

# TALIBAN RESURGENCE AFTER 9/11: THE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE AND ROLE OF LEADERSHIP

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The Taliban are predominantly Pashtun Islamic fundamentalist group that returned to power in Afghanistan in 2021 after 20 years of insurgency. It was Pashtun king Ahmad Shah Durrani who founded the modern state of Afghanistan in 1747. Although he established a solid Pashtun based Afghan identity, he left a dangerous legacy that would make Afghanistan vulnerable.<sup>1</sup> Unlike Western monarchs who restrained feudal barons and imposed a centralised system, Durrani maintained a decentralised tribal system that allowed tribal chiefs to retain their authority.<sup>2</sup> He ruled indirectly through power brokers. Afghanistan became a confederation of independent tribal fiefdoms with bare minimum aspects of statehood. Afghans who got used to such a system would never appreciate the externally imposed Eurocentric state system. Pashtuns have always been disinclined to accept any kind of central authority—even at the cost of insecurity

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1. Kareem Kamel, "Understanding Taliban Resurgence: Ethno-Symbolism and Revolutionary Mobilization", *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, Vol 15, No. 1, 2015, pp. 66-82.
2. Ibid.

and discord. What made Taliban so potent is the capacity of the insurgency to find receptive support among the population who are willing to lay down their lives for the cause.<sup>3</sup> This is the basis for this Ethno-religious and Ethno-nationalist explanation. In the theoretical conceptualisation of post 9/11 resurgence, Pashtun nationalism and Islamism are two major drivers. Taliban believe that any government in Kabul should belong to Pashtuns. The Taliban seized upon pre-existing isolationist and anti-foreign sentiment.

Around 70 per cent of the Taliban come from Pashtun belts. Over time, they have come to identify Islam with a mixture of tribal customs, Hanafi legal tradition in Islam, and Pashtunwali (tribal codes of Pashtuns). Some of these customs are widely followed by the Taliban and are aimed at uplifting the image of the Pashtun people. A few of them are thereby listed: 'Melmastia'—Deep respect for all races, religions, and tribes; 'Badal'—Revenge for any wrongdoing; 'Nanawatay'—A person who asks protection from an enemy is granted; 'Zemaka'—to motivate Pashtuns to protect their land and property against insurgents; 'Nang'—means to protect one's own and one's family's honour.<sup>4</sup> Taliban have successfully managed to integrate Islam and Pashtunwali. They emphasise three Islamic concepts that they use to justify their struggle: 'Qisas' (Revenge for Wrongdoing), 'Zina' (Human Dignity to be Protected), and 'Jihad' (The fight for freedom). The Taliban's Islamic motifs have served as a potent weapon for mobilisation and legitimisation, allowing non-Pashtuns to join the ranks of the Taliban. Reference to Islam provides Taliban with a support base that creates the appearance of cohesion in an otherwise ethnically and politically heterogeneous community.<sup>5</sup> In Taliban policymaking, multiple actors from leadership to commanders to mullahs have been the key with clear roles within the Taliban hierarchy in place, with variation on the ground. To understand their evolution, there is need to look into the early years of the insurgency where Taliban presented a public narrative in

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3. Ibid.

4. Hassan Abbas, *The Taliban Revival: Violence and Extremism on the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier* (London: Yale University Press, 2014), p. 18.

5. Kamel, n. 1.

which high level commissions crafted policies that fighters obeyed. The reality however was more complex than it seemed.

### **THE COLLAPSE AND REGROUPING (2002-2004)**

After the American onslaught during 'Operation Enduring Freedom', the Taliban suffered losses to the extent of extinction. The Taliban were able to regroup and sustain the American strikes thanks to the polycentric structure (described ahead). Polycentrism is different from Fragmentation. The former denotes several command chains, whereas the latter denotes conflicting command chains. Polycentrism and decentralisation have a few USPs: their Modus Operandi is more durable in the face of counter-insurgency attempts fuelled by current military technologies.<sup>6</sup> Taliban were quick to learn that negotiating from a position of weakness would not fetch them anything. The early regrouping started around 2002 in the southern border regions of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Shah Wali Kot became the central hub of Taliban activity in Kandahar. In the East, Nangarhar became the ground for Taliban activity. Several small shuras were set up initially in Pakistan—the significant ones being Spin Ghar, Ijraya Shura and Gardi Jangal Shura.<sup>7</sup> Fighters relied upon weapons left over by Taliban inside Afghanistan. These shuras did not have the resources to establish any shadow governance or even pay salaries to fighters. Instead, they relied on religious taxes, smugglers, and donations from businessmen.<sup>8</sup> These shuras were different from the later bigger shuras like Quetta as they were structured as a small party and not some entourage of a leader. With more funds, a bigger council called Rahbari Shura or Leadership council was set up in 2003. It became famous by the name of Quetta Shura. The founding members include Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar (former deputy minister of Defence in the 1st Emirate 1996-2001 and now deputy leader of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan), Mullah Dadullah, Mullah Faruq, Mohammad Akhtar Mansur (former leader of Taliban killed in an American drone strike), and Gul Agha Ishaqzai (close collaborator

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6. Antonio Giustozzi, *The Taliban at War, 2001-2018* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 15.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

of Mullah Omar, the founding leader of the Taliban). Their initial aim was not to overthrow the Afghan regime formed under the leadership of Hamid Karzai but to put pressure on the American and Kabul administrations to force them to seek accommodation with the Taliban.<sup>9</sup> Mullah Baradar is told to have reached out to Karzai for an amicable settlement. However, the then American Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld, strictly forbade Karzai to entertain any Taliban reconciliation advances. This miscalculation would later come to haunt United States' administration.

### **FORMATION OF QUETTA SHURA AND ITS ADMINISTRATION**

Quetta Shura was formed in 2003 and was operating along with other shuras. By 2005, it launched commissions to implement policies decided by leadership. Central leadership had to operate through consensus, and the chain of command operated through networks. The shadow governors were put in districts and provinces. A group of 2,000 fighters known as the 'Loy Mahazes' was formed and placed under the command of a Commander in a vertical chain of command. If he possessed the appropriate number of men, every Taliban leader could form his own Loy Mahaz, but there were defined regulations that every Commander had to obey. The group commander had to report to the district governor, who had to report to the provincial governor.<sup>10</sup> The Taliban's formal entry into an area would be preceded by an organised propaganda effort that laid the ground for an active insurgency. This often entailed making use of Mullahs. The persistence of the abusive attitude of local Afghan government officials and humiliation of local elders often created a base for support of the insurgency. Taliban would then launch an intimidation campaign with increasing threats to pro-government elements. The expansion also meant absorbing existing resistance fronts and co-optation of non-Taliban networks. These included former commanders of Jamaat-e-Islami and Hizb-e-Islami. Taliban exploited local rivalries among Uzbeks and Tajiks. Madrasas became

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9. Ibid., p. 40.

10. Ashley Jackson and Rahmatullah Amiri, "Insurgent Bureaucracy: How the Taliban makes Policy", United States Institute of Peace, no. 153, 2019, p. 7.

the primary source of recruitment in the areas where Taliban did not enjoy extensive support among the local population.<sup>11</sup>

Structure of the Taliban:<sup>12</sup>

- Deputy Governor
- Military Commission
- Finance Commission
- Preaching and Guidance Commission
- Culture and Information Commission
- Education Commission
- Health Commission.

Military and Finance Commissions had more significance than others. The major task of the Finance commission included investing the financial resources of Taliban in legal business and properties. Governors were supposed to supervise and perform all critical activities related to finance and logistics. The creation of Loy Mahaz is also linked to the fact that some donors would only transfer funds to their protégé among Taliban leaders. The internal organisation of Loy Mahaz varied among themselves. All Mahazes needed district and provincial representatives to coordinate with other Taliban, but they were free to organise themselves. In 2005, a “Council of Front Leaders” (Mahaz Shura) was set up to solve disputes among insurgents. From 2005 to 2010, Quetta Shura became increasingly dependent upon the multiplication of Loy Mahazes to maintain their fighting power. A system of double funding was in practice whereby the leadership paid Mahaz according to their numerical strength, and also Mahaz were able to raise funds independently.<sup>13</sup> However, these Loy Mahazes were vulnerable as it depended upon the status of their leader. As the Mahaz got bigger and better funded, it became more difficult for the governor to control it. So, there were common occurrences of infighting between Loy Mahaz and governor’s groups and amongst themselves. It was mainly the leadership provided by Mullah Baradar then that kept these fighting units together somehow.

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11. Ibid., p. 22.

12. Guistozi, n. 6, p. 68.

13. Ibid., p. 72.

In the early days of the insurgency, local taxation accounted for the maximum share of revenue, including taxation of ISAF supply convoys and war booty.<sup>14</sup> External donors gradually replaced it. United Nations sources indicate that 31 per cent of Taliban revenue did not accrue to leadership but stayed with local commanders. There were attempts by the leadership to force commanders to hand over tax revenue to the finance or military commission, but that could not fructify. Commanders were able to get a concession from the council, and they could spend revenue on their groups as they desired and only report to the Quetta Shura about the amount and how it was spent. A basic rule had been established that taxes and voluntary contributions would pay for the salaries of fighters while weapons and ammunition were to be provided by the leadership.<sup>15</sup>

#### **ALTERNATE CENTRES OF POWER: HAQQANI NETWORK AND PESHAWAR SHURA**

It was not just vertical polycentrism but also horizontal, establishing two shuras in parallel—Miran Shah Shura controlled by Haqqanis and Peshawar Shura. These shuras not just undermined Quetta but also competed with it. Sometimes, they became even more powerful than the Quetta and were able to fund the central Taliban leadership.

**Haqqani Network:** In North Waziristan, Jalaluddin Haqqani and his entourage took refuge in 2001 and reorganised immediately. The group called itself Haqqani Shabaka or Haqqani Network. Haqqanis constituted a large number of foreign fighters and were supplemented by Al Qaeda and FATA region insurgents. The Haqqanis established Miran Shah Shura in 2003. Pakistan decided to pour in money to fund the Taliban when Haqqanis started showing the capability to fight. Initially, they started operations in Paktia and Khost province and later spread to Paktika and Logar. They accepted the suzerainty of Quetta Shura but operated autonomously. Around 2006, they started to send combat troops to districts under the control of Rahbari Shura. Jalaluddin retired in 2007 owing to ill health, and the reins were taken over by his son Sirajuddin Haqqani who demanded representation in the Quetta leadership aggressively. Such was the autonomy that he

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14. Ibid., p. 83.

15. Ibid., p. 82.

even withdrew the recognition of Quetta appointed governors in their provinces.<sup>16</sup> However, an agreement was reached where governors would be appointed by Quetta but were put under the superior authority of Miran Shah representative. The strength of Haqqanis came from their better organisational structure and cohesiveness. Revenues extracted were to be necessarily transferred to the Finance Commission of Miran Shah.<sup>17</sup>

Haqqanis are champions of asymmetric warfare. With time, they developed their own brand of Jihadism. They have been receiving uninterrupted support from Al Qaeda since 2002. They did venture out in Syria and Iraq but primarily have restricted themselves to their region. Pakistani fighters are directly recruited to their rank, and the Pakistani establishment controls the Haqqani leadership. They focus on high profile Fedayin attacks and targeted assassinations. Their tactics have also been influenced by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) during 2012-2015. They have a slightly different military system from Quetta. Their structure comprises:<sup>18</sup>

- Zerbati Commission—to manage village level militias
- Delayez Commission—to manage full-time mobile units
- Fedayin Commission—for special ops and suicide attacks
- De Minema Commission—to manage IED teams

Haqqanis have the only functioning Fedayin commission that operates throughout Afghanistan. They imported suicide tactics from Iraq and have never abandoned them. There are specific madrasas maintained by Haqqanis that have been turned into specialised factories for suicide training in the FATA region.<sup>19</sup> Haqqani Network for long had maintained a Kabul City front, which was completely isolated from other Taliban groups. It was considered that other groups were more liable to be infiltrated by western spies. Haqqanis have carried out some of the most horrendous attacks, including the 2008 attack on the Indian embassy in Kabul.

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16. Ibid., p. 87.

17. All shuras had established their individual commissions, including military, finance and others.

18. Guistozzi, n. 6, p. 93.

19. Ibid., p. 94.

**Peshawar Shura:** The first attempt to establish any command centre for jihad in the eastern part was the Ijraya Shura.<sup>20</sup> The elements of Hizb-e-Islami had always been prominent in the East, and hence its former members filled the ranks of Ijraya Shura. Another faction split from Hizb-e-Islami and formed Shamsatoo Mahaz,<sup>21</sup> based upon the Shamsatoo refugee camp in Peshawar. In around 2005, Shamsatoo was offered Arab and Pakistani support if it joined Ijraya Shura. Over the years, the boundary between former Hizb-e-Islamis and Taliban blurred and Shamsatoo and Ijraya Shura merged to join Peshawar Shura in 2005. Peshawar had a very distinctive feature as it focused upon recruitment from high schools and universities. Peshawar Shura operated in Nangarhar, Kunar, Nuristan and Laghman. Under the influence of ISI, another faction by the name of Toor-e-Pagri was merged into Peshawar Shura. By 2010, the shura felt strong enough to claim the monopoly of authority over large parts of Afghanistan. Governors appointed by Quetta were marginalised and were subjected to the authority of Peshawar provincial leaders. By 2012, Peshawar banned other networks and insisted that it would operate as a single entity. It established its own Peshawar military commission, and other Shuras, including Quetta, started to bow to Peshawar's financial superiority. Foreign sponsors from the Middle East threw in their lot with them owing to the military weakness of Quetta around this time. It was only around 2016 when Peshawar's might saw an end, and the supremacy of Quetta Shura was established again with the defection of Qari Baryal, the head of Peshawar Military Commission.<sup>22</sup> Peshawar Shura also expanded in the North, where it recruited many non-Pashtuns. A separate Mahaz exclusively of non-Pashtuns was established called Jundullah Mahaz<sup>23</sup> by the initiative of Qari Baryal.<sup>24</sup> Taliban always suffered from long supply lines and

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20. Ibid., p. 96.

21. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (leader of Hizb-e-Islami) ordered the creation of Shamsatoo Mahaz in 1988.

22. Guistozzi, n. 6, p. 96.

23. Ibid., p. 106.

24. Peshawar Military Commission was led by Mullah Qari Baryal, who is noted for his dynamic personality. Under the insistence of Mullah Zakir and Pakistan, he was fired from his position. Around 2014-2015, when Peshawar Shura was subsumed into Quetta Shura, he left and founded his own autonomous Mahaz, the 'Shura of the North', with Iranian and then Russian funding.



problematic logistics in the North. With the control of the North, the logistical problems were eased. Peshawar Shura also offered more promotion opportunities and better financial conditions.

Like Haqqanis, Peshawar also had Pakistani and Arab fighters. The inclusion of Toor-e-Pagri resulted in Pakistani infiltration, and many Pakistani groups formally joined. Some of them being Jamiat-e-Ulema, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Lashkar-e-Islam, Jaish-e-Mohammad, and Sepah-e-Sahaba. Peshawar came up with a new system of 'Nizami Massuleen' to provide professional leadership and operate under a new chain of command (different from governor's chain of vertical command). Other Shuras, such as Quetta's, did not use these Nizami Massuleen, which caused a lot of friction between them. With the coming of the Nizamis, the Taliban turned into a professional guerrilla force. Personal allegiance to charismatic mullahs was de-emphasised in favour of membership of the movement as a whole. The office of Nizami Massuleen was later relegated when Quetta Shura assumed complete control of the Taliban movement.

### **ADAPTATIONS AND INNOVATIONS OF THE TALIBAN**

Afghanistan has been witnessing war for the last three decades. Afghans, cognisant of their limited capabilities, have employed innovative tactical ways to fight their enemies. Once a tactic proves successful, Taliban refine it to make it fit their circumstances and then deploy it at the operational level.<sup>25</sup> Taliban have been changing their methods constantly, making them sustain such a prolonged insurgency. Taliban now might have control of all territory. However, when they were outmanned and outgunned on the battlefield, they constantly struck at the weakness of the Afghan Government and Western coalition forces. Taliban were never as politically vulnerable as their adversaries and hence could employ historical narrative of 'Jihad' or 'fighting the invaders' to circumvent questions regarding their actions.<sup>26</sup> Taliban identified their hitting targets such as logistical convoys and not adequately defended posts, similar to what Mujahideen did during anti-Soviet jihad. They controlled

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25. Thomas H. Johnson, "Taliban adaptations and innovations", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2013, pp. 3-27.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

the battlefield operational tempo by forcing US and NATO troops to commit mistakes that they used to their advantage.<sup>27</sup> This refers to issues of collateral damage, civilian deaths, and human rights. Western forces have devised some rules of engagement (ROE) in order to lessen civilian deaths. Taliban recognise this as a self-imposed limitation on the part of coalition forces and hence tend to exploit these restraints to maximise their chances.<sup>28</sup> Contrary to the fact that Taliban are mindless fanatics, they have grown into a sophisticated army fighting enduring and defensive jihad. Their strategy is reflected by: seeking haven in cities like Karachi, running circles around the Afghan Government through effective public relations and information campaigns, expanding the use of IEDs to bring the fight to Kabul, establishing shadow government institutions to bring law to rural areas where corruption was rampant.<sup>29</sup> Taliban has always been aware of their weakness, and hence they avoided symmetrical combat at all costs to minimise losses. From 2009 onwards, Taliban pulled out their full-time mobile units and left behind local fighters who could easily hide in the villages. Part-time fighters got prominence in Taliban machinery. They brought with them many advantages—they were cheaper than mobile groups, more knowledgeable about the local area, could operate underground and were easier to recruit.<sup>30</sup>

Some specific tactical changes include improved fire control using coordinated, disciplined volley of RPGs against specific targets and multiple firing positions, better fire coordination with combined arms and manoeuvring units, improved anti-armour tactic, improved cover and concealment using 'karez' irrigation ditches which provide good cover.<sup>31</sup> Taliban have been very effective in their use of mines. Until 2007, most mines were made with military explosives. Later they started to manufacture it using fertilisers produced in Pakistan. Miran Shah Shura even had a specific mines commission. Taliban could secure small arms, machine guns, rocket launchers, recoilless

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27. Ibid., p. 6.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid., p. 7.

30. Guistozzi, n. 6, p. 202.

31. Johnson, n. 25, p. 7.

guns but surprisingly could not source TNT for IED manufacturing. This hints that Pakistan hosts were somehow constraining the ability of the Taliban to escalate military technologies.<sup>32</sup> Taliban resorted to intimidation campaigns where they used their intelligence network inside the government apparatus for hunting down collaborators. Another tactic they employed was the infiltration of Afghan Security Forces. The Green on Blue insider attacks had a major debilitating impact. In 2011, Taliban set up the 'Dawat-o-Irshad' commission to encourage defections from security forces.<sup>33</sup>

The adaptations had some considerable impact. The regular operation by ISAF troops in Taliban held areas were reduced as they started consolidating their controlled areas. This also resulted in a lesser number of ISAF casualties. They developed an IED development centre in Pakistan where new technologies were developed. The major objective of IED was to limit the mobility of US and NATO forces and keep them out of village areas. The capacity of the Taliban to absorb large losses became one of their great strengths. Suicide bombs became more common at a time when the Taliban was simultaneously growing its organisation. The purpose was to show the Taliban's commitment and determination in their struggle and exhibit the Afghan government's vulnerability and their failure to protect average civilians.<sup>34</sup> Another tactic used was frequent assassination attacks, especially in Southern Afghanistan. The modus operandi of Taliban has been simple—to target important officials like governors or police chiefs with command-detonated IEDs or suicide attacks<sup>35</sup> and shoot at sight for mid-level bureaucrat. Again, the primary goal of the assassination campaign is to reverse security gains in the disputed areas and discredit their enemies' most celebrated achievement—Governance and Authority.<sup>36</sup>

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32. Guiztozzi, n. 6, p. 152.

33. Ibid., p. 159.

34. Johnson, n. 25, p. 12.

35. "Afghanistan: Annual Report 2010 Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict," UNAMA, March 2011, [https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/engi\\_version\\_of\\_poc\\_annual\\_report\\_2011.pdf](https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/engi_version_of_poc_annual_report_2011.pdf), Accessed on September 24, 2021.

36. Johnson, n. 25, p. 13.

## TALIBAN LEADERSHIP

If not for the operational efficiency of commanders, the Taliban would not have been able to revive amidst growing counter-insurgency operations. Especially in southern and south-eastern parts, the Taliban saw fierce commanders who got primarily famous or infamous and penetrated deep into rural households. With the establishment of Loy Mahaz in 2005, the stature of commanders rose as they got the required autonomy to manage their own Mahaz.<sup>37</sup> The leadership provided during the initial stages of insurgency was so significant that later the need for a leader was not required. This eventually became the strength of the Taliban movement. The first leaders to establish their Mahaz were Mullah Dadullah, Mullah Baradar, Mullah Faruq, and Mullah Ibrahim. This also resulted in infighting, but it never got enough to shatter the organisation as a whole.

**Mullah Dadullah:** In the south, Mullah Dadullah launched an operation and expanded the influence of Quetta Shura. Dadullah was a powerful commander and cruel as well. While leading Taliban operation in Hazarajat in 1998, he ordered massacres of Shias. Soon he was appointed to lead all operations in the south. Even all senior commanders used to bow to him, including Baradar and Mullah Faruq Ibrahim.<sup>38</sup> Dadullah had personal rapport with Deobandi leaders in Karachi and raised money from a large Pashtun population in the city.<sup>39</sup> However, owing to his brutality, he earned some enemies as well. Haqqanis saw Dadullah Mahaz as an opportunity to expand influence into southern Afghanistan.

In the East, few Taliban Commanders had a sizeable following. There was no Eastern Dadullah.<sup>40</sup> Former foreign affairs minister in the first Islamic Emirate, Mullah Kabir, was dispatched to the east. He failed to gather support among the small Shuras. Here new fronts were forming outside the influence of Quetta much before even Peshawar Shura was launched. Kabir wanted southern Durrani tribes

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37. Guistozi, n. 6, p. 69.

38. Ibid., p. 46.

39. Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia* (New York: Penguin, 2008).

40. Guistozi, no. 6, p. 58.

to settle in the east, but the local Taliban did not want their leaders to be from Kandahar.<sup>41</sup>

**Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar:** Mullah Baradar was best known of all Taliban political leaders and de facto head of Quetta Shura. Baradar's relationship with ISI deteriorated in 2009 as he started working on a reconciliation deal with Kabul.<sup>42</sup> His major funding came from Arab Gulf sources through ISI. As that stopped, Baradar started to survive on Iranian funding<sup>43</sup> and kept the Taliban military system together somehow. After helping found the Taliban movement in 1994, he developed his profile as a military strategist and commander. He was the primary reason for Loy Mahaz coherence, as he used to mediate and resolve disputes. Baradar attempted to centralise power in his hands and also got partially successful, but it soon ended in 2010 when Pakistani authorities arrested him.<sup>44</sup> After his arrest, the fear of Taliban crumbling grew, but Mullah Akhtar Mansur's leadership managed it. Mullah Baradar again rose into prominence when he was released from Pakistani detention.

**Mullah Akhtar Mansur:** Akhtar Mansur was elected as a successor of Mullah Omar, though in a controversial selection. He brought back Quetta Leadership from their period of adversity. Mansur brought the news of the death of Mullah Omar in 2015 during a power struggle within Taliban. Mansur was recognised for his administrative qualities more than military capability. He had an influential role in reviving the Taliban in southern Afghanistan after 2001. After being appointed as a leader, he won loyalties of most Taliban factions. Through diplomatic manoeuvring, he brought much of Taliban funding under his control. However, Mullah Mohammad Yakub (son of Mullah Omar) posed an obstacle to Mansur's leadership.

The leaders of the Military Commission have been very significant in the Taliban movement. **Abdul Qayum Zakir**, who led the Quetta Military Commission till 2014 was relatively independent of Pakistani pressure as he was closer to Iran. He belongs to a very conservative,

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41. Ibid., p. 59.

42. Ibid., p. 73.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid., p. 79.

hardline faction within the Taliban. **Qari Baryal**, erstwhile leader of Peshawar Military Commission and now Governor of Kabul Province in the new Taliban administration, was instrumental in the expansion of Taliban. The US Military described Baryal as 'al-Qaeda associated Taliban leader'. He began his career as Hizb-e-Islami cadre, rose through the ranks of Taliban to lead forces in central and north-eastern Afghanistan. Baryal was a key commander in what NATO called 'Kabul Attack Network'. This network pooled fighters from Taliban, Al Qaeda, Islamic Jihad Union, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.<sup>45</sup> Baryal group facilitated movement of weapons, explosives, and suicide bombers from the Pakistan border to Kabul.

**Sirajuddin Haqqani:** After Jalaluddin Haqqani retired in 2007 due to ill health, his son Sirajuddin Haqqani took over the reins. Keeping in line with the tradition of Haqqanis, he took asymmetric warfare to higher level. Like his father, he has been a go-between for Al Qaeda and Taliban on both sides of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.<sup>46</sup> He had been actively overseeing the planning and execution of attacks on International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), Afghan officials and civilians, mostly in eastern and south-eastern Afghanistan. With Sirajuddin as leader, Haqqanis' activities ranged from extortion and ransom to investments in firms abroad through front companies.<sup>47</sup> Sirajuddin made sure that hardliners within Taliban would always be placed in the higher echelons. Therefore, any international dialogue with Taliban cannot proceed without Haqqanis or, in other sense, without Pakistan on board.

## CONCLUSION

It is clear that from the beginning Taliban established a parallel form of government which was complex and extensive. It exhibited a level

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45. Bill Roggio, "Taliban appoints Kabul Attack Network Commander as provincial governor", *FDD's Long War Journal*, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2021/11/taliban-appoints-kabul-attack-network-commander-as-provincial-governor.php>. Accessed on January 2, 2022.

46. Sirajuddin Jallaloudine Haqqani, UNSC, September 13, 2007, <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/sanctions/1988/materials/summaries/individual/sirajuddin-jallaloudine-haqqani>. Accessed on January 2, 2022.

47. Gretchen Peters, "Haqqani Network Financing: The Evolution of an Industry", *CTC at West Point*, July 2012, [https://ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/CTC\\_Haqqani\\_Network\\_Financing-Report\\_Final.pdf](https://ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/CTC_Haqqani_Network_Financing-Report_Final.pdf). Accessed on January 5, 2022.

of policy coherence which many other insurgencies are not able to sustain and hence it falls apart. However, Taliban's policies and its implementation differed in different regions because individual shadow governors and officials interpreted the commands according to their own preferences and local imperatives. The local adaptation and regional decision making have been an important factor in the success of Taliban. From \$1 trillion surge to complete withdrawal of Western troops and the resulting establishment of Taliban government after two decades, this should count amongst the most surreal episodes in the history of modern International Relations.<sup>48</sup> The hybrid of state-building and counter-insurgency became fatal in Afghanistan. The Taliban has its own vision for establishing security, governance and the rule of law. They sold it in the name of Sharia from within tribal structures and appealed to rural population.<sup>49</sup> The more the military was deployed against them, the more they presented themselves as a bastion of Jihad. Over time swathes of rural territory were swayed by Taliban. This was not just a result of military offensives but also the movement's increasing civilian capacity. Taliban expanded its judiciary significantly and sent judges into contested and earlier government-controlled districts to adjudicate disputes.<sup>50</sup> By also expanding its taxation regime and parallel governance, Taliban increased its civilian support and prepared fertile ground for further infiltrations and future operations.

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48. Rory Stewart, "The last days of Intervention: Afghanistan and the Delusions of Maximalism", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 100, no. 6, 2021, p. 60.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

50. Jackson, n. 10, p. 37.