The **Taliban**, alternative spelling **Taleban**, \(^4\) (\(\text{ṭālibān}\), meaning "students" in Arabic) is an Islamist militia group that ruled large parts of Afghanistan from September 1996 onwards. Although in control of Afghanistan's capital (Kabul) and most of the country for five years, the Taliban's Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan gained diplomatic recognition from only three states: Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. After the attacks of September 11 2001 the Taliban regime was overthrown by Operation Enduring Freedom. The Taliban mostly fled to neighboring Pakistan where they regrouped as an insurgency movement to fight the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (established in late 2001) and the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).\(^5\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Taliban</strong></th>
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<td>Participant in the Civil war in Afghanistan, the War in Afghanistan (2001–present)</td>
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Flag used by the Taliban (1997–2001)

| **Active** | Sept. 1994 – Sept. 1996 (militia)  
2004–present (insurgency) |
|---|---|
| **Ideology** | Islamism  
Islamic fundamentalism  
Pashtun nationalism |
| **Leaders** | Mullah Mohammed Omar  
Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar  
Mullah Obaidullah Akhund |
| **Area of operations** | Afghanistan and Pakistan |
| **Strength** | 45,000 (2001 est.)\(^1\)  
11,000 (2008 est.)\(^2\)  
36,000 (2010 est.)\(^3\) |
| **Originated as** | Students of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam |
| **Allies** | Pakistan (Inter-Services Intelligence)  
Haqqani network  
Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin  
Islamic Emirate of Waziristan  
Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan  
Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan  
East Turkestan Islamic Movement  
Al-Qaeda and Chechens |
| **Opponents** | United States armed forces  
International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)  
Military of Afghanistan |

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\(^1\) [1]
\(^2\) [2]
\(^3\) [3]
\(^4\) [4]
\(^5\) [5]
Most Taliban leaders were influenced by Deobandi fundamentalism. Many also strictly follow the social and cultural norm called Pashtunwali. The Taliban movement is primarily made up of members belonging to Pashtun tribes, the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan. The main leader of the Taliban movement is Mullah Mohammed Omar. Omar's original commanders were "a mixture of former small-unit military commanders and madrassa teachers." While in power, the Taliban enforced one of the strictest interpretations of Sharia law ever seen in the Muslim world, however most of their criticism came from leading Muslim scholars. They became notorious internationally for their treatment of women.

The Taliban's allies include the Pakistani army as well as Arab and Central Asian militants. Al Qaeda supported the Taliban with regiments of imported fighters from Arab countries and Central Asia. In the late period of the war, of an estimated 45,000 force fighting on the side of the Taliban, only 14,000 were Afghans. Today the Taliban operate in Afghanistan and northwest Pakistan. US officials say one of their headquarters is in or near Quetta, Pakistan. The Taliban engage in terrorism against the civilian population of Afghanistan. According to a report by the United Nations, the Taliban were responsible for 76% of civilian casualties in Afghanistan in 2009.

**Etymology**

The word *Taliban* is Pashto, طالبان ṭālibān, meaning "students", the plural of ṭālib. This is a loanword from Arabic طالب ṭālib, plus the Indo-Iranian plural ending -an (the Arabic plural being طلاب ṭullāb, whereas طالبان ṭālibān is a dual form with the incongruous meaning, to Arabic speakers, of "two students"). Since becoming a loanword in English, *Taliban*, besides a plural noun referring to the group, has also been used as a singular noun referring to an individual. For example, John Walker Lindh has been referred to as "an American Taliban", rather than "an American Talib". In the English language newspapers of Pakistan the word talibans is often used when referring to more than one taliban. The spelling 'Taliban' has come to predominate over 'Taleban' in English.

**History**

**Emergence**

After the fall of the communist Mohammad Najibullah-regime in 1992, several Afghan political parties agreed on a peace and power-sharing agreement (the Peshawar Accords). The Peshawar Accords created the Islamic State of Afghanistan and appointed an interim government for a transitional period. According to Human Rights Watch:

The sovereignty of Afghanistan was vested formally in the Islamic State of Afghanistan, an entity created in April 1992, after the fall of the Soviet-backed Najibullah government. [...] With the exception of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-e Islami, all of the parties... were ostensibly unified under this government in April 1992. [...] Hekmatyar's Hezb-e Islami, for its part, refused to recognize the government for most of the period discussed in this report and launched attacks against government forces and Kabul generally. [...] Shells and rockets fell everywhere.

Gulbuddin Hekmatyar received operational, financial and military support from Pakistan. Afghanistan expert Amin Saikal concludes in *Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival*:

Pakistan was keen to gear up for a breakthrough in Central Asia. [...] Islamabad could not possibly expect the new Islamic government leaders... to subordinate their own nationalist objectives in order to help Pakistan realize its regional ambitions. [...] Had it not been for the ISI's logistic support and supply of a large number of rockets, Hekmatyar's forces would not have been able to target and destroy half of Kabul.

In addition, Saudi Arabia and Iran – as competitors for regional hegemony – supported Afghan militias hostile towards each other. According to Human Rights Watch, Iran assisted the Shia Hazara Hezb-i Wahdat forces of Abdul Ali Mazari, as Iran attempted to maximize Wahdat's military power and influence. Saudi Arabia supported the Wahhabite Abdul Rasul Sayyaf and his Ittihad-i Islami faction. Conflict between the two
militias soon escalated into a full-scale war. A publication by the George Washington University describes:

Outside forces saw instability in Afghanistan as an opportunity to press their own security and political agendas.\cite{24}

Due to the sudden initiation of the war, working government departments, police units or a system of justice and accountability for the newly-created Islamic State of Afghanistan did not have time to form. Horrific crimes were committed by individuals of different factions. Rare ceasefires, usually negotiated by representatives of Ahmad Shah Massoud, Sibghatullah Mojaddedi or Burhanuddin Rabbani (the interim government), or officials from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), commonly collapsed within days.\cite{20}

Meanwhile southern Afghanistan was neither under the control of foreign-backed militias nor the government in Kabul, but was ruled by local leaders such as Gul Agha Sherzai and their militias. In 1991, the Taliban (a movement originating from Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-run religious schools for Afghan refugees in Pakistan) also developed in Afghanistan as a politico-religious force, reportedly in opposition to the tyranny of the local governor.\cite{25} Mullah Omar started his movement with fewer than 50 armed madrassah students in his hometown of Kandahar.\cite{25} The most credible and often-repeated story of how Mullah Omar first mobilized his followers is that in the spring of 1994, neighbors in Singesar told him that the local governor had abducted two teenage girls, shaved their heads, and taken them to a camp where they were raped repeatedly. 30 Taliban (with only 16 rifles) freed the girls, and hanged the governor from the barrel of a tank. Later that year, two militia commanders killed civilians while fighting for the right to sodomize a young boy. The Taliban freed him.\cite{25} \cite{26}

The Taliban's first major military activity was in 1994, when they marched northward from Maiwand and captured Kandahar City and the surrounding provinces, losing only a few dozen men.\cite{27} When they took control of Kandahar in 1994, they forced the surrender of dozens of local Pashtun leaders who had presided over a situation of complete lawlessness and atrocities.\cite{27} \cite{28} The Taliban also took-over a border crossing at Spin Baldak and an ammunition dump from Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. In the course of 1994, the Taliban took control of 12 of 34 provinces not under central government control, disarming the "heavily armed population". Militias controlling the different areas often surrendered without a fight.\cite{9}

At the same time most of the militia factions (Hekmatyar's Hezb-i Islami, Junbish-i Milli and Hezb-i Wahdat) which had been fighting in the battle for control of Kabul were defeated militarily by forces of the Islamic State's Secretary of Defense Ahmad Shah Massoud. Bombardment of the capital came to a halt.\cite{29} \cite{30} \cite{31} Massoud tried to initiate a nationwide political process with the goal of national consolidation and democratic elections, also inviting the Taliban to join the process and to contribute to stability.\cite{15} Ahmad Shah Massoud had been named "The Afghan who won the cold war" by The Wall Street Journal.\cite{32} He had defeated the Soviet Red Army nine times in his home region of Panjshir, in north-eastern Afghanistan.\cite{33} Massoud, unarmed, went to talk to some Taliban leaders in Maidan Shar to convince them to join the initiated political process, so that democratic elections could be held to decide on a future government for Afghanistan. He hoped for them to be allies in bringing stability to Afghanistan. But the Taliban declined to join such a political process. When Massoud returned unharmed to Kabul, the Taliban leader who had received him as his guest paid with his life (he was killed by other senior Taliban) for failing to execute Massoud while the possibility had presented itself.

The Taliban started shelling Kabul in early 1995 but were defeated by forces of the Islamic State government under Ahmad Shah Massoud.\cite{30} see video \cite{34} Amnesty International, referring to the Taliban offensive, wrote in a 1995 report:

This is the first time in several months that Kabul civilians have become the targets of rocket attacks and shelling aimed at residential areas in the city.\cite{30}

The Taliban's early victories in 1994 were followed by a series of devastating defeats that resulted in heavy losses.\cite{28} Pakistan started to provide stronger military support to the Taliban.\cite{12} \cite{22} Many analysts like Amin Saikal describe the Taliban as developing into a proxy force for Pakistan's regional interests which the Taliban decline.\cite{25} On September 26, 1996, as the Taliban with military support by Pakistan and financial support by Saudi
Arabia prepared for another major offensive, Massoud ordered a full retreat from Kabul.[35] The Taliban seized Kabul on September 27, 1996, and established the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

**Taliban Emirate against United Front**

**Creation of the United Front**

The Taliban imposed on the parts of Afghanistan under their control their interpretation of Islam. The Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) analyze:

"To PHR's knowledge, no other regime in the world has methodically and violently forced half of its population into virtual house arrest, prohibiting them on pain of physical punishment"[36]

Women were required to wear the all-covering burqa, they were banned from public life and denied access to health care and education, windows needed to be covered so that women could not be seen from the outside, and they were not allowed to laugh in a manner they could be heard by others.[36] The Taliban, without any real court or hearing, cut people's hands or arms off when they were accused of stealing.[36] Taliban hit-squads watched the streets, conducting brutal public beatings.[36]

Ahmad Shah Massoud and Abdul Rashid Dostum, two former archenemies, created the United Front (Northern Alliance) against the Taliban that were preparing offensives against the remaining areas under the control of Massoud and those under the control of Dostum. see video [37] The United Front included beside the dominantly Tajik forces of Massoud and the Uzbek forces of Dostum, Hazara factions and Pashtun forces under the leadership of commanders such as Abdul Haq, Haji Abdul Qadir, Qari Baba or diplomat Abdul Rahim Ghafoorzai. From the Taliban conquest in 1996 until November 2001 the United Front controlled roughly 30% of Afghanistan's population in provinces such as Badakhshan, Kapisa, Takhar and parts of Parwan, Kunar, Nuristan, Laghman, Samangan, Kunduz, Ghōr and Bamyan.

**Taliban massacres**

According to a 55-page report by the United Nations, the Taliban, while trying to consolidate control over northern and western Afghanistan, committed systematic massacres against civilians.[38] [39] UN officials stated that there had been "15 massacres" between 1996 and 2001.[38] [39] They also said, that "[t]hese have been highly systematic and they all lead back to the [Taliban] Ministry of Defense or to Mullah Omar himself."[38] [39] In a major effort to retake the Shomali plains, the Taliban indiscriminately killed civilians, while uprooting and expelling the population. Kamal Hossein, a special reporter for the UN, reported on these and other war crimes. Upon taking Mazar-i-Sharif in 1998, about 4,000 civilians were executed by the Taliban and many more reported tortured.[40] [41] The Taliban especially targeted people of Shia religious or Hazara ethnic background.[38] [39] Among those killed in Mazari Sharif were several Iranian diplomats. Others were kidnapped by the Taliban, touching off a hostage crisis that nearly escalated to a full scale war, with 150,000 Iranian soldiers massed on the Afghan border at one time.[42] It was later admitted that the diplomats were killed by the Taliban, and their bodies were returned to Iran.[43] The documents also reveal the role of Arab and Pakistani support troops in these killings.[38] [39] Bin Laden's so-called 055 Brigade was responsible for mass-killings of Afghan civilians.[13] The report by the United Nations
quotes eyewitnesses in many villages describing Arab fighters carrying long knives used for slitting throats and skinning people.\[38\] [39]

**Pakistan military interference**

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf – then as Chief of Army Staff – was responsible for sending thousands of Pakistanis to fight alongside the Taliban and Bin Laden against the forces of Massoud.\[12\] [44] [45] [15] In total there were believed to be 28,000 Pakistani nationals fighting inside Afghanistan.\[15\] 20,000 were regular Pakistani soldiers either from the Frontier Corps or army and an estimated 8,000 were militants recruited in madrassas filling regular Taliban ranks.\[13\] The estimated 25,000 Taliban regular force thus comprised more than 8,000 Pakistani nationals.\[13\] [46] A 1998 document by the U.S. State Department confirms that "20–40 percent of [regular] Taliban soldiers are Pakistani."\[12\] The document further states that the parents of those Pakistani nationals "know nothing regarding their child's military involvement with the Taliban until their bodies are brought back to Pakistan."\[12\] Further 3,000 fighters of the regular Taliban army were Arab and Central Asian militants.\[13\] [47] From 1996 to 2001 the Al Qaeda of Osama Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri became a state within the Taliban state.\[47\] Bin Laden sent Arab recruits to join the fight against the United Front.\[33\] [47] Of roughly 45,000 Pakistani, Taliban and Al Qaeda soldiers fighting against the forces of Massoud only 14,000 were Afghan.\[13\] [15]

**Ahmad Shah Massoud**

Ahmad Shah Massoud was the only major anti-Taliban leader who never left Afghanistan for exile and who was able to defend vast parts of his territory against the Taliban. Abdul Rashid Dostum and his forces were defeated by the Taliban in 1998. Dostum subsequently went into exile.

In the areas under his control Massoud set up democratic institutions and signed the Women's Rights Declaration.\[15\] In the area of Massoud, women and girls did not have to wear the Afghan burqa. They were allowed to work and to go to school. In at least two known instances, Massoud personally intervened against cases of forced marriage.\[15\] To Massoud there was reportedly nothing worse than treating a person like an object.\[15\] He stated:

"It is our conviction and we believe that both men and women are created by the Almighty. Both have equal rights. Women can pursue an education, women can pursue a career, and women can play a role in society – just like men."\[15\]

Author Pepe Escobar wrote in *Massoud: From Warrior to Statesman*:

"Massoud is adamant that in Afghanistan women have suffered oppression for generations. He says that 'the cultural environment of the country suffocates women. But the Taliban exacerbate this with oppression.' His most ambitious project is to shatter this cultural prejudice and so give more space, freedom and equality to women – they would have the same rights as men."\[15\]

While it was Massoud's stated conviction that men and women are equal and should enjoy the same rights, he also had to deal with Afghan traditions which he said would need a generation or more to overcome. In his opinion that could only be achieved through education.\[15\] Humayun Tandar, who took part as a Afghan diplomat in the 2001 International Conference on Afghanistan in Bonn, said that "strictures of language, ethnicity, region were [also] stifling for Massoud. That is why ... he wanted to create a unity which could surpass the situation in which we found
ourselves and still find ourselves to this day."[15] This applied also to strictures of religion. Jean-José Puig describes how Massoud often led prayers before a meal or at times asked his fellow Muslims to lead the prayer but also did not hesitate to ask a Christian friend Jean-José Puig or the Jewish Princeton University Professor Michael Barry: "Jean-José, we believe in the same God. Please, tell us the prayer before lunch or dinner in your own language."[15] Human Rights Watch cites no human rights crimes for the forces under direct control of Massoud for the period from October 1996 until the assassination of Massoud in September 2001.[48] One million people fled the Taliban, many to the area of Massoud.[44][49] National Geographic concluded in its documentary "Inside the Taliban":

The only thing standing in the way of future Taliban massacres is Ahmad Shah Massoud."[44]

The Taliban repeatedly offered Massoud a position of power to make him stop his resistance. Massoud declined. He explained in one interview:

"The Taliban say: "Come and accept the post of prime minister and be with us", and they would keep the highest office in the country, the presidency. But for what price?! The difference between us concerns mainly our way of thinking about the very principles of the society and the state. We can not accept their conditions of compromise, or else we would have to give up the principles of modern democracy. We are fundamentally against the system called "the Emirate of Afghanistan". ,[50]

"There should be an Afghanistan where every Afghan finds himself or herself happy. And I think that can only be assured by democracy based on consensus."[51]

Massoud with his Proposals for Peace[52] wanted to convince the Taliban to join a political process leading towards nationwide democratic elections in a foreseeable future.[50] Massoud also stated:

"The Taliban are not a force to be considered invincible. They are distanced from the people now. They are weaker than in the past. There is only the assistance given by Pakistan, Osama bin Laden and other extremist groups that keep the Taliban on their feet. With a halt to that assistance, it is extremely difficult to survive."[51]

In early 2001 Massoud employed a new strategy of local military pressure and global political appeals.[53] Resentment was increasingly gathering against Taliban rule from the bottom of Afghan society including the Pashtun areas.[53] Massoud publicized their cause "popular consensus, general elections and democracy" worldwide. At the same time he was very wary not to revive the failed Kabul government of the early 1990s.[53] Already in 1999 he started the training of police forces which he trained specifically in order to keep order and protect the civilian population in case the United Front would be successful.[15]

In early 2001 Ahmad Shah Massoud addressed the European Parliament in Brussels asking the international community to provide humanitarian help to the people of Afghanistan.[54] see video[55] He stated that the Taliban and Al Qaeda had introduced "a very wrong perception of Islam" and that without the support of Pakistan and Bin Laden the Taliban would not be able to sustain their military campaign for up to a year.[56] On this visit to Europe he also warned that his intelligence had gathered information about a large-scale attack on U.S. soil being imminent.[57]

The president of the European Parliament, Nicole Fontaine, called him the "pole of liberty in Afghanistan".[58]
On September 9, 2001, Massoud, then aged 48, was the target of a suicide attack by two Arabs posing as journalists at Khwaja Bahauddin, in the Takhar Province of Afghanistan. Massoud died in a helicopter taking him to a hospital. The funeral, though in a rather rural area, was attended by hundreds of thousands of mourning people. Sad day (video clip).

The assassination was not the first time Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, the Pakistani ISI, and before them the Soviet KGB, the Afghan Communist KHAD and Hekmatyar had tried to assassinate Massoud. He survived countless assassination attempts over a period of 26 years. The first attempt on Massoud's life was carried out by Hekmatyar and two Pakistani ISI agents in 1975, when Massoud was only 22 years old. In early 2001, Al-Qaeda would-be assassins were captured by Massoud's forces while trying to enter his territory. The assassination of Massoud may have had a connection to the September 11, 2001 attacks on U.S. soil, which killed nearly 3000 people, and which appeared to be the terrorist attack that Massoud had warned against in his speech to the European Parliament several months earlier.

John P. O'Neill was a counter-terrorism expert and the Assistant Director of the FBI until late 2001. He retired from the FBI and was offered the position of director of security at the World Trade Center (WTC). He took the job at the WTC two weeks before 9/11. On September 10, 2001, O'Neill told two of his friends, "We're due. And we're due for something big.... Some things have happened in Afghanistan. [referring to the assassination of Massoud] I don't like the way things are lining up in Afghanistan.... I sense a shift, and I think things are going to happen ... soon." O'Neill died on September 11, 2001, when the South Tower collapsed.

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Massoud's United Front troops ousted the Taliban from power in Kabul with American air support in Operation Enduring Freedom. In November and December 2001 the United Front gained control of much of the country and played a crucial role in establishing the post-Taliban interim government of Hamid Karzai in late 2001.

NATO invasion, Taliban overthrow and insurgency

Prelude

After the September 11 attacks on the U.S. and the PENTTBOM investigation, the United States made the following demands of the Taliban, and refused to discuss them:

1. Deliver to the U.S. all of the leaders of Al-Qaeda
2. Release all foreign nationals that have been "unjustly imprisoned"
3. Protect foreign journalists, diplomats, and aid workers
4. Close immediately every terrorist training camp
5. Hand over every terrorist and their supporters to appropriate authorities
6. Give the United States full access to terrorist training camps for inspection

The U.S. petitioned the international community to back a military campaign to overthrow the Taliban. The U.N. issued two resolutions on terrorism after the Sept.11 attacks. The resolutions called on all states to "[increase] cooperation and full implementation of the relevant international conventions relating to terrorism" and specified consensus recommendations for all countries. The Security Council did not authorize military intervention in Afghanistan of any kind, and nowhere in the U.N resolutions did it say military operations in Afghanistan were justified or conform to international law. Despite this, NATO approved a campaign against Afghanistan as self-defense against armed attack.

On September 21, the Taliban responded to the ultimatum, promising that if the U.S. could bring evidence that bin Laden was guilty, they would hand him over, stating that they had no evidence linking him to the September 11 attacks.

On September 22, the United Arab Emirates, and later Saudi Arabia, withdrew recognition of the Taliban as Afghanistan's legal government, leaving neighbouring Pakistan as the only remaining country with diplomatic ties.
On October 4, the Taliban agreed to turn bin Laden over to Pakistan for trial in an international tribunal\textsuperscript{[68]} that operated according to Islamic Sharia law, but Pakistan blocked the offer as it was not possible to guarantee his safety.\textsuperscript{[69]} On October 7, the Taliban ambassador to Pakistan offered to detain bin Laden and try him under Islamic law if the U.S. made a formal request and presented the Taliban with evidence. A Bush administration official, speaking on condition of anonymity, rejected the Taliban offer, and stated that the U.S. would not negotiate their demands.\textsuperscript{[70]}

**Coalition attack**

Still on October 7, and less than one month after the Twin Towers fell, the U.S., aided by the United Kingdom, Canada, and other countries including several from the NATO alliance, initiated military action, bombing Taliban and Al-Qaeda-related camps.\textsuperscript{[71]} \textsuperscript{[72]} The stated intent of military operations was to remove the Taliban from power, and prevent the use of Afghanistan as a terrorist base of operations.\textsuperscript{[73]}

The CIA’s elite Special Activities Division (SAD) units were the first U.S. forces to enter Afghanistan (noting that many different countries intelligence agencies were on the ground or operating within theatre before SAD, and that SAD are not technically military forces, but civilian paramilitaries). They joined with the Afghan United Front (Northern Alliance) to prepare for the subsequent arrival of U.S. Special Operations forces. The United Front (Northern Alliance) and SAD and Special Forces combined to overthrow the Taliban with minimal coalition casualties, and without the use of international conventional ground forces. *The Washington Post* stated in an editorial by John Lehman in 2006:

> What made the Afghan campaign a landmark in the U.S. Military's history is that it was prosecuted by Special Operations forces from all the services, along with Navy and Air Force tactical power, operations by the Afghan Northern Alliance and the CIA were equally important and fully integrated. No large Army or Marine force was employed.\textsuperscript{[74]}

On October 14, the Taliban offered to discuss handing over Osama bin Laden to a neutral country in return for a bombing halt, but only if the Taliban were given evidence of bin Laden's involvement.\textsuperscript{[75]} The U.S. rejected this offer, and continued military operations. Mazari Sharif fell November 9, triggering a cascade of provinces falling with minimal resistance. Many local forces switched loyalties from the Taliban to the Northern Alliance. On the night of November 12, the Taliban retreated south from Kabul. On November 15, they released eight Western aid workers after three months in captivity. By November 13, the Taliban had withdrawn from both Kabul and Jalalabad. Finally, in early December, the Taliban gave up Kandahar, their last stronghold, dispersing without surrendering.
Resurgence

Before the summer 2006 offensive began, indications existed that soldiers in Afghanistan had lost influence and power to other groups, including potentially the Taliban. A notable sign was rioting in May after a street accident in the city of Kabul. The continued support from tribal and other groups in Pakistan, the drug trade, and the small number of NATO forces, combined with the long history of resistance and isolation, indicated that Taliban forces and leaders were surviving. Suicide attacks and other terrorist methods not used in 2001 became more common. Observers suggested that poppy eradication, which destroys the livelihoods of rural Afghans, and civilian deaths caused by airstrikes encouraged the resurgence. These observers maintained that policy should focus on "hearts and minds" and on economic reconstruction, which could profit from switching from interdicting to diverting poppy production—to make medicine.

In September 2006, Pakistan recognized the Islamic Emirate of Waziristan, an association of Waziristani chieftains with close ties to the Taliban, as the de facto security force for Waziristan. This recognition was part of the agreement to end the Waziristan War, which had exacted a heavy toll on the Pakistan Army since early 2004. Some commentators viewed Islamabad's shift from war to diplomacy as implicit recognition of the growing power of the resurgent Taliban relative to American influence, with the U.S. distracted by the threat of looming crises in Iraq, Lebanon, and Iran.

Other commentators viewed Islamabad's shift from war to diplomacy as an effort to appease growing discontent. Because of the Taliban's leadership structure, Mullah Dadullah's targeted killing in May 2007 did not have a significant effect, other than to damage incipient relations with Pakistan.

By 2009, a strong resistance was created, known as Operation Al Faath, the Arabic word for "victory" taken from the Koran, in the form of a guerrilla war. The Pashtun tribal group, with over 40 million members (including Afghans and Pakistanis) had a long history of resistance to occupation forces, so the Taliban may have comprised only a part of the insurgency. Most post-invasion Taliban fighters were new recruits, mostly drawn from local madrasas.

In early December, the Taliban offered to give the U.S. "legal guarantees" that it would not allow Afghanistan to be used for attacks on other countries. The U.S. ignored the offer, and continued military action.

Targeted killings

The United States and United Kingdom have used targeted killings, mainly by SOF forces, and sometimes by drones, to kill Taliban leaders. British forces also used similar tactics, as well as United Kingdom Special Forces, to eliminate individual Taliban commanders, mostly in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. Among the more notable of the targeted killings of Taliban:

- In June 2004, the U.S. killed Nek Muhammad Wazir, a Taliban commander and al-Qaeda facilitator, along with five others, in an apparent Predator missile strike in South Waziristan, Pakistan.
• In November 2008, Rashid Rauf, British/Pakistani suspected planner of a 2006 transatlantic aircraft plot, was killed by a missile launched from a U.S. drone on the well-guarded compound of a Taliban commander in North Waziristan, carried out by the CIA's Special Activities Division.[89] [90]

• In August 2009, Baitullah Mehsud, the leader of the Taliban umbrella group, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which he formed from an alliance of about five pro-Taliban groups, who was thought to have commanded up to 5,000 fighters and to have been behind numerous attacks in Pakistan including the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, was killed (along with a Taliban lieutenant, seven bodyguards, his wife, and his mother- and father-in-law) in a U.S. CIA Special Activities Division drone missile attack on his father-in-law's house in South Waziristan, where he was staying.[91] [92] [93] [94] [95] [96] [97] [98] [99]

• During Operation Herrick since 2002, British special forces killed at least 50 high and local Taliban commanders in targeted killings in Helmand Province, which in the U.K. was received both positively and negatively by the media. One specific killing, by Corporal Craig Harrison of the Household Cavalry, though initially a classified operation, was later revealed to have broken the record for longest confirmed sniper kill, at a range of 2,475 m (2,707 yd).[98]

• According to Guantanamo Bay charge sheets, the United States Department of Defense believes the Taliban maintains a 40-man undercover unit called "Jihad Kandahar", which is used for undercover operations including assassination.[99]

Civilian casualties

According to a report by the United Nations, the Taliban were responsible for 76% of civilian casualties in Afghanistan in 2009.[17]

According to Human Rights Watch, the Taliban's bombings and other attacks which have led to civilian casualties "sharply escalated in 2006" when "at least 669 Afghan civilians were killed in at least 350 armed attacks, most of which appear to have been intentionally launched at non-combatants."[100] [101] By 2008, the Taliban had increased its use of suicide bombers and targeted unarmed civilian aid workers, such as Gayle Williams.[102]

The United Nations reported that the number of civilians killed by both the Taliban and pro-government forces in the war rose nearly 50% between 2007 and 2009. In the first half of 2008, the Taliban killed 495 civilians, and the allies 276.[103] The high number of civilians killed by the Taliban is blamed in part on their increasing use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), "for instance, 16 IEDs have been planted in girls’ schools" by the Taliban.[103]

Criticism of tactics and strategy

In 2009, Colonel Richard Kemp, formerly Commander of British forces in Afghanistan and the intelligence coordinator for the British government, drew parallels between the tactics and strategy of Hamas in Gaza to those of the Taliban. Kemp wrote:

Like Hamas in Gaza, the Taliban in southern Afghanistan are masters at shielding themselves behind the civilian population and then melting in among them for protection. Women and children are trained and equipped to fight, collect intelligence, and ferry arms and ammunition between battles. Female suicide bombers are increasingly common. The use of women to shield gunmen as they engage NATO forces is now so normal it is deemed barely worthy of comment. Schools and houses are routinely booby-trapped.
Snipers shelter in houses deliberately filled with women and children.\[104] \[105]

**Ideology**

**Overview**

The Taliban initially enjoyed goodwill from Afghans weary of the warlords' corruption, brutality, and incessant fighting.\[106\] However, this popularity was not universal, particularly among non-Pashtuns.

The Taliban's extremely strict and anti-modern ideology has been described as an "innovative form of sharia combining Pashtun tribal codes,"\[107\] or Pashtunwali, with radical Deobandi interpretations of Islam favored by JUI and its splinter groups. Also contributing to the mix was the jihadism and pan-Islamism of Osama bin Laden.\[108\]

Their ideology was a departure from the Islamism of the anti-Soviet mujahideen rulers they replaced who tended to be mystical Sufis, traditionalists, or radical Islamicists inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan).\[109\]

Under the Taliban regime, Sharia law was interpreted to forbid a wide variety of previously lawful activities in Afghanistan. One Taliban list of prohibitions included: pork, pig, pig oil, anything made from human hair, satellite dishes, cinematography, and equipment that produces the joy of music, pool tables, chess, masks, alcohol, tapes, computers, VCRs, television, anything that propagates sex and is full of music, wine, lobster, nail polish, firecrackers, statues, sewing catalogs, pictures, Christmas cards.\[110\] They also got rid of employment, education, and sports for all women, dancing, clapping during sports events, kite flying, and characterizations of living things, no matter if they were drawings, paintings, photographs, stuffed animals, or dolls. Men had to have a fist size beard at the bottom of their chin. Conversely, they had to wear their head hair short. Men had to wear a head covering.\[111\]

Many of these activities were hitherto lawful in Afghanistan. Critics complained that most Afghans followed a different, less strict, and less intrusive interpretation of Islam. The Taliban did not eschew all traditional popular practices. For example, they did not destroy the graves of Sufi pirs (holy men), and emphasized dreams as a means of revelation.\[112\]

Taliban have been described as both anti-nationalist and Pushtun nationalist. According to journalist Ahmed Rashid, at least in the first years of their rule, they adopted Deobandi and Islamist anti-nationalist beliefs, and opposed "tribal and feudal structures," eliminating traditional tribal or feudal leaders from leadership roles.\[113\] According to Ali A. Jalali and Lester Grau, the Taliban "received extensive support from Pashtuns across the country who thought that the movement might restore their national dominance. Even Pashtun intellectuals in the West, who differed with the Taliban on many issues, expressed support for the movement on purely ethnic grounds.\[114\]

Like Wahhabi and other Deobandis, the Taliban do not consider Shi'i to be Muslims. The Shia in Afghanistan consist mostly of the Hazara ethnic group which totaled almost 10% of Afghanistan's population.\[115\]

The Taliban were averse to debating doctrine with other Muslims. "The Taliban did not allow even Muslim reporters to question [their] edicts or to discuss interpretations of the Qur'an."\[116\]
Treatment of women

The Taliban forced women to wear the burqa in public.[118] They were allowed neither to work nor to be educated after the age of eight, and until then were permitted only to study the Qur'an.[11] They were not allowed to be treated by male doctors unless accompanied by a male chaperon, which led to illnesses remaining untreated. They faced public flogging in the street, and public execution for violations of the Taliban's laws.[36]

Employment for women was restricted to the medical sector, because male medical personnel were not allowed to look at them. One result of the banning of employment of women by the Taliban was the closing down in places like Kabul of primary schools not only for girls but for boys, because almost all the teachers there were women.[119] Women were required to wear the burqa, a traditional dress covering the entire body except for a small screen to see out of. Taliban restrictions became more severe after they took control of the capital. In February 1998, religious police forced all women off the streets of Kabul, and issued new regulations ordering people to blacken their windows, so that women would not be visible from the outside.[120]

Bamyan Buddhas

In 1999, Mullah Omar issued a decree protecting the Buddha statues at Bamyan, two 6th century monumental statues of standing buddhas carved into the side of a cliff in the Bamyan valley in the Hazarajat region of central Afghanistan. He did this because Afghanistan had no Buddhists, so idolatry would not be a problem. But in March 2001 the statues were destroyed by the Taliban of Mullah Omar following a decree stating: “all the statues around Afghanistan must be destroyed.”[121]

Yahya Massoud, brother of the anti-Taliban and resistance leader Ahmad Shah Massoud, recalls the following incident after the destruction of the Buddha statues at Bamyan:

"It was the spring of 2001. I was in Afghanistan's Panjshir Valley, together with my brother Ahmad Shah Massoud, the leader of the Afghan resistance against the Taliban, and Bismillah Khan, who currently serves as Afghanistan's interior minister. One of our commanders, Commandant Momin, wanted us to see 30 Taliban fighters who had been taken hostage after a gun battle. My brother agreed to meet them.

I remember that his first question concerned the centuries-old Buddha statues that were dynamited by the Taliban in March of that year, shortly before our encounter. Two Taliban combatants from Kandahar confidently responded that worshiping anything outside of Islam was unacceptable and that therefore these statues had to be destroyed. My brother looked at them and said, this time in Pashto, There are still many sun-worshippers in this country. Will you also try to get rid of the sun and drop darkness over the Earth?"[122]
Explanation of ideology

The author Ahmed Rashid suggests that the devastation and hardship of the Soviet invasion and the following period influenced Taliban ideology.\textsuperscript{[123]} The Taliban were often "barely literate," and did not include scholars learned in Islamic law and history. The refugee students, brought up in a totally male society, not only had no education in mathematics, science, history or geography, but also had no traditional skills of farming, herding, or handicraft-making, nor even knowledge of their tribal and clan lineages.\textsuperscript{[123]} In such an environment, war meant employment, peace meant unemployment. Dominating women simply affirmed manhood. For their leadership, rigid fundamentalism was a matter not only of principle, but of political survival. Taliban leaders "repeatedly told" Rashid that "if they gave women greater freedom or a chance to go to school, they would lose the support of their rank and file."\textsuperscript{[124]}

Criticisms

The Taliban were criticized for their strictness toward those who disobeyed their imposed rules. Many Muslims complained that most Taliban rules had no basis in the Qur'an or sharia. Mullah Omar's title as Amir al-Mu'minin was criticized on the grounds that he lacked scholarly learning, tribal pedigree, or connections to the Prophet's family. Sanction for the title traditionally required the support of all of the country's ulema, whereas only some 1,200 Pashtun Taliban-supporting Mullahs had declared Omar the Amir. "No Afghan had adopted the title since 1834, when King Dost Mohammed Khan assumed the title before he declared jihad against the Sikh kingdom in Peshawar. But Dost Mohammed was fighting foreigners, while Omar had declared jihad against other Afghans."\textsuperscript{[127]}

Another criticism was that the Taliban called their 20% tax on truckloads of opium "zakat", which is traditionally limited to 2.5% of the zakat-payers' disposable income (or wealth).\textsuperscript{[127]}

The Taliban have also been accused of being hypocritical, as intelligence picked up by Predator drones and other battlefield cameras is at odds with the notion that they are pious warriors of God. Thermal-imagery technology housed in a sniper rifle and ground-surveillance footage showed and recorded separate Taliban in southern Afghanistan committing bestiality.\textsuperscript{[128]}
**Governance**

**Overview**

Rashid described the Taliban government as "a secret society run by Kandaharis ... mysterious, secretive, and dictatorial."[129] They did not hold elections, as their spokesman explained:

The *Sharia* does not allow politics or political parties. That is why we give no salaries to officials or soldiers, just food, clothes, shoes, and weapons. We want to live a life like the Prophet lived 1400 years ago, and *jihad* is our right. We want to recreate the time of the Prophet, and we are only carrying out what the Afghan people have wanted for the past 14 years.[130]

They modeled their decision-making process on the Pashtun tribal council (*jirga*), together with what they believed to be the early Islamic model. Discussion was followed by a building of a consensus by the "believers".[131] Before capturing Kabul, there was talk of stepping aside once a government of "good Muslims" took power, and law and order were restored.

As the Taliban's power grew, decisions were made by Mullah Omar without consulting the *jirga* and without consulting other parts of the country. He visited the capital, Kabul, only twice while in power. Instead of an election, their leader's legitimacy came from an oath of allegiance ("Bay'ah"), in imitation of the Prophet and the first four Caliphs. On April 4, 1996, Mullah Omar had "the Cloak of the Prophet Mohammed" taken from its shrine for the first time in 60 years. Wrapping himself in the relic, he appeared on the roof of a building in the center of Kandahar while hundreds of Pashtun mullahs below shouted "Amir al-Mu'minin!" (Commander of the Faithful), in a pledge of support. Taliban spokesman Mullah Wakil explained:

Decisions are based on the advice of the Amir-ul Momineen. For us consultation is not necessary. We believe that this is in line with the *Sharia*. We abide by the Amir's view even if he alone takes this view. There will not be a head of state. Instead there will be an Amir al-Mu'minin. Mullah Omar will be the highest authority, and the government will not be able to implement any decision to which he does not agree. General elections are incompatible with *Sharia* and therefore we reject them.[132]

The Taliban were very reluctant to share power, and since their ranks were overwhelmingly Pashtun they ruled as overlords over the 60% of Afghans from other ethnic groups. In local government, such as Kabul city council[129] or Herat,[133] Taliban loyalists, not locals, dominated, even when the Pashto-speaking Taliban could not communicate with the roughly half of the population who spoke Dari or other non-Pashtun tongues.[133] Critics complained that this "lack of local representation in urban administration made the Taliban appear as an occupying force."[134]
Organization

Consistent with the governance of early Muslims was the absence of state institutions or "a methodology for command and control" that is standard today even among non-Westernized states. The Taliban did not issue press releases, policy statements, or hold regular press conferences. The outside world and most Afghans did not even know what their leaders looked like, since photography was banned. The "regular army" resembled a lashkar or traditional tribal militia force with only 25,000 men (of whom 11,000 were non-Afghans).

Cabinet ministers and deputies were mullahs with a "madrasah education." Several of them, such as the Minister of Health and Governor of the State bank, were primarily military commanders who left their administrative posts to fight when needed. Military reverses that trapped them behind lines or led to their deaths increased the chaos in the national administration. At the national level, "all senior Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara bureaucrats" were replaced "with Pashtuns, whether qualified or not." Consequently, the ministries "by and large ceased to function.

The Ministry of Finance had neither a budget nor "qualified economist or banker." Mullah Omar collected and dispersed cash without book-keeping.

Conscription

According to the testimony of Guantanamo captives before their Combatant Status Review Tribunals, the Taliban, in addition to conscripting men to serve as soldiers, also conscripted men to staff its civil service.

Economy

Ariana airlines

Ariana Afghan Airlines was a key node in Al Qaeda's infrastructure, which was to move money, personnel and materiel. According to the Los Angeles Times,

With the Taliban's blessing, Bin Laden effectively had hijacked Ariana, the national civilian airline of Afghanistan. For four years, according to former U.S. aides and exiled Afghan officials, Ariana's passenger and charter flights ferried Islamic militants, arms, cash and opium through the United Arab Emirates and Pakistan. Members of Bin Laden's Al Qaeda terrorist network were provided false Ariana identification that gave them free run of airports in the Middle East.
Opium

Opium poppies are a traditional crop in Afghanistan, and, with the war shattering other sectors of the economy, opium became its largest export.

"The Taliban have provided an Islamic sanction for farmers ... to grow even more opium, even though the Koran forbids Muslims from producing or imbibing intoxicants. Abdul Rashid, the head of the Taliban's anti-drugs control force in Kandahar, spelled out the nature of his unique job. He is authorized to impose a strict ban on the growing of hashish, "because it is consumed by Afghans and Muslims." But, Rashid told me without a hint of sarcasm, "Opium is permissible because it is consumed by kafirs in the West, and not by Muslims or Afghans."[138]

In 2000 Afghanistan's opium production accounted for 75% of the world's supply. On July 27, 2000, the Taliban issued a decree banning cultivation.[139] By February 2001, production had reportedly been reduced from 12600 acres (51 km²) to only 17 acres (7 ha).[140] Opium production was reportedly cut back by the Taliban not to prevent its use, but to increase its price, and thus increase the income of Afghan poppy farmers and tax revenue.[141]

In October 2009 an article, citing "American and Afghan officials", appeared in The New York Times stating that the Taliban derive important funding from the opium trade but other sources such as foreign donations provide more.[142]

Deforestation

The so-called "transportation mafia" operating out of Pakistan working with the Taliban "cut down millions of acres of timber in Afghanistan for the Pakistani market, denuding the countryside without attempting reforestation. They stripped rusting factories, ... even electricity and telephone poles for their steel and sold the scrap to steel mills in Lahore."[143]

Emerald mines

The Taliban took over emerald mines in Pakistan's Swat valley (not a tribal area), once the 'Switzerland of Pakistan', a popular tourist area for skiers. The government did not react to the move. The Taliban reached an agreement with the region's mining labor allowing the Taliban to keep one-third of the miners' output, while equally sharing costs. The Taliban does not take part in the mining operations.[144]

Business dealings

In 1997, the Taliban and Unocal negotiated arrangements for CentGas to build a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Pakistan.[145] Reportedly, a deal was struck but later collapsed,[146] rumored to be because of competing negotiations with Bridas, an Argentine company.[147]

International relations

During its time in power, the Taliban regime, or "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan", gained diplomatic recognition from only three states: the United Arab Emirates, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia, all of which provided substantial aid. The other nations including the United Nations recognized the government of the Islamic State of Afghanistan (parts of whom were part of the United Front (Northern Alliance) as the legitimate government of Afghanistan.
Pakistan

The "vast majority" of the Taliban's rank and file and most of the leadership, though not Mullah Omar, were Koranic students who had studied at madrasas set up for Afghan refugees, usually by JUI. Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman, JUI's leader, was a political ally of Benazir Bhutto. After Bhutto became prime minister, Rehman "had access to the government, the army and the ISI," whom he influenced to help the Taliban.148

Pakistan's ISI supported the previously unknown Kandahari student movement,149 the Taliban, as the group conquered Afghanistan in the 1990s.150

From 1994 onwards Pakistan has been the force behind the Taliban. Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf – then as Chief of Army Staff – was responsible for sending thousands of Pakistanis to fight alongside the Taliban and Bin Laden against the forces of Massoud.124444515 In total there were believed to be 28,000 Pakistanis nationals fighting inside Afghanistan.1520,000 were regular Pakistani soldiers either from the Frontier Corps or army and an estimated 8,000 were militants recruited in madrassas filling regular Taliban ranks.13 The estimated 25,000 Taliban regular force thus comprised more than 8,000 Pakistani nationals.11346 A 1998 document by the U.S. State Department confirms that "20–40 percent of [regular] Taliban soldiers are Pakistani."12 The document further states that the parents of those Pakistani nationals "know nothing regarding their child's military involvement with the Taliban until their bodies are brought back to Pakistan."12 Further 3,000 fighters of the regular Taliban army were Arab and Central Asian militants.13 Of roughly 45,000 Pakistani, Taliban and Al Qaeda soldiers fighting against the forces of Massoud only 14,000 were Afghan.1315

Human Rights Watch also writes, "Pakistani aircraft assisted with troop rotations of Taliban forces during combat operations in late 2000 and ... senior members of Pakistan's intelligence agency and army were involved in planning military operations."151 Pakistan provided military equipment, recruiting assistance, training, and tactical advice.152 Officially Pakistan denied supporting the Taliban militarily.

Author Ahmed Rashid claims that the Taliban had "unprecedented access" among Pakistan's lobbies and interest groups. He also writes that they at times were able to "play off one lobby against another and extend their influence in Pakistan even further".153 By 1998–99, Taliban-style groups in Pakistan's Pashtun belt, and to an extent in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, "were banning TV and videos ... and forcing people, particularly women, to adapt to the Taliban dress code and way of life."154

After the attacks of September 11, 2001, and the U.S. operation in Afghanistan the Afghan Taliban leadership has largely fled to Pakistan where they regrouped and created several shuras to coordinate their insurgency in Afghanistan. On February 8, 2009, U.S. commander of operations in Afghanistan General Stanley McChrystal and other officials said that the Taliban leadership was in Quetta, Pakistan, though the Pakistani government, an official U.S. ally, denied this.16

From 2010, a report by a leading British institution claimed that Pakistan's intelligence service still today has a strong link with the Taliban in Afghanistan. Published by the London School of Economics, the report said that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI) has an "official policy" of support for the Taliban. It said the ISI provides funding and training for the Taliban, and that the agency has representatives on the so-called Quetta Shura, the Taliban's leadership council, which is believed to meet in Pakistan. The report, based on interviews with Taliban commanders in Afghanistan, was written by Matt Waldman, a fellow at Harvard University.155

"Pakistan appears to be playing a double-game of astonishing magnitude," the report said. The report also linked high-level members of the Pakistani government with the Taliban. It said Asif Ali Zardari, the Pakistani president, met with senior Taliban prisoners in 2010 and promised to release them. Zardari reportedly told the detainees they were only arrested because of American pressure. "The Pakistan government's apparent duplicity – and awareness of it among the American public and political establishment – could have enormous geopolitical implications," Waldman said. "Without a change in Pakistani behaviour it will be difficult if not impossible for international forces and the Afghan government to make progress against the insurgency." Afghan officials have long been suspicious of the ISI's role. Amrullah Saleh, the former director of Afghanistan's intelligence service, told Reuters that the ISI was
"part of a landscape of destruction in this country".\[156\]

**Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (Pakistani Taliban)**

Before the creation of the Tehrik-i-Taliban(Pakistan), some of their leaders and fighters were part of the 8,000 Pakistani militants fighting in the War in Afghanistan (1996-2001) and the War in Afghanistan (2001-present) against the United Islamic Front and NATO forces.\[13\] Most of them hail from the Pakistani side of the Af-Pak border regions. After the fall of the Afghan Taliban in late 2001 most Pakistani militants including members of today's TTP fled home to Pakistan.

After the creation of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan in 2007, headed by Baitullah Mehsud,\[157\] its members have officially defined goals to establish their rule over Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas. They engage the Pakistani army in heavy combat operations. Some intelligence analysts believe that the TTP's attacks on the Pakistani government, police and army strained the TTP's relations with the Afghan Taliban.\[158\] \[159\]

The Afghan Taliban and the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan differ greatly in their history, leadership and goals although they share a common interpretation of Islam and are both predominantly Pashtun.\[158\] The Afghan Taliban have no affiliation with the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan and routinely deny any connection to the TTP. *The New York Times* quoted a spokesman for the Afghan Taliban stating that:

"We don't like to be involved with them, as we have rejected all affiliation with Pakistani Taliban fighters ... We have sympathy for them as Muslims, but beside that, there is nothing else between us."\[160\]

The Afghan Taliban have always relied on support by the Pakistani army in the past and are still supported by them today in their campaign to control Afghanistan.\[12\] \[14\] Regular Pakistani army troops fought alongside the Afghan Taliban in the War in Afghanistan (1996-2001).\[15\] Major leaders of the Afghan Taliban including Mullah Omar, Jalaluddin Haqqani and Siraj Haqqani are believed to enjoy safe haven in Pakistan.\[14\] In 2006 Jalaluddin Haqqani was called a 'Pakistani asset' by a senior official of Inter-Services Intelligence.\[14\] Pakistan regards the Haqqani's as an important force for protecting its interests in Afghanistan and therefore have been unwilling to move against them.\[14\]

Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Omar asked the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan in late 2008 and early 2009 to stop attacks inside Pakistan, to change their focus as an organization and to fight the Afghan National Army and ISAF forces in Afghanistan instead.\[160\] In late December 2008 and early January 2009 he sent a delegation, led by former Guantanamo Bay detainee Mullah Abdullah Zakir, to persuade leading members of the TTP to put aside differences with Pakistan.\[160\]

Some regional experts state the common name "Taliban" may be more misleading than illuminating.\[158\] Gilles Dorronsoro, a scholar of South Asia currently at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington says:

"The fact that they have the same name causes all kinds of confusion."\[158\]

As the Pakistani Army began offensives against the Pakistani Taliban, many unfamiliar with the region thought incorrectly that the assault was against the Afghan Taliban of Mullah Omar which was not the case.\[158\]

The Pakistani Taliban was put under sanctions by U.N. Security Council for terrorists attacks in Pakistan and 2010 Times Square car bombing attempt.\[159\]

**Malakand Taliban**

Malakand Taliban is militant outfit led by Sufi Muhammad and his son in law Molvi Fazalullah.\[161\] Sufi Muhammad is in government custody, however, Molvi Fazalullah is believed to be in Afghanistan.\[161\] In the last week of May 2011, eight security personnel and civilians fell victim to four hundred armed Taliban who attacked Shaltalo check post in Dir, a frontier District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, located few kilometers away from Afghan border.\[161\] Although, they have been linked with Waziristan-based Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), however, the
connection between these two groups is of symbolic nature.[161]

**Al Qaeda**

In 1996, bin Laden moved to Afghanistan from Sudan. He came without invitation, and sometimes irritated Mullah Omar with his declaration of war and fatwas against citizens of third-party countries,[162] but relations between the two groups improved over time, to the point that Mullah Omar rebuffed his group's patron Saudi Arabia, insulting Saudi minister Prince Turki while reneging on an earlier promise to turn bin Laden over to the Saudis.[163]

Bin Laden was able to forge an alliance between the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. The Al Qaeda-trained 055 Brigade integrated with the Taliban army between 1997 and 2001. Several hundred Arab Afghan fighters sent by bin Laden assisted the Taliban in the Mazar-e-Sharif slaughter.[164] The so-called Brigade 055 was also responsible for massacres against civilians in other parts of Afghanistan.[13] From 1996 to 2001 the organization of Osama Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri had become a virtual state within the Taliban state.

Taliban-Al-Qaeda connections were also strengthened by the reported marriage of one of bin Laden's sons to Omar's daughter. While in Afghanistan, bin Laden may have helped finance the Taliban.[165][166]

After the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings in Africa, bin Laden and several Al-Qaeda members were indicted in U.S. criminal court.[167] The Taliban rejected extradition requests by the U.S., variously claiming that bin Laden had "gone missing",[168] or that Washington "cannot provide any evidence or any proof" that bin Laden is involved in terrorist activities and that "without any evidence, bin Laden is a man without sin... he is a free man."[167][169]

Evidence against bin Laden included courtroom testimony and satellite phone records.[170][171] Bin Laden in turn, praised the Taliban as the "only Islamic government" in existence, and lauded Mullah Omar for his destruction of idols such as the Buddhas of Bamyan.[172]

At the end of 2008, the Taliban was in talks to sever all ties with Al-Qaeda.[173]

In 2011, Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn at New York University's Center on International Cooperation proclaimed that the two groups did not get along at times before the September 11 attacks, and they have continued to spar since. Contrary to the established perception that they are of one mind, the Taliban and al-Qaeda are not in lockstep. In fact, the Taliban in Afghanistan could be persuaded to renounce the infamous terrorist group led by Osama bin Laden.[174]

**Iran**

Iran has historically been an enemy of the Taliban. In early August 1998, after attacking the city of Mazar, Taliban forces killed several thousand civilians and 10 Iranian diplomats and intelligence officers in the Iranian consulate. Alleged radio intercepts indicate Mullah Omar personally approved the killings.[175] In the following crisis between Iran and the Taliban, the Iranian government amassed up to 200,000 regular troops on the Afghan-Iranian border.[176] War was eventually averted.

Many U.S. senior military officials such as Robert Gates,[177] Stanley McChrystal,[178] David Petraeus[179] and others believe that Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps nowadays is involved in helping the Taliban to a certain extent. Reports in which NATO states accused Iran of supplying and training some Taliban insurgents started coming forward since 2004/2005.

"We did interdict a shipment, without question the Revolutionary Guard's core Quds Force, through a known Taliban facilitator. Three of the individuals were killed... 48 122 millimetre rockets were intercepted with their various components... Iranians certainly view as making life more difficult for us if Afghanistan is unstable. We don't have that kind of relationship with the Iranians. That's why I am particularly troubled by the interception of weapons coming from Iran. But we know that it's more than weapons; it's money; it's also according to some reports, training at Iranian camps as well."[180]

—General David Petraeus, Commander of US-NATO forces in Afghanistan, March 16, 2011
**United States**

Foreign powers, including the United States, briefly supported the Taliban, hoping it would restore order in the war-ravaged country. For example, it made no comment when the Taliban captured Herat in 1995, and expelled thousands of girls from schools. These hopes faded as the Taliban began killing unarmed civilians, targeting ethnic groups (primarily Hazaras), and restricting the rights of women. In late 1997, American Secretary of State Madeleine Albright began to distance the U.S. from the Taliban. The next year, the American-based oil company Unocal withdrew from negotiations on pipeline construction from Central Asia.

One day before the capture of Mazar, bin Laden affiliates bombed two U.S. embassies in Africa, killing 224 and wounding 4,500, mostly Africans. The U.S. responded by launching cruise missiles on suspected terrorist camps in Afghanistan, killing over 20 though failing to kill bin Laden or even many Al-Qaeda. Mullah Omar condemned the missile attack and American President Bill Clinton. Saudi Arabia expelled the Taliban envoy in protest over the refusal to turn over bin Laden, and after Mullah Omar allegedly insulted the Saudi royal family. In mid-October the U.N. Security Council voted unanimously to ban commercial aircraft flights to and from Afghanistan, and freeze its bank accounts worldwide.

Adjusting its counterinsurgency strategy, in October 2009, the U.S announced plans to pay Taliban fighters to switch sides.

On November 26, 2009, in an interview with CNN's Christiane Amanpour, President Hamid Karzai said there is an "urgent need" for negotiations with the Taliban, and made it clear that the Obama administration had opposed such talks. There was no formal American response. [187] [188]

In early December 2009, the Taliban offered to give the U.S. "legal guarantees" that they would not allow Afghanistan to be used for attacks on other countries. There was no formal American response.

On December 6, U.S officials indicated that they have not ruled out talks with the Taliban. Several days later it was reported that Gates saw potential for reconciliation with the Taliban, but not with Al-Qaeda. Furthermore, he said that reconciliation would politically end the insurgency and the war. But he said reconciliation must be on the Afghan government's terms, and that the Taliban must be subject to the sovereignty of the government.

In 2010, General McChrystal said his troop surge could lead to a negotiated peace with the Taliban.

**Allegations of connection to CIA** There have been many claims that the CIA directly supported the Taliban or Al-Qaeda. In the early 1980s, the CIA and the ISI (Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency) provided arms and money, and the ISI helped gather radical Muslims from around the world to fight against the Soviet invaders. Osama Bin Laden was one of the key players in organizing training camps for the foreign Muslim volunteers. "By 1987, 65,000 tons of U.S.-made weapons and ammunition a year were entering the war."

**United Kingdom**

After 9/11, the United Kingdom froze the Taliban's assets in the U.K., nearly $200 million by early October 2001. The U.K. also supported the U.S. decision to remove the Taliban, both politically and militarily.

The UN agreed that NATO would act on its behalf, focusing on counter-terrorist operations in Afghanistan after the Taliban had been "defeated". The United Kingdom took operational responsibility for Helmand Province, a major poppy-growing province in southern Afghanistan, deploying troops there in the summer of 2006, and encountered resistance by re-formed Taliban forces entering Afghanistan from Pakistan. The Taliban turned towards the use of improvised explosive devices.

In 2008, the U.K. announced plans to pay Taliban fighters to switch sides or lay down arms; later, in 2009 the United Kingdom government backed talks with the Taliban.
India

India is one of the Taliban's most outspoken critics. India was concerned about growing Islamic militancy in its neighborhood, and refused to recognize the Taliban regime. [198] Ahmad Shah Massoud also had close ties to India. [199]

In December 1999, Indian Airlines Flight 814 en route from Kathmandu to Delhi was hijacked and taken to Kandahar. The Taliban moved its militias near the hijacked aircraft, supposedly to prevent Indian special forces from storming the aircraft, and stalled the negotiations between India and the hijackers for days. The New York Times later reported that there were credible links between the hijackers and the Taliban. [200] As a part of the deal to free the plane, India released three militants. The Taliban gave a safe passage to the hijackers and the released militants. [201]

Following the hijacking, India drastically increased its efforts to help Massoud, providing an arms depot in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. [202] India also provided a wide range of high-altitude warfare equipment, helicopter technicians, medical services, and tactical advice. [203] According to one report, Indian military support to anti-Taliban forces totaled US$70 million, including five Mi-17 helicopters, and US$8 million worth of high-altitude equipment in 2001. [204] India extensively supported the new administration in Afghanistan, [205] leading several reconstruction projects [206] and by 2001 had emerged as the country's largest regional donor. [207]

In the wake of recent terrorist attacks in India, there have been growing concerns about fundamentalist organisations such as the Taliban seeking to expand their activities into India. During the 2011 ICC Cricket World Cup which was co-hosted in India, Pakistani Interior Minister Rehman Malik and Interpol chief Ronald Noble revealed that a terrorist bid to disrupt the tournament had been foiled; following a conference with Noble, Malik said that the Taliban had begun to base their activities in India with reports from neighboring countries exposing their activities in the country and a Sri Lankan terrorist planning to target cricketers was arrested in Colombo. [208] [209] [210] Kashmir-based militant groups thought to have ties with the Taliban have historically been involved in the Jammu and Kashmir insurgency in Indian-administered Kashmir. [211] In 2009, the Times of India called for India to reassess its Taliban threat. [212]

United Nations and NGOs

A major issue during the Taliban's reign was its relations with the United Nations (UN) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Twenty years of continuous warfare had devastated Afghanistan's infrastructure and economy. There was no running water, little electricity, few telephones, functioning roads or regular energy supplies. Basic necessities like water, food, housing and others were in desperately short supply. In addition, the clan and family structure that provided Afghans with a social/economic safety net was also badly damaged. [116] [213] Afghanistan's infant mortality was the highest in the world. A full quarter of all children died before they reached their fifth birthday, a rate several times higher than most other developing countries. [214]

International charitable and/or development organisations (NGOs) were extremely important to the supply of food, employment, reconstruction, and other services. With one million plus deaths during the years of war, the number of families headed by widows had reached 98,000 by 1996. [215] Thus Taliban restrictions on women were sometime a matter not only of human rights, but of life and death. In Kabul, where vast portions of the city had been devastated from rocket attacks, more than half of its 1.2 million people benefited in some way from NGO activities, even for water to drink. [216] The civil war and its never-ending refugee stream continued throughout the Taliban's reign. The Mazar, Herat, and Shomali valley offensives displaced more than three-quarters of a million civilians, using "scorched earth" tactics to prevent them from supplying the enemy with aid. [217]

Despite the aid, the Taliban's attitude toward the UN and NGOs was often one of suspicion, in place of gratitude or even tolerance. The UN operates on the basis of international law, not Sharia, and the UN did not recognize the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan. Additionally, most foreign donors and aid workers, were non-Muslims. As the Taliban's Attorney General Maulvi Jalil-ullah Maulvizada put it:
Let us state what sort of education the UN wants. This is a big infidel policy which gives such obscene freedom to women which would lead to adultery and herald the destruction of Islam. In any Islamic country where adultery becomes common, that country is destroyed and enters the domination of the infidels because their men become like women and women cannot defend themselves. Anyone who talks to us should do so within Islam’s framework. The Holy Koran cannot adjust itself to other people’s requirements, people should adjust themselves to the requirements of the Holy Koran.\[218]\n
Taliban decision-makers, particularly Mullah Omar, seldom if ever talked directly to non-Muslim foreigners, so aid providers had to deal with intermediaries whose approvals and agreements were often reversed.\[134]\n
Around September 1997 the heads of three UN agencies in Kandahar were expelled from the country after protesting when a female attorney for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees was forced to talk from behind a curtain so her face would not be visible.\[219]\n
When the UN increased the number of Muslim women staff to satisfy Taliban demands, the Taliban then required all female Muslim UN staff traveling to Afghanistan to be chaperoned by a mahram or a blood relative.\[220]\n
In July 1998, the Taliban closed "all NGO offices" by force after those organizations refused to move to a bombed-out former Polytechnic College as ordered.\[221]\n
One month later the UN offices were also shut down.\[222]\n
As food prices rose and conditions deteriorated, Planning Minister Qari Din Mohammed explained the Taliban's indifference to the loss of humanitarian aid:

We Muslims believe God the Almighty will feed everybody one way or another. If the foreign NGOs leave then it is their decision. We have not expelled them.\[223]\n
In 2009 a top U.N official called for talks with Taliban leaders.\[224]\n
In 2010 the U.N lifted sanctions on the Taliban\[225]\n
and requested that Taliban leaders and others be removed from terrorism watch lists.\[226]\n
In 2010 the U.S. and Europe announced support for President Karzai’s latest attempt to negotiate peace with the Taliban.\[227]\n
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Notes


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[5] ISAF has participating forces from 39 countries, including all 26 NATO members. See [(Cite document | publisher = NATO | url = http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/isaf_placemat.pdf | format = PDF | title = ISAF Troop Contribution Placement | date = 2007-12-05].


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[117] Raway.us (http://www.raway.us/movies/beating.mp4)


164] Rashid 2000, p. 139.
166] However, Lawrence Wright claims bin Laden was almost completely broke at this time, cut off from his family income and fleeced by the Sudanese.Wright 2006, pp. 222–223.
169] BBC article stating that bin Laden in “a man without sin” (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/217947.stm).
174] AllGov (http://www.allgov.com/US_and_the_World/ViewNews/Surprise_Taliban_and_Al-Qaeda_are_Worlds_Apart_110209).
185] Rashid 2000, p. 78.
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[201] India reaches out to Afghanistan (http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/GH30Df01.html).
[202] India's Afghan policy (http://mea.gov.in/opinion/2003/03/07601.htm).


[217] Rashid 2000, pp. 64, 78.


[221] Aid agencies pull out of Kabul (http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/317/7155/369/a) The building had neither electricity or running water.


External links

- Taliban in Oxford Islamic Studies Online (http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e2325?_hi=14&_pos=4).
- Taliban's website (English) (http://www.alemarah.info/english/) How Do I Get in Touch With a Terrorist (http://www.slate.com/id/2231637) Slate. October 2009
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• Taliban (http://english.aljazeera.net/category/organisation/taliban) collected news and commentary at *Al Jazeera English*

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