

Afghanistan's Crucial Shift: From Semi - Liberal Democracy to Islamic Emirate and Its Implications

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ABSTRACT

This article examines Afghanistan's profound political shift from a Western-backed semi liberal democracy to the reestablishment of the Islamic Emirate under the Taliban. It explores the historical context of regime changes, highlighting ideological conflicts between religious conservatism and secular liberalism since the 20th century. The study analyzes the implications of this transition for Afghanistan's socio-political landscape and its international relations, focusing on the Taliban's implementation of policies that challenge both national and international norms. Through fieldwork, including interviews with Taliban members, scholars, and ordinary citizens, the author provides insights into the domestic policies of the Islamic Emirate and the responses from various Afghan demographics. The article concludes with reflections on the future governance of Afghanistan and the challenges posed by a young, urbanized population that has been shaped by two decades of liberal democracy.

Keywords- political Shift, Liberal Democracy, Islamic Emirate, regime change, Ideological Conflict.

I. INTRODUCTION

The causes of each regime change and political transition in Afghanistan since the 20th century stem from ideological differences between religious conservatism and secular liberalism and modernism. Each regime change in Afghanistan has also been linked to great power competition, influencing regional and neighboring countries. The two coups in the 1970s were connected to Cold War dynamics. The Soviet Union played a significant role in the coups and political transformations in Afghanistan during that period. In 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, promoting socialist and communist ideologies. This invasion led to the overthrow of President Hafizullah Amin and the installation of Babrak Karmal as chairman of the People's Democratic Socialist Republic of Afghanistan. However, the USSR encountered significant resistance from religious

conservatives, which ultimately compelled it to adapt its policies toward Afghanistan.

When the Soviet Union shifted its policy on Afghanistan and withdrew its troops based on the face-saving agreement of the 1988 Geneva Accord, the impact was significant, not only for Afghanistan but for the entire region. This withdrawal contributed to the separation of Eastern European countries from Soviet influence and ultimately led to the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The Soviet retreat in Afghanistan inspired liberation efforts in Eastern Europe. Meanwhile, the Arab world faced challenges from transnational jihadist movements. Although this period marked the decline of socialist governing systems globally, it also sparked new movements for change and reform.

However, the collapse of the Soviet-installed state in Afghanistan resulted in prolonged civil wars, infrastructure destruction, and chaos, which contributed

to the emergence of global jihadist movements. This turmoil culminated in the tragic events of 9/11, which ultimately paved the way for the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001.

In the second decade of the 21st century, thirty years after the Soviets left Afghanistan, the U.S. followed a similar path, signing a face-saving troop exit agreement on February 29, 2020. As a result, not only did "liberal democracy" fail in Afghanistan and the Afghan republic collapse, but the global liberal order also suffered a significant setback. The Taliban 2.0 took power, introducing new laws and policies based on their own ideology and interpretation of Islamic law. Over the past three and a half years of the Islamic Emirate's rule in Afghanistan, the Taliban have implemented policies that challenge international norms and the status quo, leading to disappointment among a substantial portion of urban residents of Afghanistan as well.

The rapid changes and power transitions in Afghanistan have significant implications for the country, the region, and the world. The immediate consequence was the collapse of the Western-backed Afghan republic and the replacement of its "liberal democracy" with the reestablishment of the "Islamic Emirate." This transition has greatly affected Afghanistan's socio-political landscape and its relations with the rest of the world. There are two narratives surrounding this transition. The Taliban, now the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, exercises strict control over the country, while liberal and secular Afghans mourn the loss of their "democratic government", which has resulted in the loss of their freedoms, jobs, and even their homeland. Many Afghans, particularly those living in urban areas, also express frustration with certain policies of the Emirate, such as the ban on girls' education and the manipulation of power. Meanwhile, the UN and other international organizations continue to publish concerning reports regarding women's rights, participation in the job market, and freedom of speech.

In this article, the author seeks to answer how an unrecognized, heavily sanctioned pariah state has governed Afghanistan for the past three and a half years, and why the Taliban-led Islamic Emirate introduces laws and policies that elicit both national and international reactions. The article aims to explore the transition policies of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) over the last three years.

The author actively engages in fieldwork to collect data from the daily lives of people in Afghanistan, conducting interviews with Taliban members, scholars, and ordinary citizens. This research includes a comprehensive overview of national and international media, UN and stakeholder statements, social media platforms (particularly X (formerly Twitter), and official

statements from the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) as well as their leadership decrees. To gain a deeper understanding of the situation, the author conducts direct interviews with key stakeholders and observes conditions on the ground. The analysis encompasses up to 30 decrees issued by the IEA's supreme leader, along with his remarks to scholars, to assess the evolving relationship between the international community and the IEA. Additionally, the author gathers data from UN statements and UNSC resolutions to provide a well-rounded perspective on the political landscape.

II. THE FIRST PHASE OF TRANSITION FROM REPUBLIC TO EMIRATE

Afghanistan has long been a crucial region for great powers, serving as a vital link between Europe and Asia for thousands of years. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Afghanistan and its surrounding regions became an imperialist chessboard for these powers.¹ In the twenty-first century, Afghanistan emerged as the center of the "War on Terror." Following the events of September 11, 2001, the U.S.-led coalition launched "Operation Enduring Freedom" to dismantle the Taliban-run Islamic Emirate and replaced it with a liberal democracy system. In the beginning of the 21st century Afghanistan became the focal point in experimental of imposing liberal democracy and the global war against "terrorism".

A significant portion of the anti-Taliban political elite supports the transition of Afghan society toward liberalization. This is not the first time a liberal political system has been introduced in Afghanistan. Prior to the Soviet occupation, Amir Habibullah Khan and his son King Amanullah Khan (1872–2028) pursued a path of liberalization and modernization, and implemented a modern governance system. In the 1960s, King Zahir Shah also introduced a liberal political system to pave the way for democracy. Political opening began after adoption of new constitution in 1963 that transferred Afghanistan from a semi – absolute into a more constitutional monarchy.² However, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan PDPA's coup, their repression and subsequently the Soviet invasion, followed by the civil war and the emergence of the Taliban movements in 1990s, marked the end of the first period of democracy in Afghanistan.

However, in 2001, following the collapse of the Taliban-run Islamic Emirate, a Western-imposed liberal democracy was promoted. Despite the efforts of the U.S.-led coalition, achieving a secure, stable, and peaceful Afghanistan aligned with Western-style democracy has

¹ Iram Khalid, "Afghanistan: Quest for Peace and Stability (Historical Context)," *J. Pol. Stud.* 18 (2011): 1.

² Jelena Bjelica, "Between Reform and Repression: The 60th anniversary of the PDPA," *Afghanistan Analysts Network - English*.

January 2, 2025, <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/en/reports/context-culture/between-reform-and-repression-the-60th-anniversary-of-the-pdpa/>.

remained elusive. Furthermore, although the U.S. and the Afghan government signed a Bilateral Security Agreement with the President Ashraf Ghani administration to maintain 9,800 American forces in Afghanistan for the training of Afghan security forces, to safeguard the Western imposed liberalism.³ The U.S. plan shifted when Donald Trump was elected president. He negotiated with the Taliban and signed a withdrawal agreement that allowed for a face-saving exit for the U.S., ultimately leading to the collapse of the Afghan republic on August 15, 2021. Unlike the Geneva Accords on Afghanistan in April 1988, the Doha agreement paved the way for the Taliban to boost their moral and ultimately gain the full power in Afghanistan after the U.S. withdrawal.⁴

On August 15, 2021, the Taliban unintentionally entered Kabul without firing a bullet. According to the Taliban's spokesman, the original plan was that the Taliban would not enter Kabul until the end of August 2021, when all foreign forces complete their evacuation plan. It was expected that the Afghan Republic would deal with security until the withdrawal of the last U.S. soldier; subsequently, there would be an official transition. The secret talks between the Taliban representatives, the U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Peace, and officials of the Afghan Republic were going on. According to Anas Haqqani, the Taliban representative interviewed with TOLO Television, the Taliban accepted 10 members of the previous Afghan government as members of the future government's cabinet.⁵

It was likely that the Taliban would form an inclusive government because, when the author talked to H.E. Mujib Rahman Karimi, the Minister of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MMRD) of the defunct Afghan Republic, he said the reason he didn't flee Afghanistan was that a group of the Taliban approached him, assured him of his security, and then told him that the Taliban needed him, so the Taliban recommended that he stay in Afghanistan.⁶ It means that since August 15, 2021, there has been the expectation of a negotiated solution and power sharing.

The negotiated political solution was beneficial for the future of Afghanistan as well. Because the first rationale behind it was to avoid any direct confrontation between the Taliban and the U.S. soldiers and to prevent the possibility of clashing. Secondly, it helped to rescue Afghanistan from a power vacuum, chaos, and looting, and it helped to give the new government a sort of international legitimacy. Thirdly, the middle class of the Afghan people, along with professionals, might stay in

Afghanistan. It is likely that a lot of experts will not flee Afghanistan.

However, this plan failed, and the negotiated solution collapsed because the former Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, along with the Defense and Interior Ministers, and other high-ranking members of the Afghan republic, including the chief of Kabul police, fled the country. Thus, former President Hamid Karzai and some other politicians who resided in Kabul invited the Taliban to enter Kabul and fill the power vacuum. Thus, on August 15, 2021, the Taliban unwantedly entered Kabul and secured the Presidential Palace and all governmental ministries. From August 15 to September 7, 2021, Afghanistan was in the first phase of transition. This period was harsh for the Taliban to manage the security situation, because the threat of the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) still exist. They already killed 170 civilians and 13 US soldiers as Afghans were trying flee Afghanistan.⁷ It sent shockwaves to the rest of the world. Despite the existence of the threat of (ISKP), the first phase of transition was still peaceful and smooth. The author was in Kabul and observed the situation closely. Except for the banks' closure, all other facilities were provided to ordinary citizens: phones, internet, and electricity were well functioning. In fact, the quality of electricity turned out to be better than during the defunct Afghan Republic, and security has improved. The Taliban were patrolling the streets of Kabul to hunt robbers and looters. The high, middle, and low members of the previous Afghan government, including military personnel, had already been declared forgiven. The first phase of the government's transition in Afghanistan was not as bad as it was covered or portrayed outside Afghanistan.

The international image of transition that the author has followed in the international media is totally different from what have been actually happening on the ground. International media have covered the chaotic evacuation of thousands of people gathered near Kabul airport, creating a messy scene of evacuation similar to the image of the helicopter leaving the American embassy in Saigon with a long line queued up for an escape. There is no doubt that some people may fear the repercussions of the Taliban, but a large number of others who had already intended to migrate to the West considered it the best opportunity to leave a third-world country such as Afghanistan and reside in the West.⁸

Those who argued that the people left Afghanistan due to the onslaught of the Taliban weren't correct because, by August 16, 2021, the Taliban were in control of Kabul. If the Taliban wanted to harm anyone.

³ Aneek Chatterjee, "Will Democracy Survive? Afghanistan and the International Community Post-2014," *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* 38, no. 4 (2015): 23–43.

⁴ William Maley and Ahmad Shuja Jamal, "Diplomacy of Disaster: The Afghanistan 'Peace Process' and the Taliban Occupation of Kabul," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 17, no. 1 (2022): 32–63.

⁵ Anas Haqqani, Special TOLONews Interview With Anas Haqqani, August 15, 2022, <https://tolonews.com/tawde-khabare-179416>.

⁶ Mujib Rahman Karimi, Collapse of Afghan Republic, September 2021.

⁷ Nadine Yousif, "Taliban Kill IS Leader behind Kabul Airport Bombing," April 25, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-65382277>.

⁸ Aya H Mohamed, "Understanding the Afghan Diaspora: Exploring the Factors Driving Migration and the Impact of Migration Policies on Recent Afghan Evacuees Resettling in the United States," 2023.

They were able to easily hunt them down or at least prevent them from leaving the Kabul airport; rather, the Taliban tried to convince some to stay and helped those who wanted to leave. The author was in Kabul and saw the amnesty of the Taliban. It was unbelievable; it was the first time in Afghanistan that an insurgent group, after 20 years of fighting, has forgiven all their enemies. In rare cases, according to United Nations Assistant Mission in Afghanistan some members of the defunct Afghan government extrajudicially killed, arrested and detained.⁹ It is highly likely that they weren't killed by the Taliban as retribution. They might have personal animosity in their community.

During the first phase of the transition, no one knew about the future of the Taliban 2.0 political system. During the first phase of the government, almost nothing changed; private TV channels and public institutes normally carried on with their jobs. There weren't any restrictions or new kinds of laws or regulations imposed. The Taliban members were discouraged from treating people badly. Even the national flag was still flying on some government buildings, including the Presidential Palace. It was unclear to the people what the political structure would be like. Whether it would be a republican system, an emirate, or a mixture of both whether there could be elections, whether there would be a president and parliament, or not, the Taliban never proclaimed any detailed information regarding the model, type, and structure of their future favorable "Afghan Islamic government" as mentioned in Doha Agreement¹⁰ was a vague term can be interpreted differently. As the Taliban's ideology in the international media seemed closer to and in favor of the Muslim Brotherhood ideology,¹¹ some expected that the Taliban might adopt some values of philosophical liberalism such as election, women's equal rights, etc...

The former Afghan President Hamid Karzai, the former Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, and some other high-ranking members of the defunct Afghan republic haven't fled Afghanistan. Thus, there was speculation that the Taliban members plus former high-ranking members of the defunct republic would form an inclusive unity government because international legitimacy was and still is a big challenge for the Taliban 2.0. Adhering to some international obligations and international norms could help them in that regard, but

later it was proven that the Taliban only seek legitimacy and recognition based on their territorial dominance rather than by upholding the norms and standards of the international community. Markus Potzel, in his briefing to the UN Security Council, stated this aspect of the Taliban as well.

The first phase of the transition was problematic, but by the end of August 2021, when Major General Chris Donahue, the last American soldier, boarded the final US military flight out of Kabul, the Taliban felt relaxed. Subsequently, America's longest war against the Taliban in Afghanistan also came to an end. Thereafter, the debates among the Taliban over the establishment of a new acting government started.

The 2513 (2020) UN Security Council Resolution had already revealed that UNSC members do not support "the restoration of the Islamic Emirate" in Afghanistan.¹² Meanwhile, the regional and neighboring countries, which always support ethnic factionalism in Afghan politics, had pressured the Taliban 2.0 to include different ethnic groups inside the new political system.¹³ Thus, there was a hope that, for the sake of international acceptability and in order to win more friends in the region, the Taliban might accept some level of outside pressure, compromise, and restraint. However, neither the Taliban restrain nor international community put a positive step forward. The International Community turned blind eyes to the positive aspects of Taliban 0.2 or Islamic Emirate as well; they turned back on Afghanistan. The World Bank immediately cut its funding for healthcare in the midst of COVID-19 because Afghanistan was in urgent need of the fund.¹⁴ The United States slammed sanctions on Afghanistan and seized \$9.5 billion worth of Afghanistan's central bank assets.¹⁵ All Western embassies have closed their diplomatic missions in Afghanistan and have encouraged the middle-level, educated segments of Afghans to evacuate to the West. It affected the economy of Afghanistan.

III. THE SECOND PHASE OF TRANSITION

On the second phase of transition, despite all odds, on September 7, 2021, the Taliban reinstated the Islamic Emirate as a political and legal system in the country and ended the post-2001 Western-imposed two-

⁹ UNAMA, "Impunity Prevails for Human Rights Violations against Former Government Officials and Armed Force Members," August 22, 2023, <https://unama.unmissions.org/impunity-prevails-human-rights-violations-against-former-government-officials-and-armed-force>.

¹⁰ Muhammad Khurshid Khan, "Afghanistan at the Cross-Roads after Doha Agreement," *CISS Insight Journal* 8, no. 2 (2020): P95-115.

¹¹ Jelena Bjelica, "Birds of a Feather, in Ideology: What Is the Relationship between the Islamic Emirate and Hamas?," *Afghanistan Analysts Network - English*, December 23, 2024, <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/en/reports/regional-relations/birds-of-a-feather-in-ideology-what-is-the-relationship-between-the-islamic-emirate-and-hamas/>.

¹² Carla Mavrodin, "S-Security Council-Resolution 2513 (2020)," 2020.

¹³ Kabir Taneja, "Chasing an 'Inclusive Government' in Taliban's Afghanistan," *orfonline.org*, July 14, 2023, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/chasing-an-inclusive-government-in-talibans-afghanistan>.

¹⁴ Apoorva Mandavilli, "Health Care in Afghanistan Is Crumbling, Aid Groups Warn - The New York Times," September 12, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/12/health/afghanistan-health-taliban.html>.

¹⁵ Saleha Mohsin, "US Freezes Afghan Central Bank's Assets of \$9.5bn," *Al Jazeera*, August 18, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/8/18/us-freezes-afghan-central-banks-assets-of-9-5bn>.

decade-old political and legal secular liberal order. Unlike democracy in the Emirate political system, sovereignty does not belong to the people. In the Islamic Emirate system, sovereignty belongs to God, so all legal and political systems should be governed by divine law rather than man-made law.

Unlike the definition of democracy, the Emirate political system defined by its founder the Unlike the definition of democracy, the Emirate political system was defined by its founder, the late Mullah Mohammad Omer, on March 30, 1996, as: "*To implement the religion of God on God's land, to serve God's word, and to establish Sharia rulings of Allah.*" In May 2022, the Islamic Emirate political system is further illustrated by the 312-page manifesto titled "The Islamic Emirate and its Administration's Order," written by Sheikh Abdul Hakim Haqqani, the chief justice of the IEA. This manifesto is peer-reviewed by IEA's supreme leader, Sheikh Hebatullah Akhundzada, and IEA's other religious leaders. Based on this political system, instead of an elected president, the Amir-ul-Muminin, the commander of the faithful, would be the head of the state who has enacted vital legislation via decrees, and he would be chosen by Ahl Al-Hall wa Al-Aqd, or the Council of Islamic Scholars.¹⁶

Since September 7, 2021, Afghanistan has adopted this new political and legal trajectory. This new policy of the Taliban 2.0 indicates that the Taliban prefer to sustain internal legitimacy and loyalty among their ranks rather than make the West or the rest of the world convinced or happy to support them. The West had already turned its back on Afghanistan, and the announcement of the reestablishment of the Islamic Emirate that the UNSC had already denounced further isolated Afghanistan from the rest of the world.

There were multiple reasons why the Taliban delayed the reinstatement of the Emirate system until the month of September: firstly, the U.S. had already completed its withdrawal by August 31. Secondly, the Taliban completed total control over Afghanistan because, prior to the mentioned date, the province of Panjshir was not under their control. On September 7, 2021, Zabiullah Mujahed, the Taliban's spokesman, appeared on national television and revealed the new trajectory of their government to reprise the government of their 1990s Emirate and announce the new caretaker cabinet. It has shocked the world because it has rejected all the speculation and hope of an inclusive and professional cabinet where, despite different segments of society, the high-ranking members of the defunct Afghan government may be included.

Based on the order of Amir al-Muminin Shaikh al-Hadith Hebatullah Akhundzada, Mr. Mujahed declared each member of the caretaker cabinet Muhammad Hassan Akhund as Prime Minister, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar as first deputy, Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi as second

deputy, Mullah Sirajuddin Haqqani as Interior Minister, and so on and so forth. The entire cabinet was formed from the members of the Taliban, overwhelmingly Pashtun, mainly clerical and male. Later, on September 21, 2021, and October 4, 2021, some other people were also introduced as high-ranking members of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Once again, except for a few, almost all of them were clerics who had no experience in the governing system.

On the one hand, the Taliban didn't take into consideration some aspects of the Western promotion of liberalism because the Taliban failed to appoint any woman or secular members of the previous US-backed defunct Afghan government as officials inside the new cabinet. The Taliban, unlike the defunct Afghan government, preferred to obey their own traditionally Islamic interpretation rather than Western liberal values. On the other hand, some members of the cabinet were on the UN blacklist. The Prime Minister, Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund, is on the UN's blacklist. Sirajuddin Haqqani has been named acting Interior Minister. He is the leader of the Haqqani network. His father, Jalal Uddin Haqqani, was the founder of the network. He is on the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) wanted list, with a \$10 million bounty on his head.¹⁷

The new political and legal trajectory of the Taliban is being criticized by different groups of Afghans. The liberal and secular segments of society consider the restoration of the "Emirate" system, where Afghanistan is a pariah state, an unnecessary step. According to them, the Republic system is founded on a constitution (2004) that, by many standards, could be considered the most progressive constitution in the region. Some other critics of the Islamic Emirate may not disagree with the Emirate political system, but they do criticize the Taliban 2.0 for assigning non-professional people who lack experience and merit to government posts. Thus, the declaration of this cabinet provoked a lot of domestic and international backlash. Afghanistan's neighboring countries (Iran and Tajikistan) blamed the IEA's new government for not being ethnically inclusive enough because the overwhelming majority of the IEA's officials are from the Pashtun ethnic group.

A few points could be extracted from the Taliban's new political trajectory. Firstly, the Taliban give more preference to unity and internal legitimacy among their own rank and file than convincing outsiders. Thus, appointing only those who have fought against the U.S. and US-backed Afghan Government It was a way of expressing loyalty to their comrades and showing that they were not abandoning them. Secondly, any compromise and declination to the demands of the West can benefit the chief rival of the Taliban, the ISKP, which has already sought to portray the Taliban as a compromiser on Islamic credentials and has betrayed Islamic principles and ideas in order to receive Western

¹⁶ John Butt, "A Taliban Theory of State: A Review of the Chief Justice's Book of Jurisprudence," 2023.

¹⁷ Jeffrey A Dressler, "The Haqqani Network," *Afghanistan Report* 6 (2010).

support. Thirdly, the time of philosophical liberalism and liberal progressive values, which were promoted in Afghanistan for 20 years, came to an end.

The non-compromise aspects of Taliban 2.0 regarding accepting the legal and political system of the defunct Afghan republic also indicate that another transition is also undergoing, which is the transition of values and ideas. Since the second phase of transition and revival of the Emirate, the West's 20 years of efforts for "nation-building," building a liberal democratic regime in Afghanistan that respects human rights and fundamental freedoms, especially equal rights for women and girls based on Western definition and perspective, have ended. The Taliban 2.0 comeback and humbling of a great power like the United States were not because the Taliban had such a superior military or wealth or had strong support from other international actors; it was because the societal values of the Afghan people were incompatible with the outside-imposed liberal order. The Western-backed Afghan government hasn't had legitimacy in the eyes of its fellow citizens.

The Taliban understood the sensitive aspect of Afghan culture: if they were lenient toward some liberal aspects or showed a softer position toward some Western demands, the people would disown them, just as the Afghan republic was disowned. The minister of education even called the ban on girls' secondary schools a reason for the cultural sensitivity of the people and fear of provocation and uprising against their Emirate, because, as it was mentioned previously, despite the widespread corruption, injustice, armed robbery, lawlessness, and chaos, being an ally and puppet of the West was the main reason for the Afghan republic to collapse and the Taliban return to power.

IV. AFGHANISTAN UNDER THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE EMIRATE

In the contemporary history of Afghanistan, whenever Afghanistan suffers from domestic or international turmoil, the rulers of the time have chosen the Emirate Governing System for Afghanistan to overcome the difficult time. Since August 2021, the IEA has not been the first Emirate government system in Afghanistan. From 1823 to 1926, when the British Empire attempted to colonize Afghanistan, the governing system in Afghanistan was changed to Emirate. The Emirate is a religious and political system where sovereignty belongs to God. An emirate is headed by an Amir or emir. An Amir, Caliph, or Sultan is a man who is considered a divine successor and whose job it is to implement God's rule on the earth.¹⁸ In this system, political legitimacy doesn't derive from the people but from divine norms.

This system has some similarities to the pre-Westphalia period in Europe.

The Emirate is a smaller political and religious unit than the Caliphate; in it, the Emir can declare Jihad against the invaders, and his decree is obligatory for everyone to accept. Unlike the other governments system, the Emirate system is the government of guidance rather than one aimed at accumulating wealth. In this system the women cannot be the head of state or part of political elite.¹⁹ whenever an Amir declares a verdict, it is religiously an obligation for all Muslims to obey the Amir; it is compulsory, and if some refuse, he or she has committed sin. The Emir is the one who can declare war against the enemy, and everyone should obey him and fight the enemy. In 1823, the reason behind naming Afghanistan an emirate was to mobilize people to fight against the British Empire. In the 1990s, the Emirate's governing system emerged from the ashes of civil war and chaos. For the third time in 2021, the Emirate's governing system was reestablished by those who considered the U.S.-led coalition's intervention in Afghanistan as an occupation and the fighting against them as a religious obligation.

However, the Emirate of the Taliban faces internal and external opposition. All Afghans are not in favor of the restoration of the "Islamic Emirate" system, especially those who gave dozens of years of their lives to the government job in the defunct Afghan republic. The Afghan republic's collapse like a deck of cards was a sad day for them. Hundreds of thousands of military and civilian government employees have lost their jobs, which were the only source of their income for most of them. Internationally, UN Security Council Resolution 2513 (2020) had already declared its opposition to the restoration of the "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan".

Yet, inside Afghanistan, the people who have fought against the U.S. for the past 20 years favor this system. Hence, there are two main viewpoints among the people of Afghanistan regarding the transitional process from the Republic to the Emirate. For the ultra-conservative, traditionally religious group of people, the return of the Emirate was a positive change. While the secular and more liberal segments of Afghan society, along with some ethno-Tajik nationalists, considered it a catastrophe.

Generally speaking, the transformation from constitutional semi-liberal democracy to semi-absolute Emirate political system has both positive and negative aspects for Afghanistan and regional countries. On the one hand, the transformation of power in Afghanistan improved the security situation. The 20 years of brutal war, as a result of which an estimated 300 people had been killed every single day, came to an end. Since the re-establishment of the Emirate, the death toll of the war has been dropped significantly.²⁰ After 20 years of international aid dependency, the IEA announced the first

¹⁸ زرولي صدیقی، د افغانستان معاصر تاریخ (کابل: وحید مطبوعه، 2017)

¹⁹ Butt, "A Taliban Theory of State: A Review of the Chief Justice's Book of Jurisprudence."

²⁰ (blog), شجاع امینی، "از مزار تا کابل؛ طالبان همهجا بودند." روزنامه اصبح، December 4, 2021, <https://8am.af/from-mazar-to-kabul-the-taliban-were-everywhere/>.

annual national budget without any direct international aid. Despite the sanctions and freezing of billions of dollars of Afghanistan's asset, still the Afghanistan's currency stands out as one of the three most stable currencies²¹

On the other hand, the dysfunction of the governing system, the increase of nepotism, and the exclusion of non-Taliban affiliates from professional seats, even University Professors were fired from their posts. Along with the failure of diplomatic relations with the world, were the shortcomings that made Afghanistan a pariah state once again. Since the reestablishment of The IEA, half of Afghan media outlets have closed and thousands of Afghan journalists have left the country. Firstly, there is a significant shortage of financial resources, which has adversely affected the sustainability of media organizations. Secondly, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) has disagreement with liberal interpretations of freedom of speech, resulting in severe limitations on the media in Afghanistan.²² These factors collectively hinder the ability of the media to operate effectively and uphold its role in society.

Another thing that confuses people inside and outside of Afghanistan is the political philosophy behind Taliban policies. Despite the Islamic Emirate ruling Afghanistan for more than three years, the state does not have a constitution. The Islamic Emirate is described as a "highly underspecified and under-theorized political system."²³ However, the political roots of the Islamic Emirate have many similarities to the Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Hind (the Society of Islamic Scholars of India), which was re-established in Pakistan after 1947 under the name of Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam (the Society of Islamic Scholars). However, the active political activities of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan differ from them as well. One of the challenges that the IEA underestimates are the Afghan youths who have lived and grown up in urban Afghanistan during the secular liberal political system and adopted values contrary to what the Taliban advocates for the values that are supposed to be. Approximately 70 percent of Afghanistan's population is under the age of 30. They have been bombarded by the media and education system to diametrically oppose the Taliban's policies and be portrayed as murderers and war criminals. Thus, convincing these youth takes lots of effort and time. Though the security challenge was not a big issue in rural Afghanistan in the last year, the threat of the ISKP (Islamic State of Khurasan Province) and NRF (National Resistance Front) is still challenging the IEA. The rest of this chapter explores the domestic policies of the Taliban-run government to find out how the transitional process

from "liberal democracy" to an ultraconservative religious system impacts Afghanistan.

V. CONCLUSION

The transition from a liberal democratic framework to the Islamic Emirate in Afghanistan marks a significant turning point in the country's history. While the Taliban's return to power has resulted in a reduction in violence and improvement in the stability, it has also led to widespread dissatisfaction among urban populations and those who once benefitted from the previous regime's progressive values. The dual narratives surrounding the Taliban's rule highlight a blunt divide within Afghan society, where conservative elements may celebrate the restoration of the Emirate, while liberal factions mourn the loss of freedom and rights.

The implications of this shift extend beyond Afghanistan, affecting regional dynamics and international relations. The international community's response remains critical, as Afghanistan faces the challenges of legitimacy and recognition amid ongoing humanitarian crises. The article underscores the importance of understanding Afghanistan's complex socio-political fabric and the need for a nuanced approach to governance that considers the aspirations of all Afghans, particularly the youth who envision a different future.

Ultimately, as Afghanistan navigates its new political landscape under the Islamic Emirate, the potential for dialogue and reform exists, but it will require a willingness to engage with diverse voices and foster an inclusive political environment. The future of Afghanistan hinges on balancing the demands of tradition with the aspirations for progress, making it important for both domestic and international stakeholders to identify and support the diverse needs of Afghan society.

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