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AFGHANISTAN UNDER TALIBAN: A NEW REGIME POSES A THREAT TO INTERNATIONAL STABILITY

Valeri Modebadze

Georgian Technical University - Tbilisi, Georgia
ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1232-4841>
valery_4@yahoo.com

Abstract: The purpose of this study was to see whether the Taliban regime poses a threat to the international community. The research primarily examined the threats that the formation of a theocratic regime in Afghanistan poses to neighboring countries and the international community. With regards to research methods, a document analysis method was used to obtain valid information and to analyze and describe the complex situation in Afghanistan. A wide array of documents and scholarly articles were analyzed to obtain reliable and objective information. This research revealed that the Taliban has not changed at all and still rules Afghanistan with medieval methods and strategies. Since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, the economic situation has deteriorated considerably and people face severe hardship. Therefore, hundreds of thousands of Afghans want to leave their homeland and migrate to the West. The Taliban violates constantly human rights and discriminates against women, ethnic and religious minorities. The Taliban has transformed Afghanistan into a narco-state. Neighboring countries fear that Afghanistan might become a hotbed of terrorism and extremism again.

Keywords: Taliban; Afghanistan; Economic Crisis; Terrorism; Terrorist Organizations; Drug Trade; Narco-State

INTRODUCTION

One of the tragic periods in the history of Afghanistan is a 'dark age' of Taliban domination in 1996-2001 when radical Islamists established a strict theocratic rule in the country. The Taliban regime was highly authoritarian and strict censorship and restrictions were imposed on Afghan people. The political power was concentrated in the hands of a small group of senior Taliban clerics, who ruled Afghan society according to Sharia law. They declared Afghanistan an Islamic emirate and started imposing their strict interpretation of Islamic law. Women were not allowed to attend school. They were unable to obtain an education, work, or participate in politics. All types of music were banned, and strict censorship was established. As time passed more and more restrictive measures were imposed on Afghan society and life became unbearable for ordinary people. Millions of Afghans who lived through the 1990s remember the Taliban's harsh

rules and governing style. The Taliban clerics have studied in conservative religious schools in Afghanistan and Pakistan and some of them have also fought against the Soviet Union in the 1980s.

For years, many religious schools in Pakistan and Afghanistan incubated extremism and were transformed into the training grounds for jihadists. The Taliban leaders, who were educated in these religious schools, have managed to retake power almost 20 years after being ousted by a US-led military coalition in 2001. After Biden decided to withdraw US troops from Afghanistan, the Taliban took control of major cities in the country, including Kabul, and forced the democratically elected government to flee. In other words, the US withdrawal emboldened the Taliban to overthrow the democratically elected government of Afghanistan and establish a theocracy in Afghanistan.

When the fighting was ongoing between the Taliban and the Afghan Army, the world was grappling with how to deal with the fast-moving events in Afghanistan. The international community watched in amazement as events unfolded in Afghanistan, as no one expected that the Taliban could defeat the Afghan Armed Forces so easily. For some reason, everyone (including the intelligence services of leading Western countries) thought that the fighting would last for a long time and that the Afghan army would be able to resist the 'badly' armed radical Islamists. However, the events did not unfold in a way as was expected in the West. The Taliban defeated very easily a demoralized and incompetent army and overthrew a democratically elected government of Afghanistan. The Taliban takeover of Afghanistan sent shockwaves around the world. The speed of the Afghan national armies' collapse and the disintegration of President Ashraf Ghani's government took even the United States of America by surprise. Now, the international community is trying to figure out how to deal with the new realities on the ground.

Since 2001 The United States of America has spent almost 2 trillion dollars on the war and reconstruction projects and implemented a large number of programs in Afghanistan to strengthen Afghanistan's security and armed forces. The United States of America and its allies did not spare financial resources and effort to train and equip the 300,000-strong Afghan army, which later turned out to be a waste of money (Sabga 2021). The West has not achieved its strategic goal in Afghanistan and has suffered a bitter defeat: it has failed to pull the country out of a severe economic, social and financial crisis and transform it into a western-style liberal democracy (Vanda Felbab-Brown, 2021). A theocratic regime has been re-established in Afghanistan and the country has returned to its dark past. The Taliban have taken control of the country and are determined to rule it using medieval methods and strategies.

FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC CRISIS IN AFGHANISTAN

After the Taliban came to power, a major financial crisis erupted in Afghanistan and the economy collapsed as the US Federal Reserve seized assets of the Central Bank of Afghanistan. After the Islamists captured Kabul and seized power, the West imposed sanctions on Afghanistan. This decision created a severe humanitarian and economic crisis in the country. The already difficult socio-economic situation of the Afghan people has worsened and the country is on the verge of a humanitarian catastrophe. It is predicted that, the economic situation will become even more unbearable in the future and millions of Afghans will leave their homeland. The United Nations estimates that about half a million Afghan refugees will flee the country and seek refuge in the West.

Since the establishment of the theocratic regime, Afghanistan is completely isolated from the rest of the world. No country is in a hurry to recognize the legitimacy of the Taliban, which makes the difficult economic situation in Afghanistan even more unbearable. International funds and organizations, which previously provided significant assistance to the country and funded various programs, are no longer cooperating with the Afghan regime after the Islamists came to power. They decided to suspend their financial activities in the country. For example, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have stopped funding Afghanistan and implementing various projects in the country. The United States has frozen nearly \$ 9.5 billion of the country's foreign reserves and has stopped sending financial resources to Kabul (Mohsin 2021). Due to such a dire situation, a complete economic collapse in Afghanistan is imminent shortly. The country is gradually returning to the dark past and the Stone Age (Radio Liberty 2021).

The West fears that if the economic crisis in Afghanistan continues, it could pose new challenges for the world, as the number of people willing to leave the country will increase significantly. In other words, if the dire economic situation fails to stabilize, a refugee crisis will be inevitable in the future. It is expected that soon a large influx of refugees will flow to the West and millions of Afghans will start migrating to Europe. 95% of the Afghan population does not have enough income to support their families (World Food Program 2021). More than half of the population, 22.8 million people are starving and experiencing food shortages (Goldbaum 2021). Frequent conflicts, political and economic instability, droughts, and scarce crops further increase the risk of mass starvation. The whole country is now left to rely on the World Food Program and UN aid. The United Nations is warning that millions of Children could starve or freeze to death this winter if they do not get immediate help.

The Taliban regime is composed of incompetent people, who do not have any plans or strategy how to deal with such a difficult situation and overcome the economic and financial crisis. Afghan people are deeply worried about the Taliban's ability to govern the country and solve socio-economic problems. Most public sector employees

have not received salaries for months and face severe hardship. Since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan 85% of the factories have ceased production and many entrepreneurs have left the country (Jurist Staff 2021). As a result, the unemployment rate has increased considerably and for many Afghans, the country has become a prison. A huge number of Afghans want to flee and escape the fear, hunger, and uncertainty of the new regime. They are determined to leave Afghanistan as soon as possible. Nearly a quarter of Afghanistan, approximately 5 million people have already fled a country ruined by the war. Because of the widespread poverty and the Taliban's brutal rule, many people do not feel secure and are desperate to leave the country.

THE THREAT OF THE RISE OF TERRORISM AND EXTREMISM IN AFGHANISTAN

Since the Taliban seized power, the legal status of women in Afghanistan has also deteriorated. When the Taliban took over Kabul and came to power, they promised the Afghan people that they would form an inclusive government that would protect the rights of national minorities, religious minorities, and women. In its first news conference since taking Kabul, the Taliban promised the international community that it would protect women's rights, give amnesty to those people who worked with foreigners, and respect media freedoms. Its leaders also publicly stated that they would not let other terrorist groups use Afghanistan to launch terrorist attacks on any other country and they called on women and other minorities to join their government. But many Afghans and world leaders remain skeptical towards the new regime and they do not trust the Taliban. Although the Taliban has announced an amnesty for their opponents, human rights groups have documented numerous reprisal killings. The Taliban are still hunting down the people who worked for the former government. 250 media organizations have shut down since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan (Graham-Harrison 2021).

Ever since the Taliban took power, their government officials have been lobbying hard for international recognition. They want to escape isolation and therefore, try hard to portray themselves as more moderate than during their 1990s rule. The Taliban has sought to reassure the international community that no one would be harmed in Afghanistan and that every citizen's rights would be protected. However, when the terrorist attacks in different provinces of Afghanistan resumed and the terrorist organization 'Islamic State-Khorasan' killed many Shiites and ethnic minorities because of their religious beliefs, it became clear to everyone that the Taliban's promise was a lie and a complete bluff. The Taliban have already broken their promises and have started to gradually restrict women's rights and freedoms. Many women have lost their jobs and consequently, their socio-economic conditions have worsened considerably. Women's rights protests have been declared illegal in Afghanistan. Violent crackdowns on women have driven the protests off the streets. It is getting very difficult for women to make their voices to be heard. Every time they gather to protest, they are forced to disperse.

Taliban is gradually returning to the hard-line rule of the 1990s and women are not even allowed to walk in the streets without a male guardian. The Taliban are imposing strict restrictions on Afghan society and enacting draconian laws. Most of the women are oppressed, who no longer have the right to dress as they wish, and are forced to wear Burqas. Every woman is obliged to wear a burqa and cover her face and body according to strict religious rules. The doors of schools and state universities are now closed for women. Oppressed Afghan women often stage protests in Kabul demanding their right to work and education. They want the international community to put more pressure on Taliban leaders.

When The Taliban formed a new government in Afghanistan, women were not offered any senior positions and were completely excluded from politics. Recent developments in Afghanistan: the crackdown on women's rallies, the persecution of ethnic and religious minorities, and the escalation of terrorist attacks demonstrated that the Taliban are as ruthless and backward as they were 20 years ago and haven't made any progress in recent decades. It seems that they don't intend to respect the national minorities' rights or women's rights.

There West fears that Afghanistan will once again become a hotbed of terrorism and extremism, and many terrorist organizations will resume their dangerous activities under the Taliban regime. There is a danger that the terrorist organizations operating in Afghanistan - 'Islamic State-Khorasan' and 'al-Qaeda' will be strengthened to the point that in a few months they will be able to attack the United States and other Western countries. The Taliban regime, which is now completely isolated due to Western sanctions, may create favorable conditions for terrorist organizations and jihadi groups in Afghanistan. Moreover, they may even encourage terrorist organizations to launch deadly attacks against the West.

The United States, China, and Russia are making pressure on the Taliban and urging them not to provide safe havens for transnational terrorist groups. Nevertheless, there is a danger that the terrorist groups, which are very much emboldened by the Taliban's success, may try to gain a foothold in Afghanistan and establish their training camps there, which is likely to lead to a significant increase in global terrorism and transnational organized crime. Afghanistan's neighbors are very worried and think that this country could become again a breeding ground for terrorism and extremism (Carbonaro 2021).

Neighboring countries, especially India and Central Asian countries, are watching with great concern the consolidation of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. There is a widespread view in India that the Taliban leaders were supported by the Pakistani government and intelligence (Kumar 2021). Indians believe that it was with the help of Pakistan that the Taliban managed to overthrow the US-backed government of Ashraf Ghani and seized power. The former president of Afghanistan Ashraf Ghani had a very warm and friendly relationship with the Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi and he

was considered as an ally of India. India invested about \$ 3 billion in Afghanistan and made significant efforts to develop the country. Indians trained the Afghan army and police and supplied them with military equipment, while Pakistan maintained close ties with the Taliban (The Associated Press 2021). India is distrustful of the new Taliban regime, which it perceives as a puppet of Pakistan. Pakistan provided significant financial, economic, and moral assistance to the Taliban, and with the help of Pakistan's intelligence service, the Taliban managed to seize power in Afghanistan in the 1990s.

When the United States of America invaded Afghanistan and overthrew the Taliban's brutal regime in 2001, Taliban leaders migrated to neighboring Pakistan and obtained a 'safe haven' there. Since then, Pakistan has been offering material and moral support to the Taliban. Pakistan has offered support to the Taliban during the most difficult times when they were persecuted after the US military intervention in Afghanistan. Indians believe that without Pakistan's support Taliban would not have been able to take Kabul and overthrow the government of Ashraf Ghani.

India particularly fears that Pakistan could activate terrorist groups operating in Afghanistan and carry out terrorist acts with their help in Kashmir province. Two extremist groups operating in Kashmir - 'Lashkar-e-Taiba' and 'Jaish-e-Mohammed' - have historical ties to the Taliban. According to a UN report, 6,500 members of Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed took part in the fight against Ashraf Ghani's government in Afghanistan and sided with the Taliban (Ellis-Petersen 2021). New Delhi fears that the Taliban victory in Afghanistan will embolden these extremist groups and motivate them to resume fighting in Kashmir against India. Indians fear that Afghanistan could become a base from where Islamists could carry out jihad on Indian soil (Ellis-Petersen 2021). Indian government officials believe that Afghanistan could turn into a base for extremist groups fighting against India, from which radical Islamists will plan and then carry out terrorist acts on Indian soil. That is why Indians are watching with great concern the events unfolding in Afghanistan, as they believe that extremist groups operating in Afghanistan can create major problems for India's security.

The Taliban regime poses a great threat not only to India but also to the People's Republic of China. The terrorist organization 'Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement' which operates in Xinjiang province, has close ties to Afghanistan. Hundreds of fighters of this paramilitary organization are present in Afghanistan, in Badakhshan province. China hopes that the Taliban will take appropriate measures to prevent the entry of militants of the East Turkestan Islamic Movement into Xinjiang province and will not fund their terrorist activities. Chinese authorities decided to tighten control of the border with Afghanistan to prevent the terrorists of the East Turkestan Islamic Movement from entering China (Noorzai and Yang 2021). When the Taliban defeated the Afghan armed forces and came to power, they seized large quantities of ammunition, as well as armored vehicles, aircraft, and weapons.

After gaining such a large number of weapons, the Taliban has become the most well-armed jihadist group in the world. They may supply these weapons to other terrorist organizations and jihadi groups. When these radical groups will be equipped with such dangerous weapons, they may carry out deadly attacks against neighboring countries of Afghanistan. When the Taliban leaders have seized the power in Afghanistan they have released large numbers of prisoners, including extremists, from Afghan prisons. As they advanced towards the capital, the Taliban stormed the country's jails one by one. They freed thousands of Taliban fighters, as well as al-Qaeda and IS militants. Releasing thousands of extremists and radical Islamists from prisons poses new threats to humanity and increases the likelihood of future terrorist attacks (Wood 2021). In June 2021, the United Nations released a report stating that there were approximately 8,000 to 10,000 foreign terrorists in Afghanistan from Central Asia, the North Caucasus, Pakistan, and China from Xinjiang Province (Schmitt 2021).

TRANSFORMATION OF AFGHANISTAN INTO A NARCO-STATE

Because the Taliban regime is in complete isolation and receives no financial assistance from other states or international organizations, there is a great danger that the ousted regime will start mass-producing drugs and selling them worldwide. Because of the absence of foreign aid, Afghan farmers have no other option but to increase opium production. Foreign aid accounted for about 43% of Afghanistan's GDP in 2020. But now that international aid is being replaced by sanctions. Due to the international isolation, many Afghan farmers view drug production and trade as the only solution to survive and feed their families. Afghanistan has long played a central role in the global narcotics trade. Now, that the country has been taken over by Islamists and extremists, more favorable conditions are being created for the development of the drug business and narco-terrorism. Millions of Afghans are turning to opium poppy cultivation to finance their livelihoods.

Since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan drug trade is booming. Afghanistan is the largest producer of Heroin and Opium in the world. According to the United Nations, Office on Drugs and Crime 80% of global opium and heroin supplies originate from Afghanistan (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2021b). Most of the heroin is smuggled through Iran and Pakistan and ends up in Europe. 5% to 10 % of it reaches the United States of America (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2021b). Before the Taliban takeover opium traders paid off corrupt officials and sold narcotics secretly. Now they have been allowed to open up stalls in markets. Every week opium farmers gather in markets to sell their harvest. Opium farmers are afraid that the new regime might ban opium trade and production as they did in the year 2000. The Taliban did ban opium farming in 2000, although it didn't last. Now, opium farmers fear that the Taliban will ban again opium production after the peace deal was signed with the USA.

But, in reality, the Taliban are not interested in stopping the drug trade and production. They have been taxing it for years. The Taliban view drug production as a very profitable business, which brings in hundreds of millions of dollars. Opium is now sold openly in markets. Opium accounts for 6 percent to 11 percent of Afghanistan's GDP, depending on the year's harvest (The Economist 2021). For comparison, at the height of Colombia's drug trade in the 1980s, cocaine accounted for 6 % of the country's GDP (Badkar 2011). In 2020 about 224.000 hectares of opium poppies were cultivated in Afghanistan and approximately 6.300 tons of opium were produced (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2021).

Apart from heroin, the Taliban also produce hashish and crystal methamphetamine. Afghanistan has become a major producer of crystal methamphetamine thanks to the cultivation of naturally occurring ephedra plants in the countries mountainous regions. Since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, the country produces 3000 kilograms of crystal methamphetamine every day (Secunder Kermani 2021). The vast majority of the meth labs and drug factories are located in the southwest of the country. It is estimated that the production of crystal methamphetamine will soon outweigh the production of heroin (Secunder Kermani 2021).

The Taliban does not want to prohibit the drug trade in a war-torn and impoverished country. The Taliban state that they will not ban drug production because Afghan people are starving and they do not have alternative sources of income. Many farmers and families depend on opium production to survive. For years poor farmers have relied on poppy cultivation to provide for their families. Now as Afghanistan's economy collapses without international support and water levels continue to drop, many see it as the safest crop to grow. Afghans justify their illicit drug trade by saying that wheat production is not a profitable business and does not bring any benefits for them, whereas opium production is a very lucrative activity.

Over the last decades, drug production has become the principal source of employment in Afghanistan and hundreds of thousands of people are employed in this business. Opium farming provides hundreds of thousands of full-time jobs every year. In 2017 it was estimated that poppy cultivation provided up to 590.000 full-time jobs (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2017). Opium is so entrenched in the economy that even if it were possible to completely get rid of it, spillover effects on the local population would be disastrous. It would generate great privation, malnutrition, and huge political instability. When the Taliban first came to power in the 1990s they tried to ban opium cultivation but all their efforts ultimately failed because of the fierce opposition from the Afghan population. Then, the Taliban realized that trying to suppress opium production was unsustainable and therefore, allowed cultivation to proceed. They began to impose a tax on opium cultivation and benefited directly from drug production. Since 1996 the Taliban has been taxing opium production. Taliban got around the religious contradiction of opium production by prohibiting and punishing its

use within the country, and allowing its export abroad because selling the drug to infidels was viewed as another form of Jihad.

Since retaking power in 2020, the Taliban have publicly stated that they would ban the production and trade of drugs and would not turn Afghanistan into a narco-state (France 24 2021). But similar to their pledges to respect human rights and press freedoms, there is a general distrust in the Taliban to follow through. The Taliban is unlikely to ban opium production in Afghanistan. In reality, drug production has not decreased, on the contrary, the new regime has considerably increased opium and heroin production. Many experts believe that drug production is going to explode even more as opium prices continue to rise. Opium prices have more than tripled since the Taliban takeover. Uncertainty over opium farming is driving up the demand and the prices.

Afghanistan's opium trade keeps booming and as the international community has decided to isolate a new regime, the representatives of it have more motivation to increase opium and heroin production. According to the UN estimates for decades, the Taliban relied on opium as a source of half its revenue (Congressional Research Service 2021). In the past opium production played a minor role in Afghanistan's agriculture, especially when compared with neighboring countries like Iran. But starting with the Soviet invasion of 1980 armed groups ravaged Afghanistan's countryside, destabilizing its rural economy. This instability is part of what made the profitable opium trade more attractive to struggling farmers and made the poppy plant an integral part of the rural economy. When the Mujahedeen groups were fighting against the Soviet Union, they relied on opium as a source of income to fund their operations and purchase weapons. These Mujahedeen groups encouraged and motivated Afghan farmers to grow poppy plants. When the Taliban took power in 1996, they actively permitted the opium trade to keep the support of farmers and smugglers. As a result, drug trade and business boomed during the 1990s. In 1998 Afghanistan became the largest producer of opium in the world. But two years later, the Taliban decided to ban opium to obtain international legitimacy and recognition. Initially, they managed to reduce drug production drastically. According to UN estimates, the Taliban's prohibition resulted in a 90% reduction in opium production between 2000 and 2001 (The Economist 2021). The move temporarily cut the global supply of heroin by two-thirds. Poppy farmers were dissatisfied because they suffered great losses and therefore, began to rebel against the Taliban. The Taliban was forced to cede and decided to lift the ban before the USA invaded Afghanistan. But the political damage was already done. Support for the Taliban had diminished considerably, especially in the rural population. After the US invaded Afghanistan in 2001 and destroyed the Taliban regime, drug production exploded and returned to its previous heights.

The most counternarcotics measures adopted by the USA after the invasion of Afghanistan did not bring any results: Initially, the US government spared no effort to

destroy opium production and drug trade in Afghanistan. Combating the opium and drug trade became a top priority of the USA in Afghanistan. The first elected president of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai was convinced that the struggle against narco-terrorism, drug trade, and opium production was essential for Afghanistan's survival as a state. The USA declared war on drugs and spent 8.6 billion dollars between 2002 and 2017 on counternarcotics efforts (Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction 2018). The USA also paid Afghan farmers to grow crops, like wheat instead of poppies. Americans tried to help Afghan farmers to find alternative crops. But these alternative crops were much less profitable for poor farmers. Because of the widespread economic hardship and poverty, they preferred to cultivate poppy plants instead of wheat. Waging a war against drugs inflicted a lot of harm on poppy farmers and undermined support for the US-aligned government in Kabul. The Kabul government was only able to eliminate opium production in the regions it controlled. But there was still high demand for the drug from the global black market. As a result, the price of opium shot up, making drug production even more attractive to farmers who lived in regions outside Kabul's control. Corruption was widespread in Afghanistan and even government officials were involved in the drug trade. The Afghan government was run by smugglers, irresponsible people, and the mafia. For this reason, Karzai's efforts to eliminate drug production failed and the opium trade persisted, impacting not just Afghanistan, but its neighboring countries. The neighboring countries still fear that political and economic instability in Afghanistan will exacerbate the narcotics problem. Another problem that Afghanistan is facing is drug addiction. The number of drug addicts is growing constantly in this backward and impoverished country. Nearly 11% of the population of Afghanistan consume drugs (France 24 2021b). Many young people die because of the widespread consumption of drugs. Only a tiny number of those who are dependent on drugs receive the treatment or rehabilitation they need. There are not enough rehabilitation centers for drug addicts in the country. Because of the economic crisis, rehabilitation clinics are running out of medicine.

According to the US report the Taliban derives as much as 60% of its income from illegal drug trade and production (Culbertson 2021). Opium has been a significant source of income for the Taliban for many years. The Taliban are known for their ultra-strict interpretation of Islam and harsh legal punishments, but at the same time, they are one of the biggest players of Afghanistan's illegal drug trade. The Taliban faces a major threat from the Islamic State-Khorasan, which is a local branch of ISIS in Afghanistan. The Islamic State-Khorasan is vehemently opposed to drug production and trade because it is viewed as an anti-Islamic practice. The representatives of the Islamic State-Khorasan do not agree on many issues with the leaders of the Taliban and accuse them of supporting drug trade and production. The Islamic State-Khorasan views the Taliban as a drug cartel and narco-terrorist organization that violates Islamic rules and principles. This is the reason why the Islamic State-Khorasan views the Taliban as its

enemy. The Islamic State-Khorasan has carried out numerous deadly terrorist attacks in Afghanistan and there is a danger that conflict may erupt soon between this organization and the Taliban over the issue of the drug trade and opium production.

CONCLUSION

Recent political events in Afghanistan demonstrated that the Taliban has not changed at all and still rules the country with repressive methods. The Taliban leaders have failed to keep their promises to the international community and they continue to discriminate against women, ethnic and religious minorities as they did in the 1990s. Women still are treated as second-rate citizens and are excluded from all spheres of public life. They are denied the right to education and employment. Religious and ethnic minorities also face discrimination and various terrorist groups sometimes carry out deadly attacks against them.

The research revealed that the drug mafia has a free run in Afghanistan. The Taliban may have promised to ban opium cultivation, but they have failed. The drug production and narcotics trade remain a substantial source of income for a new regime.

The Taliban is actively involved in the production and distribution of drugs. Their warlords benefit from the narcotics trade. The Taliban has transformed Afghanistan into a narco-state. The consumption and production of drugs have increased considerably since the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan. There is a danger that conflict may erupt soon between the Taliban and Islamic State-Khorasan over the issue of drugs.

The Taliban regime poses a serious threat to international peace and security. Neighboring countries of Afghanistan are afraid that the Taliban regime because of the international isolation and sanctions could provide support to various terrorist organizations that are operating in the region. The international community must take special measures to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a hotbed of terrorism and extremism again. When the Taliban came to power in 1996, they provided a 'safe haven' for al-Qaeda and protected dangerous terrorists. The same scenario may be repeated now, twenty years later, and Afghanistan will become a safe base for terrorists again. Therefore, the international community should not turn a blind eye to the events unfolding in Afghanistan and should act to prevent the spread of terrorism in this isolated country. 

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