

AFGHANISTAN'S PEACE AGREEMENT: ONE STEP FORWARD OR TWO STEPS BACKWARD?

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Abstract

This paper attempts to find out that the US peace agreement with the Taliban is a promising step but is rife with ambiguities because the hasty peace deal reached in Doha on February 29 has undermined the Afghan government and avenged the US-Taliban's nefarious zero-sum game. It can change all that goes forward. However, it marks a significant breakthrough in the two adversaries' nearly two-decade-long conflict, and a peaceful, terrorism-free Afghanistan is the desire of everyone in the region. However, the current environment in Afghanistan, in which the agreement was signed, raises some questions in the minds of all strategists. Is it a compromise or a doomed deal? All the stakeholders expressed hopes of peace returning to Afghanistan. Still, various dignitaries could not hide their apprehensions about the deal's longevity and prospects for peace in the statements. This article focuses on whether the Doha Peace Agreement has led Afghanistan towards development or progress or whether it has taken two steps backwards.

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Key word: Afghanistan, Doha agreement, Taliban, peace, freedom, development, security.

INTRODUCTION

In 1992, the Mujahideen overthrew the communist government of Dr. Najibullah and came to power. The lack of unity among the Mujahideen and their weakness in sharing power and managing the country led Afghanistan to civil war.¹ In such circumstances, taking advantage of the opportunity, the Taliban movement was formed in southern Afghanistan and announced its presence under the name of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. As a result, with the support of the people of the south and Pakistan, this group captured Kabul in a short time in 1996 and named the country "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan". The Taliban movement ruled Afghanistan between 1996 and 2001. The Taliban's support for extremist groups, their limited interpretation of Islam, and the implementation of strict laws in the political, economic, social, and cultural spheres led to their non-recognition by the international community and regional countries, and this situation caused poverty, unemployment, and migration of more Afghans.²

After the September 11 incident, the United States launched "Operation Enduring Freedom" against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban on October 7 under the guise of self-defence due to the Taliban government's support for Al-Qaeda and its leader Osama bin Laden. As a result, the Taliban regime fell. With the support of the United States and the international community, the "Bonn Conference" was held, and the foundation of the post-Taliban order was laid in this conference. Within the framework of the decisions of the Bonn Conference, an interim administration was formed (for six months), and Hamid Karzai was appointed as the head of the interim administration. The interim administration's main task was establishing political and legal order in Afghanistan. For this purpose, the Loya Jirga - the Constituent Assembly was called. The Loya Jirga changed the interim administration to a transitional administration (for 18 months) and approved the Afghan Constitution in its next session. Elections were held based on the Constitution, and Hamid Karzai was elected President of the country based on the people's vote, and the country's parliament began to function. The judiciary, army, and police were also formed, and as a result, a relative political-legal order based on the Constitution was established in Afghanistan.³

The United States, under the leadership of Bush, designated the Taliban as a terrorist group and did not allow the group to participate in the Ben-Brien Conference. It closed the door to negotiations with the Taliban because it considered them terrorists and did not deal with their prisoners within the framework of the laws of war. This action of the United States led to criticism from the public and human rights organizations. The Taliban did not remain silent after the fall of their regime and continued their war using various tactics. When Barack Obama came to power in the United States, he changed the US strategy towards the Taliban. In this regard, Obama withdrew US forces from Afghanistan in 2014. He also negotiated with the Taliban on the prisoner exchange and allowed the Taliban to open a "political office" in Doha.⁴

¹Dolatyar, Ahmad Khan. The Factors that Led to the Taliban's Return to Power and the Future of Afghanistan, 2021, (2).

²Dolatyar, Ahmad Khan. The Factors that Led to the Taliban's Return to Power and the Future of Afghanistan, 2021, (2).

³Rahimi, Mujib Rahman, A Critical Analysis of Afghanistan's Political System, 2019.

⁴Dolatyar, Ahmad Khan, The Factors that Led to the Taliban's Return to Power and the Future of Afghanistan, 2021.

When Donald Trump came to power in 2016, he sought a solution for the withdrawal of American troops. In this regard, the Trump cabinet decided to enter into negotiations with the Taliban without preconditions. To prove its seriousness, the United States appointed Zalmay Khalilzad (a Pashtun of Afghan origin) as the chief negotiator and special representative of the US State Department for the Afghan peace process. Khalilzad demanded that Pakistan release Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar to accelerate peace negotiations. After two years of negotiations, the United States signed the Doha Agreement with the Taliban on February 29, 2020, in the absence of the Afghan government. In the Doha Agreement, the Taliban pledged to sever ties with terrorist groups, including Al-Qaeda. In return, the United States pledged to withdraw from Afghanistan within 14 months and stop air operations against this group. During the 14 months, intra-Afghan negotiations began, and as a result, a "new Islamic State" was formed in Afghanistan.

In 2021, Joe Biden was elected as the President of the United States and in a speech he gave on May 1 (the end date of the withdrawal under the Doha Agreement), he pledged to remain faithful to the Doha Agreement and withdraw all its forces from Afghanistan by September 11, 2021. After this speech, the Taliban intensified their attacks instead of negotiating with the Afghan government. As a result of the attacks, the Taliban group took control of most of the country, and with former Afghan President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani fleeing the country, the Taliban entered Kabul in the presence of American forces in Afghanistan and once again seized power.

REACTION OF REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ACTORS:

The reactions to the agreement were interesting in their way. In a televised address, US President Donald Trump welcomed the deal and stated that he would personally meet with Taliban leaders "in the not-too-distant future." He also noted that Afghanistan's neighbours should help maintain the stability following the agreement.

While stressing the importance of reducing violence across Afghanistan, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called the agreement a significant step forward in achieving a lasting political settlement in Afghanistan. Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani said: "We hope that this historic agreement will contribute to achieving peace, stability and prosperity in the region and the world." The Saudi Foreign Ministry also hoped the agreement would lead to a complete and permanent ceasefire and comprehensive peace in Afghanistan. NATO members also said that recent progress in the peace process has reduced violence and paved the way for intra-Afghan negotiations. We call on the Taliban to make the most of this opportunity. To help achieve this, NATO is reducing its military presence. The NATO Secretary-General also called the agreement a first step towards lasting peace. Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan also welcomed the signing of the contract and said: "This is the beginning of a "reconciliation process." We welcome the Doha Agreement signed between the United States and the Taliban. This is the beginning of a peace and reconciliation process to end decades of war and the suffering of the Afghan people and is the only meaningful path to peace."

Despite such statements, Iran considered the agreement reached between the US and the Taliban illegal. After signing this agreement, the Iranian Foreign Ministry announced in a statement that the Islamic Republic of Iran believes the last peace agreement in Afghanistan can only be achieved through intra-Afghan dialogue with the participation of the country's political groups. Iran welcomes any development that contributes to peace and stability in Afghanistan and supports efforts to this end under the leadership and ownership of the Afghans; however, it considers this US action as an attempt to legitimize the presence of its forces in Afghanistan and opposes them. The US does not have the legal standing to sign a peace agreement or determine the future of Afghanistan. We believe that the United Nations has the appropriate capacity to facilitate intra-Afghan negotiations and monitor and ensure the implementation of the agreements reached. Mohammad Javad Zarif, Iranian Foreign Minister, also stated in a Twitter message that the American occupiers should not have attacked Afghanistan at all. But they did so and blamed others for the consequences. After 19 years of humiliation, America is bragging about its defeat. Whether in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, or Yemen, the problem is the United States. The United States will leave the region behind a legacy of immense chaos.

HUMAN RIGHTS:

The fundamental rights of citizens or public freedoms are among the most important contemporary legal issues. Although the primary roots of the fundamental rights of citizens should be sought in the concepts and principles of human rights, wherever the fundamental rights of citizens are mentioned, they refer to those rights that were considered for the citizens of that country in the Constitution of a country and their observance guaranteed by law. Article 4 of the Law on the Establishment, Duties and Competencies of the "Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission" states: "Human rights, within the meaning of this law, are the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens that enshrined in the Constitution, declarations, covenants, agreements, protocols, and other international human rights documents that Afghanistan is committed to respecting and implementing. Equal and fair access to insurance, supplies, and services provided by the government is also considered a human right."⁵

⁵Danish, Sarwar, Afghanistan's fundamental rights, p336

After ratifying the Declaration of Human Rights in the world's most prominent political centre, the politicization of this category in international relations began. After ratifying this declaration in 1901, it became mandatory in 1991. In the first part of Article 5 of the Vienna Declaration of Human Rights 1992, the assumptions of human rights are considered universal, and all states and nations are obliged to observe them. The human rights concept has often been used in contemporary law and politics. This concept has different forms, given the different ontologies of human rights models. In general, human rights are tools through which the fundamental freedoms of individuals can be protected from abuse by other individuals or organizations. Human rights include all individuals regardless of gender, social class, race or ethnic background, religion, belief, culture, nationality, sexuality or anything else that causes discrimination. According to the annual index⁶, published by the Economist Intelligence Unit, more than a third of the world's population now lives under authoritarian regimes, with North Korea, Myanmar and Afghanistan under Taliban control at the bottom of the list.

It is clear that the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan has become increasingly fragile since the Taliban took over, and humanitarian needs are expected to increase significantly.

In the current situation, the Taliban could further restrict humanitarian efforts; since taking over Afghanistan on August 15 2021, the Taliban have imposed severe restrictions on women's right to work, banned secondary education for girls in most parts of the country, and beaten women protesting peacefully. Given the importance of human rights in the current situation in Afghanistan, the UN Human Rights Council held an emergency meeting on human rights and women in Afghanistan on July 1 2022. Some speakers said that the humanitarian crisis reflected a failed military invasion by the United States and crimes against humanity. The United States bore primary responsibility for the situation in Afghanistan. Western countries continued to take unilateral coercive measures against Afghanistan. These were illegal and must be immediately ended, and a peaceful solution was established that respected Afghanistan's sovereignty in accordance with the UN Charter.⁷ Fundamental rights and public freedoms are divided into different categories in general division, but the focus of this research is on the right to education and the right to freedom of expression, which we will examine.

1. The right to education:

The purpose of the right to education, while individually aimed at developing the personality, is collectively aimed at promoting understanding, tolerance and friendship among nations. Regarding the idea of education, the UNESCO International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century states that education should be based on four fundamental and essential learnings for individual knowledge:

1. Learning to know is acquiring the means to develop individual intelligence.
2. Learning to be able to influence the environment.
3. Learning to live together to participate and cooperate with others in all human activities.
4. Finally, learning to live worthy of individual, social and environmental manifestations.

Freedom to learn is considered one of the fundamental rights, the enjoyment of which brings with it the cultivation of a spirit capable of thinking and the application of human intelligence. Freedom from ignorance is possible through the blessing of education. God has made education and training the basis of the mission of the Prophet of Islam in numerous verses of the Quran to provide the basis for creating thoughtful and capable societies. In his noble teachings, the Prophet considers knowledge an obligation for everyone. It attaches so much importance to learning that even the suffering of distance and foreign lands must be endured for its sake.⁸

After years of war, civil strife, and ethnic conflict, the political and social order that emerged after the Bonn Agreement in 2001, like all other Afghan political systems, collapsed. The United States left Afghanistan after twenty years without fulfilling any of its promises and goals, including the complete destruction of the Taliban, the expansion of democracy, the establishment of a new political order, and women's rights. As a result of the untimely withdrawal of American and allied forces and the re-establishment of the Taliban in Afghanistan, all the opportunities and efforts of twenty years in Afghanistan, namely freedom of speech, democracy, social values, educational opportunities, human rights, women's rights, social and political order, media and newspapers, were destroyed. The new generation of Afghans who wanted to be free from discrimination, war, violence and injustice and reach democratic societies were once again disappointed and disappointed. When the Taliban came to power on August 15, 2021, women were once again deprived of all rights, freedoms, and life opportunities. In the first days of their entry into Kabul, the Taliban removed images of women from the city walls. They banned girls from going to school. This situation was already experienced in the 1990s under the Taliban. At that time, the Taliban also imposed severe restrictions on women. After the Taliban took control of Afghanistan, women stayed at home and were deprived of any opportunities. The Taliban decreed that women should stay at home and only do housework and not go out. They argue that women do not have the right to education. According to them, women have no rights or place in society. They are against modern

⁶. Mohammadi, Fatima, The Second Taliban Reign: Human Rights and America's Responsibility, p 4

⁷ Mohammadi, Fatima, The Second Taliban Reign: Human Rights and America's Responsibility, p9

⁸. Danish, sarwar, fundamental rights, p361-362, 2010

education. In a statement released by the Taliban on November 21, 2021, women were banned from appearing in TV series. Girls' schools were closed. Public universities were also closed, and female employees in government offices could not return to work (BBC).⁹

2. Freedom of expression rights:

Freedom of expression has traditionally been considered a core value of democracy. The right of an individual to hold and express their own views freely is an essential aspect of the government's respect for individual dignity and autonomy. Freedom of expression often includes protecting the rights of individuals and the press to criticize their governments freely. It also allows people to participate in the political process by freely expressing their opinions about how they are being run.¹⁰

The symbol of freedom of expression is the freedom of the media, and this is due to the significant role that the media plays.

- 1) Increasing the general knowledge of the people.
- 2) Creating a clash of ideas and intellectual advancement of the society.
- 3) Public awareness of issues and problems and mobilizing the society against oppression and corruption.
- 4) Informing the ruling body about the desires and aspirations of different classes of people.

In Islam, freedom of expression also has a unique value, and in the history of Islam, praiseworthy examples of freedom of expression have been cited. In the Holy Quran, God has considered freedom of speech and writing, freedom of speech and following the best and best ideas among the divine blessings for man and has praised them.

(الرحمن. عَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ. خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ) God the Most Gracious said the Quran is education. He created man and taught him speech. (والقلم وما يسطرون) I swear by the pen and what they write.

(اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ. اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ. الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ. عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ) Read in the name of your Lord who created the worlds. He created man from a clot of blood. Read, for your Lord is the Most Generous, the One who taught by the pen and taught man that which he did not know.¹¹

According to international human rights documents, any restriction on freedom of expression and the press must be legitimate and legal, meaning that the limitation on the enjoyment of this right must be based on the law and the needs of a democratic society. Therefore, imposing any unlawful restriction is contrary to the provisions of international documents and an example of a violation of human rights.

Since August 2021, when the Taliban have been in power, they have purposefully suppressed freedom of expression and freedom of the press. As such, the independence and freedom of action of all active media in Afghanistan have been denied, and they cannot publish independent and critical reports due to the prevailing atmosphere of repression and suppression. Unconditional adherence to Taliban policies is a prerequisite for the activity of the media and the press in Afghanistan, and also, based on the issued decrees, the publication of any report and analytical program is subject to the coordination and prior permission of the Directorates of Information and Culture. This department has also ordered the media to invite the Taliban in their analytical programs instead of critical and independent experts.¹²

But the Taliban, as mentioned, do not tolerate any kind of protest or criticism and seek revenge on their critics. However, since August 2021, many people have been arrested, tortured, and even killed for criticizing and freely expressing their beliefs and thoughts and pursuing civil demands. The officials of the Islamic Emirate of the Taliban have repeatedly said that expressing any critical view of the current situation and talking about problems and disorders is considered damaging to the reputation and status of the Islamic Emirate and, therefore, deserves punishment. They have considered opposition to themselves as forbidden and even killing opponents as obligatory.

As Maulvi Nada Mohammad Nadeem, the former Taliban governor for Kabul, had said, they will spare no effort to eliminate opponents and protesters of the Islamic Emirate's policies.¹³

The Taliban have imposed extensive and illegal restrictions on the presence and role of women in the media. In some parts of the country, a limited number of women are allowed to work with some media outlets under the conditions set by the Amr-e-Maruf administration. Wearing a black mask and observing the Taliban's hijab are among the first prerequisites for women to work in the media. In addition, female journalists are not allowed to co-host programs with their male colleagues, conduct interviews with Taliban officials or participate in public programs in some provinces, including press conferences, as reporters.¹⁴

On the other hand, as a result of the discriminatory policies of the ruling group, a large number of female journalists have lost their jobs, of which only a few have been able to continue working in many parts of the country, subject to strict conditions imposed by the Office of the Virtue. In some provinces, women not only do not have the right to work in the media and press but they are even prohibited from broadcasting their voices.

⁹. Mohammadi, Fatima, The Second Taliban Reign: Human Rights and America's Responsibility, p18-20

¹⁰. (ALEP), An Introduction to the Constitutional Law of Afghanistan, p205

¹¹. Danish sarwar, fundamental rights of Afghanistan, 2010, p354-355.

¹². (RAWADARI), The status of access to information and freedom of expression in Afghanistan, 2024, p16

¹³. (RAWADARI), The status of access to information and freedom of expression in Afghanistan, 2024, p19

¹⁴. (RAWADARI), The status of access to information and freedom of expression in Afghanistan, 2024, p15

However, the Taliban are not accountable for the current situation and the countless challenges they have created, and with each passing day, they are imposing stricter regulations to implement restrictions on the right to access information and the right to freedom of expression.

SECURITY CHALLENGES:

In relation to state security, the government is a two-faced institution. This institution is responsible for ensuring the security of society from the traditional realist (Locke) and idealist (Hobbes) perspectives but considering historical experiences, it can be concluded that providing security is merely the positive existence of the state's function, but at the same time this institution can manifest itself as a negative function and become the most dangerous enemy of security. Therefore, the question is how to define and institutionalize security so that governments cannot use it as a factor of oppression. In any case, security has always been one of the essential concerns of human life, and the very construction of the state, which is of great importance, has been proposed in order to ensure the ultimate security of the people, that is, the state. It is a means, and security is a goal. The reason for this importance lies in the value of survival because survival is the priority for human beings, and the human individual has attempted to establish a socio-political government to escape destruction and desire survival.¹⁵

The Taliban's military takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021 nearly ended 43 years of war and conflict that had reached its peak as US forces prepared to withdraw. As the former insurgents took power, the world's attention initially focused on the humanitarian disaster and economic collapse. Few outsiders noticed the dramatic changes in the security situation, including a rapid decline in violence on a scale Afghans had never seen in their lifetimes. Afghans were undoubtedly aware of this change, accustomed to the sound of death and destruction that claimed 20,000 to 40,000 war casualties almost every year, far more than the US-led airstrikes in Syria, Yemen, Iraq and elsewhere in the world for several years. After the Taliban took power, hospital emergency rooms were suddenly empty of Afghans wounded and cut by explosions and shrapnel. According to a United Nations report in early 2022, war casualties had fallen by 18 percent compared to previous levels. Another comparison is the first ten months of Taliban rule, which showed a five-fold decrease in the number of weekly battles, explosions and other forms of violence compared to the same period a year earlier (as shown in Figure 1).¹⁶

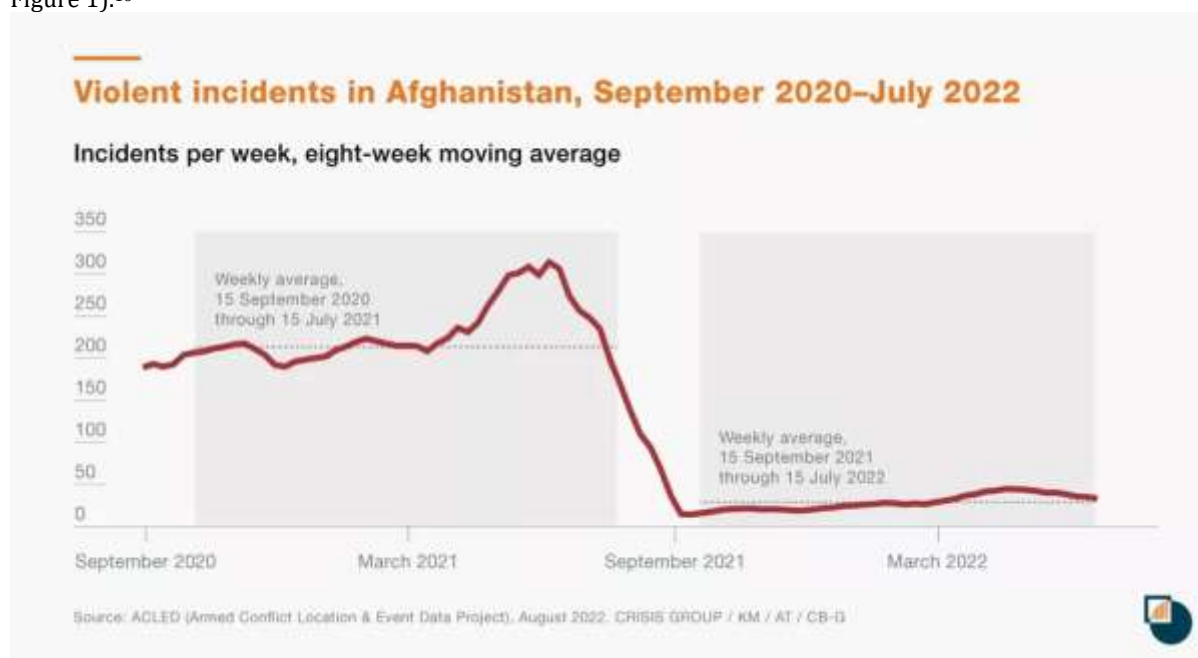


Figure 1: Total violent incidents in Afghanistan, September 2020 – July 2022.

After the Taliban seized power in August 2021 and called an end to its military offensive against Afghan Government forces in early September, levels of violence in the country decreased significantly, including the number of civilian casualties sustained. The UN estimated that by the end of 2021, armed clashes in the country had fallen by 98% compared to the previous year. However, serious security concerns remain, increasing speculation about the Taliban's ability to maintain control in the longer term.

Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic and predominantly tribal society, and pockets of violence continue to exist as the Taliban struggles to combat the Islamic State affiliate group, Islamic State– Khorasan Province (IS-KP or IS-K),

¹⁵ Elham Hussin khani, Afghan Security and the Issue of Taliban Resurgence, p 8

¹⁶ . International Crisis Group, Security challenges in Afghanistan under Taliban rule, 2022, p8.

which has a presence in Kabul and in the east of the country, and several armed militant groups opposed to Taliban rule.

The number of armed groups opposed to the Taliban is reported to be increasing, although there is little information on their size and capabilities. In June 2022, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan estimated that a dozen such groups were operating across 18 provinces.

The most active and visible group is the National Resistance Front (NRF), which links to the old Northern Alliance that opposed the Taliban in the late 1990s. It also has the support of several former members of the Afghan Government. As part of the Doha Agreement (PDF) signed in February 2020, the Taliban committed to not allowing members of the Taliban or other groups, including Al Qaida, to use Afghan soil to threaten the US or its allies. This included preventing recruiting, training, and fundraising for such activities.

Shortly after regaining power, Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid told a news conference on September 6, 2021, that concerns over foreign militants or individuals linked to Al Qaida being present in Afghanistan were "misplaced" and "expressed for the sake of propaganda only". He went on to claim that Al Qaida had no presence in Afghanistan, a denial the Taliban have continued to make.¹⁷

ECONOMY AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES UNDER THE TALIBAN REGIME:

Although Afghanistan suffered from significant human, physical, economic, and social damage during the two decades of the Taliban insurgency, the influx of financial and security assistance, along with the enormous international military spending that had been made in the country, appeared to strengthen the service sector in particular and the economy in general. During this time, Afghanistan experienced significant improvements in human development indicators, such as health and education. The end of widespread violence in Afghanistan after August 2021 had positive effects on Afghan security. But the economic "peace dividend" that would naturally be expected at the end of a civil war (especially in a situation where one side of the conflict, such as the Taliban, can achieve a decisive victory), was overshadowed by a series of other shocks. The most damaging shock to Afghanistan was the sudden cessation of financial aid (an amount of \$8 billion per year, equivalent to almost 40 percent of GDP) and the cessation of international military spending in Afghanistan. In the meantime, issues such as the freezing of more than \$9 billion in Afghan foreign exchange reserves (of which \$7 billion was held in the United States), the initial collapse of the banking system, and the interruption of regular financial transactions with the rest of the world exacerbated the economic collapse. No country has managed such large shocks without suffering a significant economic collapse. Afghanistan has been no exception - Afghanistan experienced a sharp 21% decline in its GDP in 2021. A further 6% decline in 2022, with no significant improvement in 2023, and only modest growth is forecast for 2024 and 2025. This situation has resulted in unemployment, damage to livelihoods, widespread poverty in the country, and the dependence of many people on humanitarian aid.

Despite extensive international humanitarian support since the Afghan government collapsed in August 2021, economic conditions in Afghanistan remain dismal. According to the UN, the Afghan economy stabilized after the initial months of free fall that followed the Taliban takeover. Still, it has since been functioning at a much lower equilibrium. The economy contracted by an estimated 20% since August 2021, potentially losing as many as 700,000 jobs. Some 25 million Afghans are now impoverished, with the overall population poorer and more vulnerable to privation, hunger, and disease. A US Institute for Peace analyst warned there is "no prospect for the economy to resume high growth, let alone recover to pre-2021 levels in the foreseeable future. The World Bank reported that labour demand remained relatively stagnant with some regional variations and that employment opportunities remain mostly seasonal and agriculture-related. Work availability for skilled workers (such as carpenters, electricians, masons, painters, plumbers, and tile workers) increased marginally in July. For unskilled workers, it declined slightly from its peak in May 2022 due to the end of the harvest season in most of the country. While labour demand declined in some provinces—including Badakhshan, Balkh, Farah, Herat, and Khost—it increased in some central-northern provinces. Nominal wages are slowly recovering but remain lower than pre-August 2021 levels. However, real wages are declining due to high inflation, decreasing the affordability of essential household consumer goods. Rising global food and energy prices and the impact of the ongoing drought on agricultural production continue to drive inflation. According to the World Bank, year-on-year (Y-O-Y) price increases include a 55% cost increase for diesel, a 33% increase for high-quality rice, a 31% increase for sugar, a 42% increase for wheat, a 16% increase for pulses; and a 28% increase in the cost of bread. Overall inflation for essential household goods, including food and fuel items, rose by 31.5% Y-O-Y in August, a drop from 43% Y-O-Y in July 2022. Recent price statistics published by Afghanistan's National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA) for July 2022 show headline consumer price index inflation at 18.3%, mainly driven by 25% Y-O-Y inflation in the food segment. Non-food segment Y-O-Y inflation for June 2022 was recorded at 11.6%. While prices constrain household consumption rates, survey data show a general availability of basic food and non-food items in the markets.¹⁸

¹⁷ . Claire Mills, Philip Loft, Matt Ward, Philip Brien, Afghanistan: One year under a Taliban government, 2022, p20

¹⁸ . SIGAR, QUARTERLY REPORT Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction OCT 30 2022,

After the Taliban regained power in August 2021, they removed women from government offices and imposed strict regulations on women's employment. With the Taliban in power, women were forced to leave their jobs. The Taliban have also banned women from working in non-governmental organizations. Over the past two years, the group has also dismissed female teachers from boys' schools.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan's economy has been facing serious problems for the second consecutive year since the Taliban returned to power. A senior Taliban leader recently admitted that Afghanistan is facing severe economic hardship due to widespread sanctions and the Taliban's lack of recognition by the international community. The United Nations wrote in its recent report, citing data from 2022, that 34 million people, equivalent to about 86 percent of the total Afghan population, are currently living below the poverty line (Afghanistan International). <https://www.afintl.com/202312132016>.

Also, 350,000 people working within the Afghan security forces were laid off. In addition, all women working in government institutions were suddenly sent home. In December 2022, the Taliban issued a decree suspending the work of all women working in non-governmental institutions. One hundred fifty non-governmental organizations with hundreds of employees also stopped all or part of their activities.

Meanwhile, the United Nations announced that the restrictions on women's work would cause more than \$1 billion in losses to the Afghan economy and reduce the country's gross domestic product by five percent. The UN Secretary-General stated in this regard: "80 percent of the Afghan economy depends in some way on the role of women. Without them, there is no way for the Afghan economy and society to grow. I strongly urge the Taliban to uphold their commitments to women and girls and to fulfil their responsibilities under international human rights law and human rights law."

The Taliban's strict laws and practices, particularly regarding work restrictions for women, have had a negative impact on international aid to Afghanistan and have pushed the country's economy to the brink of collapse.

This year, the World Food Programme reported that 20 million people in Afghanistan go to bed hungry, and four million children and women are at risk of malnutrition and death (AMU TV). <https://amu.tv/fa/61204/>.

But, according to reports from international organizations and experts on Afghanistan, the plight of Afghans has worsened in the past two years, with the economic situation deteriorating and malnutrition rates rising. Women's rights are being curtailed, migration and internal displacement continue, and the health care system is collapsing, they say (BBC). <https://www.bbc.com/persian/articles/crg7g0q7rpyo>

CONCLUSION

The US-Taliban peace agreement signed in Doha on February 29, 2020, represented a significant step in ending a decades-long conflict, yet its execution has led to complex consequences. While the deal facilitated the withdrawal of US forces and an initial reduction in violence, it ultimately resulted in the Taliban's return to power, reversing many of Afghanistan's democratic and human rights gains. The agreement sidelined the Afghan government, weakening its authority and emboldening the Taliban, who failed to uphold key commitments such as severing ties with terrorist organizations and engaging in genuine intra-Afghan dialogue. The aftermath of the Taliban's takeover in August 2021 has been marked by severe human rights abuses, particularly against women and the media, economic devastation, and deteriorating security conditions due to the presence of rival militant groups. The international community's mixed reactions to the agreement reflect both hopes for stability and skepticism over its long-term viability. While the deal momentarily reduced violence, Afghanistan's current humanitarian and economic crisis raises concerns about the actual effectiveness of the agreement. Ultimately, the Doha Agreement may be seen as a strategic miscalculation—offering short-term political gains but exacerbating long-term instability.

While the Doha Agreement was intended to be a step toward peace, it ultimately led Afghanistan into more profound instability and suffering. The withdrawal of US forces, the fall of the Afghan government, and the Taliban's rule have erased years of progress. Afghanistan is now more isolated, impoverished, and vulnerable than before. Rather than achieving peace and prosperity, the country has regressed into political uncertainty, human rights abuses, security threats, and economic disaster.

However, rather than leading to lasting peace and stability, the agreement accelerated the country's decline into political chaos, human rights violations, economic collapse, and security concerns. Based on the developments following the agreement, it is clear that Afghanistan has taken two steps backwards rather than one step forward.