



ASIA MAIOR

Vol. XXXII / 2021

Asia in 2021: In the grip of global and local crises

Edited by
Michelguglielmo Torri
Filippo Boni
Diego Maiorano

viella



CENTRO STUDI PER I POPOLI EXTRA-EUROPEI “CESARE BONACOSSA” - UNIVERSITÀ DI PAVIA

ASIA MAIOR

The Journal of the Italian think tank on Asia founded by Giorgio Borsa in 1989

Vol. XXXII / 2021

Asia in 2021: In the grip of global and local crises

Edited by
Michelguglielmo Torri
Filippo Boni
Diego Maiorano

viella

Asia Maior. The Journal of the Italian Think Tank on Asia founded by Giorgio Borsa in 1989.

Copyright © 2022 - Viella s.r.l. & Associazione Asia Maior

ISBN 978-88-3313-827-5 (Paper) ISBN 978-88-3313-828-2 (Online)

ISSN 2385-2526 (Paper) ISSN 2612-6680 (Online)

Annual journal - Vol. XXXII, 2021

This journal is published jointly by the think tank Asia Maior (Associazione Asia Maior) & the CSPE - Centro Studi per i Popoli extra-europei «Cesare Bonacossa», University of Pavia

Asia Maior: The Journal of the Italian Think Tank on Asia founded by Giorgio Borsa in 1989 is an open-access journal, whose issues and single articles can be freely downloaded from the think tank webpage: www.asiamaior.org.

The reference year is the one on which the analyses of the volume are focused. Each *Asia Maior* volume is always published in the year following the one indicated on the cover.

Paper version	Italy	€ 50.00	Abroad	€ 65.00
Subscription	abbonamenti@viella.it www.viella.it			

EDITORIAL BOARD

Editor-in-chief (direttore responsabile):

Michलगuglielmo Torri, University of Turin.

Co-editors:

Filippo Boni, The Open University.

Diego Maiorano, The University of Naples «L'Orientale».

Associate editors:

Axel Berkofsky, University of Pavia;

Giulio Pugliese, King's College London;

Emanuela Mangiarotti, University of Pavia;

Pierluigi Valsecchi, University of Pavia.

Consulting editors:

Elisabetta Basile, University of Rome «Sapienza»;

Kerry Brown, King's College London;

Peter Brian Ramsay Carey, Oxford University;

Rosa Caroli, University of Venice;

Jaewoo Choo, Kyung Hee University (Seoul, South Korea);

Jamie Seth Davidson, National University of Singapore;

Ritu Dewan, Indian Association for Women Studies;

Laura De Giorgi, University of Venice;

Kevin Hewison, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill;
Lucia Husenicova, University Matej Bel (Banská Bystrica, Slovakia);
David C. Kang, Maria Crutcher Professor of International Relations, University of Southern California;
Rohit Karki, Kathmandu School of Law;
Jeff Kingston, Temple University – Japan Campus;
Mirjam Künkler, Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study – Uppsala;
Noemi Lanna, University of Naples «L'Orientale»;
James Manor, School of Advanced Studies – University of London;
Aditya Mukherjee, Jawaharlal Nehru University;
Mridula Mukherjee, Jawaharlal Nehru University;
Parimala Rao, University of Delhi;
Guido Samarani, University of Venice;
Marisa Siddivò, University of Naples «L'Orientale»;
Eswaran Sridharan, Institute for the Advanced Study of India, University of Pennsylvania;
Arun Swamy, University of Guam;
Akio Takahara, University of Tokyo;
Edsel Tupaz, Harvard University alumnus, Ateneo de Manila University and Far Eastern University;
Sten Widmalm, Uppsala University;
Ather Zia, University of Northern Colorado;

Book reviews editors:

Francesca Congiu, University of Cagliari;
Oliviero Frattolillo, University Roma Tre.
Michelguglielmo Torri, University of Turin.

Graphic project:

Nicola Mocchi, University of Florence.

Before being published in *Asia Maior*, all articles, whether commissioned or unsolicited, after being first evaluated by the Journal's editors, are then submitted to a double-blind peer review involving up to three anonymous referees. Coherently with the spirit of the double-blind peer review process, *Asia Maior* does not make public the name of the reviewers. However, the reviewers' names – and, if need be, the whole correspondence between the journal's editors and the reviewer/s – can be disclosed to interested institutions, upon a formal request made directly to the Editor in Chief of the journal.

Articles meant for publication should be sent to Michelguglielmo Torri (mg. torri@gmail.com), Filippo Boni (filippo.boni@open.ac.uk), Diego Maiorano (dmaiorano@unior.it); book reviews should be sent to Michelguglielmo Torri (mg.torri@gmail.com).



ASSOCIAZIONE ASIA MAIOR

Steering Committee: Filippo Boni, Marzia Casolari, Matteo Fumagalli, Michelguglielmo Torri (President).

Scientific Board: Guido Abbattista (Università di Trieste), Domenico Amirante (Università «Federico II», Napoli), Elisabetta Basile (Università «La Sapienza», Roma), Luigi Bonanate (Università di Torino), Claudio Cecchi (Università «La Sapienza», Roma), Alessandro Colombo (Università di Milano), Anton Giulio Maria de Robertis (Università di Bari), Thierry Di Costanzo (Université de Strasbourg), Max Guderzo (Università di Firenze), Franco Mazzei (Università «L'Orientale», Napoli), Giorgio Milanetti (Università «La Sapienza», Roma), Paolo Puddinu (Università di Sassari), Adriano Rossi (Università «L'Orientale», Napoli), Giuseppe Sacco (Università «Roma Tre», Roma), Guido Samarani (Università «Ca' Foscari», Venezia), Filippo Sabetti (McGill University, Montréal), Gianni Vaggi (Università di Pavia), Alberto Ventura (Università della Calabria).



CSPE - Centro Studi per i Popoli extra-europei
«Cesare Bonacossa» - Università di Pavia

Steering Committee: Axel Berkofsky, Arturo Colombo, Antonio Morone, Giulia Rossolillo, Gianni Vaggi, Pierluigi Valsecchi (President), Massimo Zaccaria.



viella

libreria editrice

via delle Alpi, 32

I-00198 ROMA

tel. 06 84 17 758

fax 06 85 35 39 60

www.viella.it

CONTENTS

9	Nicola Mocci (22 September 1969 – 29 January 2022)
11	MICHELUGUGLIELMO TORRI, <i>Asia Maior in 2021: Pandemic crisis; US-China confrontation; authoritarian involution</i>
39	SILVIA MENEGAZZI, <i>China 2021: Coping with the resilience dilemma of the Chinese model</i>
63	GIULIO PUGLIESE & COREY WALLACE, <i>Japan 2021: The Liberal Democratic Party emerges stronger despite domestic tumult</i>
95	MARCO MILANI, <i>Korean peninsula 2021: Managing the crisis and adapting to the new situation</i>
125	AURELIO INSISA, <i>Taiwan 2021: Heightened geo-economic relevance amid rising cross-strait tensions</i>
153	MIGUEL ENRICO G. AYSON & LARA GIANINA S. REYES, <i>The Philippines 2021: Populist legacy and looming uncertainties</i>
171	BOIKE REHBEIN, <i>Laos 2017-2021: Revival of the subsistence ethic</i>
191	CAROLINE BENNETT, <i>Cambodia 2018-2021: From democracy to autocracy</i>
221	EMANUELA MANGIAROTTI, <i>Malaysia 2021: A widening political legitimacy crisis</i>
237	EDOARDO SIANI, <i>Thailand 2019-2021: Military, monarchy, protests</i>
259	MATTEO FUMAGALLI, <i>Myanmar 2021: Repression and resistance in a multi-cornered conflict</i>
277	SILVIA TIERI, <i>Bangladesh 2021: The year of the golden jubilee and the second wave of pandemic</i>
297	DIEGO MAIORANO, <i>India 2021: Politics amid the pandemic</i>
329	DIEGO ABENANTE, <i>Sri Lanka 2021: From pandemic emergency to political and economic crisis</i>
347	MARCO CORSI, <i>Pakistan 2021: In pursuit of a pivotal role in post-pandemic South Asia</i>
375	FILIPPO BONI, <i>Afghanistan 2021: US withdrawal, the Taliban return and regional geopolitics</i>
393	LUCIANO ZACCARA, <i>Iran 2021: The year of transition</i>
417	CARLO FRAPPI, <i>Azerbaijan 2021: Towards a new beginning?</i>
445	<i>Reviews</i>
471	<i>Appendix</i>

AFGHANISTAN 2021: US WITHDRAWAL, THE TALIBAN RETURN
AND REGIONAL GEOPOLITICS

Filippo Boni

The Open University
filippo.boni@open.ac.uk

Afghanistan in 2021 was characterised by the withdrawal of US troops and by the sudden fall of Kabul to the Taliban in August. After 20 years of war, and US\$ 2.3 trillion spent in the conflict, the US was eventually out of Afghanistan and the Taliban back in power. The latter's ability on the battleground did not translate in the capacity to govern the country, whose population suffered a dramatic deterioration in living conditions, also due to the freezing of assets and cuts in international aid following the Taliban takeover. Hopes that the Taliban had become a moderate force were dashed by the new cabinet announcement. Rather than being representative of the Afghan social fabric, the cabinet did not include any women and was mostly formed by Pashtuns, to the neglect of other Afghan ethnic groups. The international relations of Afghanistan under the new Islamic regime saw Pakistan, China and Russia increasing their influence, amid concerns that instability in the country could have significant repercussions on their domestic politics. Among the regional players, India is the one that has been weakened more significantly by the American exit and the return of the Taliban.

KEYWORDS – Taliban government; Afghanistan Papers; China-Afghanistan relations; Pakistan-Afghanistan relations; humanitarian crisis.

1. Introduction

The fall of Kabul to the Taliban on 15 August 2021 was without doubt the most significant development which characterised Afghanistan in the year under examination. Images of the militant group seizing the presidential palace made the headlines around the world. As the Taliban arrived at the gates of the Afghan capital, President Ashraf Ghani and Vice President Amrullah Saleh fled the country. In just 10 days, the Taliban went from taking their first provincial capital to gaining control of Kabul. The capitulation of Afghanistan's main city, alongside the speed at which the country's main institutions – the presidency and the Afghan National Army (ANA) above all – collapsed, caught many observers, as well as US administration officials, by surprise. It should not have. For those who have followed Afghanistan's political developments closely, these events could have been largely anticipated. In 2020 only, there were clear signs of a very fragile situation; these included: the Doha agreement between the US and the Taliban, which

reflected America's weak position at the negotiating table; the stalled intra-Afghan reconciliation process between the US-backed Afghan government and the Taliban; endless political infighting between President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, highlighted by two separate inauguration ceremonies of March 2020.¹ In such a fragmented and weak political landscape, worsened by the quick and chaotic withdrawal of the US forces, a Taliban ascent to power was only a matter of time.

To understand how such a quick Taliban takeover was possible, it is not only necessary to delve into the events in 2021, but also to take a deeper look at some of the root causes of American failure in Afghanistan. To this end, this article draws on a wealth of archival sources, first published by *The Washington Post* in December 2019, which later became known as the «Afghanistan Papers». These are a collection of 611 interviews conducted by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) on the US war in Afghanistan, including those with high-level US and Afghan officials. They shed unique and unprecedented light on the shortcomings and failures of the American approach to its longest conflict, and are key to provide some explanations behind the unravelling of the US-led effort in Afghanistan and the dramatic return of the Taliban to power in 2021.

This article proceeds as follows: section 2 looks at the US's withdrawal from Afghanistan and it analyses the causes behind the sudden return of the Taliban; the latter's campaign to regain control of the country and the disastrous humanitarian and economic crises that affected Afghanistan are treated in sections 3 and 4, respectively. Section 5 discusses how key regional players such as Pakistan, China, Russia and India have approached the Taliban revival in Kabul. A brief conclusion wraps up the article.

2. *The US in Afghanistan: causes of failure and the final withdrawal*

«The history of military conflict in Afghanistan [has] been one of initial success, followed by long years of floundering and ultimate failure. We're not going to repeat that mistake».² With these words, pronounced by George W. Bush in April 2002, during a speech at the Virginia Military Institute, the then US President was clearly trying to set the US on a different course from other great powers.³ At the time, Bush's optimism was justified. By April 2002, the Taliban forces had been reduced to very small numbers and their presence significantly weakened across the country. The Bonn Agreement,

1. Filippo Boni, 'Afghanistan 2020: The US-Taliban peace deal, intra-Afghan talks and regional implications', *Asia Maior*, Vol. XXXI/2020, pp. 465-478.

2. Craig Whitlock, 'At war with the truth', *The Washington Post*, 9 December 2019.

3. Both the British in the late 19th century and the Soviet Union in the 1980s, embarked in attempts to bring Afghanistan under their control and ultimately failed in their military campaigns.

signed on 5 December 2001, provided a roadmap for an inclusive government. From a military standpoint, the invasion had achieved its objective of toppling the Taliban, and the US-led coalition had a relatively light footprint in the country, with 7,200 US troops as of March 2002.⁴ In this context, the return of the Taliban in August 2021, facilitated by the disintegration of the Afghan state as envisioned and supported by the US and its allies, appears all the more striking. A number of explanations, ranging from rampant corruption to the attempts to impose a Western-style form of government, have been advanced to explain the failure to stabilise the country and the overall fragility of state institutions. While it is beyond the scope of this article to address all of these explanations in depth, it is important to survey the most prominent among them, as they help understand the return of the Taliban in 2021.

To start with, some analysts identify the root cause of America's problems in the decision to exclude the Taliban from the political arrangements reached through the Bonn Agreement. According to Barnett Rubin, former senior adviser to the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan in the US Department of State between 2009 and 2013, the original sin was the rejection by then US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld of a political agreement between Karzai and what remained of the Taliban leadership in 2001. At a time in which the Taliban were weak and defeated, including them in the political process to establish a stable government would have signified having the Taliban on board «in proportion to their true numbers and influence (small, but real) in the drafting and implementation of the constitution».⁵

Another explanation points to what Rory Stewart – former British Army officer and, in 2019, UK's secretary of State for International Development – defined «an obsession with universal plans and extensive resources».⁶ As this line of argument goes, the US failure is to be ascribed to the desire to export systems of government and institutions modelled on the Western paradigm of liberal democracy.

A similar critique emerged clearly from a number of interviews published in the «Afghanistan Papers». A former State Department official, for instance, argued that the US policy in Afghanistan was «to create a strong central government» noting how this was «idiotic because Afghanistan does not have a history of a strong central government. [...] The timeframe for

4. 'A timeline of U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan since 2001', *Military Times*, 6 July 2016.

5. Barnett Rubin, 'The Once And Future Defeat In Afghanistan', *War On The Rocks*, 1 November 2021.

6. Rory Stewart, 'The Last Days of Intervention', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 100, No. 6, 2021, pp. 60-73.

creating a strong central government is 100 years. Which we didn't have». ⁷ Along similar lines, a retired US diplomat observed that the US were «trying to build systematic government a la Washington, DC [...] in a country that doesn't operate that way». He went on further to say that «this idea that we went in with that this was going to become a state government like a U.S. state or something like that was just wrong and is what condemned us to 15 years of war instead of 2 or 3». ⁸

The «Afghanistan papers» also foregrounded how corruption played a key role in making state institutions extremely vulnerable and fragile. Christopher Kolenda, former strategic adviser to three US commanders in Afghanistan, noted how the US «never came to grips with [...] kleptocracy. And by 2006, Afghanistan had self-organized into a kleptocracy [...] where senior positions were purchased for a price». He continued arguing that «foreign aid is part of how they [the Afghans] get rents to pay for the positions they purchased». ⁹

Blaming Afghans for corruption was a widespread narrative but, as Barnett Rubin reminds us, «the basic assumption was that corruption is an Afghan problem and we are the solution. But there is one indispensable ingredient for corruption – money – and we were the ones who had money». ¹⁰ Such a view is echoed by other officials interviewed, who observed how in late 2005 it became clear that there was going to be no improvement unless corruption was dealt with. According to Doug Wankel, former director of the counternarcotics task force at US embassy in Kabul, the «US created a lot of millionaires and multi-millionaires since its intervention». ¹¹

Another important explanation emerging from the more than 2,000 pages of interviews and memos published by *The Washington Post* is the lack of clarity in the aims of the mission. Records of an interview with Douglas Lute, former US ambassador to NATO and Army lieutenant general, are particularly revealing. In Lute's words, «we [the US] didn't have the foggiest

7. Afghanistan Papers, Former State Department official, Lessons Learned interview, 7 October 2015 (https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=background_ll_01_xx_dc_07102015).

8. Richard Boucher, Lessons Learned interview, 15 October 2015 (https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=boucher_richard_ll_01_b9_10152015).

9. Christopher Kolenda, Lessons Learned interview, 4 May 2016 (https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=background_ll_03_xx_dc_04052016).

10. Barnett Rubin, Lesson Learned Interview, 20 January 2015.

11. Doug Wankel, Lessons Learned interview, 4/19/2016 (https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=background_ll_04_xx2_04192016).

notion of what we were undertaking». ¹² Similarly, Ryan Crocker, former US ambassador to Afghanistan, noted that in the early days «we didn't know what the task was [...] what the US was there to do, and [...] there was [...] in those early months, significant differences in view, in Washington, as to whether we should embark on a long term nation building effort or whether we wanted to keep our role and our agenda very minimal». ¹³ Nonetheless, it was not just in the early days that things lacked clarity. Dan McNeill, commander of US forces in Afghanistan, (2002-2003) and of NATO forces (2007-2008), declared that he «tried to get someone to define for me what winning meant, even before I went over, and nobody could. Nobody would give me a good definition of what it meant». ¹⁴ These final remarks are particularly interesting if put into context with the words that President Joe Biden pronounced in July 2021. In his view, «the United States did what we went to do in Afghanistan: to get the terrorists who attacked us on 9/11 and to deliver justice to Osama Bin Laden, and to degrade the terrorist threat to keep Afghanistan from becoming a base from which attacks could be continued against the United States. We achieved those objectives. That's why we went». ¹⁵ Even if assessed exclusively on this aspect – that is securing US interests by preventing Afghanistan from becoming a terrorist hotbed – US' mission has fallen short. A report for the UN Security Council published in early 2022 noted how al-Qā'idah «received a significant boost following the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021, as some of its closest sympathizers within the Taliban now occupy senior positions in the new de facto Afghan administration». ¹⁶ The report further added that «terrorist groups enjoy greater freedom there than at any time in recent history». ¹⁷

Overall, the Biden administration displayed a high degree of continuity with the policies implemented under Donald J. Trump. During the latter's presidency, the US signed a withdrawal deal with the Taliban in Febru-

12. Afghanistan Papers, Douglas Lute, Lessons Learned interview, 20 February 2015

(https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=lute_doug_ll_01_d5_02202015).

13. Afghanistan Papers, Ryan Crocker, Lessons Learned interview, 11 January 2016 (https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=crocker_ryan_ll_first_interview_01112016).

14. Afghanistan Papers, Dan McNeill, Lessons Learned interview, no date available, accessed: 16 February 2022 (https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/documents-database/?document=background_ll_07_xx_xx_undated_mcnell1).

15. The White House, 'Remarks by President Biden on the Drawdown of U.S. Forces in Afghanistan', 8 July 2021.

16. UN Security Council, Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, *Twenty-ninth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2368 (2017) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities*, 3 February 2022.

17. *Ibid.*

ary 2020, which stipulated that US forces would withdraw from Afghanistan by 31 May 2021, in return for some counterterrorism assurances from the Taliban.¹⁸ The Biden administration chose to delay the withdrawal date to 31 August 2021, but it did not reverse this decision.

Views differ as to whether a different course of action could have prevented such a rapid capitulation of Afghanistan. According to some analysts, the Biden administration could have decided to ignore the deal with the Taliban and to retain several thousand troops in order to oversee the intra-Afghan reconciliation process and, ultimately, to facilitate a peace agreement.¹⁹ The proponents of this option contend that the minimal costs of retaining such a force would have far outweighed the security risks associated with Afghanistan's collapse.²⁰ By contrast, President Biden was convinced that retaining a small military presence in Afghanistan would have not been enough to prevent the Taliban from regaining control of the country. As he put it, «nearly 20 years of experience has shown us that the current security situation only confirms that 'just one more year' of fighting in Afghanistan is not a solution but a recipe for being there indefinitely».²¹

Regardless of the different viewpoints, the Taliban establishing their new cabinet around 11 September 2021 carried an extremely powerful symbolism. 20 years since the attack on the Twin Towers shocked the Western world, and after having spent 2.3 trillion dollars in the conflict,²² the US was out of Afghanistan and the Taliban were again in control of the country.

3. *The Taliban's (re)ascent to power: from combat operations to the first cabinet*

There were two key phases that defined the Taliban offensive towards Kabul. The first phase, roughly between May and July, saw the Taliban progressively gaining territory; the second one, in the first 15 days of August, led to the capitulation of Afghanistan's capital and the surrender of the Western-backed government. During the first phase, Taliban attacks began to intensify in May, with fighting occurring between the Taliban and Afghan National Forces (ANA) in the southern province of Helmand.²³ Districts in the Wardak province near Kabul were also seized by insurgents. In June, fighting was

18. Filippo Boni, 'Afghanistan 2020: The US-Taliban peace deal'.

19. 'Afghanistan Study Group Final Report', *United States Institute of Peace*, February 2021.

20. 'The Afghanistan Withdrawal: Military and Defense Implications', *Congressional Research Service*, 17th August 2021.

21. The White House, 'Remarks by President Biden on the Drawdown of U.S. Forces in Afghanistan'.

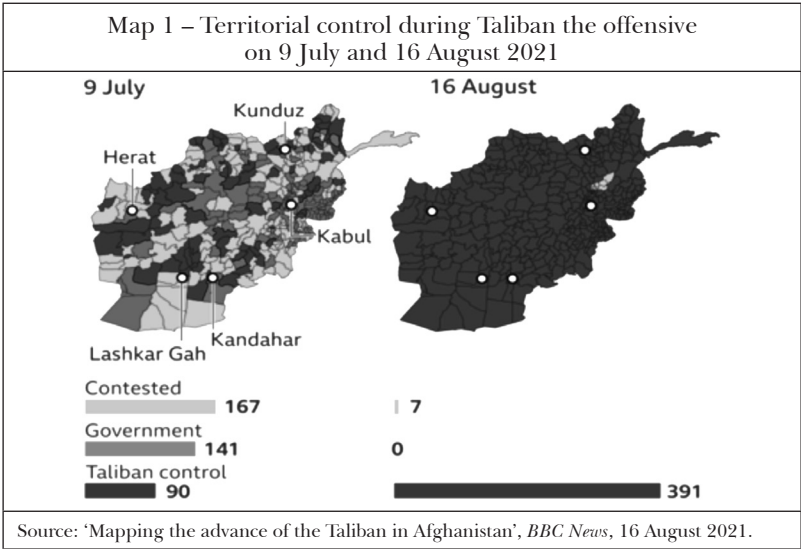
22. Brown University, *Costs of War Project* (<https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/>).

23. Claire Brader, 'Timeline of Taliban offensive in Afghanistan', *House of Lords Library*, 17 August 2021.

taking place in 26 out of the 34 Afghan provinces and the United Nations Afghan envoy, Deborah Lyons, claimed that insurgents had taken more than 50 of the 370 districts since the previous month.²⁴ A further acceleration of the Taliban advance came in early July, as US forces withdrew from their main military base at Bagram. A number of cities across the country, including Herat and Kandahar, witnessed intense fighting between the Taliban and ANA. By this time, it was clear that the Taliban had the upper hand, which led to increasing desertions in the ANA as it was becoming increasingly difficult for Afghan regular forces to keep the Taliban's advance in check.

The second phase started in the first days of August, and saw a progressive escalation of violence. By 8 August, the Taliban had carried out a sweeping offensive through northern Afghanistan in a bid to encircle Kabul. Kunduz City, an area in northern Afghanistan which has routes to major cities including Kabul, was reported to have been largely in insurgent control by this date. The cities of Herat and Kandahar fell to Taliban control by 13 August with Mazar-i-Sharif following suit on 14 August. The day after, the Taliban entered Kabul.

The map below provides a visual representation of the changes in district control between early July and mid-August, and it shows how the Taliban went from controlling 90 districts in July, to having almost the entire country under their rule within a month.



24. 'UN Afghan envoy Deborah Lyons alarmed at Taliban gains', *BBC News*, 22 June 2021.

After having taken control of the capital and most of the country in mid-August, it took the Taliban a little over three weeks to announce the first cabinet of their caretaker government on 7 September 2021.²⁵ This was followed by other two rounds of appointments on 21 September and 4 October, which completed the cabinet.²⁶ Amid calls from the international community for an inclusive government representing the country's ethnic makeup and recognising women's role in Afghanistan, unsurprisingly the Taliban's cabinet was mostly composed by Pashtuns and had no women sitting on it. Most of the new appointments were already involved in running the country during the previous stint (1996-2001) in power, including the acting prime minister, Mohammad Hasan Akhund, and the acting foreign minister, Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi.²⁷ Hopes that the Taliban of the 21st century would be a more inclusive version of the one seen between 1996 and 2001 were therefore quickly dashed.

4. *Economic and humanitarian crises*

The Taliban's ability on the battlefield did not translate into a comparable ability to run the country. The militants grappled with a series of social and economic crises, including a freefalling economy and a devastating humanitarian crisis. From an economic standpoint, one of the very first reactions to the Taliban's takeover was the freezing of most international aid to the country. Billions of dollars of development assistance stopped flowing into Afghanistan in a matter of days, leaving the country de facto isolated financially. The US Treasury froze about US\$ 9 billion of Afghanistan's central bank reserves; the International Monetary Fund (IMF) suspended Afghanistan's access to financial support until the Taliban are recognised by the international community as the legitimate political authority; the World Bank paused its disbursements to Afghanistan.²⁸ This lack of external support is particularly significant for a country whose public spending in 2019 was financed for more than 75% by foreign aid.²⁹ Cut off from international aid and assistance, Afghanistan's already fragile economy plummeted. In December 2021, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator defined the Afghan

25. 'Taliban announces new government in Afghanistan', *Al-Jazeera*, 7 September 2021.

26. For a full list of cabinet appointments, see Martine van Bijlert, 'The Taliban's Caretaker Cabinet and other Senior Appointments', *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 7 October 2021.

27. 'Who are the men leading the Taliban's new government?', *Al-Jazeera*, 7 September 2021.

28. United Nations Development Programme, *Afghanistan: Socio-Economic Outlook 2021-2022: Averting a Basic Needs Crisis*, 1 December 2021.

29. World Bank, *Afghanistan: Public Expenditure Update*, 29 July 2019.

economy as being in «freefall».³⁰ On its part, the IMF estimated that Afghanistan's economy would contract by 30% in 2021.³¹

Some economic policy choices by the Taliban contributed to this situation. For instance, the decision to ban the use of foreign currency in Afghanistan has been regarded as very detrimental for the economy, given how widespread the use of US dollars was across the country.³² In a similar fashion, the decision to ban women from public life it is estimated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as going to cost around 3% of the country's GDP, in addition to the devastating social effects, already visible in the first months of Taliban rule.³³

Against the backdrop of a worsening economic situation, a humanitarian disaster followed. While the latter was already in the making in the war's final months, the situation worsened significantly in the second half of 2021. According to the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), 22.8 million people (55% of the population) were in «crisis» or «emergency» levels of food insecurity in 2021. Estimates for 2022 project that 24.4 million people will be in need of humanitarian assistance.³⁴ The living conditions within Afghanistan, coupled with the economic crisis, have led the International Crisis Group to warn of a potential refugee crisis, that would have significant repercussions on neighbouring countries.³⁵ Data from the United Nations Human Rights Commissioner (UNHCR) in table 1 below paints a dramatic picture.

Table 1 – Afghan refugees and asylum seekers in 2021³⁶

Host country	Refugees	Asylum seekers
Pakistan	1.438.020	10.057
Iran	780.000	0
Germany	152.677	30.146
Austria	41.037	4.810
France	37.744	9.704
Source: Data compiled by the author from UNHCR, <i>Refugee Data Finder</i>		

30. 'Afghanistan economy in «freefall», threatening to take entire population with it', *UN News*, 19 December 2021.

31. 'IMF warns Afghanistan's economic slump will impact neighbours', *BBC News*, 20 October 2021.

32. 'Taliban bans the use of foreign currency across Afghanistan', *Al Jazeera*, 2 November 2021.

33. United Nations Development Programme, *Afghanistan: Socio-Economic Outlook 2021-2022: Averting a Basic Needs Crisis*.

34. UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Global humanitarian overview 2022: Afghanistan*, no date.

35. International Crisis Group, *Beyond Emergency Relief: Averting Afghanistan's Humanitarian Catastrophe*, Report N. 317, 6 December 2021.

36. 2021 data is available up to mid-year.

The data presented in the table is the latest available from the UNHCR, but it does not account for the flux of refugees leaving Afghanistan in the wake of the Taliban return to power. In late 2021, the UNHCR estimated that around 300,000 people had fled to Iran between mid-August and November.³⁷

5. *The international relations of Afghanistan under the Taliban*

Besides the dramatic domestic repercussions just outlined, the Taliban's return had important implications for the international politics of Afghanistan and neighbouring countries. On the one hand, regional powers like China, Pakistan and Russia have seen their influence increase significantly. To varying extents, they all had supported the Taliban ascent on the Afghan political scene well before the US departure. But for these three players a return of the Taliban also stoked fears that Afghanistan would once again become a haven for foreign terrorist organisations that could carry out attacks on their own soil. On the other hand, the country that was certainly damaged the most by the Taliban's resurgence was India, whose policy of support for the elected government in Kabul proved to be short-sighted and has led New Delhi to being relegated to the position of peripheral player.

5.1. *Pakistan and the Taliban: winning at what costs?*

Among Afghanistan's regional neighbours, Pakistan was the one that welcomed the Taliban takeover more enthusiastically. The day after the militants entered Kabul, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan claimed that the Afghans had finally «broken the shackles of slavery».³⁸ To be sure, Pakistan would have preferred the Taliban being reintegrated into Afghan institutions via inclusion in a government with both international legitimacy and financial support.³⁹ Nevertheless, the seizing of Kabul by the militant group was in many ways the successful culmination of a policy that Pakistan had implemented since the US-led invasion of 2001. For years, Pakistan has provided shelter and safe havens for Taliban leaders and, in August 2021, was ready to harvest on 20 years of engagement and support.

The Taliban's victory in Kabul was all the more important in light of the fraught ties that Pakistan has had with elected governments in Afghani-

37. Philip Loft, 'Afghanistan: Refugees and displaced people in 2021', *House of Commons Library Research Briefing*, 16 December 2021.

38. "PM Khan talks about overpowering «shackles of slavery» at Single National Curriculum launch", *Dawn*, 16 August 2021.

39. International Crisis Group, *Pakistan's Hard Policy Choices in Afghanistan*, Report N. 320, 4 February 2022.

stan. Regardless of the party that was in power on either side of the Durand Line, the relationship between successive Pakistani governments and their counterparts in Kabul have always been difficult and marked by mistrust. The latest episode of reciprocal mistrust came in mid-July 2021, when former Afghan President Ghani denounced Pakistan's «negative role in the Afghan conflict», an allegation vehemently rejected by the Pakistani Prime Minister.⁴⁰ Against such a backdrop, having the Taliban in power looked like an ideal strategic scenario for Pakistan – also considering the weakened position of its main rival, India. But soon after the Taliban takeover, concerns started to emerge in Islamabad in relation to the international recognition of the Taliban regime, the actual leverage that Pakistan could exert on the Taliban, and the domestic repercussion deriving from instability in Afghanistan.

Despite not having recognised the Taliban regime, Pakistan has made its backing for it abundantly clear. Significantly, Islamabad has engaged in a diplomatic push to get some form of recognition to the new government in Kabul, at both international and regional levels. In his speech at the UN's general assembly in September 2021, Imran Khan stated that there was «only one way to go. We must strengthen and stabilize the current government».⁴¹ In addition, Pakistan has issued visas to Taliban-appointed diplomats to replace those working under the previous administration.⁴² Islamabad has also tried to convince Western countries that incentives, rather than pressure, will be more effective in changing Taliban behaviour. In an interview with the Associated Press, Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi suggested trying «innovative ways» to engage with the Taliban and work towards recognition, alerting that «the international community has to realize: What's the alternative? What are the options? This is the reality [...]».⁴³

Regionally, Pakistan has played a key role in facilitating the creation of a new forum for foreign minister-level consultations among Afghanistan's neighbours. The group includes China, Iran, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Pakistan. In addition, in November 2021, Pakistan hosted a Troika Plus meeting in Islamabad, which along with Pakistan and the US includes Russia and China. The extended Troika met with senior Taliban representatives on the sidelines of the meeting and agreed to «continue practical engagement with the Taliban to encourage the implementation of moderate and prudent policies that can help achieve a stable and

40. 'Premier Imran Khan says blaming Pakistan for Afghan mess «extremely unfair»', *Anadolu Agency*, 16 July 2021.

41. 'At UN, Pakistan Prime Minister urges «bold steps» to prevent humanitarian crisis Afghanistan', *UN News*, 24 September 2021.

42. 'Afghan «diplomats» take charge in Pakistan', *Dawn*, 30 October 2021.

43. Edith M. Lederer, 'The AP interview: Don't isolate the Taliban, Pakistan urges', *Associated Press*, 24 September 2021.

prosperous Afghanistan as soon as possible».⁴⁴ The joint communiqué at the end of the meeting reiterated calls for the Taliban to «take steps to form an inclusive and representative government that respects the rights of all Afghans and provides for the equal rights of women and girls to participate in all aspects of Afghan society».⁴⁵ Recognition, as things stand at the end of 2021, is still a long process.

With regards to Pakistan's ability to control the Taliban, many observers noted how the visit by the ISI chief, Lieutenant General Faiz Hameed, to Afghanistan in early September 2021, only a few days before the announcement of the first cabinet, was symbolic of Pakistan's ability to influence political processes in Kabul.⁴⁶ But high on the agenda of Pakistan's powerful intelligence chief was also the Taliban's refusal to break ties with their Pakistani counterparts, the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which have been targeting Pakistan over the past decade.⁴⁷ This has created a rift between Islamabad and the new leadership in Kabul, which has important implications on the Pakistani domestic front. It has re-ignited fears that a Taliban government in Kabul could embolden powerful radical Islamist groups in Pakistan, making the country more vulnerable to terrorist organisations operating from Afghanistan, including the TTP. In other words, while Pakistan has pursued the «strategic depth» doctrine in Afghanistan, it could turn out that the Taliban, alongside other militant groups, could gain strategic depth in Pakistan.⁴⁸ Early signs of how instability in Afghanistan could spill over to Pakistan came on 14 July 2021, when an attack was carried out, allegedly by the TTP, at the Dasu hydropower project in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in northwest Pakistan. The attack resulted in 10 Chinese nationals being killed and 26 more being injured.⁴⁹ The project is being built by construction giant Gezhouba Group, with funding from the World Bank. The fact that Chinese nationals were targeted raised alarm not only in Pakistan but, more importantly, in Beijing too.

44. 'Joint Statement on Troika Plus Meeting, 11 November 2021, Islamabad', *U.S. Embassy & Consulates in Russia*, § 5.

45. *Ibid.*, § 4. See, also, Kamran Yousaf, 'Troika Plus seeks practical engagement with Taliban', *The Express Tribune*, 11 November 2021.

46. Abubakar Siddique, 'Spy Chief's Visit With Taliban Underscores Pakistan's Victory In Afghanistan', *Gandhara*, 7 September 2021.

47. For the analysis of the relationship between the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban, see: Abdul Basit, 'Ties that Bind? Deconstructing the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban's Partnership and Counter-Terrorism Options for Pakistan', *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol., 20 Issue 3; Asfandiyar Mir, 'After the Taliban's Takeover: Pakistan's TTP problem', *United States Institute of Peace*, 19 January 2022.

48. Praveen Swami, 'As the Taliban prepare for victory, Islamabad is being forced to face up to the cost of getting what it wanted', *MoneyControl*, 10 July 2021.

49. 'Chinese engineers killed in Pakistan bus blast', *BBC News*, 14 July 2021. For details regarding the investigation into the accident, see: '«Indian-Afghan nexus» behind Dasu bus attack: Qureshi', *Dawn*, 12 August 2021.

5.2. *China's Afghan policy in 2021*

The attack to Chinese interests in Pakistan just discussed epitomises the risks that instability in Afghanistan might have for China's foreign and domestic policies alike. More broadly, the incident in Pakistan is representative of wider security concerns that China has on its Western frontier, with fears that an unstable Afghanistan could have significant repercussion on China's own internal security in Xinjiang. Beijing's main concern is that Afghanistan does not become a safe haven for the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) and the Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP) to organise attacks against mainland China. A report produced for the UN Security Council by the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, estimated that in the second half of 2021, between 200 and 700 fighters belonging to the ETIM and to the TIP were operating in Afghanistan.⁵⁰ The report also noted that these groups were «active in military training and in planning terrorist attacks against Chinese interests» and that «ETIM/TIP members frequently visited the Wakhan corridor», calling for a «return to Xinjiang for jihad».⁵¹ To mitigate these concerns, China has acted on two interrelated fronts: first, Chinese leaders have engaged directly with the Taliban leadership; second, China has stepped up its cooperation with regional partners, including Pakistan and Central Asian Republics (CARs).

First, an article in mid-July by the Global Times' editor-in-chief, Hu Xijin, expressed China's position on the Taliban very clearly. According to Hu, alienating the Taliban was against China's interests, as the group was «of great significance» for China to exert «influence in Afghanistan and maintaining stability in Xinjiang».⁵² On 28 July 2021, a Taliban delegation led by the group's number two, Abdul Ghani Baradar, visited north China's Tianjin Municipality and met China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi. The message conveyed by Wang to the Taliban was clear: make a clean break with all terrorist organisations, including the ETIM.⁵³ In making this request, China was hoping it could leverage its economic resources, something the Taliban valued very highly at a time of international isolation. To use the words of a prominent Taliban figure, «we welcome them [China]. If they have investments of course we ensure their safety. Their safety is very important for us».⁵⁴ In early September, Zabiullah Mujahid, the Taliban spokesperson, expressed the new government's desire to join the China-Pakistan Econom-

50. UN Security Council, Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, *Twenty-ninth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted [...]*.

51. *Ibid.*

52. Hu Xijin, 'Making an enemy of Taliban is not in the interest of China', *Global Times*, 19 July 2021.

53. 'China urges Afghan Taliban to fight against ETIM terrorists', *CGTN*, 28 July 2021.

54. 'Taliban welcome «friendly» China's investments in Afghanistan', *Anadolu Agency*, 12 July 2021.

ic Corridor (CPEC). On its part, China promised emergency aid of US\$ 31 million to Afghanistan, including grain, winter supplies, vaccines and medicines.⁵⁵ A flurry of editorials and news reports appearing in the international media in the weeks following the Taliban takeover suggested that China was willing to extend economic aid to Afghanistan, and to include the country in the Belt and Road Initiative.⁵⁶ At the end of 2021, this has not materialised. As we have just seen, China has been moving very cautiously vis-à-vis Afghanistan; any form of economic assistance will necessarily be tied to guarantees coming from the new leadership in Kabul that China's security interests are being looked after.

Second, alongside the bilateral engagement with the Taliban leadership, China has also proactively collaborated with neighbouring countries, in order to monitor the evolving situation in Afghanistan. With regards to Pakistan, the two countries have been closely coordinating their agendas on Afghanistan. Islamabad and Beijing share similar concerns regarding the potential instability deriving from Afghanistan, and are both focused on protecting investments under the CPEC.⁵⁷ During the July 2021 visit by the Pakistani Foreign Minister to China, security was high on the agenda, as also testified by the fact that the Pakistani Minister was accompanied by the Director General of the Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI).⁵⁸ As China's foreign ministry spokesperson noted, during the visit the two countries discussed «deepening counter-terrorism and security cooperation and ensuring the security of Chinese personnel, institutions and projects in Pakistan».⁵⁹

As far as the Central Asian Republics are concerned, in July 2021 Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi began a high-profile, week-long tour with stops in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The latter in particular remains a key country security-wise, as it hosts both a Russian military base and a Chinese military outpost along the Afghan-Tajik border.⁶⁰ As a testament to the importance that Tajikistan plays in China's regional calcula-

55. Adnan Aamir, 'Taliban rolls out red carpet to China's Belt and Road Initiative', *Nikkei Asia*, 12 September 2021.

56. E.g., 'China ready for 'friendly relations' with Taliban, welcomes Afghan development projects', *France24*, 16 August 2021; 'Does the Belt and Road Have a Future in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan?', *The Diplomat*, 21 August 2021; 'China eyes BRI extension to Afghanistan as it awaits Taliban to form govt', *Mint*, 3 September 2021; 'China eyes Belt & Road extension in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, raising concerns for India', *Times of India*, 3 September 2021.

57. 'China, Pakistan to take joint actions to tackle terrorist spillover from Afghanistan', *Global Times*, 25 July 2021.

58. 'Foreign Minister, ISI chief in China for strategic dialogue', *Dawn*, 24 July 2021.

59. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, *Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian's Regular Press Conference on July 23, 2021*, 23 July 2021.

60. Reid Standish, 'China Cautiously Eyes New Regional Leadership Role As Afghanistan Fighting Intensifies', *Radio Free Europe*, 14 July 2021.

tions, reports emerged in October 2021 that the Central Asian country has approved the construction of a new Chinese-funded base near the country's border with Afghanistan.⁶¹

The security-stability nexus represents the main lens through which China sees the Afghan scenario. While Beijing has stepped up its engagement both with the Taliban and with regional countries, it has been very cautious in its dealing with Afghanistan to date.

5.3 *Russia and the Taliban: engagement to contain*

Similarly to China and Pakistan, Russia's main interests in Afghanistan revolve around preventing the spread of instability from Afghanistan to bordering Central Asian states and preventing terrorist attacks against Russia, carried out by militant organisations based in Afghanistan. To mitigate the instability brought by the first months of the Taliban government, Russia's policy has been two pronged: on the one hand, Moscow has engaged with the new Taliban leadership; on the other, it has strengthened its relations with Pakistan.

First, as the Taliban takeover appeared imminent, a delegation from the militant group visited Moscow to assuage Russian concerns. At the meeting, Russia envoy Zamir Kabulov highlighted the importance of tensions not «spreading beyond the country [Afghanistan]'s borders» and claimed he had received assurances from the Taliban that they would not violate the borders of Central Asian states or allow the use of their territory for attacks against Russia.⁶² Moscow is now capitalising on years of engagement through backdoor channels with the Taliban and hoping that these pre-existing informal ties could translate into some forms of economic and political cooperation. Evidence of this came from Russian Ambassador to Afghanistan, Dmitry Zhirnov, who reported the Taliban's willingness to let Russia tap Afghanistan's natural resources.⁶³

Second, Russia is strengthening its engagement with Pakistan on Afghan security. In the days following the Taliban return to power, Russia President Vladimir Putin had a phone conversation with Pakistan's Prime Minister. According to the official readout, «it was agreed to coordinate approaches to the Afghan issue both in bilateral and multilateral formats».⁶⁴ Commenting on the significance of this decision, analysts described it as a «defining moment» in Russia–Pakistan relations, representing the «first-

61. 'China To Build Military Bases In Tajikistan', *Silk Road Briefing*, 2 November 2021.

62. 'Taliban visit Moscow to say their wins don't threaten Russia', *PBS News Hour*, 8 July 2021.

63. 'Taliban ready to let Moscow exploit mineral resources in Afghanistan', *The Economic Times*, 27 August 2021.

64. President of Russia, *Telephone conversation with Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan*, 25 August 2021.

ever tacit acknowledgement that Russia has come to rely on Pakistan to advance its interests».⁶⁵

The Islamabad-Moscow axis has been in the making since 2011, when contacts started intensifying through a number of high-profile bilateral visits from both civilian and military leaders.⁶⁶ In 2014, the two countries signed a defence agreement, followed in 2016 by the «Druzhba 2016» (Friendship 2016) joint military exercises, which have been repeated annually since.⁶⁷ Overall, Russia views Pakistan as an indispensable backchannel to the Taliban and sees security benefits in strengthening its relationship with Islamabad.⁶⁸

5.4. *India and Afghanistan*

A common thread emerging from the previous analysis of Pakistan, China and Russia in Afghanistan is these country's ability to leverage years of engagement with the Taliban, either directly or through backchannels. This has enabled those three countries to be in a favourable position vis-à-vis the new Afghan regime. For India, things were quite different. India's policy towards Afghanistan since 2001 has relied on two main pillars: the US military presence in Afghanistan and support for the elected government in Kabul. In a matter of weeks, both were gone. India's limited policy options under the current scenario are epitomised by the dynamics surrounding the «Delhi Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan», hosted by New Delhi in November 2021. Chaired by India's National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval, the meeting was attended by NSAs from other seven countries, including Iran, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.⁶⁹ Pakistan and China were the two countries that, for different reasons, declined India's invitation.

China's absence was significant, as Beijing had attended the two previous meetings (in 2018 and 2019) of the forum, whereas, in 2021, was signalling its intention of not being part of India-led initiatives on Afghanistan. Even more importantly, no Afghan representatives were invited to the meeting, reflecting the limited leverage that India had with the Taliban

65. Andrew Korybko, 'The Khan-Putin call is a defining moment in Pak-Russian relations', *The Express Tribune*, 27 August 2021.

66. Filippo Boni, 'Caught between the U.S. and China: Critical Junctures in Pakistan's Foreign Policy', in Aparna Pande (ed.), *Routledge Handbook on South Asian Foreign Policy*, New York: Routledge, 2021, pp. 311-323.

67. 'Pakistan, Russia sign landmark defence cooperation agreement', *Dawn*, 21 November 2014; 'First Russia-Pakistan Druzhba-2016 Military Drills Kick Off in Cherat', *Sputnik News*, 24 September 2016.

68. Samuel Ramani, 'Russia and the Taliban: Prospective Partners?', *RUSI Commentary*, 14 September 2021.

69. Shubhajit Roy, 'Explained: NSAs' agenda on Afghanistan', *Indian Express*, 10 November 2021.

leadership. This was also in stark contrast to the above discussed Troika Plus meeting (hosted by the Chinese), to which the Taliban interim foreign minister participated. The joint declaration issued at the end of the Delhi meeting included the need for a more inclusive government, representing all sections of Afghan society. Simultaneously, it emphasized shared concerns about terrorism, terror financing, and radicalization emanating out of Afghanistan.⁷⁰ In addition, the Afghan ambassador to India, Farid Mamundzay, was still the one appointed by the Ghani government, differently from what we have seen in the case of Pakistan. In the last part of 2021, India started bridging the existing political gap with the Taliban, by sending medical aid to the country, to which the Taliban responded positively.⁷¹ Observers noted how this development signalled India's willingness to adopt a more pragmatic approach to its ties with the Taliban, at a time in which they seem to be the only possible interlocutor on the Afghan political scene.⁷²

6. Conclusion

The end of America's longest war dominated Afghanistan's domestic and international relations in the year under examination. Many observers saw the dynamics surrounding the return of the Taliban as evidence of both the inevitable demise of the US's global hegemony in the post-Cold war era and the simultaneous ascendance of China. But neither Beijing, nor any of the other regional countries that enjoy close ties with the Taliban, signalled the intention of filling the vacuum left by the US. While Russia, Pakistan and China have gained leverage as a result of the Taliban's ascent to power, all these nations have been moving cautiously vis-à-vis Afghanistan. As recognition of the Taliban regime is going to be a long process, the consequences of Afghanistan being an outcast in the international community are being mostly felt by the population. Rising levels of food insecurity, a dire economic outlook, and a potentially catastrophic refugee wave portray the picture of a humanitarian disaster in the making, whose early signs were already visible in the year under examination. In addition to this, the Taliban have not displayed any desire or willingness to become a more moderate force than the one that was in power in the late 1990s and early 2000s. This means sustained economic and social hardship on the domestic front, as well as a difficult international environment to navigate.

70. Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, *Delhi Declaration on Afghanistan*, 10 November 2021.

71. 'India sends medicine to Afghanistan, Taliban says «thank you», relations «very vital»', *The Print*, 12 December 2021.

72. Vinay Kaura, 'India's search for a new role in Afghanistan', *Middle East Institute*, 8 December 2021.

