

# تحليل اسبتي

## WEEKLY ANALYSIS

Issue Number - 392  
(August 27–September 2, 2022)

### AN OVERVIEW OF THE ONE-YEAR SITUATION OF AFGHANISTAN UNDER THE ISLAMIC EMIRATE



Weekly Analysis is one of the CSRS' publications analyzing significant weekly political, social, economic, and security events of Afghanistan and the region. The prime motive behind this is to provide strategic insights and policy solutions to decision-making institutions and individuals in order to help them design better policies. Weekly Analysis is published in Pashto, Dari, English and Arabic languages.

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Center for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS)



## AN OVERVIEW OF THE ONE-YEAR SITUATION OF AFGHANISTAN UNDER THE ISLAMIC EMIRATE

### INTRODUCTION

One year ago, Islamic Emirate took control of the country, and the US-backed Republic collapsed. On August 15, 2021, the Taliban declared the end of the prolonged war after seizing Kabul and subsequently assuming control of Panjshir province within two weeks. The Islamic Emirates then announced their interim administration, in which almost all of the key posts are held by members of the Taliban.

The Afghan people's lives have been significantly impacted by the regime change in both positive and negative ways in every aspect of politics, the economy, society, and security. Negative impacts include Afghanistan's ongoing political isolation, poverty, and humanitarian crises, in addition to social issues like women's and girls' employment and education. However, the end of the 20-year bloody war, which took the lives of hundreds of Afghans every day, was the most significant positive outcome.

What did the regime change bring to the Afghan people? How did the new government perform during its first year? What were the most significant political, economic, social, and security challenges and opportunities, and what developments have been made? In what direction is the country headed? In this article, we provide answers by analyzing a year of Islamic Emirate-controlled Afghanistan.

### POLITICAL SITUATION

The regime change brought the two decades of violent conflict to an end and made the political system more centralized; at the same time, Afghans now face new challenges due to the political isolation and international sanctions on the Islamic Emirate. The significant issues that have gained political attention at the national and international levels over the previous 12 months are covered here.



The lack of international legitimacy has been a major challenge for Afghanistan, particularly for the Islamic Emirate's interim administration. It was anticipated that some countries would recognize the Islamic Emirate, and although Russian authorities made some promising statements, after a year, not a single country in the world is ready to step forward.

Despite a lack of official recognition, certain countries have established relations with the Taliban and have even welcomed the new caretaker government's diplomats. High-ranking delegates of the Islamic Emirate have traveled to various countries and taken part in international conferences, such as the 2022 International Conferences on Afghanistan, which took place in Oslo, Norway, on January 23 and 24, 2022, and in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on July 26, 2022. Additionally, a few countries did not close their embassies in Kabul or later reopened them.

It is generally assumed that the gradual increase in foreign engagement with the Taliban implies de facto recognition. On the one hand, the U.S.'s global political influence has prevented the Islamic Emirate from receiving de jure recognition. On the other hand, the Taliban's actions and decrees, particularly those related to the employment and education of women and girls, have made the international community less inclined to trust them. Additionally, there were several shortcomings and challenges nationally that have brought the international legitimacy of this new government under the shadow.

The most important issue, nationally, is ambiguity about the type and future of the political system. The caretaker government announced by the Islamic Emirate last September is still in power. The authorities have initially made some promising statements about the constitution, their silence has grown over time, and after a year, no official stance regarding the system's future has been taken. Islamic Emirate promised that they would apply the Constitution of 1343 for a short duration of time and would appoint a committee to revise it, nothing has been done to date, and there does not appear to be any strong will or urgency to do so.

There were also calls for organizing the Loya Jirga to determine the system's legitimacy and legal grounds. Although a large gathering of scholars was organized in Kabul, all of the members or supporters of the Islamic Emirate were invited, and there were no talks on national issues. The gathering is said to be used as a tool for legitimizing the new administration.

The establishment of national reconciliation and an inclusive system in which all Afghans can see themselves has been the most important demand of the political opponents of the Islamic Emirate and the international community in the past year. In this regard, the Taliban have always argued that, on the one hand, Afghans do not want former corrupt officials and ethnic tycoons to be brought back to power, and on the other hand, the current system is inclusive and people of every tribe and region have a part in the system.



To undermine the political opposition and quell the existing objections, the Islamic Emirate also formed a committee for the return of political figures, through which more than 100 officials, including the top officials of the previous regime, have returned to the country. However, the criticism in this regard is that the Taliban does not allow any kind of political activity, as some officials, including their leader, Sheikh Hibatullah Akhundzada, made such statements that they will never give power to the former officials.

Overall, last year has demonstrated that the Islamic Emirate does not tolerate any form of political activity and only trusts the Taliban to hold the top posts in the government. The Department of Political Parties in the Ministry of Justice was dissolved, and former officials, most notably the former president Hamid Karzai, Dr. Abdullah, the former head of the National Reconciliation Council, and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the leader of Hizb-e-Islami, who initially remained in Kabul, have no influence over the country's governance and have been kept in complete political isolation.

Taking a quick look back at the political situation of the last year, Afghanistan was enduring international political isolation, and certain events provided the international community with a justification for maintaining its isolationist stance toward the Islamic Emirate. Examples include killing the Al-Qaeda leader in Kabul, and concerns about women's education and work. However, the informal interaction of some countries with the Taliban was encouraging and reduced the level of complete isolation of Afghanistan. On the national level, the worrying issues include the uncertainty regarding the role and participation of the ordinary Afghan in determining the type and leadership of the political system and the refusal to open the door to a lasting reconciliation with the political opponents. However, the return of some politicians was encouraging.

## ECONOMIC SITUATION

The nation's economy was entirely dependent on foreign aid for the past two decades. With the events of last year, however, international funding was suspended on the one hand, and Central Bank assets were frozen by the U.S. on the other. As a result, the country went through a severe economic and humanitarian crisis. Some events and actions, however, kept the nation's economy from a complete collapse.

Last year's major economic concerns were international sanctions on the Islamic Emirate and the frozen Afghan assets. The sanctions, especially freezing the Afghan assets, harmed the country's economy, however, the effects of sanctions were slightly reduced when the U.S.



Department of the Treasury allowed financial transactions with Afghanistan. The cash shortage in the country and the bank withdrawal restrictions put a lot of burden on the companies and ordinary Afghans.

The Islamic Emirate tried hard over the past year to unfreeze these assets but to no avail. Although recent agreements between the US and Afghanistan raised expectations, after the targeting of the Al-Qaeda leader in Kabul, American authorities reaffirmed their commitment to not releasing these assets. On the other hand, reports say that the American courts have denied the plea to compensate these frozen assets to the 9/11 victims.

The international community's limited aid to Afghanistan continued throughout the year, which lessened the severity of the economic crisis and saved Afghanistan's banking system from a complete collapse. However, it was generally accepted that humanitarian aid alone or even the release of the Afghan assets would avert the humanitarian catastrophe and rescue the nation's economy in the long run. The UN's Special Envoy for Afghanistan Deborah Lyons, told the "Afghanistan's First Economic Conference" on January 19, 2022 that humanitarian aid is not a long-term solution and Afghanistan's economic crisis should be fundamentally resolved.

Another pressing issue was the falling value of the Afghani against the US Dollar, which increased the market prices and directly impacted the lives of ordinary Afghans. Afghani was rapidly losing its value against the US Dollar after the Islamic Emirate took over in August, and for a short time, the price of one dollar increased to 100 Afghanis, with which the market fluctuated, and the cost of the initial products skyrocketed. However, the Islamic Emirate took urgent measures that resulted in a gradual stabilization of the currency. In the last several months, Afghanistan Bank has been auctioning 13 to 14 million US Dollars each week to stabilize the Afghani, which contributed to the recent stability of the value of a dollar between 88 and 90 Afghanis. This occurred at a time when the dollar's value increased globally due to the war between Russia and Ukraine and other factors, and other currencies in the region also lost their value.

The national income grew due to the general drop in corruption in governmental institutions, notwithstanding complaints about corruption in the Passport Department and certain other departments. The Ministry of Finance reported an annual income of 151 billion Afghanis, while the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum recorded generating 13.2 billion Afghani during the previous year. Additionally, according to the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology's report, it brought in roughly 6.9 billion Afghani in income last year, an increase of 1.2 billion Afghani from the year before. In its report, the Ministry of Transport also stated that it had given the State Treasury 4.5 billion Afghani.



The country's National Budget for the year 1401 was prepared and approved for the first time exclusively from domestic income. The budget totals 231 billion Afghani, 203 billion in the recurrent budget, and 28 billion in the development budget. The budget has a 44 billion Afghani deficit, but the Ministry of Finance claims that based on its financial plan, it would still achieve its objectives by the end of the year. Since the budget included huge military expenses in the past, this annual budget is practically half that of the previous administration. National Budget in the year 1400 was around 473 billion Afghanis, of which 311 billion were allocated for routine operations and 161 billion for development. The international community, particularly the United States, contributed over 75% of the budget of the previous administration.

Various international organizations have expressed serious concerns and issued warnings about the economic and humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan from time to time and called for funds. The United Nations World Food Program (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) published a report on the 10th of May stating that over half of Afghanistan's population, or roughly 20 million people, are presently suffering from extreme hunger. The report demonstrates that Afghans are still struggling economically even though foreign aid helped to mitigate the humanitarian catastrophe last winter to a considerable extent.

If we take a wide look at the country's economic situation during the last year, the economic and human crises brought on by the events of August appear to have been under control. Afghani currency's exchange rate to the US dollar remained stable, which impacted market pricing. One of the reasons for the stability was the influx of foreign aid. This crises' relative calm coincided with the recent economic effects of the war between Russia and the Ukraine, which drove up the price of basic goods, oil, and other commodities globally.

## SECURITY SITUATION

Quickly looking at last year's situation in terms of security, the 20-year bloody conflict and the daily slaughter of hundreds of Afghans ended in most and reduced in some areas of the country. Despite the fact that this was the biggest improvement from the previous year, there are still war and insecurity incidents in some areas of the country, and the ISIS group's attacks on civilian targets and places of worship continue to pose the greatest threat to the Islamic Emirate and the Afghan people.

Despite the significant reduction in armed conflict and the improvement in the security situation, 700 civilians were killed, and 1406 others were injured in the ten months since August 15, according to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), which has been



keeping track of Afghan civilian casualties since 2009. The majority of these incidents were caused by ISIS attacks, according to UNAMA's most recent report, which was released on July 20 (2022). Compared to prior years, this number is much lower. According to UNAMA, 1659 civilians were killed and 3254 injured only in the first half of 2021.

The Islamic Emirate's spokesperson, Zabihullah Mujahid, dismissed this report as propaganda, yet there has really been a slew of attacks and explosions of a similar sort during the past year . The government primarily censored this news, although certain targeted assaults happened, and armed resistance organizations in other parts of the nation also inflicted casualties.

Looking at the number of attacks by the ISIS, it appears that the group has mostly been subdued in the recent months. The majority of the ISIS group's strikes on civilian targets occurred in Shiite and Hazara ethnic communities. April was the deadliest month of 2022 for ISIS assaults. An attack on a school in Kabul's Dasht Barchi district resulted in 9 deaths and more than 50 injuries on April 19. Two days later, prayers in Mazar-e-Sharif city were assaulted, resulting in more than 40 fatalities and more than 90 injuries.

A monastery in Kunduz's Imam Sahib district suffered an explosion the next day, on April 22, which resulted in 33 deaths and 43 injuries. According to other estimates, the incident took 60 lives. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported on April 25 that more than 50 children had died in the previous week alone as a result of these incidents. Additionally, on the 29th of this month, a Sufi mosque in the Darul Aman of Kabul city had an explosion that left at least 50 worshipers dead, according to some accounts. Although the security officials only reported 10 fatalities and 30 injuries from this incident, the Reuters news agency claimed that 66 people have died and 78 people have been sent to hospitals, according to health officials . This month saw assaults outside of the Hazara ethnic communities, which left a large number of victims .For instance, on April 1, an explosion in the city of Herat left 5 people dead and 22 others injured, while it is also claimed that this incident took place in a Shiite neighborhood .In addition, a grenade explosion occurred on April 3 in Kabul's major market, Shahzada Sarai. On April 6, three days later, at noontime, there was an explosion at the Pul Khishti mosque in Kabul, injuring more than ten persons, at least according to government records. On the 27th of this month, five coal miners in the northern province of Samangan were shot and killed in their car by unidentified assailants.

There were more significant attacks that caused a significant number of casualties, similar to the attacks in April. For instance, on August 26, a terrible incident occurred at the Kabul airport as passengers were being evacuated, resulting in the deaths of 182 people, including at least 13 foreigners. Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate, was assaulted on October 3 while attending the Fatiha ritual next to the Eidgah Mosque in Kabul. More than 20





individuals were injured, and 8 people died, according to sources. In addition, there were brutal attacks on Shiite mosques in the provinces of Kunduz and Kandahar on October 8 and 15. Around 100 individuals were killed and more than 200 others were injured in each incident. 46 people were murdered and 143 others were injured in the attack in Kunduz, and 47 people were killed and more than 70 others were injured in the attack in Kandahar. At least 23 individuals were killed and more than 50 were injured as a result of a massive attack by Daesh on the Sardar Mohammad Daud Khan military hospital in Kabul on November 2. Senior Taliban leader Maulvi Hamdullah Noorzi, who oversaw the Kabul Military Corps, was among those killed. Nurzai was the first person to enter the presidential palace and take a seat behind the president's desk after arriving in Kabul on August 15.

In assessing the security situation during the previous year, there are other crucial factors. There were reports of the armed fronts' activities in several places under various names. Another significant incident occurred on August 2 (2022), when the leader of the Al-Qaeda network in Kabul was targeted. This very unlikely event demonstrates the US's total control over the nation's airspace and the ongoing dangers to Afghans. Additionally, Pakistani airspace is being used by American drones to enter Afghanistan. In the meeting to submit the annual report, the acting minister of defense of the Islamic Emirate asked Pakistan not to utilize its airspace against Afghanistan.

Another significant incident that highlighted the tense ties between Afghanistan and Pakistan was the bombing of Afghan territory by Pakistani planes in April, which resulted in the deaths of at least 50 people, including 20 children. The acting defense minister angrily denounced this attack and issued a warning that, in reaction to such an occurrence, he might not allow it again after tolerating it for the sake of his country's interests. Similar to this, there were several instances of conflicts in Iran's border regions, most of which were settled diplomatically by both sides.

If we compare the country's security condition with the previous year, it appears that the terrible conflict, which took the lives of hundreds of soldiers on either side of the conflict as well as civilians, came to an end this year. However, Afghans continued to suffer due to the ISIS attacks as well as the continuance of the armed resistance against the Islamic Emirate. Although the Islamic Emirate was able to gradually control this situation and not only suppress the ISIS group but also eliminate other armed opponents. A noteworthy example is the execution of Hazara Taliban commander Mehdi Mujahid and the weaponry under his control. Also, the armed opponents of the regime in Panjshir and the northern territories have been severely crushed and have not made any noticeable advance.



## SOCIAL SITUATION

Human rights situation, brain drain, women's and girls' employment and education, and the adverse environment for free speech were the social issues of concern last year. When Islamic Emirate came to power, the moral and cultural issues of the previous 20 years vanished, and in particular, the foreign-funded media stopped airing programs that were hostile to Afghan culture and Islamic Sharia.

Following the events of last August (2021), many Afghans attempted to leave their country due to unemployment and other societal issues. In the first six weeks following the overthrow of the former government, 124,000 educated Afghans were evacuated from the country as part of the evacuation operation. Since then, tens of thousands more Afghans have steadily fled the country. The exodus of educated Afghans and experts also caused a gap in the country's reconstruction for a considerable amount of time and produced widespread discord within society.

The closure of girls' schools above the sixth grade caused widespread dissatisfaction at the national and international levels delaying the recognition of the Islamic Emirate by the world. Known Islamic Emirate officials have stated repeatedly that they support girls' education in the country, which is why women's studies are permitted in universities, there is a growth in school education, and they work on issue mechanisms and solutions. However, a year later, it appears that the Islamic Emirate's authorities disagree on the subject of girls' education, and they haven't yet been able to agree.

Sher Muhammad Abbas Stanakzai, the political deputy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, spoke out against this issue in front of the media on several occasions and asked for more room for girls' education. In a speech, he previously gave at a gathering on May 22, he claimed: "Islamic Emirate did not provide women the right to study. Afghanistan currently has no educational system at all. Assign their rights to them. Where may females learn about Islam and Sharia? They will study it in madrasa and class." He contends that the government's responsibility is to fight corruption, not to ignore a group's rights out of concern for corruption.

Human rights, particularly women's rights, as well as the presence and work of women in society, have generated a great deal of concern on a global scale. When Islamic Emirates published an order addressing the need that women wear the hijab, on May 7th, these worries and discussions only grew more intense. In accordance with this directive, women were urged to avoid leaving the house unless absolutely necessary and, if they did, to hide their faces—aside from their eyes—when speaking to unmarried males. If this rule is broken, their male relatives might be put on trial or imprisoned, according to the edict. The fact that there are different



viewpoints on the type of hijab is one example in this regard. According to certain scholars, women's hands and faces are not covered by the hijab according to Hanafi law, and the Taliban maintain a strict view of the hijab.

The Islamic Emirate's rule of the Hijab has sparked great worldwide outrage and has been criticized as going beyond the Taliban's pledges. These responses grew after Afghan television's female journalists and presenters were ordered to cover their faces with masks while delivering the programs. The Taliban were urged to "immediately remove" their restrictions on Afghan women in a statement released by the UN Security Council on May 23. The Security Council's 15 members unanimously expressed their worry over placing limitations on women's access to education, employment, freedom of movement, and meaningful, full involvement in public life. Among them, limits on women's movement and travel seem to be a major concern because of gendered views, particularly for women who are the breadwinners in their households. In the previous 20 years, there has been a lot of extremism in this area, and women's cases have been exploited against Afghan culture and religion, thus it appears that there are more sensitive issues in the field of women's cases.

The issue of freedom of speech was another example of societal concern. Journalists and certain civil activists have frequently been detained, and protests and other civil actions against the Islamic Emirate have generally been violently put down. These incidents exhibited a type of social despotism and instilled a great deal of dread and skepticism. The Islamic Emirate's leadership has so far issued a rule making it illegal but also punitive to criticize government officials without cause. The argument made against the government was that if there were no protests, civil disobedience actions, or government criticism, how would people inform the authorities of their problems and become aware of issues in public affairs when there is no avenue to complain.

This suggests that, despite some progress, the social atmosphere in the last year was unfavorable and was caused by a number of reasons. Due to the severe social instability that resulted from this, many Afghans attempted to escape the country during the year.

## FUTURE SCENARIOS

**Political situation:** The Islamic Emirate was not recognized by any country and did not take any serious steps towards national legitimacy, making these issues the most significant political issues of the last year. There are two possibilities. The first is that the Taliban will continue in their existing form, but with the current caretaker government, the current politics, and the



current ambiguity regarding the system, at least for the upcoming year, in which case Afghanistan will continue to be politically isolated. On an individual level, opposition and discontent will rise. Second, the Taliban may take immediate action and show flexibility in some cases, particularly through appointing a committee to draft the constitution, define the objectives and direction of their political system, address the issue of girls' education, and so on. In this scenario, not only will nationally discontent decrease, but some countries might be willing to recognize the Islamic Emirate. Important to mention, that luckily, no country supports military opposition against the current system. It seems that the leaders of the Islamic Emirate have a somewhat hostile position with the international community, and most of them are suspicious of what the international community is asking for. This is the reason why Sheikh Hibatullah Akhundzada, the leader of the Islamic Emirate, said during a gathering of scholars in Kabul: "I do not accept the orders of the international community, even if they use atomic bombs." Thus, the general opinion is that the Islamic Emirate's political ties with the rest of the world will not change much as a result.

**Economic situation:** From an economic point of view, the future situation of the country is directly related to the political situation, because if the Islamic Emirate can gain the satisfaction of the international community as a result, it will be recognized by some countries or at least by the international If understandings and agreements increase in relations with Afghanistan, not only the frozen assets of Afghanistan will be freed, but the restrictions on the country will also be removed or greatly reduced, which will directly affect the economic situation of the country and the living conditions of the common Afghans. It appears that the country's economic situation will not be any worse since, as last year proved, despite the sanctions and suspension of foreign aid, the Islamic Emirate did a good job of controlling the crisis. In addition to this, the end of corruption, or at least its reduction has led to the improvement of the country's economic situation.

**Security situation:** From a security perspective, it appears that things will be more tranquil than they were last year, as last year the Taliban regime was still forming, the security forces were chaotic, and the government was dealing with several other issues. Fortunately, it seems that no country supports the armed opposition to the change of the system in Afghanistan and that the Taliban is left with extensive military equipment of the previous regime and its security agencies are getting more organized every day. It appears like there will not be any significant security threats in the foreseeable future that will substantially jeopardize the country's security stability.

**Social situation:** The harsh policies of the Islamic Emirate have a direct impact on the social condition, making the future highly unpredictable. The fact that Islamic Emirate pays more attention to women's issues than other priorities indicates that some social freedoms may be



gradually curtailed. During the first several months of last year, there were not many orders and restrictions, but subsequently, various directives changed the scenario. It is particularly likely that, if the issue of girls' education beyond the sixth grade is not resolved, it would not only cause more national unrest but also pose a threat to the Taliban rule on a global scale. In the most recent instance, Amnesty International has urged the international community to act swiftly to stop the Taliban from violating human rights. According to the group, the Taliban have consistently dismantled important human rights organizations, suppressed free speech, and imprisoned, torturously treated, and even murdered numerous Afghans.

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The Centre for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS) is an independent, non-profit, and non-governmental research organization established in July 2009 in Kabul. CSRS is committed to promoting policy-oriented research through conducting authentic and unbiased research concerning Afghanistan and the region.

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