

7. Prospects for Afghanistan and Pakistan

Acronyms and abbreviations

AQAP—Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.
AQIS—Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent
ISIS—Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham
NATO—North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PDPA—People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan.

Glossary

Gulf War (1990–91): A war waged and won by a coalition of 24 nations, led by the U.S., against Iraq, in response to the latter’s invasion and annexation of Kuwait.

Abdul Raziq: Police chief of Kandahar Province, Afghanistan since 2009. Raziq, a warlord and suspected drug trafficker, is materially supported by the U.S., which provides him with arms, intelligence and equipment.

Abdullah Abdullah: Afghanistan’s chief executive since 2014. Abdullah contested Ashraf Ghani’s presidential victory, resulting in a power sharing agreement brokered by the U.S., and the creation of the post of chief executive of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Abdullah previously served as minister of foreign affairs (2001–05) and was a prominent member of the resistance against the Taliban and Soviet occupation.

Afghan Taliban: Literally, “students.” The Afghan Taliban began as a movement of Pashtun students at Islamic schools set up with Saudi support. The group originally formed around 1994, led by Mullah Muhammad Omar. The Taliban ruled Afghanistan from 1996 until the American invasion in 2001. It continues

to wage guerilla war with the goal of overthrowing the Afghan government and instituting Sharia Law.

Al-Qaeda: A militant Islamist organization founded by Osama bin Laden during the final years of the Soviet-Afghan War (1979–89), and headquartered in Afghanistan. The international terrorist network orchestrated the 9/11 attacks.

Ashraf Ghani: President of Afghanistan since 2014. Ghani previously served as finance minister (2002–04) and chancellor of Kabul University (2004–08). He shares the government with Afghanistan’s Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah.

Babrak Karmal (1929–96): Leader of the Parcham faction of the PDPA. Karmal was installed as leader of the Afghan government by the USSR following the 1979 invasion, and served in that role until his resignation in 1986.

Hafizullah Amin (1929–79): A member of the Khalq faction of the PDPA, who helped orchestrate the successful 1978 coup against Muhammad Daoud Khan’s government. After overthrowing his Khalq predecessor, Nur Muhammad Taraki, in 1979, Amin served briefly as president until he was killed during the Soviet invasion. He was succeeded by the Soviet-backed Babrak Karmal, a member of the Parcham faction of the PDPA.

Hakimullah Mehsud (1979–2013): Head of the Pakistani Taliban from 2009 until he was killed by a U.S. drone strike in 2013.

Hamid Karzai: President of Afghanistan (2004–14). Karzai was appointed president of the transitional Afghan government (2002–04) after the U.S. removed

the Taliban from power. He was elected president in 2004 under a new constitution, and won a second term in 2009.

Hazara: Afghanistan's third largest ethnic group, concentrated in the highlands of central Afghanistan. Unlike the majority of Afghans, Hazara speak a Persian dialect and practice Shi'a Islam; they have traditionally faced persecution.

ISIS (The Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham) [Islamic State (IS); Islamic State of Iraq and Syria; Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL); Daesh]: A transnational jihadist-Salafi insurgent group based in Iraq and Syria, and led by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. It is designated a terrorist group by dozens of individual countries, as well as by the UN and the European Union.

Khalid Sheikh Mohammed: A member of al-Qaeda, responsible for planning the 9/11 attacks on the U.S. He was captured in Pakistan in 2003 and is currently held in Guantanamo Bay detention camp.

Khalq: A faction of the PDPA, consisting predominantly of Persian-speaking Afghans from Kabul. Its leaders include Nur Muhammad Taraki and Hafizullah Amin.

Mawlawi Hibatullah Akhundzada: Current leader of the Afghan Taliban, succeeding Akhtar Mansour.

Michael Mullen: A retired U.S. Navy admiral and the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 2007–11. Admiral Mullen helped to command allied coalition forces during the war between the Taliban and the U.S.

Muhammad Zahir Shah (1914–2007): The last king of Afghanistan. He ruled from 1933 until 1973, when his cousin, Muhammad Daoud Khan, ousted him in a bloodless coup.

Muhammad Daoud Khan (1909–78): Prime minister of Afghanistan (1953–63), Khan overthrew his cousin Zahir Shah in a bloodless coup in 1973, installing himself as president of the new Afghan republic. He remained in power until his assassination in 1978.

Muhammad Najibullah (1947–96): Last PDPA president of Afghanistan (1986–92), succeeding Babrak

Karmal. He was ousted from office by the military and mujahideen rebels in 1992, and was assassinated by the Taliban in 1996.

Mullah Akhtar Mansour (1968–2016): Head of the Taliban from 2015 until he was killed by a U.S. drone strike in 2016.

Mullah Muhammad Omar (1960–2013): Mujahideen commander, first leader of the Taliban and ruler of Afghanistan (1996–2001). The U.S. invaded Afghanistan in 2001 and overthrew Omar's Taliban government after he refused to extradite Osama bin Laden. He continued to lead the Taliban until his death.

Northern Alliance (United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan): A military front that formed to counter the Taliban's capture of the government in 1996. The alliance disbanded following the U.S. invasion in 2001.

Operation Enduring Freedom (2001–14): The joint U.S.-UK military operation in Afghanistan following the September 11 attacks. The operation aimed to dismantle al-Qaeda, which orchestrated the attacks, and to end the Taliban government's protection of the group. Enduring Freedom was later supported by Afghan and NATO allies. It was succeeded by Operation Freedom's Sentinel in 2015.

Osama bin Laden (1957–2011): Founder of al-Qaeda and architect of the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the U.S. He was killed by U.S. forces in Abbottabad, Pakistan in 2011.

Pakistani Taliban: A terrorist group that began as a coalition of various militant groups in the western tribal areas of Pakistan, where resentment against the government was strong. The Pakistani Taliban, unlike the Afghan Taliban, is focused on fighting the government in Islamabad. Most Pakistani Taliban are part of the umbrella group Tehrik-i-Taliban (TTP), which was formed in late 2007.

Parcham: A faction of the PDPA, consisting predominantly of Pashto Afghans. The USSR backed the Parcham government, which collapsed in 1992, a few years after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Pashtun: The dominant ethnic group in Afghanistan,

often denoted as the “original Afghans.” The Pashtun are also the second largest ethnic group in Pakistan, where they are concentrated in the northwest.

People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA):

A socialist political party founded in 1965 and led by Nur Mohammad Taraki and Babrak Karmal. The party quickly split into two factions—Parcham and Khalq—but united to stage a coup in 1978. Leading up to the Soviet invasion in 1979, the PDPA government insti-

tuted a series of radical reforms that were met with retaliation in the form of guerilla warfare from Afghanistan’s traditional society. The PDPA government collapsed in 1992, shortly after the Soviet withdrawal.

Robert “Bowe” Bergdahl: A U.S. Army soldier held captive by the Haqqani network (associated with the Taliban) from 2009 to 2014. The circumstances of his capture and release sparked domestic controversy in the U.S.

Taliban structure

Taliban structure

The Emir

Mullah Hibatullah Akhonzada

Ultimate authority on political, religious and military affairs. Head of Rahbari Shura leadership council



was the deputy of



Deceased

Mullah Akhtar Mansour

Ex leader, killed in drone strike in May 2016

was the deputy of



Mullah Omar

Founder and ex leader, death announced in July 2015

Deputies

Sirajuddin Haqqani

Military operational commander, Haqqani network



Mullah Mohammad Yaqoob

Son of founder Mullah Omar



Rahbari Shura – Leadership council

18+ people responsible for strategy, policy and overall decision making. Made up of ex-Taliban ministers, diplomats, governors, military commanders and religious figures.

Commissions ('cabinet of ministers')

These include military, political, finance, health, education, information and culture, martyrs and others.

Field commanders and shadow governors

Some members move across the different bodies