

# The Impact of the Taliban's Return to Power on the Stability of Public Security in Afghanistan

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**Abstract.** The Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan in 2021 has sparked concern for the Afghan people and the international community. The Taliban's takeover of power not only impacts the country's security situation, but also affects the stability of public security in Afghanistan. Through this research, public security becomes an important aspect in knowing the impact of the new Taliban power. This research uses a qualitative method with a literature review and uses the concept of human security as an analytical framework. This research shows that some of the Taliban's policies since returning to power tend to be repressive and discriminatory, creating insecurity in the form of human rights violations, fear and individual freedom. The results of this research have shown that public security conditions in Afghanistan under the Taliban's second rule have not shown any improvement compared to their first period of power in 1996-2001. Although the Taliban managed to reduce the incidence of armed violence, public security stability still far from stable. This condition arises from the existence of rules and restrictions on access to education, employment, and health. The Taliban also resorted to violence, with persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention of people. The Taliban also face internal and external challenges in their efforts to maintain the stability of public security in Afghanistan.

**Keywords:** Taliban, Afghanistan, Public Security.

**Abstrak.** Kembalinya kekuasaan Taliban di Afghanistan pada tahun 2021 telah memicu kekhawatiran bagi masyarakat Afghanistan dan dunia internasional. Pengambilalihan kekuasaan oleh Taliban tidak hanya berdampak pada situasi keamanan negara, tetapi juga berpengaruh terhadap stabilitas keamanan masyarakat di Afghanistan. Melalui penelitian ini, keamanan masyarakat menjadi aspek penting dalam mengetahui dampak kekuasaan Taliban yang baru. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan studi kepustakaan, serta menggunakan konsep keamanan manusia (human security) sebagai kerangka analisis. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa beberapa kebijakan Taliban sejak kembali berkuasa cenderung bersifat represif dan diskriminatif, sehingga menciptakan ketidakamanan dalam bentuk pelanggaran hak asasi manusia, ketakutan, dan kebebasan individu. Hasil penelitian ini telah menunjukkan kondisi keamanan masyarakat di Afghanistan di bawah pemerintahan kedua Taliban, belum menunjukkan perbaikan yang lebih baik daripada periode pertama kekuasaan mereka pada tahun 1996-2001. Meskipun Taliban berhasil mengurangi insiden kekerasan bersenjata, namun stabilitas keamanan masyarakat masih jauh dari kestabilan. Kondisi tersebut muncul dari adanya aturan dan pembatasan terhadap akses pendidikan, pekerjaan, dan kesehatan. Taliban juga bertindak menggunakan kekerasan, dengan melakukan penganiayaan, penangkapan dan penahanan orang secara sewenang-wenang. Taliban juga menghadapi tantangan-tantangan internal dan eksternal dalam upaya menjaga stabilitas keamanan masyarakat di Afghanistan.

**Kata Kunci:** Taliban, Afghanistan, Keamanan Masyarakat.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

After nearly two decades of military intervention in Afghanistan, the United States finally withdrew its troops in August 2021. This intervention was carried out in an effort to fight terrorism and overthrow the Taliban regime in 2001. However, this decision then became a momentum for the Taliban to regain control of Afghanistan after its last reign 20 years ago (Anugerah & Purba, 2021). Afghanistan has long been the focus of global attention due to its prolonged situation of conflict and instability, from the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1979 to the power vacuum after the departure of the Soviet Union in 1989. This led to power struggles by groups that had previously united against the Soviet occupation, and Afghanistan then faced a transition of government that led to civil war. This chaos became the initial opportunity for the Taliban militant group to control most of Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001 (Ameyaw-Brobbe, 2023).

The Taliban is a militant group composed of idealistic students from various Islamic boarding schools who were trained with the Mujahideen's political ideology that emerged in 1994. During the Taliban's reign from 1996 to 2001, there were significant changes felt by Afghan society, starting with the loss of individual rights by eliminating personal freedoms such as restricting women from working, limiting the freedom to enjoy entertainment, and the application of laws based on strict Islamic sharia including public executions and beatings, which created a sense of fear and insecurity for the public. The Taliban also caused changes in the political and security dynamics in Afghanistan through its involvement with terrorism, namely by protecting Al Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden, which influenced the international community's perception of the Taliban (Thomas, 2021). The Taliban's leadership marked a dark period for Afghanistan, which experienced an increased in violence, systematic human rights violations, and acts of terrorism that led to a massive refugee crisis. This proved that the Taliban's extreme ideology and policies failed to create stability and only brought suffering to the Afghan people.

The US intervention since 2001 has not had enough impact on the handling of human rights in Afghanistan. Many civilians still suffer violence and losses as a result of ongoing war crimes. Even

the United States government considers that human rights issues are an obstacle rather than an important component in overcoming the problems that occur in Afghanistan (Gossman, 2021). In fact, the hope that emerged in the community that Afghanistan would be better after 2001, after the Taliban was successfully ousted, ended up causing complaints and disappointment. Human rights violations were also continuously committed by warlords chosen by the United States, causing insecurity and triggering widespread hatred by the public, even encouraging the Taliban to gain support and recruits.

According to Human Rights Watch, civilian casualties from US and NATO airstrikes in Afghanistan have risen sharply since 2007, with more than 500 deaths in 2008. According to the 2021 Action on Armed Violence (AOAV) report, the number of civilian casualties from US and Afghan airstrikes between 2016 and 2020 was 3,977, with 2,122 civilians killed and 1,855 civilians injured, and nearly 1,600 children killed and injured by the airstrikes (Jones, 2021). In mid-2019, the number of civilian casualties caused by the Afghan government and US forces exceeded those caused by armed groups such as the Taliban and ISIS. However, during the 20 years of US intervention, Afghanistan has also made progress in several areas, for example, in terms of education, since 2002, millions of girls in areas under the control of the Afghan government have been able to attend school, and women have also been able to participate in public life, including working.

The Taliban's return to power will not forget the dark history that has occurred before, even the Taliban's return to power raises concerns by the international community regarding security stability in Afghanistan. The previous Taliban leadership was characterized by cases of human rights violations, increased violence, and all forms of restrictive rules and restrictions that made Afghan society face new challenges in terms of security, politics, and economy. This research will be explained with an analytical framework using the concept of "Human Security" to determine the public security stability in Afghanistan after the rise to power of the Taliban. This concept can provide a broader perspective in viewing state security that is not only limited to military and state

security aspects but also includes other factors such as economic, environmental, health, social, and political security.

The security situation in Afghanistan has been the object of discussion in various studies conducted previously. However, this research will be different by focusing more on the public security situation in Afghanistan after the Taliban returned to power in 2021. To assist this research, several previous studies will be used as sources of reference to support the research and to compare the results of the written analysis. Three studies will serve as a comparison and show novelty with the author's research.

The first research article is entitled "Kondisi Politik dan Keamanan Afghanistan di Bawah Rezim Taliban dan Signifikansinya Terhadap Geopolitik Global" and was written by Boy Anugerah and Jabinson Purba in 2021. The research examines the situation and conditions of Afghanistan after the Taliban regime replaced the Afghan government in mid-August 2021. The research shows that there is political and security instability at the domestic level in Afghanistan, and this has a significant impact on global geopolitical conditions. The research focuses its analysis on the state and the global order, explaining how a country's condition impacts the global context. Although it discusses security issues, it could be more specific on the security of society or its people. Meanwhile, this research is more specific in its scope of analysis by wanting to know the internal impact of the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan in 2021. This is what distinguishes this research from the research that the author examines.

The second research study from Hanindya Ratih Febriana was entitled "Ancaman Keamanan Manusia: Sepak Terjang Taliban Menguasai Afghanistan" in 2021. The research highlights the Taliban's actions and policies that have an impact on the humanitarian crisis. However, it only focuses on the dynamics of human security under Taliban rule in the first period 1996-2001. This is the main difference with the author's research, which offers novelty with a specific focus on the impact of Taliban rule on public security in Afghanistan after returning to power in 2021. The author's research aims to analyze the changes in Taliban rule that affect the security situation in

Afghanistan by providing a new perspective that is more accurate to the current conditions.

The third research, "Perlindungan terhadap Anak Akibat Konflik Bersenjata di Afghanistan Pasca Pengambilalihan Kekuasaan oleh Taliban" was written by Sydney Aisyiyah Maharani, et al. in 2022. The research highlights the urgency of child protection in the midst of the Afghan conflict, especially after the return of Afghan power to the Taliban. The research also sought to explore the role of organizations such as UNICEF in ensuring the protection of the civil, economic, social, and cultural rights of affected children. The difference in this study lies in the research focus and analytical approach, which provides different insights. The research was related to society security but focused on child protection, while this research focuses more on societal security as a whole. The analysis conducted in the study is normative juridical, which refers to the analysis of laws related to child protection. Meanwhile, this research will be analyzed using a different approach, namely the concept of human security.

According to a 1994 UNDP report, the concept of human security focuses on four important characteristics. Firstly, human security is a universal problem that can occur anywhere, regardless of whether the country is rich or poor. Second, the components of human security are interdependent. When human security is threatened in an area of the world, other countries will be involved, such as famine, disease, terrorism, and so on. Third, human security is easier to ensure through early prevention rather than later intervention, meaning it is easier to address potential future threats in advance. Fourth, human security is human-centered, which relates to how people live their lives in society, the freedom to make their choices, and broad access to socio-economic aspects.

The concept of human security focuses on the individual as the reference point or main actor who is the key to global security. The conception of human security is also not limited to things that are military or high politics but can also be caused by non-military causes such as environmental conditions, economic, health, and social problems that affect the conflict process. King and Murray (2001), in the book "Security Studies: An Introduction" by Paul Williams, define human security as *'the number of years of*



*future life spent outside the state of "generalized poverty"* (Hampson, 2013). The generalized poverty referred to is when a person does not meet certain standards in human well-being such as income, health, education, and freedom in politics and democracy. Human security can also be assessed from the impact of war, measured by the number of civilian casualties in various countries around the world.

There are two main components in the concept of human security: freedom from fear and freedom from want. The emphasis on human security issues has become a focus faced by many countries in the world, rather than traditional security such as war or conflict. There are 7 main categories included in human security, namely economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security (United Nations Development Programme, 1994). Therefore, the concept of security is not only limited to military or national defense aspects but also includes various other dimensions that affect human life and well-being.

With the return to power of the Taliban in 2021, the Afghan people are facing new challenges in living their lives. Therefore, this research aims to find out more about the Taliban leadership in 2021. Based on the background of these problems, this research will examine the impact of the Taliban's return to power on the security of the Afghan people. This is to find out how much influence the return to power of the Taliban in 2021 has on the public security situation in Afghanistan.

## 2. METHODS

The method used in this research is qualitative, with data collection techniques using library research or literature review. According to Creswell, qualitative research is an approach that tries to explore and understand the meaning of what happens to various individuals or groups that come from social or humanitarian issues (Santana K., 2010). As for the literature review, this research collected data from books, scientific journals, mass media, archives or documents, reports of government and non-government institutions, and other literature sources relevant to the research topic. By using the literature review method, this research can

collect information from various perspectives and different sources so as to provide a comprehensive picture of the topic under study. Various data that have been obtained are then systematically analyzed to answer research problems. This qualitative research involves critical evaluation and analysis to gain a deep understanding of the research topic, namely the impact of the Taliban's return to power on public security stability in Afghanistan. Thus, the research will produce conclusions that are relevant to the topic being researched, namely the public security situation in Afghanistan.

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Taliban Governance in Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001

The Taliban is a conservative Islamic movement group founded by Mullah Mohammad Omar in Afghanistan in 1994, whose goal is to restore Afghanistan to a stable state by implementing strict Islamic teachings in all aspects of people's lives (Anugerah & Purba, 2021). The Taliban leadership began when it succeeded in controlling most of Afghanistan, especially after occupying Kabul on September 27, 1996. The Taliban government, which officially came to power in 1996-2001, then formed the Islamic Imarah government of Afghanistan, making Islamic law the basis of its state (Amaritasari & Sugiharto, 2022). The Taliban's leadership in Afghanistan was recognized by three countries at the time, namely Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia, because of their view of the Taliban, who would restore stability and order in the midst of prolonged chaos in Afghanistan.

However, during its first period in power, the Taliban committed many acts of human rights violations and implemented harsh policies and rules for the Afghan people. The Taliban even executed groups with different religious beliefs. In addition, globally, the Taliban has been known for its repressive gender policies that prohibit women from leaving the house without a male companion and the implementation of a dress code that is considered strange for most Afghans (ICG, 2023). The Taliban also banned Afghans from listening to music, watching television, movie theaters, and prohibited girls aged 10 and above from attending school. The Taliban also restricted the freedom of the press and Afghans

to demand their rights, leading to violence with the beating and detention of journalists and protesters (BBC, 2022). These restrictions have isolated communities from outside influences and deprived them of an important means to express themselves. It also deprives them of their basic right to actively contribute to society, reinforcing the cycle of poverty and dependency.

According to a report by the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), 90% of women were depressed due to the Taliban's unreasonable rule, and thousands of cases of rape, even of children, were recorded during the Taliban's rule from 1996 to 2001. The Taliban's strict application of Islamic sharia rules not only applied to women but also to Afghan men. They are required to grow a long beard so that its tip can touch the bottom of the glass. Those who do not comply with these rules will be subject to punishment in the form of detention, beatings, and imprisonment. These conditions have caused the life expectancy of Afghan men and women to be one of the lowest in the world (Febriana, 2021). This situation shows that the Taliban's actions have become a real threat to human security in Afghanistan. In fact, the Taliban's repressive actions not only affect the psychological and physical health of the victims but also threaten the country's long-term development prospects and stability.

The Taliban have increasingly drawn international condemnation, such as in March 2001, for destroying a Buddha statue carved into a hill above the city of Bamiyan, which the Taliban considered idolatrous and contrary to Islamic norms. The Taliban's actions demonstrated a lack of respect for culture, religious tolerance, and pluralism, reinforcing fear and insecurity for minority groups in Afghanistan. The Taliban's decision to protect Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden in 1996 also came under scrutiny and caused tension at the international level. The Taliban assisted Al-Qaeda in the form of camps and training grounds for around 10,000 Al-Qaeda fighters (Thomas, 2021). This has created a negative perception of the international community about the Taliban, which is considered to support the agenda of violence and terrorism and has threatened global security.

A series of strict policies and rules, as well as the imposition of severe penalties in

Afghanistan at that time, made the Taliban lose international support, even causing resistance from most of the population, especially those living in urban areas. One such form of resistance occurred on October 17, 1996, when more than a hundred women in Herat City protested against the Taliban's closure of public bathing facilities. However, the women were beaten and arrested by the Taliban religious police, who warned men not to let them out of the house (Terpstra, 2020). The Taliban's repressive actions have erased the fundamental rights of Afghans, especially by limiting women to education, public participation, and even essential services such as health.

The Taliban government of 1996-2001 is considered a failure in providing public services and reconstructing Afghanistan. Even the Taliban's extreme and intolerant Islamic doctrine contradicted the true values of Islam and was rejected by many religious leaders (Ameyaw-Brobbey, 2023). The Taliban's interpretation of Islam is very narrow, as it ignores the basic principles of Islam that emphasize justice, compassion, protecting the weak, and individual rights. In 2001, the United States also assessed that the human rights violations committed by the Taliban were among the worst human rights records in the world (Thomas, 2021). From a human security perspective, the first Taliban leadership focused more on strictly enforcing their rules and laws than on meeting the basic needs of the Afghan people. The Taliban were not able to guarantee the security of the Afghan people, instead, they created fear by ignoring the fundamental values of individuals and were involved with the Al-Qaeda terrorist network, which was not only an internal threat but also a global security threat.

### **3.2 The Condition of Afghan Society under the US Intervention in 2001**

The United States intervention in Afghanistan began in 2001 in response to the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001, known as 9/11. The Taliban government, which at that time protected the Al-Qaeda terrorist group, made the United States decide to invade Afghanistan in October 2001 in a *War on Terror* effort. The United States then launched airstrikes and ground military operations to subdue the Taliban regime. The intervention was supported by the Afghan

Northern Alliance, a military front of anti-Taliban resistance in Afghanistan that wanted to end the Taliban's harsh rule. After several months of fighting, the Taliban forces were finally pushed back and lost control of most of Afghanistan by the end of 2001.

The United States war on terror efforts was not only limited to strengthening military and defense forces in Afghanistan but sought to meet the basic needs of the people, such as establishing schools and clinics in order to gain the support of Afghan civilians (Connah, 2021). This action is aimed at narrowing the space for extremist groups such as the Taliban and al-Qaeda and strengthening the legitimacy of the Afghan government supported by the US. In addition, US policy in Afghanistan aims to fight for and protect women's rights. Supporting women's human rights in the context of a war-affected society is considered a just step, as innocent women deserve to have their rights protected. However, it does not justify military intervention or prevent the escalation of armed conflict. Afghan communities are still often targeted by the armed conflict, even to the point of damaging critical infrastructure. The reality on the ground is more complex, as the conflict has led to a lack of political stability, making it difficult for basic human rights to be upheld and protected.

During two decades of U.S. intervention, donors spent hundreds of millions of dollars on projects aimed at improving social equality for women. The United States alone has spent approximately \$787.4 million on programs supporting Afghan women and girls (ICG, 2023). Since 2001, the United States has contributed to improving the lives of civilians by providing access to health services, educational facilities, infrastructure improvements, training Afghan police, establishing stabilization programs, and strengthening community development (Connah, 2021). The United States has funded programs to help rebuild Afghanistan's economy and improve political stability. In 2021, the number of girls enrolled in primary school increased from 900,000 boys and no girls in 2001 to 9.2 million, including both girls and boys (Gonnella-Platts, 2022). Maternal and child mortality rates also decreased significantly during the US intervention, and there was an

increase in the number of women working in the formal sector.

Under the US intervention, Afghanistan also adopted several policies that paid attention to the fulfillment of human rights, especially women. In 2009, Afghanistan passed the Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) Law which criminalizes 22 types of violence against women, namely rape, beatings, forced marriage, restrictions on women's rights to education, employment, and access to health (Leclerc & Shreeves, 2023). With this law, women in Afghanistan have a legal framework to protect their rights and prevent violence. However, the actual enforcement of the law is still weak because several factors, such as families and judges with a patriarchal culture and strict religious interpretations, make them override women's rights.

Despite some progress, military operations by the United States have taken the lives of many Afghan civilians. In 2021, an estimated 241,000 people died as a result of the war since the US invaded Afghanistan to overthrow the Taliban, and hundreds of thousands of civilians have died from hunger, disease, and injury as a result of the war (Haddad, 2021). This is due to poor US strategies, such as the use of excessive force, detention, torture, and harassment as a way to obtain information, as well as destroying many suspected terrorist hideouts. For example, in 2010, the United States launched an airstrike targeting three minibusses suspected of carrying militant insurgents, but in reality, 23 civilians were killed (Connah, 2021). In 2018-2019, the US military also increased the intensity of bombing in Afghanistan, resulting in the deadliest airstrikes on children in the history of the conflict. The number of child casualties increased by 85 percent in 2018 compared to the previous year (Javaid, 2021).

The US government is hampered in effectively rebuilding Afghanistan by its lack of understanding of the country's social, economic, and political dynamics. United States officials often reinforce local power brokers who exploit the people or misuse U.S. aid for their own and their allies' benefit. This lack of understanding of local conditions resulted in projects that aimed to reduce conflict instead of exacerbating the situation, and sometimes inadvertently funding insurgent groups (SIGAR, 2021).



The US intervention in Afghanistan succeeded in removing the Taliban leadership and driving Al-Qaeda out of the country. However, this intervention had the tragic consequence that the death toll of the "War on Terror" in Afghanistan far exceeded the death toll caused by the 9/11 attacks. Public security is also threatened not only by military attacks but also by unmet resources, such as a lack of food and basic health services, adding to the seriousness of the situation in Afghanistan. Protection of civilians and fulfillment of people's basic rights should be a priority in any military operation. Despite many abuses under the US-backed Afghan government, conditions have generally improved since 2001, especially in the areas of human rights, especially the rights of women and girls and the rights of ethnic and religious minorities.

### 3.3 The Impact of the Taliban's Return to Power on the Stability of Public Security in Afghanistan

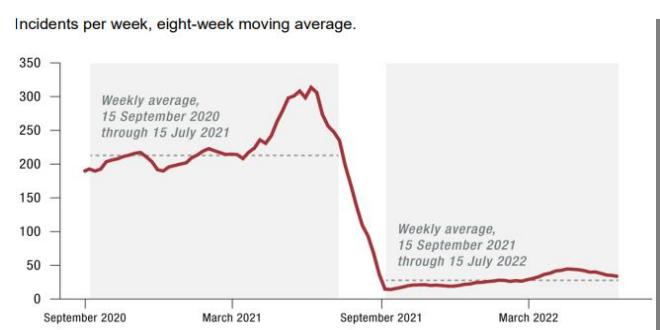
The Taliban's return to power in August 2021 was a cause for concern for the Afghan people as well as the international community, given the poor governance of the Taliban in the first period. The Taliban managed to regain control of Afghanistan after an agreement between the United States government and the Taliban, marked by the signing of a peace agreement in February 2020. Through the agreement, the US government will gradually withdraw its military forces within 14 months from the date of signing, and the Taliban promised not to allow groups or individuals to use Afghan territory to threaten the US and its allies. They will cut ties with terrorist groups, including al-Qaeda (Bobkin, 2022).

Although negotiations to end the conflict are making progress, there are concerns among Afghans. According to Shaharзад Akbar, chairman of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, the agreement lacked the presence of non-Taliban Afghans, marginalizing the voices of the Afghan people as a whole (Graham-Harrison et al., 2020). The lack of Afghan involvement casts doubts on the agreement, which truly reflects peace efforts for all Afghans. However, the agreement marked a turning point in the end of the United States intervention in Afghanistan. Although many remain skeptical about the implementation of

the Taliban's promises given their past track record, the tense situation resulting from the prolonged conflict at least began to ease after the United States exit.

After the Taliban took control of Afghanistan, the country's overall security situation has improved for the better, and civilian casualties have decreased. Emergency wards that were once always full of Afghans suffering from shrapnel or explosion wounds are no longer as busy. This decrease in the level of armed violence is attributed to the fact that the Taliban has managed to take control of most of Afghanistan's territory.

**Figure 3.1. The Number of Violence Cases in Afghanistan, September 2020- July 2022**



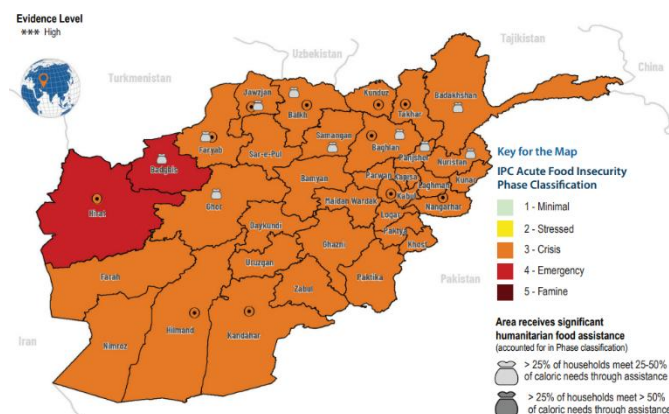
Source: International Crisis Group, 2022. "Afghanistan's Security Challenges under the Taliban (pg. 2)".

Based on figure 3.1, the incidence of violence in Afghanistan shows a five-fold decrease by 2022. A significant decline occurred during the transition of the Afghan government under the United States to the Taliban (International Crisis Group, 2022). Several important aspects need attention to determine the stability of public security in Afghanistan as a result of the return of Taliban power, namely the economy, food security, health, and social politics, including individual security such as the guarantee of their rights in life.

Based on the UNDP report in October 2022, the standard of living of Afghans has decreased, with almost all Afghans living in poverty. An estimated 700,000 jobs have been lost, and the economy has shrunk by 30% since the takeover (UNDP, 2022). This condition is exacerbated by the cessation of aid from several donor countries and international organizations that have been helping the economy and public health sector. Dependence on international support has prevented the Taliban from addressing poverty in the country. The food security situation in Afghanistan is also a cause for concern, with

more than 90 percent of the population experiencing food shortages throughout the year and millions of people going without food at all during the day. This hunger-induced malnutrition has also led to increased mortality and vulnerable health problems for children (Human Rights Watch, 2022). Between November 2023 and March 2024, an estimated 15.8 million people will experience high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC, 2023). The distribution of food insecurity in Afghanistan is in crisis level (see figure 3.2.)

**Figure 3.2. Projected Acute Food Insecurity, November 2023 - March 2024**



Source: IPC, 2023

Based on the distribution map, most provinces in Afghanistan are projected to be in a crisis phase or high acute food insecurity (red) during the period. One northeastern province, Badakhshan, is expected to experience famine. The picture is alarming as it points to the potential for a massive and widespread food security crisis in almost all parts of Afghanistan in the coming months. This is likely due to the combined impact of prolonged conflict, natural disasters, poverty, and economic shocks in the country.

Afghans people are struggling to meet their basic needs due to loss of income, rising prices of food, fuel, and other necessities, and declining agricultural yields due to seasonal changes. Even children who should be enjoying their childhood are affected by not having access to adequate health care, nutritious food, and a clean and decent environment. According to the Afghanistan Humanitarian Situation Report, by 2022, as many as 13.1 million children will need humanitarian assistance to survive (Maharani et al., 2022).

The economic crisis in Afghanistan is also influenced by the Taliban's controversial

policies that again prohibit women from attending school, teaching, and working. In the first period of their rule, the Taliban were already criticized for restricting women's rights, and now they are back to implementing the same detrimental policies without any changes. Before the Taliban's return to power, women had the freedom to contribute to economic development in Afghanistan. However, the loss of women's participation in the economic sector led to increased poverty, disempowered human resources, and hampered Afghanistan's overall economic recovery efforts. Decisions regarding women's access to employment have led to a decline in GDP of up to \$1 billion. According to ILO estimates, by the third quarter of 2021, employment is expected to fall by 8 percent as workers are forced out of work due to economic uncertainty and restrictions on women's involvement (UNDP, 2022). Women's labor force participation rate in Afghanistan also decreased by 25 percent between August 2021 and March 2023 (Menon, 2023).

After the Taliban took power in Afghanistan, there was a wave of displacement by Afghans who flocked to the country's international airports in hopes of leaving Afghanistan. These refugees reportedly experienced a deep fear of a government system that would be led again by the Taliban. This fear is based on past experiences during the first period of Taliban rule (1996-2001), which was known for brutal repression, human rights violations, and strict application of shariah law (Cahyani, 2022). This anxiety and fear triggered a strong desire to seek refuge and safety in other countries, away from the repressive Taliban power.

UNHCR recorded that more than 1.6 million Afghans have left the country since 2021, bringing the total to 8.2 million Afghans displaced in neighboring countries due to years of prolonged conflict (UNHCR, 2023). An additional 3.5 million Afghans have been displaced within their own country due to war, earthquakes, drought, or resource depletion (Aljazeera, 2023b). Conflict will no longer be the main driver of displacement in 2021, but the fear of protection and humanitarian aid, as well as seeking livelihood support, will force them to leave their countries. However, some countries, such as Pakistan and Iran, are currently



conducting mass deportations of Afghan refugees due to the economic and social pressures posed by the large number of refugees in their countries (Amini, 2023).

The new Taliban government also changed the Women's Ministry to the Ministry of Vice and Virtue. After the ministry was changed, the Taliban excluded women from the government sector by prohibiting them from coming to the office (Pramadiba, 2022). This ban was based on the full application of Islamic sharia, which prohibits women from working with men in any sector. However, they could still be involved in the education and health sectors, but this was also a cause for concern as the Taliban also imposed strict restrictions that prevented women and communities from working in these sectors.

Much of the progress made after 2001 has now been reversed. The Taliban's policy of closing and restricting schools at secondary and university levels has deprived women of their basic human right to equal learning opportunities. According to Amnesty International, these restrictions relate to gender segregation, where male and female students are separated, such as using separate entrances and exits, attending university at different times, and having gender-specific teachers. Consequently, many women choose to drop out of college and have not even applied to university. Even boys whom female teachers previously taught after the restrictions made them leave school. This is due to the inadequate quality and capacity of teachers, they often did not study and received corporal punishment, which affected to their mental health (RL's Radio Azadi, 2024).

The Taliban also created an unfavorable and fearful educational environment in the community with incidents where the Taliban subjected students and teachers to harassment and violence. Hence, people were worried and did not allow girls to attend school (Amnesty International, 2022). The situation is most frightening when women imprisoned for unknown reasons are subjected to severe torture, electric shocks, death threats, sexual harassment, and forced marriages to Taliban fighters. This is especially detrimental for poor women who then have no hope of survival because some surrender themselves to the

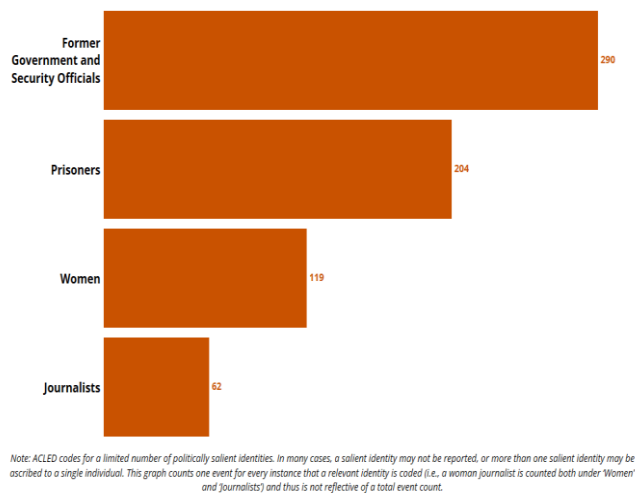
Taliban by becoming wives of Taliban group members (Khorasani, 2024).

Afghanistan holds the highest rate of violence against women in the world, with 9 out of 10 women having experienced at least one form of intimate partner violence during their lives (UNAMA, 2021). After the US intervention, many international organizations assisted the Afghan government in providing services to survivors, such as shelter, medical, and psychological support. However, after the Taliban took over, the support network for victims of violence was lost as some victim shelters were closed, and shelter staff were forced to return women to their families. As a result, the previous system of support services to address violence was no longer sustainable. The Taliban also released perpetrators of violence, resulting in an increased threat to community security, especially for survivors.

The Taliban's discriminatory policies have also led to the arbitrary arrest and detention of many people, who are arrested on baseless charges such as being accused of "moral crimes" such as women going out without a mahram, which they consider a form of adultery. Even in 2022, only 10% of the people in prison had actually committed a crime, while the other 90% were imprisoned for moral crimes (Amnesty International, 2022). This policy clearly indicates a serious violation of the personal and social dimensions of security. The Taliban has abused its power by undermining social integrity and ignoring individual rights to justice and freedom. The Taliban's application of extreme religiously oriented rule of law has created an environment that disregards human security and threatens overall social stability.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) reported that there were 1,600 incidents of detention-related human rights violations between January 2022 and July 2023, half of which constituted torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (Amnesty International, 2023). The Taliban's violence targeted civilians with four main target groups: former government and security officials, prisoners, women, and journalists (ACLED, 2023).

**Figure 3.3 Taliban Violence Civillians by Salient Identity Type, 16 August 2021 – 30 June 2023.**



Source: ACLED (*Armed Conflict Location and Event Data*), 2023.

As can be seen in Figure 3.3, the group most targeted by Taliban violence is former officials, indicating the Taliban's efforts to suppress and eliminate its political opponents. In addition, some prisoners are mostly activists and anti-Taliban groups, women who oppose the return of the Taliban's repressive policies on gender, and journalists who are victims of Taliban violence. The data also indicates that the Taliban use violence systematically to suppress groups that are perceived to threaten or challenge their authority in Afghanistan. In 2023, Rawadari also recorded at least 16 cases of torture leading to death in Taliban prisons (Rawadari, 2024).

Besides that, threats to the safety of civilians are still ongoing in various regions of Afghanistan. According to data released by UNAMA, between August 2021 and May 2023, 3,774 civilian victims were the target of attacks. This figure includes 1,095 people killed and 2,679 people injured. Most of these incidents of violence against civilians were caused by terrorist acts committed by the Islamic State Khorasan Province (IS-KP) armed group, a militant offshoot of ISIS operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Although the Taliban have managed to reduce the overall level of violence, the threat of terrorist groups such as IS-KP still lurks and ensures the security of the Afghan people. IS-KP attacks escalated after the attack on Kabul airport during the evacuation of Afghanistan in August 2021, which killed 170 Afghan civilians and 13 US soldiers. By 2022, the terrorist group had caused the third highest

number of deaths in the world after ISIS and Al-Shabaab, but 75 percent of ISKP attacks focused on the Taliban to attack Afghanistan's new leadership (Eggink, 2024).

Freedom of the press in Afghanistan has also suffered drastic setbacks, with journalists facing a wide range of abuses, including intimidation, arrest, persecution, and murder. There are a number of independent media outlets that were once free to report on the ground from Afghanistan, now, they are struggling due to restrictions from the Taliban, and many journalists have even fled the country. Due to strict limitations on the media and journalists, more than half of journalists have been forced to stop working, especially women journalists (Rachman, 2022). Some journalists have also been assaulted for attempting to report on sensitive issues such as anti-Taliban protests, arbitrary detention, food price hikes, and other topics deemed too critical by Taliban authorities (Human Rights Watch, 2022). This crackdown not only violates press freedom but also creates an atmosphere of fear among journalists, hindering them from reporting the truth and depriving the public of accurate information about the situation in Afghanistan.

Minority groups in Afghanistan continue to be faced with an alarming situation, especially religious minority groups such as Shia, Sikhs, Hindus, Christians, Ahmadiyya, and Ismailis, who experience marginalization, prejudice, and discrimination in their daily lives. The Sunni-dominated Taliban government has adopted policies that limit the space for religious minorities to practice their beliefs and traditions. For example, in July 2023, the Taliban imposed restrictions on the commemoration of Ashura, an important celebration for Shia Muslims. In that incident, the Taliban opened fire on a gathering of Shia-Hazara who were celebrating Ashura for dispersal. However, as a result, four people were killed, including a child and a woman, while six others were injured (Amnesty International, 2023). Furthermore, the Taliban also mandated the exclusion of Shia teachings and jurisprudence from the education curriculum in Afghanistan. This means that religious instruction in schools is based solely on Sunni Islamic beliefs. This policy could marginalize the Shia community and hinder

their ability to learn and practice their beliefs fully.

Initially, the Taliban promised fair treatment for every minority group in Afghanistan. However, this promise is not in line with the actions taken because it has limited the freedom of religious minorities to practice their beliefs. Representatives of religious minorities said that the Taliban had oppressed them by restricting access to worship, holding civil service positions, and university admissions. Hundreds have even fled abroad for fear of violent attacks by the Taliban (US Department of State, 2022). These restrictions on minorities have demonstrated systemic discriminatory treatment by the Taliban to prevent them from fully participating in public life and living their lives freely and safely.

Lack of access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities makes people more vulnerable to the influence and oppression of Taliban ideology. When people live in poverty and constant fear, they become easier to exploit and control. The Taliban capitalize on this situation to strengthen their grip, using violence and intimidation to subdue an already vulnerable population. This creates a continuous cycle of vulnerability, where Taliban threats further hamper development, poverty deepens, and poverty exacerbates fear. People living under this threat suffer not only physical but also psychological harm, which hinders their ability to develop, seek change, or demand fulfillment of their rights.

The Taliban's repressive and discriminatory policies, especially against women, have created new insecurities for the people in the form of human rights violations, creating a sense of fear and injustice. Afghanistan's economy has also regressed due to severe crises and poverty. The Taliban's ban on women's participation in the economy has also had a significant impact on Afghanistan's declining productivity and GDP. The Taliban's policies restricting women's rights, such as the ban on schooling and employment, were reinstated even more strictly than in the first period of its rule.

Repression of minority groups and freedom of expression also persisted in the second period of Taliban rule. The Taliban's use

of violence and coercion, as well as its authoritarian and repressive style of government against opposition groups, limited the freedom of its people. In general, although the Taliban managed to reduce the incidence of armed violence, the stability of public security in Afghanistan after the Taliban returned to power can be said to be far from stable, especially in terms of protecting human rights, economic development, and upholding social justice. The discriminatory policies of the first period of his rule continue to this day. In fact, the Taliban's implementation of strict Islamic rules did not bring security and tranquility to the Afghan people but instead eliminated the fundamental values of individuals. Some Taliban members even deviated from the teachings of Islam, committing acts of violence and harassment against women. Even women who go out without a mahram are considered adultery and should be punished severely. The ideology of the Taliban government, which has not changed since the first period, is the fundamental reason that the stability of public security in Afghanistan is difficult to achieve.

### **3.4 Taliban Challenges in Efforts to Maintain Public Security Stability in Afghanistan**

Afghanistan is still in a situation of instability after the takeover of power by the Taliban, with various complex problems. The new Taliban government is faced with various challenges that complicate their efforts to create a safe environment, especially maintaining the stability of public security in Afghanistan. The challenges come from internal factors such as factional divisions, the emergence of anti-Taliban militant groups, and humanitarian challenges due to climate. External factors include diplomatic isolation and international sanctions.

The Taliban consists of various factions with different agendas and power bases. This makes it very possible for divisions to emerge between the factions, especially since the Taliban's supreme leader, Haibatullah Akhundzada, has repeatedly rejected input from other Taliban factions, especially the more pragmatic and internationally oriented Taliban leaders (Felbab-Brown, 2023). The current leadership of the Taliban movement is divided into at least three groups, the first consisting of



the US peace negotiation team led by Abdul Ghani Baradar. The second is the military wing led by Molavi Yaqoob and Mullah Mohammed Omar, and the third is the Haqqani network wing led by Sirajuddin Haqqani (Qandil, 2022).

The strength of the different groups has caused internal strife within the Taliban, mainly due to different attitudes. For example, the pragmatically-minded Haqqani group seeks to support girls' education by mobilizing clerics to support the agenda (Taneja, 2022). This contrasts with the more traditional or conservative standards of the Taliban's official leadership on the issue of girls' education. Divisions within the Taliban have also led to armed clashes between faction supporters, such as the suicide bombing incident inside a mosque inside the foreign ministry on October 5, 2022, that killed four people but was kept secret by the Taliban (UNICRI, 2023). This is a major challenge for the Taliban as there is a lack of internal unity within the Taliban to collectively address issues such as public security. Instead, this situation could escalate the risk of violent conflict, making the situation even more complex.

The Taliban's challenge also arises from the National Resistance Front (NRF) and ISIS-K/ISKP militant groups, who have carried out many attacks against the Taliban government. In August 2021, ISKP carried out a suicide attack outside Kabul airport that killed 85 people (Washdatyar, 2021). At the same time, the Afghan National Resistance Front militia force emerged and launched airstrikes in Northern Baghlan. The group also captured three districts 160km north of Kabul (Tempo, 2022). Militant groups like ISIS view the Taliban movement as a strategic enemy in the South Asian region and have always questioned the Taliban's legitimacy among jihadis. ISIS-K tries to create propaganda to attract disillusioned citizens who want to take revenge on the Taliban. These groups have ideologies that contradict the Taliban, posing a serious threat to maintaining public security. This problem causes the Taliban's focus on solving structural problems in Afghanistan to be divided and can weaken the Taliban's power.

Additionally, the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan is influenced by climate change, which has led to an increase in the frequency and intensity of natural disasters and extreme

weather in Afghanistan. This makes people more vulnerable to food shortages, as searing heatwaves and floods damage crops and fertile farmland. The UN reports that 20 million Afghans are food insecure (Boot, 2022). These food shortages led to mass starvation, with six million people on the brink of starvation in August 2022 (Center for Preventive Action, 2023). In June 2022, Afghanistan was hit by the worst earthquake in twenty years, killing at least 1000 people (UNHCR, 2023). ). This has further exacerbated the already vulnerable conditions of the Afghan people due to prolonged conflict, the impact of COVID-19, and poverty. Moreover, it has triggered social unrest and large-scale displacement of refugees.

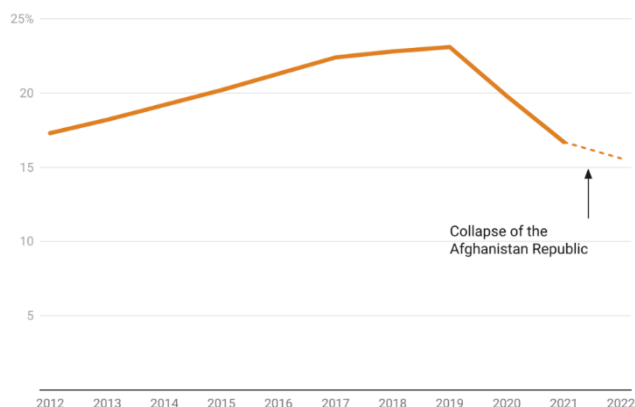
As for the external factors that challenge the Taliban in maintaining the security of the Afghan people, the first is diplomatic isolation, namely, until now, no country has officially recognized the Taliban government. Even the Taliban has tried to submit a request to be recognized by the UN in June 2023. However, it is still difficult because the Taliban still maintains discriminatory laws (Center for Preventive Action, 2023). The lack of recognition is due to the Taliban's ban on restricting women's access to education and employment in Afghanistan (Aljazeera, 2023a). The international community, including stakeholders in Afghanistan's neighboring countries, called for an inclusive government for Afghanistan as a condition for recognizing and respecting human rights, women's rights, and basic freedoms, as well as joint efforts against terrorism. NATO, the UN, and the British government have warned the Taliban that they will face isolation from the international community if they continue to occupy power in Afghanistan using violent means (Qandil, 2022). These parties assert that the Taliban will not receive official international recognition if they take over Afghanistan through military action and armed insurgency.

Senior United Nations officials have conveyed that to improve the conditions in Afghanistan, it requires two-way cooperation and engagement between the Taliban government and the international community. (United Nations, 2022). The Taliban must be willing to meet the standards of international norms so that the global community can assist in

economic recovery and development in Afghanistan. If the Taliban ignores these issues, fragmentation, isolation, poverty, and internal conflict will bring greater misery to the Afghan people.

Second, the Taliban faces the challenge of international sanctions. Before August 2021, Afghanistan's economy was heavily dependent on foreign aid, with around 75% of its economy supported by foreign aid. However, after the Taliban took power in Afghanistan, most of the international aid flow to the country was halted as a result of international sanctions against the Taliban government (CDP, 2024). This resulted in a decline in the purchasing power of the Afghan people. The decrease in the amount of aid for development in Afghanistan has resulted in fewer jobs being available. Meanwhile, the UN estimates that more than two-thirds, or about 67% of the total Afghan population, currently require humanitarian assistance in order to meet their basic living needs (Yawar, 2023).

**Figure 4.1 Afghanistan Female labour force participation of total labour force**



Source: *The Devpolicy Blog*, 2024. "Impacts of the Taliban's ban on women's work and education."

According to the figure, in 2022, the female labor participation rate in Afghanistan was 19% and decreased to 16.7% in the third quarter of 2021. This decline is due to the Taliban's restrictions on women, making donors reluctant to provide aid to Afghanistan. Whereas in the last 20 years, Afghan women have contributed greatly to the economy by running around 57,000 small and medium enterprises with the help of donor support (Qazizada, 2024).

The international sanctions imposed on Taliban were meant to limit their access to financial resources with the aim of making the Taliban pay more attention to humanitarian issues in Afghanistan. However, the sanctions

became a hindrance to the Taliban as they resulted in losses to the Afghan economy and society, where the livelihoods of millions were lost and some have turned to the black market to survive (UNICRI, 2023). The reduction in international aid in Afghanistan has also led to the collapse of basic health and education services. This poses a challenge to the Taliban because, historically, Afghanistan has relied heavily on grant inflows to finance its huge trade deficit (Kohsar, 2022). This dependency shows how fragile the Afghan state economy is due to the lack of domestic resources to cover trade needs. This underscores the importance of international support to maintain Afghanistan's economic stability. Without external assistance, the Taliban may struggle to maintain economic balance and provide basic services to the Afghan people.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Since the return to power of Taliban in 2021, the situation in Afghanistan has faced numerous challenges compared to the Taliban's first period of governance from 1996 to 2001. Through this research, we find that the Taliban's return to power with an authoritarian and repressive approach has failed to create security stability in Afghanistan. The implemented policies have failed to protect the basic rights of the people and have exacerbated social and economic conditions. Afghanistan's economy has experienced a crisis and poverty, worsened by Taliban restrictions on women's participation in economic activities and limitations on access to education. Additionally, discriminatory actions against religious minority groups and freedom of expression continue unabated. This indicates that the ideology and policies of the Taliban are major obstacles to achieving stability and progress in Afghanistan.

The condemnation and criticism from countries around the world and various international communities have not prompted the Taliban to reform and improve their new leadership. The Taliban wanted to create Afghanistan as a secure country. Instead, they ignored the crucial things that are important in building security, namely creating a sense of security for its people. The Taliban's return to power has resulted in regression in the protection of human rights, unlike the Afghan government under US intervention. People once again live in

fear due to the lack of safe spaces outside their homes. Press freedom has vanished as many journalists are harassed, beaten, and even killed. The complex and interconnected situation further exacerbates the plight of Afghan society.

Creating public security stable is a complex process in Afghanistan. The Afghan government under Taliban rule is faced with internal challenges such as differences in the interests of Taliban factions, the emergence of militant groups such as ISKP and NRF, and climate problems that exacerbate the humanitarian crisis. As for external challenges in an effort to maintain public security, namely the diplomatic isolation carried out by international organizations and other countries, as well as a decrease in international assistance as an international sanction against the repressive and discriminatory Taliban government.

To address these issues, more comprehensive and holistic interventions are needed from the international community to support security and development in Afghanistan. This research confirms the importance of an approach that respects individual rights and inclusiveness in building community security and long-term stability. This research has limitations in terms of data coverage and methodology. The data used mostly came from secondary reports and conceptual analysis, which did not deeply explore the perspectives of local communities directly affected by Taliban rule. As a recommendation for future research, there should be more focus on collecting primary data from the field to get a more accurate picture of the conditions in Afghanistan. In addition, further studies could explore the long-term impact of Taliban policies on the country and wider society, as well as potential effective intervention strategies to improve the security and welfare of the Afghan people.

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