



## Implications of U.S. Withdrawal from Afghanistan & Taliban Takeover

### Implications for Taliban Governance

With the Taliban now in control of nearly all of Afghanistan, the country is facing several challenges.

The Taliban has inherited **complex policy challenges** related to the **economy**, as very little money is coming into the country and food and fuel prices are rapidly rising. Even if the Taliban were to gain access to funds, its inexperience may hinder the development of an economic recovery plan. **Sanctions and the suspension of international aid** has exacerbated the gravity of the humanitarian crisis. As winter weather approaches, these problems become more dire.

Additionally, it's possible that an **armed resistance** may emerge if the Taliban struggles to consolidate power and gain domestic legitimacy. Former Taliban soldiers may find it difficult to transition to civilian life and therefore shift their allegiance to ISIS-K, increasing the influence of other jihadist groups in the region. There have also been reports of internal challenges between moderates and hardliners which may influence the Taliban's capacity to govern.

### Implications for the Central Asian Region

Although predictions suggest that China, Russia, and Iran will take on leadership in Afghanistan, this is unlikely. Instead, surrounding countries **may only intervene once they are comfortable with the level of security**. However, Proxy conflict between India and Pakistan is a real possibility. For now, India is the only country supporting anti-Taliban rhetoric and Pakistan has sponsored the Taliban for many years. Most recently, the Taliban has reiterated its support for Kashmiri Muslims, adding to India's concerns. While the region seems to be divided in disagreements, the majority of situational actors desire **greater stability within Afghanistan**. Stability within the country would lessen the likelihood of an increase in spillover effects such as refugee flow, drug trafficking, and cross-border terrorism.

### Implications for the U.S.

Although short-term credibility was somewhat affected, withdrawal from Afghanistan has not impacted countries' desire for U.S. partnership. However, the U.S. must now also handle the policy challenge of **delivering humanitarian support** to Afghanistan without going through the Taliban government. Moreover, the **threat of terror should be monitored** as it's going to be more difficult to build a global counterterrorism effort without having physical boots on the ground.

### Points for Policy

The Taliban's fundamental ideology hasn't changed and it's unlikely the treatment of women or human rights will improve. For now, the U.S. must work on **averting a humanitarian catastrophe**. It's important to **collaborate with established humanitarian organizations**, such as the **United Nations (UN)**, to help avert the crisis. The U.S. must also stand firm in UN Security Council sanctions and resist the pressure of China and Russia to 'go easy' on the Taliban. Finally, the U.S. must **reaffirm our commitment to Central Asian allies** in order to mount a comprehensive counterterrorism effort.

Based off of Presentation by Wilson Expert

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