

Opinion

NEWS INDIA
TIMES

Dr. Sudhir M. Parikh
Founder, Chairman & Publisher

Ilayas Quraishi
Chief Operating Officer

Ela Dutt
Editor

Arun Shah
Ahmedabad Bureau Chief

Peter Ferreira, Deval Parikh,
Freelance Photographers

Bhailal M. Patel
Executive Vice President

Chandrakant Koticha-Rajkot, India
Executive Director Business Development

Jim Gallentine
Business Development Manager - U.S.

M.P. Singh Chauhan
Manager Business Development
- Ahmedabad

Shahnaz Sheikh
Senior Manager
Advertising & Marketing

Sonia Lalwani
Advertising Manager

Shailu Desai
Advertising New York

Muslima Shethwala
Syed Sheeraz Mahmood
Advertising Chicago

Digant Sompura
Consultant for Business Development
Ahmedabad, India

Hervender Singh
Circulation Manager

Main Office
Editorial & Corporate Headquarters
35 Journal Square, Suite 204,
Jersey City, New Jersey 07306
Tel. (212) 675-7515 Fax. (212) 675-7624
New York Office
3601 36 Ave, Long Island City, NY 11106
Tel: (718) 784-8555

E-mails
editor@newsindiatimes.com
advertising@newsindia-times.com
Website
www.newsindiatimes.com

Chicago Office
2652 West Devon Avenue, Suite B
Chicago, IL 60659 Tel. (773) 856-3345

California Office
650 Vermont Ave, Suite #46
Anaheim, CA 92805

Mumbai Office
Nikita Ajay Pai
Goregaon, West Mumbai

Ahmedabad Office
303 Kashiparekh Complex
C.G. Road, 29 Adarsh Society
Ahmedabad 380009
Tel. 26446947 F ax. 26565596



Published weekly, Founded in 1975.
The views expressed on the opinion pages are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect those of News India Times.
Copyright © 2021, News India Times
News India Times (ISSN 0199-901X) is published every Friday by Parikh Worldwide Media LLC.,
35 Journal Square, Suite 204, Jersey City, NJ 07306
Periodicals postage paid at Newark, N.J., and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address change to News India Times,
35 Journal Square, Suite 204, Jersey City, NJ 07306
Annual Subscription: United States: \$28

Disclaimer:
Parikh Worldwide Media assumes no liability for claims/assumptions made in advertisements and advertorials.

The Taliban Caretakers Will Keep The Neighbors Up

BY DANIEL W. DREZNER

A week ago, anxious Afghans and credulous Biden administration officials were trying to take comfort in reports that Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar would head the Taliban's new government in Kabul.

It seemed like the least bad option. As leader of the group's political wing, Baradar had been the Taliban's chief representative in peace negotiations with the U.S. in Qatar, and was thought to hold somewhat more moderate views than most of the military commanders. In interviews, he promised an "inclusive" government, representing all of the country's ethnic and tribal groups.

As it turned out, Baradar may himself have been fortunate to be included in the government. Announced on Tuesday, the new caretaker administration is dominated by the Taliban's military faction, with hardliners in key positions. Baradar is only in the third tier of the hierarchy, as one of two deputy prime ministers. He will report to Prime Minister Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund, who will in turn answer to Supreme Leader Haibatullah Akhundzada.

Baradar's relegation undermines Afghan hopes for a kinder, gentler "Taliban 2.0." Far from being inclusive, the cabinet is entirely male, overwhelmingly from the Pashtun community and has no representative from the Shiite minority. This makes it even harder to believe the group's other reassurances, whether about women's freedoms or religious tolerance.

More alarming for the wider world, the new dispensation in Kabul abounds with men with bona fides that would be welcomed at the high tables of al-Qaeda and

the Islamic State. The composition of the government lengthens the odds on President Biden's gamble that the Taliban will make common cause with Washington in the fight against jihadist terrorism.

The most prominent of the hardliners in office is Sirajuddin Haqqani, a U.S.-designated terrorist with long ties to al-Qaeda and other jihadist groups. Afghans with a morbid sense of humor can now claim the \$10 million bounty offered by the FBI "for information leading directly to the arrest" of their new interior minister.

If Mohammed Yaqoob, the defense minister, doesn't have Haqqani's terrorist credentials, he more than makes up for this in lineage: He is the eldest son of Mullah Omar, the Taliban's first supreme leader and host of Osama bin Laden. Yaqoob has supervised the Taliban's military operations in recent years, as the group has embraced many al-Qaeda tactics, including the use of suicide bombings against civilian targets.

The new intelligence chief, Abdul Haq Wassiq, completes the troika of security bosses. He is under United Nations sanctions for his role in the previous Taliban administration, when he was "in charge of handling relations with Al-Qaida-related foreign fighters and their training camps in Afghanistan." (More than half the 33-man cabinet are under UN sanctions.)

If al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri could pick three men to run Afghanistan's security services, it is a safe bet that Haqqani, Yaqoob and Wassiq would have been at the top of his list. The Biden administration must assume that they will make it their business to turn Afghanistan once again a safe haven for terrorism.

It is unlikely to be much of a consolation for Washington, but the government in Kabul will also alarm other countries

with an interest in Afghanistan. For instance, there will be disquiet in China about army chief Qari Fasihuddin, who has had a long association with the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, which Beijing accuses of terrorism in its Xinjiang province. (The Trump administration last year removed the ETIM from the State Department's list of terrorist groups.)

Meanwhile, the Shiite shutout will cause grave concern in Iran, which regards itself as protector of the minority sect. There are fears of a resumption of the persecution of the predominantly Shiite Hazara community that characterized the previous Taliban administration in the late 1990s.

And there's bad news for India, which invested heavily in Afghanistan over the past 20 years. The hardliners are all closely tied to Islamabad. The Taliban has historically sided with Pakistan in its dispute with India over Kashmir, and many Indians fear the group will contribute more than just moral support to insurgents in the restive region.

Just as in Washington, fingers were crossed in Beijing, Tehran and New Delhi in the hope of a Baradar-led Afghan government. Now they must all brace for the worst.



PHOTO: TWITTER @GHOSSHORLD

Bobby Ghosh
is a Bloomberg
Opinion columnist.
He writes on foreign
affairs, with a
special focus on
the Middle East and
Africa.

-BLOOMBERG

The World 9/11 Created: The Waning Of The American Superpower

BY ISHAAN THAROOR

The aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks marked the height of a particular American moment on the world stage. Here was the United States, no longer just the triumphant victor of the Cold War, but a wounded "unipolar" superpower ready to mete out justice on a global scale. The enemy was not a rival hegemonic power, but an amorphous concept ("terror") that American leadership linked to both a web of Islamist extremists and adversarial autocratic regimes. The results were the costly invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, the massive expansion of the U.S. security state, and a new global awareness of the limits - rather than the potency - of American power.

In the full bloom of its post-9/11 mandate, the George W. Bush administration shrugged off the growing concerns of some European allies over its invasion of Iraq and the reprimands of top officials at the United Nations. "We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality," an anonymous White House official, widely believed to be Republican strate-

gist Karl Rove, told the New York Times Magazine in 2004. "We're history's actors . . . and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do."

Two decades after 9/11, that legacy of hubris hangs over Washington, a bad odor that successive administrations have tried and failed to dispel. No matter the messiness of the U.S. withdrawal last month, polling shows the overwhelming majority of the American public still supports pulling troops out of Afghanistan. Few serious politicians in either of the country's major parties call for new military interventions overseas. A growing body of lawmakers also wants to curb the White House's powers to wage war in the first place.

Former president Donald Trump argued that the United States should generally stay out of foreign conflicts, especially if it has to foot the bill for the effort. President Joe Biden, like Trump, has sought to leave the 9/11 era behind, reframing America's foreign policy ambitions around the challenge of China. The concept of "great-power competition" is once more in vogue. In foreign capitals from Europe to Asia, officials recognize that old understandings surrounding the Pax Americana are fading. Some are losing confidence in

the United States. Others sense geopolitical opportunity.

The Iraq War, in particular, undermined America's standing in the world. In September 2002, half a year before the invasion, former South African president Nelson Mandela decried the "arrogant" unilateralism of the Bush administration. "We are really appalled by any country, whether it be a superpower or a small country, that goes outside the United Nations and attacks independent countries," he said.

According to Pew polling, U.S. favorability around the world plummeted thereafter, only to recover with the election of Barack Obama, who campaigned on his opposition to the Iraq War. Obama pulled out U.S. forces deployed in the country, but he was at the helm when state failure in Iraq and Syria spawned the Islamic State and new waves of upheaval and violence. The American project in Iraq became a cautionary tale - the empire's attempt to create a new reality, as the Bush official boasted, was a delusion.

"The invasion and its chaotic, violent

-CONTINUED ON PAGE 5