

Scenario 229

TALIBAN RE-CAPTURED AFGHANISTAN - 1

EARLIER WAR ACTIVITY IN 2021: On 23rd July 2021; in the last call between US President Joe Biden and his Afghan counterpart before the Taliban seized control of nearly the whole rural districts of the country, the leaders discussed military aid, political strategy and messaging tactics, but neither Biden nor Ashraf Ghani appeared aware of or prepared for the immediate danger of the entire country falling to the Taliban, a transcript reviewed by **Reuters** dated 1st September 2021 showed; they both talked for roughly 14 minutes.

On 9th August 2021; the US Embassy in Kabul posed a question to its 400K followers on Twitter:

“This #PeaceMonday, we want to hear from you. What do you wish to tell the negotiating parties in Doha about your hopes for a political settlement? #PeaceForAfghanistan.”

The phrase divulged all about the changed American mind and trends in Afghan policy. Within 3 days, Ghani's Afghan government was reduced to only three major cities. President Biden, the leader of the world's most powerful nation, announced to dispatch 3,000 US troops to Afghanistan to bring back its diplomats and staff but within next two days the game was over. The US diplomats had to evacuate their fortress-like US Embassy the same day; two-decade-long misadventure ended in one day and with a trillion-dollar throwaway. Most think, Afghan citizens were left to live back in stone-age; but the time decided it much earlier than the US had planned.

For the US, it was not at all a heroic defeat – the comeback of Taliban also brought an end for supremacy myth of a global power. In history it would be captioned as the **Great Defeat** from **one of the poorest countries** on globe. The [15th Aug] Sunday's episode was even more embarrassing than of Saigon in 1975; even more humiliating than a rogue re-treat of 1984's Reagan Administration from Beirut when a suicide bomber of Hezbollah had killed 240+ US military personnel—the largest loss for the Marines in a single incident since the World War-II.

1 **On 11th August 2021;** the US intelligence reports indicated Taliban
2 fighters could isolate Afghanistan's capital in 30 days and possibly take
3 it over within 90. Instead, the fall happened in less than a week.
4

5 The Biden-Ghani call also underscored persistent political infighting that
6 plagued the Afghan government. When Biden asked him [Mr Ghani] to
7 include former Afghan President Hamid Karzai in a press conference,
8 Ghani pushed back and said:

9
10 *"Karzai would not be helpful. He is contrary, and time is of the essence,
11 we cannot bring every single individual ... We have tried for months
12 with President Karzai. Last time we met for 110 minutes; he was
13 cursing me and he was accusing me of being a US lackey."*

14
15 Biden paused before responding: ***"I'm going to reserve judgment
16 on that."***

17
18 In a follow-up call later that day; Gen Mark Milley and US Central
19 Command commander Gen Frank McKenzie spoke to Ghani. Reuters
20 also obtained a transcript of that call. In this call, too, an area of focus
21 was the global perception of events on the ground in Afghanistan. Gen
22 Milley told Ghani:

23
24 *".....the perception in the US, in Europe and the media sort of thing is
25 a narrative of Taliban momentum, and a narrative of Taliban victory.
26 And we need to collectively demonstrate and try to turn that perception,
27 that narrative around."*

28
29 *"I do not believe – the time is our friend here. We need to move
30 quickly,"* McKenzie added.

31
32 Hidden confession of defeat was prevailing on both sides; with the US
33 and in Afghanistan.

34
35 NOW Attend a former Soviet ambassador's remarks on the situation:
36 ***"We meddled in Afghanistan, and then we stopped paying attention."***

37
38 In 'The Financial Times' dated 13th August 2021, Gideon Rachman had
39 correctly predicted that:

40
41 *"If Donald Trump were presiding over the debacle in Afghanistan,
42 the US foreign policy establishment would be loudly condemning the
43 irresponsibility and immorality of American strategy. Since it is Joe*

Biden in the White House there is instead, largely, an embarrassed silence.

The horrific results are unfolding on the ground in Afghanistan, as the Taliban take city after city. The final collapse of the government looks inevitable.”

.....and suddenly Kabul falls down in the hands of its ex-rulers, the Taliban; America quits.

JO-BIDEN URGED GHANI TO HOLD:

In the call, Biden offered aid if Ghani could publicly project he had a plan to control the spiralling situation in Afghanistan. **Biden said: ‘We will continue to provide close air support, if we know what the plan is.’** Days before the call, the US had carried out air-strikes to support Afghan security forces; a move the Taliban said was in violation of the Doha Peace Agreement.

The US president also advised Ghani to get buy-in from powerful Afghans for a military strategy going forward, and then to put a ‘warrior’ in charge of the effort, a reference to Defence Minister Gen Bismillah Khan Mohammadi was being made. President Biden had urged:

“The Afghan armed forces were trained and funded by the US government. You clearly have the best military. You have 3000,000 well-armed forces versus 70-80,000 (Taliban people) and they’re clearly capable of fighting well.”

Days later, the Afghan military started folding across provincial capitals in the country with very little resistance to the Taliban.

In much of the call, Biden focused on what he called the Afghan **government’s ‘perception problem’ adding that:**

“I need not tell you [Mr Ghani] the perception around the world and in parts of Afghanistan, I believe, is that things are not going well in terms of the fight against the Taliban. And there is a need, whether it is true or not, there is a need to project a different picture. If Afghanistan’s prominent political figures were to give a press conference together, backing a new military strategy that will change perception, and that will change an awful lot I think.”

1 *We are going to continue to fight hard, diplomatically, politically,
2 economically, to make sure your government not only survives but is
3 sustained and grows."*

4

5 After the call, the White House released a statement that focused on
6 Biden's commitment to support Afghan security forces and seeking funds
7 for Afghanistan from Congress. Ghani replied Biden that:

8

9 *"I believe there could be peace if we could 'rebalance the military
10 solution' but we need to move with speed. We are facing a full-scale
11 invasion, composed of Taliban, full Pakistani planning and logistical
12 support, and at least 10-15,000 international terrorists, predominantly
13 Pakistanis thrown into this."*

14

15 Afghan government officials, and US experts, have been consistently
16 pointing to Pakistani support for the Taliban as key to the group's
17 resurgence.

18

19 Afghan President Ghani had also blamed Pakistan earlier on 17th May
20 2021 in an interview to **German magazine Der Spiegel** alleging that:

21

22 *"Pakistan operates an organised system of support for the Taliban
23 insurgents, who receive logistics and financial support from there,
24 besides carrying out recruitment."*

25

26 *.....various decision-making bodies of the Taliban were named after
27 Pakistani cities like Quetta Shura, Miranshah Shura and Peshawar
28 Shura, where they were supposedly based."*

29

30 The Pakistani Embassy in Washington had immediately denied those
31 allegations with full force saying that '*....it was unfortunately an excuse
32 and an afterthought peddled by Mr Ghani to justify his failure to lead
33 and govern.'*'

34

35 Pakistan's Foreign Office had also earlier rejected the remarks from the
36 Afghan president calling them "**irresponsible and baseless**". PM Imran
37 Khan had replied Mr Ghani in the same harsh tone that it was **unfair** to
38 blame his country for the situation in Afghanistan; adding that:

39

40 *"President Ghani! Let me just say that the country that is most affected
41 by turmoil in Afghanistan is Pakistan. Pakistan suffered 70,000
42 casualties+ in the last 15 years..... Pakistan wants to see the ending of
43 the conflict at the earliest."*

By the time of the call, the US was well into its planned withdrawal from Afghanistan, which Biden had postponed from the May date set by his predecessor, Mr Trump. The US military had closed its main Afghanistan airbase, at Bagram, in early July [2021]. As the two presidents spoke, ⁴ Taliban fighters had controlled about half of Afghanistan's district ⁵ centres, indicating a rapidly deteriorating security situation.

Afghan government was promising a shift in its military strategy, to start focusing on protecting '**population centres**' — major cities — rather than fighting to protect rural territories. Biden referred approvingly of that strategy; he said that doing so would help not just on the ground but in the 'perception' internationally that was required to shore up world support for the Afghan government. Biden said:

"I'm not a military guy, so I'm not telling you what a plan should precisely look like, you're going to get not only more help, but you're going to get a perception that is going to change ..."

Mr Ghani, for his part, assured Biden that *"your assurance of support goes a very long way to enable us, to really mobilise us in earnest."*

Within two weeks after Biden's tele-talk with Ghani, the Taliban captured several provincial Afghan capitals and the US had to say with utter disappointment that it was up to the Afghan security forces to defend their country. Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said on 9th August 2021.

"These are their military forces; these are their provincial capitals, their people to defend."

FALL OF THE CAPITAL - KABUL:

On 15th August 2021; President Ghani fled the presidential palace, and the Taliban occupied it immediately. On the same day, the next generation of the Taliban successfully took over Kabul and thus the whole Afghanistan following an accelerated sweep across the country. They had planned their operations since 2020's deal between them and the US's representative in Qatar under the then US President Donald Trump's instructions - called as **DOHA DECLARATION** in which the US agreed to a complete withdrawal of US and allied military forces.

As the deadline for US-army withdrawal drew near day by day, the Taliban began rapid seizures of outposts, towns, and cities and all

1 leading ways to Kabul. An immediate development on ground was the
2 departure of President Ashraf Ghani, whose exit from the country
3 was confirmed by Abdullah Abdullah, the Afghan Foreign Minister.
4 On 15th August 2021 he announced on his FaceBook page that:

5
6 ***"The former Afghan president has left the nation in this state; [for***
7 ***that,] God will hold him to account."***

8
9 In a later announcement, Ghani himself said he left the country to avoid
10 bloodshed as Taliban forces had entered the presidential palace. By
11 midday, a Taliban official announced the group's plans to rename the
12 state as the **Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan**.

13
14 Referring to the world's press media of that day, 15th August 2021; and
15 to the Current Affairs programs of subsequent two weeks, the Taliban's
16 insurgency over the last month had seen the capture of major cities;
17 Kunduz was the first 'key city' to fall following days of negotiations led
18 by tribal elders and resulting in its surrender. After that, it was almost
19 like a domino effect — other major towns like Kandahar, Herat and
20 Mazar e Sharif fell to the Taliban through negotiated deals with local
21 officials. These deals with the Taliban typically involved surrendering
22 control of the cities in exchange for safe passage home.

23
24 On the same Sunday morning, Taliban forces had reached city of
25 Jalalabad, where govt forces and officials surrendered without a single
26 shot fired. Soon, the remaining cities surrounding Kabul quickly fell into
27 the Taliban's hands; thus the Taliban reached the capital's gates within
28 hours.

29
30 All around Kabul there was panic. Civilian flights were unable to leave
31 the Kabul airport because on the runway people were running after
32 the moving planes and trying to stick around the wings, wheels and
33 landing assemblies. No one including the US and its allied countries were
34 expecting so quick developments and even Taliban commanders
35 themselves. Taliban openly said in press conferences that we were
36 planning to take over in December 2021 after holding due negotiations
37 with President Ashraf Ghani but he fled away; so coward he was – so we
38 had to move in.

39
40 Taliban's strategy to take control of Kabul through peaceful negotiations
41 instead of violent offensive proved effective. An exodus of residents and
42 foreign diplomats began as the Taliban entered the Presidential Palace
43 and other key government buildings. Most Afghans lined up outside the

local banks to retrieve cash as fears were growing; it was despite the Taliban's due assurance for peace and tranquility.

Referring to the daily '**DAWN**' dated 15th August 2021: The fact remained that the US spent billions of dollars supplying the Afghan military with the tools to defeat the Taliban, but the rapid capitulation of the armed forces meant that the same armaments and guns then fuelled the Taliban's battlefield successes. President Biden, while defending his decision to withdraw American forces and leaving the fight to the local Afghans, said:

"We (the US) provided our Afghan partners with all the tools — let me emphasise: all the tools but Afghan defence forces showed little appetite for that fight and, in their tens of thousands, have been laying down their arms — only for the Taliban to immediately pick them up."

Footage of Afghan soldiers surrendering in the northern city of *Kunduz* showed army vehicles loaded with heavy weapons and mounted with artillery guns safely in the hands of the Taliban rank and file was widely spread in the world media. In the western city of *Farah*, fighters patrolled in a car marked with an eagle swooping on a snake — the official insignia of the country's intelligence service. In the list of surrendered arsenal, there was **sophisticated equipment** like armoured vehicles, humvees, small arms and light weapons, as well as ammunition.

American experts were astonished over such hauls — on top of unacknowledged support from regional allies — provided the Taliban a massive boost. The weapons not only helped the Taliban's march on *Kabul* but also strengthened group's authority in the cities it had captured. With US troops all gone, the Taliban found themselves flush with the US-supplied tools, without having to raise a single penny. One expert Commented:

"It is incredibly serious. It is clearly going to be a massive boon to them [Taliban]. Some of that weaponry was later brazenly paraded ahead of the US troops' 9/11 withdrawal deadline by the Taliban. This crisis was a worst-case scenario considered when making procurement decisions for that weaponry."

At *Kunduz* airport, a Taliban fighter on a red motorbike, head-to-toe in Taliban dress, was filmed staring at a military helicopter sitting on the tarmac. It was a picture of jubilation mirrored across the Taliban-held territory. While the Taliban continued to show off these big prizes, the

1 aircraft at least would have no impact on the battlefield without pilots.
2 Former CIA counter-terrorism analyst Aki Peritz said:
3

4 *"They will be for propaganda purposes only. More useful will be the
5 light arms and vehicles used to navigate the country's rugged terrain.
6 Coupled with the army's dwindling morale, they will boost the threat
7 the Taliban posed to the Western-backed governments."*

8 As the crisis unfolded, Biden's administration said it would still equip the
9 Afghan military that appears on the verge of collapse.
10

11 Referring to a write-up titled as '***Unfinished problem....***' AP | Reuters |
12 AFP Published on world media pages on 16th August 2021:

13 *"More than 60 countries have issued a joint statement saying Afghans
14 and international citizens who want to leave Afghanistan must be
15 allowed to depart."*

16 In fact, the Taliban's quick takeover of Afghanistan raised alarm at the
17 global level, with world leaders clamouring for the protection of human
18 rights and bringing an end to armed aggression in the war-torn country.
19 Some sought introspection, terming it a collective Western failure. Yet
20 others held out an olive branch, looking to establish relations with the
21 new regime, whose leaders were ousted from the seat of power in 2001.
22 Some countries put their appalling remarks on all sorts of media pages.
23

24 **'IT'S FAILURE OF THE WORLD' - UK:**
25

26 The Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan was termed as '***failure of the
27 international community***', Britain's Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said
28 next day of Taliban's take over, assessing that the West's intervention was
29 a job only half-done. He told **BBC** television:

30 *"All of us know that Afghanistan is not finished. It's an unfinished
31 problem for the world and the world needs to help it. The 20-year
32 intervention by the US-led forces in Afghanistan wasn't a waste, it
33 wasn't for nothing."*

34 *If it's a failure, it's a failure of the international community to not
35 realise that you don't fix things overnight,"*

36 Mr Wallace accused Western powers of being short-sighted in policy
37 matters and devising suitable strategies.
38

Know the country's history before you attack: Iran

Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi said on 16th August 2021:

"I'm afraid when you deal with a country like Afghanistan that is 1,000 years of history of fighting foreign powers and civil wars, you manage its problems and you might have to manage it for 100 years at least."

America's defeat in Afghanistan was a chance for lasting peace; the 'defeat' of the US in Afghanistan must usher in durable peace in the war-wracked country. The President added that:

"The military defeat and the US withdrawal from Afghanistan should offer an opportunity to restore life, security and lasting peace in that country."

The statement came after the Taliban seized control of Kabul.

China: 'ready for friendly relations' with Taliban:

China was ready to deepen *friendly and cooperative relations* with Afghanistan, a government spokeswoman told on 16th August 2021, after the Taliban seized control of the country. Foreign ministry's spokeswoman Hua Chunying told the media that:

"The Taliban have repeatedly expressed their hope to develop good relations with China, and that they look forward to China's participation in the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan."

We welcome this. China respects the right of the Afghan people to independently determine their own destiny and is willing to continue to develop... friendly and cooperative relations with Afghanistan (as a neighbouring country)."

Hua called on the Taliban to '*ensure a smooth transition*' of power and keep its promises to negotiate the establishment of an '*open and inclusive Islamic government*' and ensure the safety of Afghans and foreign citizens.

Taliban to uphold human rights: New Zealand

PM Jacinda Ardern of New Zealand on 16th August 2012 pleaded the Taliban leaders to uphold human rights in Afghanistan by allowing

1 women to continue in work and education and to let foreigners and
2 Afghans who want to leave the country go. She added that:
3

4 *"I would just again implore those who made these moves in recent
5 days to acknowledge what the international community has called for
6 — human rights and the safety of their people."*

7

8 ***Takeover of Kabul was 'unexpected': Russia***

9

10 Kremlin diplomat in Afghanistan, Zamir Kabulov told the ***Ekho Moskvy***
11 Radio Station that:

12

13 *"Russia will evacuate some of its embassy staff in Kabul in order not to
14 create too big a presence. Some of roughly 100 Russian embassy staff
15 will be placed on leave or evacuated in some other fashion."*

16

17 ***The Taliban's swift takeover of the Afghan capital was somewhat
18 "unexpected. Russia was too optimistic in its assessment of the quality
19 of the armed forces trained by the Americans and NATO."***

20

21 The outside perimeter of the embassy was being guarded by the Taliban.
22

23 ***We must focus on rescue mission: Germany***

24

25 German Chancellor Angela Merkel said Germany's focus must be on its
26 evacuation operation in Afghanistan. After a meeting with the leaders of
27 her CDU Party, she said:

28

29 *"We are witnessing difficult times. Now we must focus on the rescue
30 mission. The withdrawal of Western troops from Afghanistan was the
31 'biggest NATO debacle' since the founding of the alliance."*

32

33 With the Taliban sweeping to power after NATO troops withdrew, CDU
34 party Chief Armin Laschet said:

35

36 *"It is evident that this engagement of the international community was
37 not successful. It is the biggest debacle that NATO has suffered since
38 its founding, and we're standing before an epochal change."*

39

40 ***Concerned over rapid developments in Afgh....: Qatar***

41

42 Qatari Foreign Minister Al-Thani, in a statement on 16th August 2021,
43 said:

"There is international concern about the fast pace of developments 1 and 2 Qatar is doing its utmost to bring a peaceful transition, especially 2 after 3 the vacuum that happened."

'Taliban must cease violence': Australia

Australian PM Scott Morrison said on 16th August 2021 that:

"His country is working to get more than 130 of its citizens and people 9 who have been granted humanitarian visas out of Afghanistan after the 10 Taliban seized control of the country.

As a partner committed for many years to help Afghanistan build its 12 future, we are deeply concerned at the potential for further loss of life 13 and suffering."

PM Morrison called for the Taliban to cease all violence against civilians, 17 treat Afghan government officials and elected leaders with dignity and 18 allow people to leave the country without threat or hindrance.

'The clock has run out': EU Commission

EU Commission Vice President Margaritis Schinas tweeted:

"The clock has run out on how long we can wait to adopt the complete 24 overhaul of Europe's migration and asylum rules we need."

'Endless US presence in Afghanistan not acceptable': America

President Joe Biden addressed his colleagues and allies on Afghan war 29 that:

"One more year, or five more years, of US military presence would not 32 have made a difference if the Afghan military cannot or will not hold 33 its own country. And an endless American presence in the middle of 34 another country's civil conflict was not acceptable to me."

'All abuses must stop': UN

United Nations Chief António Guterres on 16th August 2021 expressed 39 concern, saying:

"The conflict in Afghanistan was forcing hundreds of thousands to flee 42 amid reports of serious human rights violations."

1 Later that day, the UN Secretary General Guterres told an emergency UN
2 Security Council meeting on Afghanistan in New York that:

3 *"The world should work together to suppress the global terrorist threat
4 in Afghanistan'. The international community must unite to make sure
5 that Afghanistan is never again used as a platform or safe haven for
6 terrorist organisations.*

7 *I appeal to the Security Council — and the international community as
8 a whole — to stand together, to work together and act together (in the
9 given situation)."*

10 Guterres urged all nations to use all tools at [their] disposal to suppress
11 the global terrorist threat in Afghanistan and to guarantee that basic
12 human rights should be respected.

13 The Secretary General urged the international community to '*speak with
14 one voice to uphold human rights in Afghanistan. Afghans deserve our
15 full support. It was essential that the hard-won rights of Afghan women
16 and girls are protected.*'

17 ***'We are heartbroken': Canadian PM***

18 Canadian PM Justin Trudeau, while speaking to media reporters on
19 15th August 2021, said:

20 *"Canada is constantly monitoring the rapidly evolving situation to get
21 the latest developments on ground in Afghanistan. We are heartbroken
22 at the situation the Afghan people find themselves in.*

23 *Our ongoing work to bring Afghans to safety in Canada under [the
24 new Special Immigration Measures program] remains a top priority,
25 and we will continue to work in close collaboration with partners and
26 allies on this commitment."*

27 More than 60 countries issued a joint statement saying Afghans and
28 international citizens who want to leave Afghanistan must be allowed to
29 depart and added that airports and border crossings must remain open,
30 the US State Department said late on 15th August 2021.

31 **AFGHANS DESERVED SAFETY & HELP:**

32 According to **Reuters**, the US government and countries including
33 Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea,
34 Qatar and the UK said in a joint statement that:

“.....those in positions of power and authority across Afghanistan bear responsibility — and accountability — for the protection of human life and property, and for the immediate restoration of security and civil order.

....*The Afghan people deserve to live in safety, security and dignity. We in the international community stand ready to assist them.*”

The European and neighboring countries immediately stepped in to help civilians evacuate the country — the United Arab Emirates [UAE] and Pakistan started facilitating the evacuation of foreign diplomats and staff through their airports; Germany sent its military planes to evacuate German nationals and Afghan support staff – and so did the UK. The US Embassy employees and citizens scrambled to go for evacuation before the Afghan capital was taken.

One can peep back into a very rare two-party consensus in America — the leaders of both political parties decided it was time to leave Afghanistan and to leave the country with the Taliban. The only dispute remained was whether the President Trump, which had committed to withdrawal by May 2021, could have directed the retreat more competently than President Biden, who faced one of the most humiliating debacles in the American history.

Poor Americans were in a fix – who to blame for those dreadful moments; what was the purpose of the US intervention in Afghanistan. The answers would shape one's views about the lost 20 years. The intervention was to defend the US from terror attacks as well as to destroy the Taliban and al Qaeda being allegedly responsible for 9/11.

Of course, since 9/11 the US went free of notable *jihadist* attacks – but it remained a fact also that right-wing domestic terrorists killed more Americans at home than *jihadists*. The 20-year mission got accomplished at the loss of fewer American combat deaths in Afghanistan than the number of civilians killed on 9/11 itself.

Referring to **Robin Wright**'s essay titled '*Does the Great Retreat from Afghanistan mark the End of American Era*' appeared at **newyorker.com** on 15th August 2021:

“In 2011, the United States pulled out of Iraq, opening the way for the emergence of ISIS. The repeated miscalculations challenge basic Washington policy-making as well as US military strategy and

1 *intelligence capabilities. Why wasn't this looming calamity - or any
2 of the earlier ones - anticipated? Or the exits better planned? Or the
3 country not left in the hands of a former enemy? It is [no doubt] a
4 dishonourable end."*

5
6 NOW the history would be written with truths that George W Bush's
7 **'war on terror [WOT]'** was an ill-written drama-script; despite having
8 mobilized NATO's 136 countries to provide various types of military
9 assistance, and 23 countries to host US forces deployed in offensive
10 operations; even the America's vast tools and tactics proved ill-equipped
11 to counter the will and endurance of the Taliban and allegedly their
12 Pakistani backers. In the long term, its missiles and warplanes were
13 unable to subjugate a movement of about 60,000 fighters in a small
14 devastated country, Afghanistan.

15
16 Think about the major repercussion of this American defeat. **Shariah**
17 **won a key battle against democracy**; the US and the West's top arsenal
18 with billions of dollars in aid could not defeat a true and sincere ideology
19 [*West say it hard-line doctrine*] with majority local following. If the
20 world would not accept the Taliban truly and realistically, with whatever
21 features they keep, Afghanistan might again become a safe haven for
22 like-minded warriors to whom they used to label as militants or *Jihadists*.

23
24 **Robin** has correctly analysed through ill-based interventions in
25 Afghanistan and Iraq. The actions unambiguously proved that the
26 US could neither build nations nor create armies out of scratch, especially
27 in countries that have a limited middle class and low education rates.
28 It takes generations. Ethnic and sectarian divisions thwart attempts to
29 overhaul political, social, and economic life all at the same time; Pakistan
30 is also an example to be cited here. The US spent 88 billion dollars
31 training and arming an Afghan force of some 300,000 men, more than
32 four times the size of the Taliban's militia, but lost once more. About a
33 month earlier, President Biden said that:

34
35 *"....he trusted the capacity of the Afghan military, who is better
36 trained, better equipped and more competent in terms of conducting
37 war - (but) all gone with the wind...."*

38
39 America's Great Retreat is at least as humiliating as was the Soviet
40 Union's withdrawal in 1989 from the same country, an event that
41 brought end to its empire and Communist rule. The Soviet Union had
42 spent about 50 billion dollars during the first seven of its ten years
43 stay here and the US spent much more. However, no difference; the

Americans flying out on their helicopters were no different than Soviet 1
troops marching across the Friendship Bridge from Afghanistan on 2 15th
February 1989. 3
4

Both of the big powers left Afghanistan as losers, with their tails between 5
their legs, leaving behind chaos – so had left the Britain after **The First** 6
Anglo-Afghan War in 1839-42 when about 17,000 British troops and 7
civilians were mercilessly slaughtered by the same Afghans in Kabul. 8
9

Referring to **David French** in weekly **TIME** of 16th August 2021: 10
11

*"The jihadist military had suffered a grievous blow [in December 12
2001] but the extremist theology lived on. We [Americans] could not 13
extinguish an idea, and the idea still possessed power....At every stage, 14
the Taliban and their al Qaeda allies were the second-strongest force 15
in the land."* 16
17

In nut shell, the Americans could not destroy the Taliban or al Qaeda - 18
despite 20 years of military attacks, they still existed; the US took a long 19
time to understand their capabilities. In December 2001, a small force of 20
the US-army, supported by local allies, and American air power had out- 21
routed the Taliban quite easily; then what went wrong later - why the US 22
allowed them to flourish again. 23
24

In the end, the above referred weekly **TIME** correctly ended up with: 25
26

*".....we should have pulled out long, long agoour leaders have 27
misled Americans about the reality of the conflict....There is no realistic 28
prospect of taking back Kabul, much less the rest of Afghanistan..... 29
And, thanks to the bipartisan failure to lead, al Qaeda has won a long 30
and critical battle against the most powerful nation in the world..... 31
This victory [of Taliban] did not end the 'endless war'. Instead it made 32
our enemy more dangerous."* 33
34

One blog of 16th August 2021 on the internet media held that: 35
36

*"Yes,... If the people doing the subjugation are their own tribesmen 37
then what is our business to intervene? The Taliban are a force of 38
(hardly) 80,000 in a country of 38m. How have they achieved control 39
when Afghani forces number approx 300,000? The only possible way 40
is through the complicity of the population; some of them are women. 41
We had no business establishing ourselves in Afghanistan in the 42
first place."* 43

1 **THE BURDEN OF SHAME – ON BIDEN:**

2

3 Referring to UK's **main-line press** dated 16th August 2021: the US
4 President Joe Biden has been criticised by media across the political
5 divide; see the world's media comments below:

6

7 A CNN columnist **Stephen Collinson** said:

8

9 *'The debacle of the US defeat and chaotic retreat in Afghanistan is a
10 political disaster for Joe Biden, whose failure to orchestrate an urgent
11 and orderly exit will further rock a presidency plagued by crises and
12 stain his legacy.'*

13

14 **Wall Street Journal opinion [Editorial]:**

15

16 *'President Biden's statement on Saturday washing his hands of
17 Afghanistan deserves to go down as one of the **most shameful in history**
18 by a Commander in Chief at such a moment of American retreat.'*

19

20 **George Packer** in **The Atlantic** said:

21

22 *'The Biden administration failed to heed the warnings on Afghanistan,
23 failed to act with urgency—and its failure has left tens of thousands of
24 Afghans to a terrible fate. This **betrayal will live in infamy**.*

25

26 *'There was enough blame attached for the Afghanistan crisis to fill a
27 library of books, condemning the betrayal of the Afghan people as he
28 placed the **burden of shame** on Biden.'*

29

30 An opinion made by **David E. Sanger** in **The New York Times** claimed:

31

32 *'.....Biden would go down in history, fairly or unfairly, as the president
33 who presided over a long-brewing **humiliating final act** in the American
34 experiment in Afghanistan'.*

35

36 **New York Post editorial** said:

37

38 *'President Biden says he inherited Trump's withdrawal plans, but that
39 is a lie. He could have taken more time, tried to at least secure the
40 capital, and left a small peacekeeping force. Instead, we pulled out in
41 the dread of night, so quickly we had to send troops back just to make
42 sure our embassy was safely evacuated. It's as humiliating an end as the
43 **rooftop scramble in Saigon in 1975**.'*

Max Boot, columnist for the **Washington Post** commented:

'Strengthened by the copious U.S. weaponry they have captured — and by the prestige that comes with having humbled a superpower — the Taliban will now be more dangerous than ever. This is on Biden, and it will leave an indelible stain on his presidency.'

Paul Brandus, columnist in **USA Today** held:

*'Biden is in charge now, this catastrophe is appearing on his watch, and he will have to take his lumps. That's the way it goes. Life and politics are often unfair. Yet as bad as things look for Biden today, I wonder just how much **long-term damage** this will actually do to him and the America.'*

Kyle Smith in the **New York Post**:

'The utterly nauseating and unnecessary abandonment of Afghanistan to its fate recalls a similar humiliation at the hands of Islamist radicals in the Jimmy Carter administration. President Biden's profligate spending policies are unleashing inflation that is sparking voter distrust so noticeable that even NPR is sounding the alarm.'

Trey Gowdy on **Fox News** said:

'Thousands of lives taken [or] have been lost in defence of our nation. Tens of thousands of our sons and daughters have been injured. And more than a trillion dollars of our money has been spent in Afghanistan alone. And we are left to wonder why.'

Senator Joni Ernst on **Fox News** said:

*'....condemn the **slap on the face to the thousands** of men and women who served in this war and a total abandonment of a country and its people by Biden.'*

*'The rushed and haphazard withdrawal of US forces in Afghanistan is not **the strategic shift** President Biden sold to the American people. Instead, it's a total abandonment of a country and its people – and a gift to the Taliban.'*

A columnist in the **British Press** also hit at President Biden that day. Commons Foreign Affairs Committee Chair Tom Tugendhat wrote in

1 **The Times** that:

2
3 *'The fall of Kabul is the biggest foreign policy disaster since Suez.
4 The operation to seize the canal in 1956 symbolised the end of
5 Britain's global ambition and refocused us on NATO and alliances.
6 It showed conclusively that the US could limit our actions and change
7 our policy.'*

8 A columnist **Ian Birrell** in the 'I' wrote:

9
10 *'The withdrawal, begun by a Republican president and speeded up by
11 his Democratic successor, is driven by domestic concerns rather than
12 the slightest consideration for people they are leaving to suffer. It is a
13 **betrayal of Afghanistan's people**, of our wider strategic interests and
14 all those troops killed or maimed fighting for its future.'*

15
16 The **Financial Times'** Editorial note said:

17
18 *'A desire in the White House to wrap up nagging foreign policy problems
19 so it can focus on China is understandable. But the **abandonment**
20 **of Afghanistan** raises doubts over the depth of US commitment to
21 supposed allies, and its determination to see military entanglements
22 through to the bitter end.'*

23
24 **Mark Almond** wrote in the **Daily Mail** that:

25
26 *'What makes this debacle different from the Americans' hasty
27 retreat from Saigon in 1975 is the existence across the West of small
28 cells of radical Islamists who will be inspired by our **humiliating**
29 **retreat from Kabul**. There were no Vietcong cells in London
30 waiting to be activated then. Today things are different. The humiliation
31 of the West in Afghanistan has set Islamist fundamentalism back on
32 a roll.'*

33
34 **Nick Timothy** in the **Daily Telegraph**:

35
36 *'It is ludicrous to think Britain – alone or in concert with all the
37 militaries of Europe – could or should have fought a new Afghan war
38 alone. First Donald Trump did a deal with the Taliban promising the
39 withdrawal of troops by May this year (2021). Then President Biden
40 declared he had **zero responsibility to Afghanistan**, insisting his sole
41 obligation was to protect America's national self-interest. As his
42 predecessor might have put it: **America first (?)**'*

Simon Tisdall in the Guardian:

*'What will it take for Joe Biden to admit he is **disastrously wrong about Afghanistan**? The US leader struck a defiant pose last week. Sounding like a slightly desperate Olympics coach, he told Afghans it was their country. If they want it, they have to fight for it. In American politics-speak, this is called tough love - without the love.'*

Leo McKinstry in the Daily Express:

'Over the last 20 years, Britain is estimated to have spent almost £40 billion in Afghanistan, while 455 of our brave personnel have lost their lives in the struggle, yet those heroic sacrifices tragically look like they were made in vain.'

The Sun editorial:

'Biden ignored repeated warnings then withdrew crucial air support for the Afghan army it has spent billions arming over 20 years. It was an action which borders on the criminal; a total and unnecessary moral failure which left Britain powerless.'

TALIBAN PROMISED SECURITY FOR ALL:

The takeover of the sprawling capital city had been years in the making, but was ultimately accomplished in a single day. The Taliban had conquered nearly all provincial hubs in Afghanistan during the week earlier, faced little to no resistance as they entered the city through its major traffic arteries. By evening of 15th August 2021, the Taliban were giving TV & Media interviews in the lavish presidential palace, just hours after Ghani had departed Afghanistan.

Next day, the Pentagon was speeding in additional troops to assist with the withdrawal of US personnel after the *American flag was lowered* from their adorned embassy. The footage of Taliban fighters occupying the palace and rolling up the Afghan national flag stood as a defining image of a failed US effort to transform Afghan society at the cost of a trillion dollars and thousands of lives lost. As the Taliban encircled and then entered Kabul on 15th [it was Sunday], the US personnel at the embassy in Kabul were being shifted to the airport along with acting US ambassador Ross Wilson, with the American flag.

Asked about comparisons to the US departure from Vietnam in 1975, Secretary of State Blinken said on ABC News:

1 ***'This Week is manifestly not Saigon.'***
2

3 Taliban co-founder, Abdul Ghani Baradar, emerged as the undisputed
4 winner of America's longest war, issued a video statement on
5 behalf of the Taliban's political bureau, recorded in Doha in conciliatory
6 tone:
7

8 *"We have reached a victory that wasn't expected - we should show
9 humility in front of Allah. Now it's about how we serve and secure our
10 people and ensure their future to the best of our ability."*

11 The **Washington Post** of 16th August 2021 is referred.
12

13 President Biden's key-colleagues, friends and foes all blasted at this
14 *'chaotic retreat'* following his decision to withdraw the remaining US
15 troops, though not asked for a return to war. Foreign Secretary Blinken
16 took defended the Biden administration's decision at various TV shows,
17 arguing that the Taliban's current offensive would have happened even if
18 US forces remained in Afghanistan; adding that:
19

20 *"If the president had decided to stay, all gloves would've been off, we
21 would've been back at war with the Taliban attacking our forces, the
22 offensive you've seen throughout the country almost certainly would've
23 proceeded."*

24
25 Blinken did not directly answer the question of how the US failed
26 to anticipate the speed of the Taliban's takeover; just a week before,
27 the US military had estimated that collapse could take 90 days.
28 Instead, it took 10 days, with provincial capitals falling one after the
29 next.
30

31 The Taliban sent squads of 15 armed men each to all government HQs,
32 embassies and diplomatic missions to protect them, and had set up
33 checkpoints along the city's entrances and main streets. On WhatsApp,
34 the group message proclaimed that ***'....we are in charge of security for
35 Kabul.'*** The messages listed telephone numbers in various areas that
36 citizens could call if they saw problems such as looting or robbery,
37 extortion or irresponsible behaviour on the part of armed individual
38 Taliban. One message said:
39

40 *"The Islamic Emirate assures you that no one should be in panic of
41 feeling fear. Taliban is taking over the city without fighting and no
42 one will be at risk."*
43

Taliban's political and military opponents pleaded them to refrain from 1 revenge. Former Afghan president Hamid Karzai appeared in an online 2 video and said that: 3

“.....he hoped that the problems of our country and our capital ... 4
will be solved and that the Taliban will guard the safety of the people's 5
lives and property.” 6
7
8

Vince Cable, a British MP from Twickenham, while making a speech on Remembrance Sunday said: 9
10
11

“**Yes, the Taliban have humiliated the west** – but more importantly, did 12
our soldiers die in vain. The narrative that the USA and its allies are in 13
terminal decline will have been reinforced by the crisis in Afghanistan. 14
15

After the UK commitment to a continuing NATO-led force in 16
Afghanistan in 2006, every year mention was made of Britain's dead 17
soldiers in Afghanistan and the many thousands wounded, some of 18
whom also brought their physical injuries and mental scars to my 19
advice surgeries.” 20

Ref: Daily the '**INDEPENDENT**' dated 16th August 2021. 21
22

The fact remained that outside of Kabul, apart from minor modernisation, 23
little changed for centuries and life continued to stagnate. 'For someone 24
born in Afghanistan, by Western values he is unfortunate, particularly 25
females but that does not give us the moral or legal Right to interfere by 26
imposing other values'. 27
28

A British Bolger opined: The narrative that the West did some good and 29
that 'millions of women got education' became a curse ultimately; it 30
proved to be rubbish. Those women would never get to use their 31
education for anything useful; they could be equally cowed and enslaved 32
like ever – wait for a harsh misery to come. He added: 33
34

“*The ugly truth is that 'Great Britain' does what the Americans tell us 35
to do: no more, no less. With this week's instructions – RUN – comes 36
a tragic, unforgivable sense that those who served and died over two 37
decades did so in vain.*” 38