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Taliban and Retrieving the Sovereignty: Strong Movement, Weak Nation-State

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Abstract

Of the most unexpected events in the year, 2021 was the collapse of the Afghanistan government, on August 15th, 2021, and the re-emergence of the Taliban's Islamic state (*Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan*) without facing up serious resistance from the state and society. How can one analyze the Taliban's takeover of the country? This is the central question that guides the analytical narration in the text. The present research attempts to come up with a multi-faceted scheme to respond to the question. In this regard, the paper hypothesizes that the Taliban movement managed to retrieve its sovereignty owing to symmetry of some factors: its internal social solidarity/ coherence in the context of Afghanistan's segmented society and failed state, and connivance in the international environment as well. To justify the hypothesis, the paper takes advantage of some theoretical approaches under a combinative the-

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oretical framework. The constituents are as follows: the concept of 'Asabiyyah' (social solidarity in Ibn Khalodn's sense of the word), 'resource mobilization theory, the quadruple crisis of the regime, and the role of the international environment in revolutionary transformation.

According to the framework, the Taliban's mobility to conquer the country was proceeding continually because of internal social solidarity driven by its ethnic (Pashtunism) and religious (Deobandi Salafi) foundations. It is whilst, on the contrary, there had been a segmented society and failed state due to a crisis in the process of nation-state building. Consequently, not only was there were lack of national solidarity and united orientation against the coherent ethnoreligious movement of the Taliban, but also the Taliban utilized the government's inefficiencies and miss-functions (such as juncture and corruption in the political system) to mobilize the followers and attract the potential ones among the disappointed people.

In terms of the process of capturing the country, the Taliban's mobility pattern showed some formal similarities to 'Eastern Revolutions' (in Huntington's sense of the word); that is, launching from the periphery to the capital. Having learned from the past, the Taliban came up with a more pragmatic orientation in its second round. While showing a tendency to negotiate with internal and foreign effective agents in the political environment of Afghanistan, the Taliban aimed to represent a modified picture of the movement compared to the long-standing violent image. To sum up, the causes of the Taliban's success in re-taking political power can be narrated as the symmetry of the strong movement and the weak nation-state; the ethnoreligious social solidarity of the Taliban, and the lack of national solidarity and efficient government.

Afghanistan went through difficult times in 2021. It was not yet summer when those provinces came under the pressure of the Taliban fighting forces and then dominoes fell one after another until the Taliban forces reached the gates of Kabul. Finally, in the middle of August, to the surprise of the world, the capital fell and the Taliban managed to seize power in Afghanistan for the second time and start a rapid transformation in the Afghan political system in order to revive the Islamic Emirate that was overthrown in 2001. There are factors involved in the occurrence of this transformation, some of which are the responsibility of the Afghan government and the others part of the United States: 1. The announcement of the withdrawal of the United States from Afghanistan; 2. Weakness and a deep gap in the leadership of the Afghan government; 3. The deep gap between army and country poli-

cies; 4. Perpetuation of the corrupting incomes caused by drugs, as well as increasing the Taliban's income generation from local sources; 5. Denial of many problems in the organization, training, equipment, and leadership of Afghan forces at least from 2007 onwards by the US, NATO, and the Afghan government; 6. The low level of readiness of the Afghan army due to dependence on American forces; 7. Dependence of Afghan forces on contractors for equipment; 8. The wrong focus of America and NATO on only the terrorist and military threat of the Taliban instead of evaluating the reasons for their increasing progress, 9. Focusing only on the cities and densely populated centers and leaving the villages and suburbs; 10. Not paying attention to the strategy of the Taliban, which was preparing for a massive advance toward the north and other regions at the same time as the peace talks.

This development has been analyzed from different perspectives, such as examining the causes of the weakness of the Afghan government, the role of foreign powers, its impact on the future of Afghanistan, regional relations, and its threats and opportunities for Iran. What distinguishes the current research is the focus on analyzing why and how this political transformation occurred from the perspective of "revolutionary transformation theories". In this context, the question is raised, how to analyze the Taliban's re-gaining power? The nature and context of the recent political transformation in Afghanistan have been such that the fixation on one of the common divisions of revolutionary transformations (revolution, coup, civil war, etc.) hinders the understanding of the various dimensions and complexities of this transformation. Based on this, the current research is based on the hypothesis that the theoretical analysis of this event requires a combination of old and new theories about the logic of political transformation. In this sense, the Taliban's ethno-religious movement, relies on the element of nervousness, in the conditions of the crisis of the nation-state in Afghanistan, i.e. a mixture of a fragmented society and a bankrupt government and symmetry with suitable international conditions, without facing serious resistance from the society, the government and successful foreign actors to restore its sovereignty in Afghanistan. The way this transformation took place was similar to the style of eastern revolutions, advancing from the periphery to conquering the capital.

The present research consists of several parts. First, in the form of a combined theoretical framework, the theoretical possibilities of old and new theories are highlighted in the direction of designing the elements of a conceptual model. In the next steps, we show the implications and exam-

ples of each of the elements of this combined theoretical framework for the analysis of the Taliban's resumption of power. In order, to the importance of nervousness in the group cohesion of the Taliban, the effect of social disintegration and the absence of the national government on the non-formation of anti-mobilization against the Taliban, and symmetry with the appropriate international conditions in the transfer of power. In the end, by freely using the style of eastern revolutions, we explain the formation of this transformation (how the Taliban advance).

Key words: Afghanistan, The Crisis of Nation-State Building, Asabiyyah, Segmented Society, Failed State, Peace Negotiations.