Afghan Fighters are Not Going to Build an 'Inclusive Regime'

Twenty years after American troops ousted the Taliban (a movement banned in the Russian Federation) from power in Afghanistan, militants of this group announced the formation of an interim government. Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid stressed that the government he announced has a temporary status, de facto, with all acting cabinet members. Other appointments are expected to be announced at a later date.

Contrary to experts’ expectations and pressure from both opposition forces and the international community, the old guard of Taliban fighters won vital positions in the country’s new leadership. Other political forces, including secular authorities, militias and women, are not represented. By doing so, the Taliban have already violated their earlier agreements with the Americans to establish a coalition government, based on which the US, in fact, withdrew from Afghanistan.

It cannot be ruled out that the composition of the new Afghan government resulted from some influence from Pakistan, particularly when Faiz Hameed, Director-General of the spy agency Inter-Services Intelligence, visited Kabul on September 4 and met with one of the Taliban leaders, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar. Although there were obviously many other hot topics of discussion between Islamabad and the Taliban, not excluding the latter's interest in resolving the Greater Pashtunistan issue, the possible refusal to recognize the Durand Line, which is an issue of interest to Afghans irrespective of their ethnic and religious background. Against this backdrop, Pakistan, where the Taliban leaders and their families are still living, is well aware that much will depend on the composition and policies of the next Afghan government in the near future. This applies particularly to Pakistan’s own interests, given that
Islamabad recently moved from Kabul's exclusive partner to being "one of the partners". Kabul is already trying to demonstrate that it can take a stance that Pakistan, whose influence over the Taliban is clearly waning after its victory over the USA, can in no way approve of.

The ceremony to announce the new Afghan government was broadcast on Twitter by AjArabic. Mullah Mohammad Hasan Akhund, a co-founder of the Taliban, was appointed as the new government leader in Afghanistan. He served as foreign minister and deputy prime minister during the Taliban's previous rise to power from 1996 to 2001, and personally commanded the destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan in 2001, which shocked the world. The UN lists him as a terrorist. He was recommended to head the interim government by the Taliban leader Hibatullah Akhundzada.

The acting deputy prime minister's post went to Abdul Ghani Baradar, one of the Taliban's founders, famous for being arrested more than a decade ago in a joint US-Pakistan operation but later released in 2018. After that, he played the role of chief negotiator in the peace dialogue with the US, and not long ago had a secret meeting with CIA Director William Burns.

The Interior Ministry is headed by Sarajuddin Haqqani, the leader of the bloodiest group within the Taliban who practiced suicide bombings. The specified faction is known as the Haqqani Network (a terrorist group banned in the Russian Federation). Sirajuddin Haqqani is wanted, and the FBI is offering a reward of up to $5 million for any information leading to his arrest. His faction is recognized in the US as the most terrorist group, compared to several other Taliban entities. The new Interior Minister is also listed as a terrorist by the UN.

In addition to Sirajuddin Haqqani, the new Afghan government includes three other ministers tied to the Haqqani network. Khalil-ur-Rahman Haqqani has taken over as Minister of Migration. Abdul Baki Haqqani has become acting Minister of Higher Education. Mawlawi Najibullah Haqqani has been appointed as Minister of Communications.

Mullah Yaqoob, a member of another dynasty, the son of Taliban founder Mohammad Omar, who has been in charge of Taliban militant operations for the past two years, has been appointed as an acting Defense Minister.

Foreign Ministry is headed by Amir Khanu Mottaki, former Minister of Education and former Minister of Information and Culture of Afghanistan until 2001, who is on the UN sanctions list. During the Taliban regime in the late 1990s, Mottaki was the Taliban's negotiating representative.

The list published by the Taliban adds another 20 names, all affiliated in one way or another with the Taliban and Taliban-friendly groups.

Many new Afghan ministers are blacklisted as terrorists by the UN and several countries around the world. So what the international community will do next with this government is still hard to predict. What draws attention is the new ministers' lack of managerial experience in peaceful life, which will undoubtedly make it difficult for them to implement and address the tasks and problems facing the country and its people.

Given that the new government's composition has been negotiated over a long time, it is unlikely to satisfy a large and disparate group of warlords who have their own views and may have fresh grievances. And this, in turn, may intensify internal contradictions in the very near future. And the fact that many resistance fighters have gone into the mountains is proof of that. The spokesperson for the National Resistance Front forces, Ali Nazari, said the other day that the Front has turned to guerrilla warfare against the Taliban. Panjsher resistance leader Ahmad Masood addressed the Afghan people on September 6 and called on his compatriots to rise up against the Taliban. However, the Taliban have banned the Afghan media from disseminating this statement by the Panjsher resistance leader.

As for the international community's response to the new Afghan government's announced composition, it has taken a wait-and-see approach, neither confronting the Taliban nor removing its members from the terrorists' list. The US, for example, is in no hurry to establish official contacts with the new government. When asked whether the US recognizes the Taliban, President Joe Biden replied that "that is still a long way off".

This low-key stance is the most justified. So far, it is only becoming apparent that the Taliban are badly breaking their previous promises. Therefore, the international community needs to closely monitor all actions of the new Afghan authorities and continue to influence the movement remotely.

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