

# Did the US Really Help Create the Taliban?

Part I — The birth of the Taliban



Kamna Kirti



**Sharbat Gula- A 10-year-old (now 49) refugee from Afghanistan who was featured in the 1985 cover of National Geographic is still an emblem of the refugee crisis. Source-Public Domain**

**A**lthough the withdrawal process by the US has not yet been completed, the Taliban has taken full control over Kabul, Afghanistan's capital. President Ghani has fled away and the government military has surrendered to the Taliban.

Sadly, Afghanistan has traveled back in time, precisely when the Taliban took over the country in 1996.

While the Taliban promises that this time they would ensure lenient policies, we can't trust their fanatical and conservative regime, especially for women.

The last time they ruled from 1996 to 2001, women suffered atrociously and lived a life caged in their burquas (*a long, loose garment covering the whole body from head to feet, worn in public by many Muslim women*). They were segregated from a co-educational school after they reached puberty or had to forcefully drop out. The women were not allowed to leave their homes without being accompanied by a male relative.

### **But how was the Taliban born?**

Let us travel back to understand this horrible piece of history.



**Timeline of the birth of the Taliban. Image created by the author.**

• • •

## Chapter 1 — October 1979 — Afghanistan's political upheaval

In October 1979, Nur Muhammad Taraki, Afghanistan's President and communist leader was brutally murdered.

The murder was orchestrated by his confidant, Hafizullah Amin, a fellow communist revolutionary.

Even though Taraki and Amin were like “nail and flesh”, their ideological differences and hunger for power behind the throne instigated Amin to plot the murder.

While the communist party (headed under Taraki and Amin) split, the Islamists initiated their own war in Afghanistan.

Amin, who consequently succeeded the throne became insecure. He was of the opinion that, just like the Iran revolution where monarchy was abolished and overthrew the king, the Islamists might take over Afghanistan.

Hence, he tried to appease the religious extremists and focussed on building mosques, including the name of “Allah” in his speeches and circulating copies of the Quran. Despite being a communist, he tried to tweak the policies of communism; the Soviet Union couldn't tolerate this.

• • •

## Chapter 2— December 1979 — Soviet Union interference

Amin's efforts were put in vain when the Soviet Union seized Afghanistan and he was murdered by them.

The Soviet Union installed Babrak Karmal as the new leader of Afghanistan who was widely seen as the Soviet puppet amongst the population. He released more than 2700 political prisoners, replaced the red communist flag and promised to bring in a new Constitution in Afghanistan.

Slowly, when Afghanistan was moving towards a stable regime and the Soviet Army had full control over the country, another superpower came into the spotlight— the USA.

. . .

## Chapter 3 — After the 1980s — the USA funded the mujahideen

As the cold war between the Soviet Union and America was already brimming, poor countries like Afghanistan became scapegoats.

The USA couldn't tolerate the influence of the Soviet Union and its policies on Afghanistan. The geopolitical tension led America to support the local Islamist mujahideen in order to fight Soviet aggression.

Who were these mujahideen? They were the Muslim rebels who fought in opposition against the Soviet Army and the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan government during the Soviet-Afghan War and its aftermath. The word ‘mujahideen’ literally translates to guerilla fighters or mountain men who considered themselves “freedom fighters.”

The United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) conducted its largest secret operation called Operation Cyclone and the CIA director Robert Gates confessed that how the US President Jimmy Carter authorized a secret aid of \$500,000 to be given to the Mujahideen on 3rd July 1979.

The financial aid kept on increasing even when the new President Reagan came into power. Pakistan’s ISI, British Secret Agency MI6, and Saudi Arabia supported Islamist Mujahideen too.



**Reagan hosts Afghan-Mujahideen leaders in the White House in 1985. Source-Wikipedia**

Finally, in 1990, the Soviet Army backed out as it was struggling its own battle of splitting into countries — Russia winning the majority.

• • •



## Chapter 4 — 1992— mujahideen took over Afghanistan

Mujahideen grew in power after getting constant financial and armament support from America. They not only had weapons but also became well-equipped to fight against aircraft missiles.

Mohammad Najibullah, the President of Afghanistan and leader of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan resigned in 1992 and mujahideen took over Kabul.

Mujahideen was an Islamist group that was made up of people from different ethnicities. In 1992, Burhanuddin Rabbani was represented as the new leader of the Islamic State of Afghanistan.

. . .

## Chapter 5 — 1996 — the birth of the Taliban

In 1996, a new extremist group rose to power in Afghanistan called as Taliban.

In the Pashto language, ‘Taliban’ means a student.

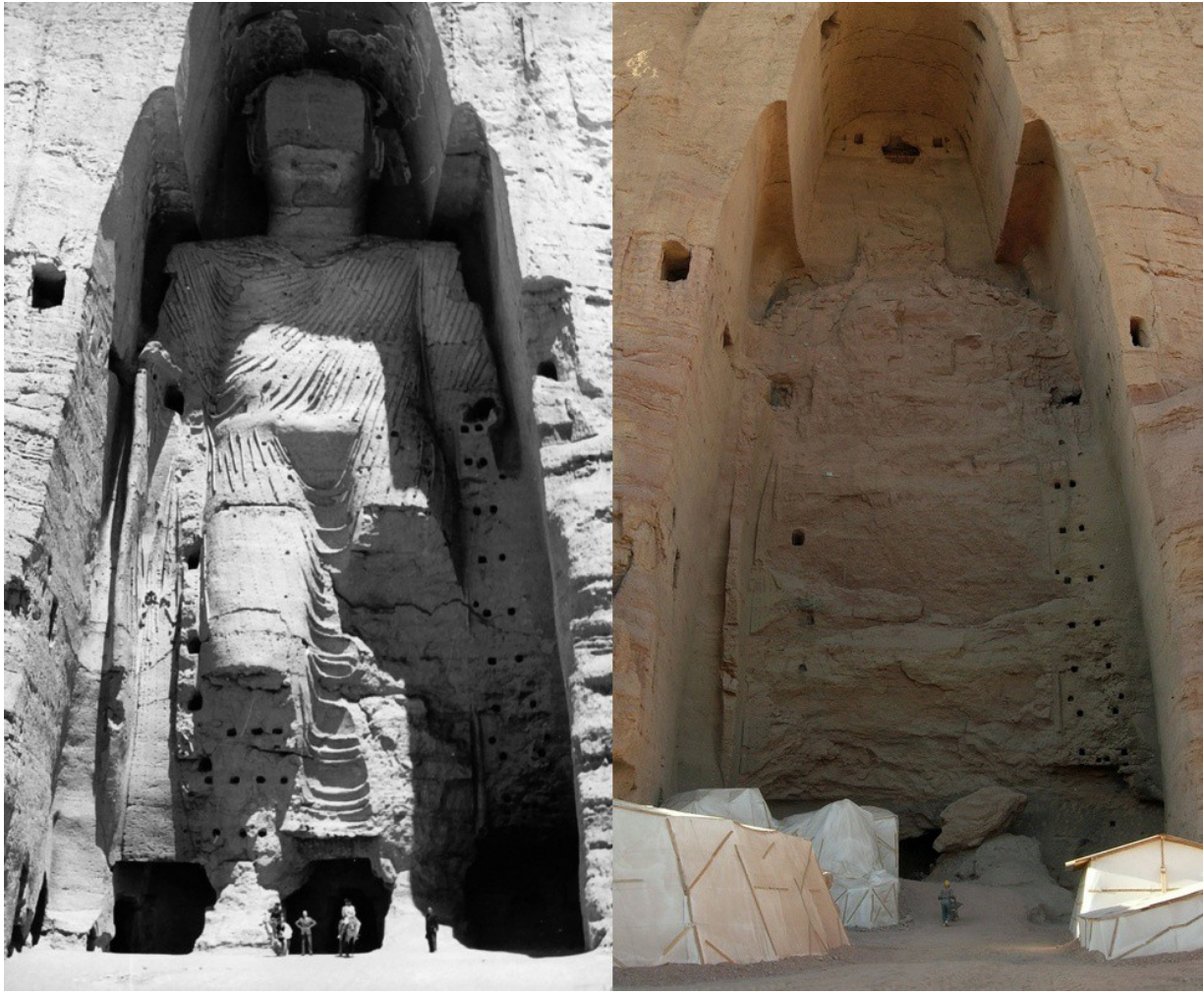
Mohammed Omar, the founding member of this group, along with a group of 50 students and some refugees from Pakistan created the Taliban.

By September 1996, mujahideen were defeated and Kabul was captured again by a new regime — the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (Taliban).

Initially, the civilians supported the Taliban and they did try to bring peace but after their extreme conservative policies came into the limelight, the common man was gutted.

The Taliban strongly believed in the Pashtun ideology and so they started ethnic cleansing. Thousands of Muslims were killed, Christians were prosecuted and Hindus were given badges to segregate them from the Pashtuns.

The Buddha statues were destroyed that formed an important part of Afghan cultural history.



Buddha before and after destruction — Source Wikipedia

Countries like Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and UAE supported the Taliban.

• • •

## How Was Taliban Created?

It is said that “America created the Taliban.” If we look at it technically, this isn’t true.

But there is some weightage to this argument. Had America not supplied financial aid and weapons to mujahideen, extreme militant groups including the Taliban might not be created or risen to power and the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan would have been the governing regime.

Hillary Clinton commented — we created the problem to fight against the Soviet Union.

America destroyed the seed of democracy and supported Islamist groups for its own benefit and to be the superpower against Russia.

## Part II — Did America's "Forever War" in Afghanistan Do Any Good?

9/11 attack shook America and to take revenge against Al-Qaeda, the US military was sent to Afghanistan. With the help of Afghan Mujahideen forces, presently known as the Northern Alliance, the Taliban was pushed back from power in 2001.

### References–

1. [Rise of Taliban | Afghanistan Crisis Continued | US Troops Return](#)
2. [Taliban Capture Strategic Cities as Biden Speeds Troop Deployment to Afghanistan](#)
3. [The War in Afghanistan: How It Started and How It Is Ending](#)