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A TERROR HAVEN IN THE (RE)MAKING? THE SPECTRE OF TERRORISM UNDER THE ISLAMIC EMIRATE OF AFGHANISTAN

SHIVAM SHEKHAWAT

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) turned three in August 2024. Last month in Doha, Qatar, the IEA attended the UN-led conference for the first time as a representative of Afghanistan. While no country has formally recognised the Taliban regime, as per the group's chief spokesperson, the regime has sent diplomats to close to 14 countries and recently pushed back on Afghan missions abroad which still have diplomats associated with the former republic's government.¹ Countries, both in the region as well as outside, have initiated some sort of communication with the group for their own security and strategic reasons. Even as the conditions of the Afghan people have not improved significantly in the last three years, the Taliban have been able to successfully consolidate their hold over the

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1. "Taliban Disavows Some Afghan Diplomatic Missions Abroad; Rejects Their Consular Services," *The Hindu*, July 30, 2024, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/taliban-disavows-some-afghan-diplomatic-missions-abroad-rejects-their-consular-services/article68464548.ece>. Accessed on August 1, 2024.

country.² Initial concerns about the group's inability to manage the internal differences which would cause it to splinter and lose control over the country have also failed to materialise, even as the Emir, Hibatullah Akhundzada has been slowly consolidating power in his hands.³ The Taliban now enjoy effective control over all 34 provinces in the country and have enough space to manoeuvre, in order to establish their idea of what an Islamic Emirate should look like.

With the world in a flux and the persistence of conflicts, be it the war in Gaza and the resultant crisis in the Middle East or the ongoing turmoil in Bangladesh, Afghanistan's importance in the list of issues that the international community is accrediting attention to has severely come down. While the calls for the formation of an inclusive government and for the Taliban to grant women their freedom have continued, countries have now initiated conversations with the group, without granting any *de jure* recognition, particularly to address their security concerns. Three years since the fall of Kabul, Afghanistan is now regarded as a haven for the resurgence of terrorist groups, with the support and covert assistance of the Taliban. The Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) and its activities in the country comprised an enabler for countries to engage with the group. Between 2021 and 2024, there has been a significant shift in how the group has been behaving and how the Taliban have been responding to their actions. While the ISKP is currently deemed to be the biggest threat coming from the country, the activities of Al Qaeda, Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Jamaat Ansarullah, East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), etc have also seen a renewed vigour.

This paper will attempt to understand the status of the proliferation of terror groups in the country, what has prompted their rise and their long-term goals for the region, how the Taliban have been responding to them and how success or failure in addressing

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2. Haroun Rahimi and Andrew Watkins, "Taliban Rule at 2.5 Years," *CTC Sentinel*, 17, no. 1, 2024, pp.7-8, <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/taliban-rule-at-2-5-years/>. Accessed on August 3, 2024.
 3. Shivam Shekhawat, "Taliban 2.0: Stronger or Moving Towards Fragmentation?," *Issue Brief*, no. 659, Observer Research Foundation, September 7, 2023, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/taliban-2-0-stronger-or-moving-towards-fragmentation>. Accessed on August 3, 2024.

this issue can affect the region's stability. The paper also seeks to assess how India views the situation and how it can be affected by the developments in Afghanistan.

ISKP'S RESURGENCE IN AFGHANISTAN

The attack at the Crocus City Centre in Moscow on March 22, 2024, which killed 145 people and injured several others renewed concerns about the transnational threat posed by the ISKP.⁴ While the media wing of the Islamic State (IS) took responsibility for it, experts see the ISKP's role in at least the provision of fighters, funds and training.⁵ The role of Tajik nationals, the presence of pre-existing ISKP networks in Turkey, and the increased propaganda against Russia in ISKP communications post the attack all indicated that the group had a role to play.⁶ The attacks followed two more attacks: at the memorial service of Qassem Soleimani in Iran in January⁷ which killed around 100 people and the Santa Maria Church in Turkey⁸ which were also claimed by the Islamic State and raised concerns about the ISKP's ability to conduct attacks in major cities around the world. There have also been reports about foiled plans in multiple European countries, with the Turkish authorities thwarting six terror attacks

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4. Shivam Shekhawat, and Rajoli Siddharth Jayaprakash, "Navigating the Terror Threat: Russia and India in Afghanistan," Observer Research Foundation, June 29, 2024, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/navigating-the-terror-threat-russia-and-india-in-afghanistan>. Accessed on August 1, 2024.
 5. Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, "Thirty-Fourth Report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2734 (2024) Concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and Associated Individuals and Entities," UN Security Council, July 22, 2024, <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n24/191/91/pdf/n2419191.pdf>. Accessed on August 2, 2024.
 6. Amira Jadoon, Abdul Sayed, Lucas Webber and Riccardo Valle, "From Tajikistan to Moscow and Iran: Mapping the Local and Transnational Threat of Islamic State Khorasan," *CTC Sentinel*, 17, no. 5, 2024, p.1, https://ctc.westpoint.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/CTC-SENTINEL-052024_cover-article.pdf. Accessed on August 3, 2024.
 7. Frank Gardner and David Gritten, "IS Takes Responsibility for Deadly Iran Bombings that Killed 84," BBC, January 5, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67888283>. Accessed on August 5, 2024.
 8. Robert Badendieck and Mehmet Guzel, "The Islamic State Group Takes Responsibility for the Istanbul Church Attack that Killed One Person," AP News, January 30, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/istanbul-church-attack-islamic-state-18ba89071eb86cd45554cd20187d190>. Accessed on August 5, 2024.

and arresting many Tajik and Russian nationals, and Germany also arresting an attack cell.⁹

This affiliate of the Islamic Emirate came into being in 2015, initially mostly concentrated in eastern and northern Afghanistan. At its peak, the group was estimated to have 2,500-8,000 fighters but the numbers fell by late 2019 with the US-coordinated air strikes and special operation forces working with the Afghan Army and recapturing the territory held by the group.¹⁰ It continued one-off attacks targeting the Shia minority communities in the country until it (re)emerged on the scene after the fall of Kabul, with the attack on the airport in Kabul by a lone ISKP bomber, a former prisoner released by the Taliban, catapulting the group back on the radar of the international community.¹¹ In 2022, the group was responsible for several high-profile attacks targeting the Russian¹² and Pakistani Embassies¹³ in Kabul and a hotel frequented by Chinese businessmen.¹⁴

Distinguishing its ideological purity from the Taliban's recent overtures to non-Muslim countries, the ISKP has consistently criticised the Taliban's Pashtun-centric governance, highlighting that the group has deviated from its Islamic principles. This helps to magnify the pre-existing faultlines in Afghan society and expand

9. Aaron Y Zelin, "The Islamic State Hits Turkey After Years of Plotting," The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, January 30, 2024, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/islamic-state-hits-turkey-after-years-plotting>. Accessed on August 5, 2024.
10. Sourav Sarkar, "ISKP and Afghanistan's Future Security," The Stimson Centre, August 6, 2021, <https://www.stimson.org/2021/https-www-stimson-org-2021-iskp-and-afghanistans-future-security/>. Accessed on August 3, 2024.
11. Clayton Thomas, "Terrorist Groups in Afghanistan," Congressional Research Service, April 2, 2024, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10604>. Accessed on August 6, 2024.
12. Mohammad Yunus Yawar, "Two Russian Embassy Staff Dead, Four Others Killed in Suicide Bomb Blast in Kabul," *Reuters*, September 6, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/afghan-police-report-suicide-bomb-blast-near-russian-embassy-kabul-2022-09-05/>. Accessed on August 6, 2024.
13. "Pakistan Embassy in Kabul Attacked, One Injured," *Reuters*, December 2, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/pakistan-says-kabul-head-mission-target-attack-embassy-2022-12-02/>. Accessed on August 6, 2024.
14. Zafar Iqbal Yousafzai, "After the Kabul Hotel Attack: The Taliban and China Confront Security Challenges in Afghanistan," The Jamestown Foundation, January 19, 2023, [https://jamestown.org/program/after-the-kabul-hotel-attack-the-taliban-and-china-confront-security-challenges-in-afghanistan/#:~:text=On%20December%2012%2C%20members%20of,%2C%20December%2014%2C%202022\)](https://jamestown.org/program/after-the-kabul-hotel-attack-the-taliban-and-china-confront-security-challenges-in-afghanistan/#:~:text=On%20December%2012%2C%20members%20of,%2C%20December%2014%2C%202022).). Accessed on August 6, 2024.

recruitment for the group. It criticises the Taliban for foregoing religious principles for political power and considers itself as being responsible for establishing a 'wider Khorasan' with its emphasis on the *global ummah*. The Taliban are projected as being pliable, easily influenced by the Western countries. The differences between the groups have been persisting since the ISKP's emergence in 2015, with fighting initially concentrated in southern, eastern and northwestern Afghanistan.¹⁵

Since the signing of the Doha Agreement in 2020, the ISKP expanded its operations to more urban spaces, with attacks on a gurudwara in Kabul, a medical clinic, a prison and the university in Kabul all being claimed by the group. Recently, emphasis has been on relatively 'soft targets': Taliban officials, minority Hazara communities or foreign tourists. On January 4, the Islamic State's spokesperson announced the *kill them wherever you find them* campaign. In the immediate aftermath of its promulgation, the number of attacks by the ISKP saw a rise, with three claimed attacks and three more unclaimed inside Afghanistan in the same month.¹⁶ The group also attacked senior Taliban officials, with the Taliban's provincial deputy governor in Badakhshan targeted in June 2023.¹⁷ The number of attacks claimed by the group in Afghanistan as well as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has shifted from 83 in 2020, 353 in 2021, 217 in 2022 to 45 in 2023.¹⁸

But even as there has been a fall in the group's operations inside Afghanistan, the increased external operations are a cause of concern. The timeline is also seen as complementary by some experts, as the group's external operations fall outside the April- August timeframe when its internal operations peak.¹⁹ Since 2020, the group has been

15. Antonio Guistozi, "The Taliban's Campaign Against the Islamic State: Explaining Initial Successes," RUSI, October 2023, <https://static.rusi.org/op-taliban-campaign-against-islamic-state.pdf>. Accessed on August 2, 2024.

16. "ISKP: 'Kill Them Wherever You Find Them' Highlights Increased Activity in Afghanistan," *Afghan Witness*, January 30, 2024, <https://www.afghanwitness.org/reports/iskp%3A-%E2%80%9Ckill-them-wherever-you-find-them%E2%80%9D-highlights-increased-activity-in-afghanistan>. Accessed on August 2, 2024.

17. Priyadarshini Baruah, "Islamic State Khorasan Province vs Taliban: Fighting for the 'Holier' Jihad," *Defence and Diplomacy*, 13, no. 2, 2024, p.39, <https://capsindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Priyadarshini-Baruah.pdf>. Accessed on August 5, 2024

18. Jadoon, et, al., n. 6.

19. Ibid.

focussing on conducting transnational attacks and is currently at a very different stage of its insurgency.²⁰ The ISKP relies on the networks that it is setting up now, along with the training and military capability of its fighters and their access to weapons in general. It has solid financial and logistical networks, with some reports claiming that it receives money from Somalia via Yemen to connect it to recruits in Central Asia.

The propaganda is now aimed at inducting more lone wolf fighters from countries in Central Asia, leveraging the pre-existing grievances and ethnic faultlines existing in these countries. As per some estimates, the ISKP saw 150-200 new recruits every month in mid-2022.²¹ The focus is on Tajik and Uzbek speaking populations, with their propaganda material now disseminated in these languages apart from Pashto and Farsi. Tajik language channels have emerged, which portray the ISKP as the sole platform to wage the fight against the governments in the Central Asian Republics (CARs) exploiting the local grievances to their advantage.²² Recruits are also encouraged to travel to Afghanistan—sometimes they travel through Turkey and Iran to reach the country. They also target Central Asian diasporas in Europe itself.

COEXISTENCE OF MULTIPLE TERROR GROUPS

Al Qaeda celebrated its return when the Taliban usurped power in 2021.²³ The group has had a presence in Afghanistan since the 1990s with inter-personal bonds and marital alliances also solidifying its relations with the Taliban. In recent years, US intelligence assessments have significantly downplayed the presence of Al Qaeda in the country. As explained by the *Long War Journal*, the '50-100 fallacy' was used in the assessments for the longest time.²⁴ As the Taliban

20. Ibid.

21. Antonio Guistozzi, "The Taliban's Campaign Against the Islamic State: Explaining Initial Successes," *RUSI*, October 2023, <https://static.rusi.org/op-taliban-campaign-against-islamic-state.pdf>. Accessed on August 2, 2024.

22. Ibid.

23. Thomas, n. 11.

24. Bill Roggio, "Department of Defense Continues to Downplay Taliban and Al Qaeda Threat in Afghanistan," *The Long War Journal*, May 19, 2022, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2022/05/departement-of-defense-continues-to>

increased control over the country, the estimated Al Qaeda operatives were still pegged at 200.

As per the recent UN Sanctions Monitoring Team, the number of training camps set up by the group has seen an increase since the return of the Taliban. In its *as-Sahab* media pamphlet, the group's current leader called on supporters from around the world to travel to Afghanistan to learn from the country's experience and for training and knowledge.²⁵ The Taliban's Islamic Emirate, as per the leader, should be studied as a model Islamic nation for the people to learn from.²⁶ This proclamation was seen as Afghanistan's (re)emergence as a safe haven. He also called for the group to wage attacks against the 'Zionists.' The group now has a presence in 12 of the 34 provinces, including Badghis, Helmand, Ghazni, Kunar, Laghman, Nangarhar, Nuristan, Parwan, Uruzgan, and Zabul²⁷ and has continued its training and reorganisation activities. There are many *madrassas* and safe houses in Herat, Helmand, Kabul, etc and weapon storage facilities associated with the group. Some Al Qaeda leaders are also in the Taliban government in different positions, from provincial governors to deputy directors in important departments or in advisory roles. The Taliban have also aided Al Qaeda members with monthly payments and the provision of Afghan passports and identity cards as per the UN Analytical Support Report.²⁸ The Ministry of Defence has also used Al Qaeda's training manuals.

With Al Qaeda, the Taliban have constrained some activities of the group while still enabling its growth by providing a 'permissive environment.' When the group's leader, Ayman Al Zawahiri was killed in a Taliban safe house in 2022, the reality of the Taliban's

downplay-taliban-and-al-qaeda-threat-in-afghanistan.php. Accessed on August 6, 2024.

25. Bill Roggio and Caleb Weiss, "Al Qaeda Leader Calls Foreign Fighters to Afghanistan," *The Long War Journal*, June 8, 2024, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2024/06/al-qaeda-leader-calls-foreign-fighters-to-afghanistan.php>. Accessed on August 10, 2024.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. Bill Roggio, "Al Qaeda Leaders are Prominently Serving in Taliban Government," Foundation for Defense of Democracies, June 11, 2023, <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2023/06/11/al-qaeda-leaders-are-prominently-serving-in-taliban-government/#:~:text=The%20Taliban%20is%20also%20providing,the%20passports%20and%20identity%20cards>. Accessed on August 10, 2024.

tacit support to Al Qaeda came to the fore. But neither of the two acknowledged his death. The house belonged to the Emirate's Acting Interior Minister, Sirajuddin Haqqani. Al Qaeda's Indian subcontinent leader, Osama Mahmood is also in the country.²⁹

The TTP currently has a strength of 6,000-6,500 fighters. Thwarting all hopes that Pakistan would have had about the success of its quest for strategic depth in Afghanistan, the TTP has effectively intensified its attacks in the country.³⁰ The Afghan Taliban, even on consistent requests from the Pakistani authorities, have refused to accept that they have any leverage over the group and have deemed Islamabad's security concerns as its internal problem. After the Taliban's return to power, the TTP's emir pledged allegiance to the group. There are ideological similarities as well as operational ties between the two groups. The Taliban also receive support from Al Qaeda, specifically from Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) which has supplied weapons and provided training for the TTP members in Al Qaeda camps.³¹ Pakistan has carried out air strikes against the group in Afghanistan and has also evicted refugees from the country.

The IMU, an ally of Al Qaeda has also allied with the Taliban and launched attacks on the Central Asian countries. The group is considered to have more freedom to expand now. ETIM and Jaish al Adl (JA) have also conducted joint operations in Pakistan, targeting Chinese interests in the country. They are headquartered in the northwestern part of Afghanistan. As per some UN member countries, there have been reports of the ISKP recruiting members from these groups as well. The Jamaat Ansarullah's Tajik commander also controls territories in northern Afghanistan. During their offensive in 2021, the Taliban placed five districts in northern Afghanistan under the control of Mahdi Arsalon, who is a commander in the JA which

29. Roggio and Weiss, n. 25.

30. Osama Ahmad, "TTP Activity Causes Continued Deterioration in Pakistani-Afghan Relations," The Jamestown Foundation, March 1, 2024, <https://jamestown.org/program/ttp-activity-causes-continued-deterioration-in-pakistani-afghan-relations/>. Accessed on August 7, 2024.

31. Bill Roggio, "Analysis: The 'Bonds are Close' as the Pakistani Taliban Benefits from its Afghan Safe Haven," *The Long War Journal*, July 16, 2024, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2024/07/analysis-the-bonds-are-close-as-the-pakistani-taliban-benefits-from-its-afghan-safe-haven.php>. Accessed on August 9, 2024.

is linked to Al Qaeda. It has received support from the IMU and the Taliban.³²

Al Qaeda is currently focussing on developing relationships with other groups present in the country. Al Qaeda provides indirect support to the TTP and has a good relationship with the Taliban. The ISKP's focus on enhancing its collaboration with the ETIM, IMU and JA³³ is a cause of concern in the absence of a concerted international effort to keep a check on these developments.

BANKING ON THE TALIBAN FOR COUNTER-TERRORISM

The permissive environment, the security gap in the country and the lack of a collective counter-terrorism effort from the international community have all provided the ISKP and other groups with an enabling environment to augment their capabilities. As per the UN sanctions monitoring report, in the short run, the ISKP would focus on building its capacity and expanding recruitment. Its enhanced propaganda outreach to potential recruits explains this trend. In the medium term, it would focus on conducting attacks inside the country, while its overall aim would be to establish territorial control over all of Afghanistan.³⁴ In the case of Al Qaeda as well, experts deem the current period as one focussed on reorganisation, with the group's focus on building long-term capabilities.

At the conference in Doha in June-July 2024, the Taliban urged the countries in the West to engage with the group in a manner similar to that of the regional countries, i.e. focussing on mutual bilateral interests.³⁵ Since 2021, countries in the region like Russia, China, Iran, Pakistan, India, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, etc have incrementally engaged with the group.³⁶ While none of these countries has established

32. Bill Roggio and Andrew Tobin, "Tajik Terrorist Serves as Taliban Commander in Northern Afghanistan," *The Long War Journal*, May 25, 2022, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2022/05/tajik-terrorist-serves-as-taliban-commander-in-northern-afghanistan.php>. Accessed on August 8, 2024.

33. n.5.

34. Ibid.

35. Shivam Shekhawat, "Taliban's Participation in the UN-led Conference in Doha," Observer Research Foundation, July 12, 2024, <https://www.orfonline.org/people-expert/shivam-shekhawat>. Accessed on August 6, 2024.

36. "The Taliban's Neighbourhood: Regional Diplomacy with Afghanistan," The International Crisis Group, January 30, 2024, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/>

de jure ties, the prospect of the security situation degrading further in the country and its spillover effects in their territories has compelled them to initiate some form of dialogue. In the last one year, this fear has become even more potent, with more transnational attacks by the ISKP and the reorganisation efforts of Al Qaeda and other groups. The Central Asian Republics are concerned about the ethnic fault-lines that the ISKP may be able to exploit due to the discontent that the Taliban's Pashtun-centric governance has brought.³⁷

Since the signing of the agreement in Doha, the Taliban's leadership has consistently outlined their policy of not letting Afghanistan become a breeding ground for terrorists or allowing it to be used to foment trouble in other countries. Since reports about the strength of the ISKP emerged from the country, the group has consistently downplayed the magnitude of the threat. There was initially some expectation that the ISKP might not be able to sustain itself after the fall of the republic as it was perceived as a proxy group by the Taliban.³⁸ The close coordinated relationships between different groups are also aimed at integrating these foreign fighters within their ambit. They have followed a dichotomy: using the presence of groups like the ISKP to establish working relationships with other countries while downplaying the threat posed by the group internally to consolidate their hold on power.

Even as the international community relies on the Taliban to counter the growing terror threat in the country, doubts about the group's capability and intent persist.³⁹ In a number of instances, the Taliban's approach has either focussed on relocating the militants from the border and disbanding their groups or integrating them in their own armed forces to keep a check on them.⁴⁰ The benefit of this approach is circumspect as it adds credence to the claims that the Taliban are trying to integrate them within their own fold. Between 2022 and 2023, the IEA's General Directorate of Intelligence and Special Forces conducted 75 operations targeting the ISKP, with close

asia/south-asia/afghanistan/337-talibans-neighbourhood-regional-diplomacy-afghanistan. Accessed on August 10, 2024.

37. Baruah, n.17.

38. Guistozzi, n.15.

39. Jadoon, et, al., n.6.

40. Ibid.

to 163 militants targeted in these raids. In the corresponding period, the attacks by the ISKP also declined. However, experts are cautious about pointing at a causal relationship between these raids and the fall in the Taliban's activity inside the country.

WHERE DOES INDIA STAND IN ALL THIS?

The ISKP has shown an inclination to recruit more fighters from India, leveraging the domestic political issues that come up between the Hindus and Muslims in its propaganda material and using the fissures to get more recruits. Since at least 2020, its *Voice of Hind* and *Voice of Khorasan* magazines have disseminated material on India⁴¹ and made calls for carrying out attacks in India, against the Hindus.⁴²

For India, fears about the presence of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) and their ability to destabilise Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has been a preeminent concern. The 13th report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team highlighted that the JeM maintains training camps in Afghanistan, with some of them under the direct control of the Taliban and that the LeT has provided finance and training support to the Taliban's operations. For New Delhi, stability in Afghanistan is also important for its outreach to the Central Asian Republics.⁴³

CONCLUSION

The growing cleavages in the international community, between the West and Russia and China, and the consequent strategic competition have completely relegated the question of collaboration for counter-terrorism and other security related concerns in Afghanistan to the background. The US, because of domestic political considerations, among other reasons, has significantly reduced the importance that Afghanistan gets in the country, banking on Over The Horizon (OTH) capabilities to counter threats inimical to America's interests. But, as experts point out, even OTH approaches require reliable partners in the region.⁴⁴ When the attacks in Moscow and Tehran occurred

41. Sarkar, n.10.

42. Baruah, n.17.

43. Shekhawat and Jayaprakash, n.4.

44. Jadoon, et. al.,n.18.

in early 2024, there were some reports that the US had shared intelligence reports with these countries regarding the possibility of attacks.⁴⁵ Notwithstanding the nature of the intelligence, this does reflect the lack of trust between countries which renders any effort for coordinated or even cooperative counter-terrorism approaches a far-fetched idea.

As was discussed in this paper, in the absence of an internationally recognised government, a multitude of militant and terrorist groups have managed to secure a more permissive and flexible environment—allowing them to regroup, reorganise and work on developing their capabilities. There is also some sort of collaboration amongst them, which can have far-reaching implications for security in the region. Even as the regional countries develop *de facto* relationships with the Taliban to hedge their bets against the security threats, the former's ability to rise to that role is still not certain. The group has capitalised on all sorts of engagements and used these to project that it is no longer isolated. By allowing space to the terror groups, it is in contravention of the key aspects of the Doha Agreement.

45. Ibid.