

Taliban

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In News

The Taliban is a predominantly **Pashtun, Islamic fundamentalist group that ruled Afghanistan from 1996 until 2001**, when a U.S.-led invasion toppled the regime for providing refuge to al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden. The Taliban regrouped across the border in Pakistan and has **led an insurgency against the U.S.-backed government in Kabul for more than eighteen years.**

History and Rise of Taliban

- The Taliban was **formed in the early 1990s by Afghan mujahideen**, or Islamic guerilla fighters, who had **resisted the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan (1979–89)** with the **covert backing of the CIA and its Pakistani counterpart**, the Inter-Services Intelligence directorate (ISI).
- They were **joined by younger Pashtun tribesmen who studied in Pakistani madrassas**, or seminaries; taliban is Pashto for “students.”
- **Pashtuns comprise a plurality in Afghanistan** and are the predominant ethnic group in much of the country’s south and east. They are also a major ethnic group in Pakistan’s north and west.
- The Taliban entered Kandahar in November 1994 to pacify the crime-ridden southern city, and **by September 1996 seized the capital, Kabul, from President Burhanuddin Rabbani, an ethnic Tajik** whom it viewed as anti-Pashtun and corrupt.
- That year, the **Taliban declared Afghanistan an Islamic emirate**, with Mullah Mohammed Omar, a cleric and veteran of the anti-Soviet resistance, leading as amir al-mu’minin, or “commander of the faithful.”
- The **regime controlled some 90% of the country before its**

2001 overthrow.

- The Taliban imposed a harsh brand of justice as it consolidated territorial control.
- Taliban **jurisprudence** was drawn from the Pashtuns' pre-Islamic tribal code and **interpretations of sharia influenced by the Wahhabi doctrine.**
- The **regime was internationally isolated from its inception.** Only Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Pakistan recognized the government.
- Two UN Security Council resolutions passed in 1998 urged the Taliban to end its abusive treatment of women. The following year the **council imposed sanctions on the regime for harboring al-Qaeda.**
- After **al-Qaeda operatives attacked the United States on September 11, 2001,** Omar rejected U.S. demands that he give up bin Laden.
- **U.S. forces invaded Afghanistan in October 2001, and the Taliban was quickly overthrown.**
- The Taliban waged an insurgency against the U.S.-backed Afghan government. The **group is now under investigation in the International Criminal Court** for alleged abuses of Afghan civilians, including **crimes against humanity.**