Tomorrow's Affairs
Analysis of today
Assessment of tomorrow

By: Tomorrow's Affairs Staff

Two years of Taliban rule - a vicious circle that Kabul does not want to break

The 2-year record of the Taliban rule in Afghanistan does not necessarily mean that the time has come for any change of policy regarding this isolated, sanctioned, and internationally unrecognised regime.

The Taliban exploited their alleged "reformation" to seize the spotlight in the early months of their rule and after the withdrawal of US troops, but they have not offered any credible evidence of it in the past 2 years.

It is quite the opposite. The Taliban administration's 2 years in power in Afghanistan have only served to confirm the pessimistic prior predictions that they would establish the nation's most rigid social system, accompanied by unfathomably severe human rights violations and overall misery.

> The gap between promises and practices by ” Afghan de facto ‘ authorities has widened, and the idea of a ”reformed” Taliban has been exposed as mistaken”, announced a group of more than 30 independent UN human rights experts on the occasion of 2 years of Taliban rule in Afghanistan.

A continuing security threat

With the arrival of a militant and ultra-conservative regime after the departure of US troops, Afghanistan has not ceased to be a source of security threats, particularly for its surrounding neighbours.

Afghanistan is the least peaceful country in the world this year, as was the case during the previous 2 years, and it comes in last on the Global Peace Index.

Since they were an extremist fighting group initially, the Taliban could not be a generator of peace in the country and its immediate surroundings.

Their security circle consists of terrorist groups, whether they are their allies or opponents. Among the first are Al Qaeda and the jihadist group Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan. Pakistan considers this group a security threat and demands its destruction in Afghanistan.

Even though it claims to be fighting the Islamic State Khorasan Province, mainly by trying to eliminate the leaders of this ISIS branch, the Taliban cannot convince its neighbours that it controls the activities of this group, which uses Afghanistan as its base of operations in the region.

After all, the assassination of Al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in July last year in a US drone strike has been a convincing confirmation that Afghanistan is still a haven for the most extreme terrorist groups, even under the Taliban administration.

Kabul discourages the flow of humanitarian aid

The country has been facing enormous humanitarian demands because, due to the catastrophic economic situation, accompanied by severe storms and food shortages, it cannot respond to the needs of the vulnerable population on its own.

Nearly half of the population (more than 20 million) is at risk of starvation, in addition to the approximately 5 million individuals who have left Afghanistan since the Taliban took power and 3 million internally displaced individuals.

While pleading for foreign aid, Afghanistan under the Taliban actively obstructs the delivery of food, medicine, and other necessities by, amongst other things, forbidding women from working in the humanitarian sector.

This leads to a drastic drop in the volume of aid and the withdrawal of international donors. As a result, just one-third of the Humanitarian Response Plan fund, which was supposed to total around $3.2 billion, has been filled.

This vicious cycle has been impossible to break as long as the Taliban hold control in Kabul, despite repeated requests for assistance from international relief organisations and human rights activists, regardless of how oppressive the Afghan government is.

In a country ruled by fear and repression, it is impossible to bypass the Taliban and send humanitarian or development aid directly to beneficiaries (communities) or encourage investors to invest in projects that will improve living conditions.

The unfreezing of the roughly $7 billion in state funds from the US Federal Reserve Bank of New York that were blocked as part of the 2021 sanctions when the Taliban seized power is the first option that the Kabul authorities see as a way out.

There are no guarantees that the Taliban regime would use this fund, as it claims - to address the population's humanitarian needs and improve agriculture, flood protection and health.

On the contrary, there is a likelihood that the Taliban leadership would use this public money as personal loot or a fund for more weapons because of the massive corruption and lack of transparency in this country.

Minor jobs with isolated states

The regime in Kabul has not been recognised by any government in the world after 2 years, even though some of them have been trying to establish economic and even diplomatic relations at a lower level.

However, these initiatives, which often come under the guise of humanitarian or development support, are actually ad-hoc commercial deals with the Taliban, which will not result in the strategic recovery of this country and its population.

Last year, for example, Russia arranged to supply Afghanistan with 2.5 million tons of oil derivatives and 2 million tons of grain annually, but without explaining how the deliveries would be paid for, given that both countries have been excluded from the SWIFT international payment system.

The Amu Darya basin's oil drilling and lithium mining are subject to agreements between China and the Taliban government. The Taliban have made similar deals on gas and oil deliveries with Iran and Azerbaijan.

The regime in Kabul can only conclude such deals with a limited number of countries that are also subject to international sanctions, such as Iran or Russia, without a significant effect on the overall economy.

It only took the Taliban 2 years to make it clear that they are unwilling to compromise their oppressive political system despite the challenging humanitarian circumstances they have forced the majority of their population into.

At the same time, they have maintained their country's status as a hub for terrorist groups that threaten the region's security, with no

visible effort to suppress their activities.

Their lack of empathy for their own population disqualifies Afghanistan from any attempt to normalise relations, including relaxing sanctions as a form of humanitarian intervention.