



COI QUERY

Country of Origin	Afghanistan
Main subject	Governance and state administration under the Taliban
Question(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What type of government and state administration is currently in place in Afghanistan?2. Have the announced Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan been recognized by any state?3. What is the composition of the interim government as regards gender, ethnicity and connections to the previous Taliban rule and affiliation with armed groups?4. Which state institutions are in place?5. Does the central leadership exercise central control of local leaders and foot soldiers?
Date of completion	15 November 2021
Query Code	
Contributing EU+ COI units	BE, SE

Disclaimer

This response to a COI query has been elaborated according to the [EASO COI Report Methodology](#) and [EASO Writing and Referencing Guide](#).

The information provided in this response has been researched, evaluated and processed with utmost care within a limited time frame. All sources used are referenced. A quality review has been performed in line with the above mentioned methodology. This document does not claim to be exhaustive neither conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to international protection. If a certain event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

The information in the response does not necessarily reflect the opinion of EASO and makes no political statement whatsoever.

The target audience is caseworkers, COI researchers, policy makers, and decision making authorities. The answer was finalised on 15 November 2021 and covers events taking place from 15 August 2021 until the date of finalisation. Any event taking place before or after the reference period is not included in this answer.

COI QUERY RESPONSE – Governance and state administration under the Taliban

Introduction: current research limitations

Analysing preliminary findings

The purpose of this query response is to provide information relevant for international protection status determination and contains information on developments in Afghanistan after the Taliban's take-over on 15 August 2021 until 15 November 2021. EASO have published two additional and related query responses covering the prevailing [justice system and the implementation of Sharia law](#) under the Taliban, and the [general security situation](#).

The political situation and conflict dynamics radically changed in Afghanistan when the former government collapsed in mid-August 2021, the Taliban took control of the country and reinstated the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), and the US withdrew their forces. Questions of great interest at the moment are related to the type of state and rule that may be established under the Taliban, and how it will impact the everyday life of the Afghan people. Such forward looking questions are impossible to answer with certainty at this stage, mainly due to a great information gap on the situation in the country and on the Taliban's intentions, but also due to the transitional and highly volatile period that Afghanistan undergoes at the time of writing. During an EASO organised seminar focusing on Afghanistan taking place on 23 November 2021 three expert speakers, independent of each other and with different fields of interest, stressed that it is too early to draw any conclusions about the situation in Afghanistan or how it might unfold in the future.¹

Against the background of prevailing research limitations, this query demonstrates preliminary findings on how Taliban rule has manifested itself since the take-over of Kabul but does not analyse whether these findings are representative of the Taliban leadership's intentions nor their bearing for the future.

Media presence

During the drafting period, journalism was facing major challenges in Afghanistan. Consequently, the possibilities to cover the situation from abroad reduced significantly. One of the main monitoring challenges was the fact that a great number of international and local journalists evacuated or fled

¹ Bette Dam, 23 November 2021; Kristian Berg Harpviken, PRIO, 23 November 2021, Roxanna Shapour, AAN, 23 November 2021

the country.² A number of international media outlets withdrew their correspondents during the evacuation efforts in the last weeks of August 2021, and relied on monitoring the situation from abroad. However, there were international correspondents that stayed in the country, returned or took up duties in Afghanistan after the evacuations³, but in some cases it remained unclear whether international media had reporters on the ground or relied on freelancers.⁴

The local media landscape was severely affected by the Taliban's take-over, both by restrictions on media freedom and financial problems.⁵ A significant number of media outlets stopped operating after the take-over.⁶ In mid-September the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) estimated that at least 153 media organisations had ceased operations⁷ and that about 1 300 local journalists remained in Afghanistan, primarily in Kabul.⁸ The availability of sources on the ground and relevant open source material was impacted by local journalists fleeing or going into hiding⁹, as well as financial drawbacks that left many without an income, forcing journalists to search for other employments.¹⁰ Especially reporting on events taking place in other areas than Kabul was sparse.¹¹

Source assessment

As the possibilities to cover the situation reduced¹², reporting on Taliban interactions with the Afghan population was limited, and in many cases tended to be 'anecdotal'.¹³ Fake news circulated¹⁴ and social media was frequently used as a source by many reporters. Twitter was, for instance, frequently used as a source to report on Taliban policy¹⁵ which made it difficult to assess whether the statements were official, verify the source, and identify nuances in stated policy changes. In

² RSF, RSF seeks UN Security Council meeting on plight of journalists in Afghanistan, 18 August 2021, [url](#); CNN, The media spotlight in Afghanistan is about to dim as journalists evacuate, 20 August 2021, [url](#)

³ See for instance: CNN, CNN correspondent Clarissa Ward boards flight out of Afghanistan, 20 August 2021, [url](#); CNN, Clarissa Ward returns to Kabul just a month after Taliban takeover, 28 September 2021, [url](#); Sune Engel Rasmussen, [Twitter], posted on: 15 September 2021, [url](#); Washington Post (The), Kabul airport chaos: How the Washington Post team escaped Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, 20 August 2021, [url](#); Washington Post (The), Q&A: Ask The Post's Susannah George about reporting on the Taliban, 11 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴ CNN, The media spotlight in Afghanistan is about to dim as journalists evacuate, 20 August 2021, [url](#)

⁵ Ariana News, Crippling economy closing Afghan media outlets, 11 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶ France24, Afghanistan's media enters the unknown under Taliban rule, 24 August 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, Afghan Media Activity Faces Sharp Decline: Report, 3 October 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, Journalists Call for Access to Official Information, 18 October 2021, [url](#)

⁷ IFJ, Afghanistan: Attacks to the media escalate as Taliban control takes hold, 17 September 2021, [url](#)

⁸ Guardian (The), Taliban's return 'catastrophe' for journalism in Afghanistan, 14 September 2021, [url](#)

⁹ IFJ, Afghanistan: "Every minute I fear they will try to find and kill me", 30 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰ Khaama Press, Degeneration of journalism, Afghan journalist making bricks to feed family, 01 October 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, As Afghan Media Struggles Under Taliban, Jobless Journalists Grow Desperate, 11 October 2021, [url](#)

¹¹ International Crisis Group, Taliban Rule Begins in Afghanistan, 24 August 2021, [url](#)

¹² RSF, RSF seeks UN Security Council meeting on plight of journalists in Afghanistan, 18 August 2021, [url](#); CNN, The media spotlight in Afghanistan is about to dim as journalists evacuate, 20 August 2021, [url](#)

¹³ International Crisis Group, Taliban Rule Begins in Afghanistan, 24 August 2021, [url](#)

¹⁴ Deadline, Afghanistan Has Its Own Fake News Problem – Special Report, 20 September 2021, [url](#); France24, Fake photo of new Afghan central bank chief goes viral, 21 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵ See for example: BBC, Afghanistan: Taliban deputy denies reports of leaderships row in new video, 15 September 2021, [url](#); New York Times (The), At Afghan Universities, Increasing Fear That Women Will Never Be Allowed Back, 27 September 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Defense Minister Admits To Revenge Killings Despite Amnesty, 23 September 2021, [url](#)

some cases, dubious information was even republished by major newspapers.¹⁶ Similarly, some fake social media accounts similar to established media spread false information¹⁷ as well as fake social media accounts attributed to some former and incumbent government officials.¹⁸ A related issue was journalists reporting from abroad who shared information on claimed atrocities and violations by the Taliban on social media.¹⁹ The possibilities to verify circulating information and track the original or primary sources were limited.

It should also be taken into account that much of the reporting on Afghanistan during the drafting period came from Western media outlets, US media in particular, and from reporters mainly working from outside Afghanistan. Furthermore, there was a concentration of reports on events in Kabul. In an article by International Journalists' Network (IJNET), some journalists working in Afghanistan or in the region pointed out that this medial reporting situation left room for errors and misrepresentation, and also noted problematic narratives and language resonating in many reports taking the form of sensationalising content stemming from biases and a lack of cultural and contextual understanding.²⁰ In this query response, cross checking has been conducted in line with EASO's COI Methodology, checking information in Western media with local sources as far as possible. However, assessing the reliability of local media reports also became increasingly complex. Still operating media outlets and journalists reportedly adjusted to the new conditions under Taliban rule.²¹ For instance, this could be noticed in a general decrease of potentially provocative content, as well as increased content praising the Taliban.²² A tendency to self-censorship could also be noted.²³ In addition, the Taliban issued 11 guidelines for journalists which included rules against topics in conflict with Islam or 'insulting national personalities'. Journalists were also instructed to produce reports in coordination with the interim-government's media office.²⁴ Human Rights Watch described these rules as 'suffocating media freedom' and criticised them for being so broad and vague that they in practice prohibited any critical reporting about the Taliban.²⁵

Decrease in relevant reporting

There were a number of sources that stopped publishing or updating material that previously has been important to COI production on Afghanistan. For example, the following sources or products stopped publishing public material during the reference period:

- Afghanistan's National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA)²⁶
- Reports on protection of civilians in armed conflict by UNAMA²⁷

¹⁶ New York Times (The), At Afghan Universities, Increasing Fear That Women Will Never Be Allowed Back, 27 September 2021, [url](#); NPR, Kabul University chancellor says female students will be allowed, but segregated, 2 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷ Deadline, Afghanistan Has Its Own Fake News Problem – Special Report, 20 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸ Pajhwok News, Tens of fake social media pages attributed to high profile figures, 18 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁹ See for example: Bilal Sarwary, [Twitter], posted on: 25 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁰ IJNET, Report responsibly on Afghanistan with this advice, 5 October 2021, [url](#)

²¹ RSF, RSF seeks UN Security Council meeting on plight of journalists in Afghanistan, 18 August 2021, [url](#)

²² BBC, Afghanistan crisis: 'Hey world, do you care what happens here?', 22 August 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Fewer women, No Entertainment: Kabul's Media Scene Transforms After Taliban Takeover, 18 August 2021, [url](#)

²³ New York Times (The), 'Everything Changed Overnight': Afghan Reporters Face an Intolerant Regime, 11 September 2021, [url](#)

²⁴ New York Times (The), New Taliban Guidelines Stir Fear About the Future of Press Freedom, 23 September 2021, [url](#)

²⁵ HRW, Afghanistan: Taliban Severely Restrict Media, 1 October 2021, [url](#)

²⁶ Afghanistan. National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA), [official website inaccessible]

²⁷ UNAMA, Reports on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, 2021, [url](#)

- Long War Journal mapping Taliban control in Afghanistan²⁸
- The New York Times’ Afghan War Casualty Report²⁹
- Voice of Jihad (Taliban official website)³⁰
- RiV Monitoring³¹
- Reportedly (resumed in early November 2021)³²
- United States Department of Defense’s (USDOD) Reports on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan³³

The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) is also a source frequently used in previous EASO COI products. ACLED continues their coding of events, but experiences increased difficulties in sourcing events.³⁴

Furthermore, there were no active monitoring bodies reporting from Afghanistan, which limited the possibilities to monitor human rights violations or other misconduct. On 18 September 2021 the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) issued a statement in which it said that it could not carry out its function as all offices had been ‘occupied’ by Taliban forces. Furthermore, AIHRC stated that they were hindered in carrying out their duties as they had little confidence in the Taliban government respecting the mandate of AIHRC or female staff members.³⁵

The Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) did not publish public reports during the drafting period.³⁶

²⁸ FDD’s LWJ, Mapping Taliban Control in Afghanistan, 15 September 2021, [url](#)

²⁹ New York Times (The), The Afghan War Casualty Report, 5 August 2021, [url](#)

³⁰ Voice of Jihad, [official website inaccessible]

³¹ RiV Monitoring, [homepage], last updated: 12 August 2021, [url](#)

³² Reportedly, [homepage], n.d., [url](#)

³³ USDOD, Publications, n.d., [url](#)

³⁴ ACLED, ACLED Methodology and Coding Decisions around the Conflict in Afghanistan, September 2021, [url](#), pp. 12–13

³⁵ AIHRC, Statement on the status of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, 18 September 2021, [url](#)

³⁶ OHCHR, Human Rights Reports OHCHR/UNAMA, n.d., [url](#); UNAMA, Reports on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, n.d., [url](#)

1. Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, political system and interim government

Following the sudden collapse of the former government of Afghanistan³⁷ and the Taliban's take-over of the capital Kabul on 15 August 2021³⁸, the Taliban announced the reestablishment of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA)³⁹, which was previously in power in Afghanistan between 1996 and 2001.⁴⁰ In October 2021, the IEA called on Afghan media to refer to them as the 'Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan' and not use terms like the 'Taliban group' or 'Taliban faction', and further stated that they controlled the entire territory of Afghanistan and provided service to the people.⁴¹

No official announcements were found related to how the Taliban intended to govern Afghanistan, nor which type of political system they envisaged to adopt. During their first press conference after the take-over, Taliban spokesmen gave some unprecise statements saying that the Taliban had changed during the past 20 years in terms of experience, maturity and vision, but that Afghanistan was still a Muslim nation and that there would be 'a strong Islamic government'. They also announced that the Taliban intended to act on the basis of their principles, religion and culture, and emphasised the importance of Islam and that 'nothing should be against Islamic values'.⁴² The Taliban did not indicate that they will hold elections.⁴³ Suhail Shaheen, official spokesperson for the Taliban's Qatar office, told Voice of America's (VOA) Urdu Service that the issue of elections would be determined when drafting a new constitution.⁴⁴

An interim government was announced on 7 September 2021⁴⁵ and three rounds of appointments followed.⁴⁶ As of 5 October 2021, the IEA government was composed of over 30 ministries including the Ministry of Preaching and Guidance, and Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice.⁴⁷ According to an article by United States Institute of Peace (USIP), the interim government was 'modelled on the same system' as in the 1990s with both a spiritual leader and a prime minister heading the government.⁴⁸ Looking at its decision-making structure, the announced emirate could be described as a religious theocracy⁴⁹ ruled by the commander of believers and supreme leader Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada⁵⁰ which has had the 'ultimate authority over the group's political, religious and military affairs' since 2016. On 31 October 2021, after years absence from public view and rumours of being deceased, Akhundzada appeared in public and held a speech in Kandahar city.⁵¹

The Taliban did not give any time indications on how long the interim government would hold office

³⁷ CSIS, The reason for the collapse of Afghan forces, 17 August 2021, [url](#), p. 2

³⁸ van Bijlert, M., The focus of the Taleban's new government: internal cohesion, external dominance, AAN, 12 September 2021, [url](#)

³⁹ WSJ, Taliban unveil new Afghan government, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁰ BBC, Hardliners get key posts in new Taliban government, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴¹ VOA, Taliban order Afghan media to use group's official name, 1 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴² Al Jazeera, Transcript of Taliban's first news conference in Kabul, 17 August 2021, [url](#)

⁴³ AP, Taliban form all-male Afghan government of old guard members, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁴ VOA, Taliban Not Ruling Out Holding Elections, 16 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁵ BBC, Hardliners get key posts in new Taliban government, 7 September 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁶ van Bijlert, M., Taleban's caretaker Cabinet and other senior appointments, AAN, 7 October 2021, [url](#); JustPaste.it, امارت اسلامي امارت اعلاميه, د نويو ټاکنو په اړه د اسلامي امارت اعلاميه [informal translation 'Islamic Emirate's declaration on new appointments'], 4 October 2021, updated on 5 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁷ van Bijlert, M., Taleban's caretaker Cabinet and other senior appointments, AAN, 7 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁸ USIP, For the Taliban, governing will be the hard part, 5 October 2021, [url](#), p. 3

⁴⁹ DW, Afghanistan: What is Taliban's religious ideology?, 2 November 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁰ van Bijlert, M., Taleban's caretaker Cabinet and other senior appointments, AAN, 7 October 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, Hibatullah Akhundzada to lead Taliban Govt, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵¹ Reuters, Taliban reclusive supreme leader appears, belaying rumours of his death, 31 October 2021, [url](#)

or on what constitutional basis it would function.⁵² On 28 September 2021, the Afghan Justice Ministry published a statement in which the acting Minister of Justice was said to have indicated to the Chinese ambassador that provisions from the 1964 constitution would be enacted temporarily, except for content contradicting Sharia law or ‘principles of the Islamic Emirate’.⁵³

2. International recognition

No country officially recognised the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan⁵⁴ while the Taliban reportedly searched for recognition, as well as assistance to avoid a humanitarian and economic disaster.⁵⁵ The Taliban expressed that they met the conditions for international recognition, as several stakeholders met with them, including the US, some EU countries, Russia, China, Iran and Pakistan.⁵⁶

Some of the more notable initial interactions with other states were the meeting between a US delegation and the Taliban representative in Doha, Qatar, on 10 October 2021,⁵⁷ Pakistan’s foreign minister’s visit to Kabul two weeks later, and President Vladimir Putin’s announcement that the IEA would be removed from Russia’s list of extremist groups.⁵⁸

The United States Department of States (USDOS) indicated that ‘candid and professional’ discussions were held in Doha on concerns related to security, terrorism, safe passage, human rights, and humanitarian assistance, and reiterated that ‘the Taliban will be judged on its actions, not only its words’.⁵⁹ Pakistan’s foreign minister vowed that Pakistan would provide humanitarian assistance, resume flights with Kabul and facilitate border crossing trade.⁶⁰ On 2 November 2021, less than two weeks after this statement, Pakistan reportedly reopened Chaman border to allow crossings from Afghanistan after a month-long closure.⁶¹ As of 5 November 2021, the Afghan embassy in Islamabad was reopened, operating with former government staff.⁶²

Regarding international recognition, however, the Express Tribune reported that Pakistan, Russia, China and the US had agreed on a continuation of ‘practical engagement’ with the Taliban but had asked them to follow ‘moderate policies’, and to ‘do more’ before a formal recognition could be brought to the fore.⁶³

⁵² ICG, Who Will Run the Taliban Government, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵³ Ministry of Justice, His Excellency Acting Minister Of Justice Met With The Chinese Ambassador, 28 September 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁴ VOA, Taliban order Afghan media to use group’s official name, 1 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁵ France 24, Taliban warns US not to ‘destabilise’ new Afghan regime in face-to-face talks, 9 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁶ Nunn Asia, اسلامي امارت: په رسمیت د پېژندو شرطونه مو پوره کړي [informal translation ‘Islamic Emirate: we have filled the conditions for international recognition’], 29 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁷ USDOS, US delegation meeting with senior Taliban representatives in Doha, 10 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁸ Ariana News, Russia Mulling excluding IEA from list of extremists group: Putin, 22 October 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁹ USDOS, US delegation meeting with senior Taliban representatives in Doha, 10 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁰ RFE/RL/Gandhara, Pakistani foreign minister pledges to expand trade after visit to Kabul, 21 October 2021, [url](#)

⁶¹ Reuters, Pakistan reopens Chaman border crossing to Afghanistan, 2 November 2021, [url](#)

⁶² TOLONews, Afghan embassy in Islamabad resumes operations, 5 November 2021, [url](#)

⁶³ Express Tribune (The), Taliban recognition unlike in near future, 11 November 2021, [url](#)



3. Government composition, and affiliation with the previous Taliban regime and armed groups

Interim government

All appointments to the interim government consisted of persons from within the Taliban, and many served in the government of the 1990s.⁶⁴ For instance, the appointed prime minister, Muhammad Hassan Akhund, and his deputy Abdul Ghani Barader, held various senior positions during the previous Taliban rule. The appointed director of intelligence, Abdul Haq Wasiq, was previously deputy director of intelligence, and the appointed foreign minister Mullah Amir Khan Mutaqi, previously served as Minister of Information and Culture regime.⁶⁵

Furthermore, the cabinet was compromised by several persons on the UN Security Council's sanction list⁶⁶, and also included three out of five senior Taliban members that were held by the US in Guantanamo Bay for over a decade and later exchanged for a US soldier in 2014⁶⁷, namely the Minister of Information and Culture, Mullah Khairullah Khairkhah, the Minister of Borders and Tribal Affairs, Mullah Noorullah Noori, the Director of Intelligence, Abdul Haq Wasiq.⁶⁸ Fazl Mohammad Mazloom served as Deputy Defence Minister for a short period, and Mohammab Nabi Omari was appointed governor of Khost province.⁶⁹ They all participated in the peace talks in Doha before the Taliban's take-over.⁷⁰

The appointments were all-male⁷¹, and most were Pashtuns and clerical.⁷² Some cabinet appointments included persons from other ethnicities than Pashtuns⁷³, such as members from the Tajik⁷⁴, Uzbek⁷⁵ and Hazara⁷⁶ communities. For example, Haji Nooruddin Azizi, the acting minister of commerce, Haji Mohammad Bashir, deputy acting minister of commerce, and Haji Mohammad Azim Sultanzada, second deputy acting minister of commerce, all are Tajiks.⁷⁷ In addition, Mawlawi Abdul

⁶⁴ van Bijlert, M., The focus of the Taleban's new government: internal cohesion, external dominance, AAN, 12 September 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁵ TOLONews, Hibatullah Akhundzada to lead Taliban Govt, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁶ UN, United Nations Security Council Consolidated List, 15 November 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁷ New York Times (The), Once Jailed in Guantánamo, 5 Taliban Now Face U.S. at Peace Talks, 26 March 2019, [url](#)

⁶⁸ TOLONews, Hibatullah Akhundzada to lead Taliban Govt, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁹ BBC, Hardliners get key posts in new Taliban government, 7 September 2021, [url](#); van Bijlert, M., Taleban's caretaker Cabinet and other senior appointments, AAN, 7 October 2021, [url](#); JustPaste.it, د نويو ټاکنو په اړه د اسلامي امارت اعلانيه [informal translation 'Islamic Emirate's declaration on new appointments'], 4 October 2021, updated on 5 October 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁰ New York Times (The), Once Jailed in Guantánamo, 5 Taliban Now Face U.S. at Peace Talks, 26 March 2019, [url](#)

⁷¹ UN Women, Expert's take: Gender equality is critical for the Afghanistan's future, long-term development, and sustained peace, 14 October 2021, [url](#)

⁷² van Bijlert, M., The focus of the Taleban's new government: internal cohesion, external dominance, AAN, 12 September 2021, [url](#)

⁷³ WSJ, Taliban add minorities, technocrats, to Afghan government, but no women, 21 September 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁴ International News (The), Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara representatives included: Taliban expand cabinet to 'make' it inclusive, 22 September 2021, [url](#); Zabihullah Mujahid, [Twitter], د عاليقدر اميرالمؤمنين د فرمان له مخې د د عاليقدر اميرالمؤمنين د فرمان له مخې د اسلامي امارت په تشکيلاتو کې لاندې ټاکنې وشوې [informal translation 'Based on supreme leader's decree the following appointments were made within the Islamic Emirate'], posted on: 21 September 2021, [url](#); JustPaste.it, د عاليقدر اميرالمؤمنين د فرمان له مخې د اسلامي امارت په تشکيلاتو کې لاندې ټاکنې وشوې [informal translation 'Based on supreme leader's decree the following appointments were made within the Islamic Emirate'], 21 September 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁵ Pajhwok News, Who is who in Taliban's caretaker cabinet?, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁶ International News (The), Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara representatives included: Taliban expand cabinet to 'make' it inclusive, 22 September 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁷ International News (The), Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara representatives included: Taliban expand cabinet to

Salam Hanafi, the IEA second deputy prime minister⁷⁸, originates from the Uzbek community.⁷⁹ The Taliban government also appointed a member from the Hazara community, Muhammad Hassan Ghyasi, as second deputy minister of public health.⁸⁰

The Taliban are affiliated to the Haqqani network via Serajuddin Haqqani, who has been the deputy leader of the Taliban since 2015. In the meantime, members of the Haqqani network are allegedly closely linked to al-Qaeda.⁸¹ According to some sources, al-Qaeda remained a present threat in Afghanistan⁸², while others, like International Crisis Group, stressed that the group did not have 'the organisational capability to capitalise on the Taliban's win' and they at times 'seemed detached from events unfolding in Afghanistan'.⁸³

Provincial authorities

On 8 November 2021, the IEA appointed new provincial governors for Badakhshan, Baghlan, Bamyan, Farah, Faryab, Ghazni, Jawzjan, Kabul, Kunduz, Logar, Maidan Wardak, Nimroz, Paktia, Paktika, Sar-e Pul, Uruzgan, and Zabul and deputy governors for the majority of these provinces. Additionally, provincial police chiefs were appointed for Baghlan, Balkh, Farah, Faryab, Ghor, Kabul, Kunar, Kunduz, Logar, and Takhar, and a 'security chief' for the districts of Herat's Shindand area.⁸⁴

There were some reports on ethnic representation on local level, for instance in Panjshir were the governor and his deputy, the security commander and his deputy (who is also head of intelligence), as well as all security personnel (including operational commanders of the Taliban) reportedly came from within the people of Panjshir.⁸⁵ The province is predominantly populated by members of the Tajik community.⁸⁶ Furthermore, the Taliban appointed Mawlavi Mahdi, from the Hazara community as the IEA intelligence chief for Bamyan province.⁸⁷ Mahdi previously served as a district governor within the Taliban's shadow governance.⁸⁸ According to the Wall Street Journal (WSJ), Mahdi was tasked to fill local government positions in Bamyan province, which is predominantly populated by

'make' it inclusive, 22 September 2021, [url](#); Zabihullah Mujahid, [Twitter], د عالیقدر امیرالمؤمنین د فرمان له مخی د [informal translation 'Based on supreme leader's decree the following appointments were made within the Islamic Emirate'], posted on: 21 September 2021, [url](#); JustPaste.it, د عالیقدر د فرمان له مخی د اسلامی امارت په تشکیلاتو کی لاندی ټاکنی وشوی [informal translation 'Based on supreme leader's decree the following appointments were made within the Islamic Emirate'], 21 September 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁸ van Bijlert, M., Taleban's caretaker Cabinet and other senior appointments, AAN, 7 October 2021, [url](#)

⁷⁹ Pajhwok News, Who is who in Taliban's caretaker cabinet?, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁰ International News (The), Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara representatives included: Taliban expand cabinet to 'make' it inclusive, 22 September 2021, [url](#)

⁸¹ New York Times (The), ISIS branch poses biggest immediate terrorist threat to evacuation in Kabul, 25 August 2021, updated on 4 November 2021, [url](#); WSJ, In Taliban-Ruled Afghanistan, Al Qaeda-Linked Haqqani Network Rises to Power, 26 August 2021, [url](#)

⁸² CNN, Pentagon: "We know that al Qaeda is a presence" in Afghanistan, 20 August 2021, [url](#); New York Times (The), Kabul Airport Attack Highlights Enduring Threat of ISIS and Al Qaeda, 26 August 2021, [url](#)

⁸³ International Crisis Group, How Islamist militants elsewhere view the Taliban's victory in Afghanistan, 27 October 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁴ TOLONews, New governors appointed in 17 provinces, 8 November 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁵ Kabul lovers, ملا حمید خراسانی قوماندان امنیه طالبان در پنجشیر آماده جنگ با امرالله صالح و مقاومت ۲ [informal translation 'Mullah Hamid Khorasani Taliban security in Panjshir ready for war against Amrullah Saleh and 2 resistance'], 22 September 2021, [url](#); Hamayon Afghan Official, ملا عبدالحمید خراسانی برضدامرالله صالح و مقاومت ۲ [informal translation 'Mullah Abdul Hamid Khorasani against Amrullah Saleh and 2 resistance'], 5 September 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁶ DW, Why Afghanistan's Panjshir remains out of Taliban's reach, 20 August 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁷ Washington Post (The), The Taliban hopes Maulavi Mahdi, a 33-year-old Hazara, will help win over the ethnic group, 2 November 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁸ Thomas Ruttig, The case of Mawlavi Mehdi and Balkhab District: Are the Taleban attracting Hazaras?, 23 May 2020, [url](#)

members of the Hazara community, with persons from the local population.⁸⁹

4. State Institutions and public servants

Government institutions and state service

Soon after the take-over, the Taliban announced a general amnesty for persons working for the previous administration and encouraged women to work within its government⁹⁰, in particular women working within healthcare.⁹¹ On 21 August 2021, the Taliban called on all former government employees to return to work and resume their jobs.⁹²

According to Abdulkader Sinno, associate professor of Political Science and Middle Eastern Studies at Indiana University, the Taliban seemed 'very serious about maintaining functioning ministries and services'.⁹³ However, there were also reports on economic difficulties to run the country. Sanctions, lack of aid, frozen Central Bank reserves, and isolation are some of the factors that impacted Afghan economy and the Taliban's ability to govern, as parts of the social services were severely underfunded and causing a difficult humanitarian situation.⁹⁴ The Taliban called on former government financial workers to return to work⁹⁵ and reportedly made certain appointments to restore the financial system in Afghanistan.⁹⁶

On 6 October 2021, passport distribution service reportedly begun in Kabul⁹⁷, and in mid-November there were reports indicating that 100 000 passports had been issued in seven provinces.⁹⁸ There were also reports on court hearings taking place.⁹⁹

Security institutions

When the Taliban entered Kabul on 15 August 2021, the group had 75 000 militants in Afghanistan who, without military confrontation, caused the collapse of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF).¹⁰⁰ One month later, the IEA army chief of staff Qari Fasihuddin reportedly announced that they were working to 'form a "regular" and "strong" army'.¹⁰¹

As of 7 September 2021, the IEA had, inter alia, appointed a Minister of Defence (MoD), a Director of Intelligence Affairs of the MoD, a Minister of Interior (Mol), a Deputy Mol for counternarcotic, a Deputy Mol for Interior security, and a Head of Intelligence.¹⁰²

In Kabul City, Taliban fighters increasingly put on military uniforms.¹⁰³ As of 4 October 2021, the

⁸⁹ WSJ, Taliban reach out to Shiite Hazara minority, seeking unity and Iran ties, 2 September 2021, [url](#)

⁹⁰ Al Jazeera, Taliban announces 'amnesty', reaches out women, 17 August 2021, [url](#)

⁹¹ Reuters, Taliban say Afghan woman health service staff should go back to work, 27 August 2021, [url](#)

⁹² AA, Taliban notify Gov't servants to return to jobs, 21 August 2021, [url](#)

⁹³ East Asia Forum, Afghanistan's Taliban-led future, 16 October 2021, [url](#)

⁹⁴ USIP, Afghanistan's Economic and Humanitarian Crisis Turn Dire, 14 October 2021, [url](#)

⁹⁵ AP, The economy on the brink, Taliban rely on former technocrats, 20 October 2021, [url](#)

⁹⁶ Reuters, Taliban expand economic team as Afghan crisis deepens, 21 September 2021, [url](#)

⁹⁷ Bakhtar News, Process of distributing passports began in Kabul, 6 October 2021, [url](#)

⁹⁸ Republicworld.com, Taliban to extend passport services to seven Afghanistan provinces: Report, 14 November 2021, [url](#); TOLONews, Govt to Reopen Passport Offices in 7 Provinces, 13 November 2021, [url](#)

⁹⁹ WSJ, Taliban commander who launched bombings in Kabul is now a police chief in charge of security, 20 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰ CSIS, The reason for the collapse of Afghan forces, 17 August 2021, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁰¹ TOLONews, Taliban says it will build a regular army, including former members, 15 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰² van Bijlert, M., Taleban's caretaker Cabinet and other senior appointments, AAN, 7 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰³ Stars and Stripes, After 20 years of waging guerrilla warfare, Taliban fighters say they miss the battle, 19 September 2021, [url](#)

number of Taliban forces in Kabul was estimated to count about 4 000 men that were deployed to provide security as policemen. However, most were dressed in local traditional clothing.¹⁰⁴

According to Nunn Asia, a Pashto independent local news agency, 'Special Security and Defence forces of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan' are called 'Fateh Zwaq' (victorious force).¹⁰⁵

In September 2021, IEA officials made public statements indicating 'plans to improve organization and marshal fighters' and called on members related to defence, interior and intelligence agencies to move to military bases.¹⁰⁶ On 11 November 2021, the IEA established a military court to deal with complaints against the Taliban military forces based on a decree of the IEA Supreme Leader.¹⁰⁷ The IEA interior ministry spokesperson, Qari Sayed Khosti, stated that a training programme is underway, that professionals will be deployed on all levels, and also called on former police personnel to return to work.¹⁰⁸

In October 2021, Balkh's governor, Mawlawi Qudratullah Abuhamza, reportedly stated that 'soldiers from different ethnic groups have been recruited into the Balkh military corps, who will provide security and safety of the people'.¹⁰⁹

As of 4 October 2021, the IEA announced the following Taliban army appointments:

- Chief of the Army: Qari Fasihuddin
- Commander of the Helmand Corps: Mullah Sharafuddin Taqi
- Deputy of the Helmand Corps: Mullah Mohibullah Nusrat
- Chief of Staff of Helmand Corps: Mullah Mohammad Khan Dawat
- Commander of the Herat Corps: Mawlawi Mohammad Zarif Muzaffar
- Deputy of the Herat Corps: Mullah Abdul Shakur Baryalai
- Chief of Staff of the Herat Corps: Mawlawi Abdul Rahman Haqqani
- Commander of the Kabul Corps: Mawlawi Hamdullah (killed in Kabul, 2 November 2021.¹¹⁰)
- Deputy of the Kabul Corps: Mawlawi Nusrat
- Chief of Staff of the Kabul Corps: Qari Baryal
- Commander of the Kandahar Corps: Mullah Mehrullah Hammad
- Deputy of the Kandahar Corps: Mullah Wali Jan Hamza
- Chief of Staff of the Kandahar Corps: Mawlawi Hizbullah Afghan
- Commander of the Kunduz Corps: Mullah Rahmatullah Mohammad
- Deputy of the Kunduz Corps: Qari Mohammad Ismail Turkman
- Chief of Staff of the Kunduz Corps: Qari Mohammad Shafiq
- Commander of the Mazar Corps: Mawlawi Attaullah Omari
- Deputy of the Mazar corps: Mawlawi Amanuddin

¹⁰⁴ France 24, From insurgency to city beat: Taliban police learn the rope, 6 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵ Nunn Asia, الهجره ستوديو د افغان ځانگړو ځواکونو تازه انځورونه نشر کړي [informal translation 'Al-Hejra Studio has published new images of Afghan special forces'], 2 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶ AP, Taliban order fighters out of Afghan homes they took over, 30 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷ AVA, دولت اسلامی طالبان اعلام کرده که به منظور رسیدگی به شکایات و عرایض علیه نیروهای نظامی طالبان، دادگاه نظامی ایجاد شده است [informal translation 'Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has announced the creation of a military court in order to address complaints against Taliban military personnel'], 11 November 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸ France24, From insurgency to city beat: Taliban police learn the rope, 6 October 2021, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹ TOLONews, In Balkh Mod official urges troops to guard the nation, 17 October 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁰ Reuters, Dozens killed and wounded as blasts and gunfire hit Kabul hospital, 2 November 2021, [url](#)

- Chief of Staff of the Mazar Corps: Mullah Abdul Razaq Faizullah
- Commander of the Paktia Corps: Qari Mohammad Ayub
- Deputy of the Paktia Corps: Mullah Rohul Amin
- Chief of Staff of the Paktia Corps: Mullah Ahmadullah Mubarak.¹¹¹

According to BBC Pashto, on 8 November 2021, the IEA issued a degree that changed the names of the previous army corps (*Qol-e Ordou*) as follows:

- Kabul Corps changed to **Kabul Central Corps**
- 209th Shaheen Corps in Mazar changed to **Al-Fatha Corps**
- 17th Pamir Corps in Kunduz changed to **Omary Corps**
- 205th Attal Corps in Kandahar changed to **Badar Corps**
- 201st Silab Corps in Laghman changed to **Khalid Ibn-e Walid Corps**
- 203rd Tander Corps in Paktia changed to **Mansouri Corps**
- 207th Zafar Corps in Herat changed to **Al-Farooq Corps**
- 215th Maiwand Corps in Helmand changed to **Azm Corps**.¹¹²

On 11 November 2021, Bakhtar news agency cited Mawlawi Attaullah Omari, the commander of the Al-Fatah Corps, stating that the IEA made the air force operational in Balkh province where the majority of the former government air force pilots and technicians had returned to work. Zia-ul-Haq Aghasi was appointed as the commander of Balkh air force.¹¹³

5. Central control and cohesion

The exact structure of Taliban forces, and the movement's decision-making practices or chain of command are not fully clear.¹¹⁴ Several sources described the Taliban as decentralised and flexible, which was an effective approach as an insurgency, but not necessarily an asset in their governance causing inefficiency in decision-making.¹¹⁵ As an effect, policy implementation differed depending on geographical contexts, such as local stakeholders and customs.¹¹⁶

A USIP study from 2019 concluded that the Taliban's shadow governance held a level of organisation, hierarchical decision-making, and policy coherence unusual for insurgencies, but did also note uneven policy implementation on local level.¹¹⁷ Although the Layeha charts¹¹⁸ of 2010 described the organisational structure as highly centralised with top-down decision-making¹¹⁹, the study concluded that policymaking and its application were influenced by local Taliban leaders'

¹¹¹ van Bijlert, M., Taleban's caretaker Cabinet and other senior appointments, AAN, 7 October 2021, [url](#)

¹¹² BBC Pashto, طالبانو د افغانستان د قول اردوگانو نومونه بدل کړي [informal translation 'Taliban changed the names of military corps of Afghanistan'], 8 November 2021, [url](#)

¹¹³ Bakhtar News, Air force of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan started operating in Balkh, 11 November 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁴ DW, Afghanistan: What will the Taliban do without an enemy to fight?, 11 October 2021, [url](#); Reuters, Taliban have their work cut out to win hearts and minds in Kabul, 10 September 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁵ van Bijlert, M., The Taleban's Caretaker Cabinet and other Senior Appointments, AAN, 7 October 2021, [url](#); Vox, What the Taliban's new government reveals about how they will rule, 13 September 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁶ USIP, Insurgent Bureaucracy: How the Taliban Makes Policy, November 2019, [url](#), p. 37

¹¹⁷ USIP, Insurgent Bureaucracy: How the Taliban Makes Policy, November 2019, [url](#), p. 37

¹¹⁸ The Taliban's Layeha can be described as the movements 'code of conduct' which was periodically issued for their members, the latest version in 2010. See: Johnson, Thomas H., Taliban narratives: the use and power of stories in the Afghanistan conflict, Hurst & Company, London, 2017, chapter 8.

¹¹⁹ Johnson, Thomas H., Taliban narratives: the use and power of stories in the Afghanistan conflict, Hurst & Company, London, 2017, chapter 8.

‘personalities, preferences and relationships’, and in practice not as hierarchal and top-down as often indicated by the Taliban, but ‘at least as much bottom-up’ as consensus within the movement had been prioritised before coherence.¹²⁰ Haroun Rahimi, assistant professor at the American University of Afghanistan, made a similar analysis concerning the importance of internal consensus when explaining the all-Taliban appointments to the interim-government. Rahimi pointed out that internal cohesion and building internal consensus before making important decisions have been essential for a long period of time, and that more diverse appointments would risk internal fractures.¹²¹

There were also reports indicating local divergence in implementing Islamic rule and official policy during the reference period.¹²² One example concerned secondary education which was abruptly as the Taliban took power, and only opened up for boys in mid-September.¹²³ Secondary education remained closed for girls, awaiting arrangements in line with Islamic law ensuring ‘a safe learning environment’ according to Taliban spokespersons.¹²⁴ However, in early October the official spokesman for the Taliban’s political office in Qatar posted on Twitter that girls were going back to school in Kunduz¹²⁵, which was also confirmed by teachers in the province.¹²⁶ Furthermore, the head of the education department of Mazar-e Sharif urged families to send their children to school in an interview with TOLONews¹²⁷, while the education ministry official Mohammad Abid told Agence France-Presse (AFP) that there had been no policy changes concerning high school education for girls¹²⁸, and in most parts of the country girls could not access secondary education.¹²⁹

Focusing on the central leadership’s control in the military chain of command and over foot soldiers, speculations on internal competition and even in-fighting circulated.¹³⁰ However, there were no verifiable reports on fragmentation and internal armed violence.¹³¹ One anonymised source, described as an Afghanistan-based security analyst, told Deutsche Welle (DW) that there were ‘numerous accounts’ of unclear military structures across the country. According to the source, such disputes were most visible in Kabul as, for example, several commanders came from different locations of Afghanistan, had competing interests and claimed responsibility of the same area or issue which caused disputes, sometimes escalating into violence.¹³² Another source, conflict expert Weeda Mehran, told Foreign Policy that violence between rival factions became more public and called the ISKP ‘a convenient scapegoat’ for attacks ‘possibly committed’ in internal power struggles.¹³³ On the other hand, there were reports of Taliban fighters not acting in line with the stated official policy of the central leadership. For instance, there were several reports on Taliban fighters subjecting civilians and journalists to violence, as well as conducting house-to-house

¹²⁰ USIP, *Insurgent Bureaucracy: How the Taliban Makes Policy*, November 2019, [url](#), p. 37

¹²¹ Diplomat (The), *Taliban Caretaker Government: Good for Internal Cohesion, Bad for Governance*, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

¹²² See for instance: RFE/RL/Gandhara, ‘I Feel Like A Dead Fish’: Silenced By The Taliban, Afghanistan’s Musicians Despair, 13 October 2021, [url](#); Just Security, *Afghanistan: A Way Forward for Women and Girls*, 8 November 2021, [url](#)

¹²³ Guardian (The), *Taliban ban girls from secondary education in Afghanistan*, 17 September 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁴ AP, *Taliban name deputy ministers, double down all-male team*, 21 September 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁵ Suhail Shaheen, [Twitter], posted on 4 October 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁶ TOLONews, *Girls Attend Schools in Kunduz, Balkh, Sar-e-Pul*, 9 October 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁷ TOLONews, *Schools Reopen for Girls in Grades 7-12 in Balkh Province*, 8 October 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁸ AFP, *Some girls return to school as Taliban seeks to manage image*, 5 October 2021, available at: [url](#)

¹²⁹ TOLONews, *Schools Reopen for Girls in Grades 7-12 in Balkh Province*, 8 October 2021, [url](#)

¹³⁰ USIP, *Five Questions on the Taliban’s Caretaker Government*, 9 September 2021, [url](#)

¹³¹ USIP, *Five Questions on the Taliban’s Caretaker Government*, 9 September 2021, [url](#); DW, *Opinion: How real is the threat of Taliban infighting?*, 21 September 2021, [url](#)

¹³² DW, *Afghanistan: What will the Taliban do without an enemy to fight?*, 11 October 2021, [url](#)

¹³³ FP, *Taliban Splintered by Internal Divisions, External Spoilers*, 12 November 2021, [url](#)

searches and retaliation acts despite the general amnesty that was issued for all who served within the previous government.¹³⁴ Yet, it remained unclear whether such acts were sanctioned by the central leadership or caused by a lack of discipline or control in the chain of command.¹³⁵

Although it was difficult to determine whether reported atrocities were systematic or not, there was room for Taliban fighters to act on their own initiative as they did not seem to face serious consequences.¹³⁶ Taliban representatives made statements in which they acknowledged that Taliban fighters sometimes did not act in line with the official policy, and in some cases claimed that they would punish members acting against it¹³⁷, would establish commissions to prevent unwanted behaviour¹³⁸, and remove problematic members from military ranks.¹³⁹ Furthermore, the IEA declared a 'ban on arbitrary military operations and courts' by the Taliban personnel and pledged to create five sub-commissions to apply these measures in all provinces of Afghanistan.¹⁴⁰ However, no reports on Taliban fighters being punished or facing other consequences for misconduct were found. The associate director of Human Rights Watch, Patricia Gossman, told RFE/RL that there were many reports of people being arrested 'purely for having any association with the former security forces and family members being interrogated or beaten by Taliban looking for former officials', and that those carrying out such abuses appeared to have been given a 'free hand' while top-officials denied such events taking place. However, reports on revenge killings have partially been confirmed by high-ranking Taliban representatives.¹⁴¹

¹³⁴ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 2 September 2021, [url](#), p. 5; France24, Afghan journalists tell of Taliban beatings after covering protests, 9 September 2021, [url](#); CNN, Taliban accused of murdering pregnant Afghan policewoman in front of her family, 6 September 2021, [url](#); Khaama Press, Protest turns violent in Kabul; journalists, women were beaten, 21 October 2021, [url](#)

¹³⁵ New York Times (The), A Taliban spokesman urges women to stay home because fighters haven't been trained to respect them, 24 August 2021, [url](#); Diplomat (The), The Taliban's False Amnesty, 24 September 2021, [url](#)

¹³⁶ Times of India, Out-of-control foot soldiers run amok, embarrass Taliban, 27 September 2021, [url](#)

¹³⁷ Bilal Karimi, [Twitter], posted on 23 September 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Defense Minister Admits To Revenge Killings Despite Amnesty, 23 September 2021, [url](#); Khaama Press, Taliban creates commission to expel unfavourable members, 13 October 2021, [url](#)

¹³⁸ TOLONews, Taliban Commission to Probe Violence Against Media, 22 August 2021, [url](#)

¹³⁹ Bilal Karimi, [Twitter], posted on 23 September 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL/Gandhara, Taliban Defense Minister Admits To Revenge Killings Despite Amnesty, 23 September 2021, [url](#); Khaama Press, Taliban creates commission to expel unfavourable members, 13 October 2021, [url](#)

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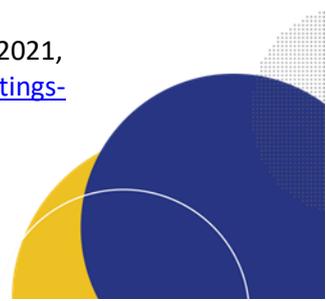
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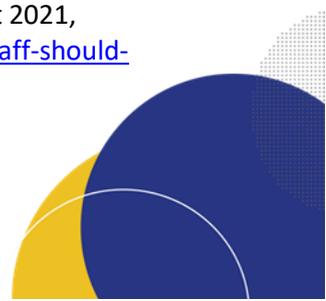
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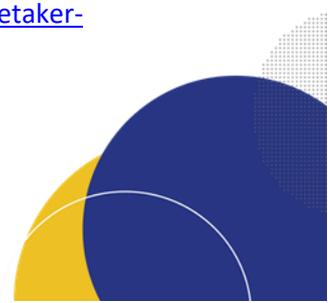
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