

# Rise of the taliban essay

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In one of the harshest countries in the world, both socially and geographically, a notorious regime emerged to fill the leadership void left by years of war.

At first, they were greeted as bringers of hope to a hopeless society, but soon after brought oppression and fear to all. The Taliban, or “students,” were only brought to the attention of most westerners after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. However, they have a much deeper history rooted as far back as the Soviet Union’s invasion and occupation of the region.

In order to comprehend the rise, fall and re-emergence of the Taliban, three men must be mentioned: Mohammad Omar, Ahmad Shah Massoud, and the most famous terrorist alive, Osama bin Laden. During the last days of the Afghanistan Soviet Union conflict, it was apparent that the less equipped and heavily disadvantaged Mujahedeen, or freedom fighter, were going to be victorious. This was due mainly to the covert help that they were given by the United States of America in the form of money and arms. One anonymous prayer leader became a legend on the battlefield for his bravery and tenacity against his Russian foes. Mohammad Omar or Mullah Omar, left his madrassa, took up arms, declared Jihad on the invading Soviet Union, and even lost his right eye in a legendary battle with the Soviets. Also, there were many volunteers from all over the Islamic world arriving in Pakistan to join the Mujahedeen in their quest for freedom. Among them was a wealthy Saudi named Osama bin Laden who brought much needed money and construction techniques that aided the Afghans greatly.

Also emerging in the conflict was a military genius named Ahmad Shah Massoud. His strategies and battle prowess earn him the nickname “Lion of Panjshir” and the post of defense minister in 1992. Now all three major players are in line to bring about events that will ultimately bring about attacks and wars that will affect the entire world. The beginning of the meteoric rise of Mullah Omar began sometime in the spring of 1994 when a local warlord kidnapped two teenage girls and brought them back to his headquarters. There, they were repeatedly raped and humiliated by the warlord commander, who controlled the area with fear and intimidation. There was nothing the residents could do but request the aid of the prayer leader in the local Madrassa, the one-eyed Soviet war veteran, Mullah Omar.

Mullah Omar organized 30 Taliban members armed with only 16 rifles and stormed the stronghold in a tank they had commandeered. Eventually, the girls were freed and the warlord killed and hung from the barrel of the tank for all to see. According to the Pakistani journalist Rahimullah Yusufzai, Mohammad Omar had a vision from Allah, to pick up arms and fight the various warlords oppressing the citizens of Afghanistan. Thus begins his quest for leadership of this unstable country. Momentum quickly picked up for the Taliban as they began systematically taking parts of Afghanistan that were outside the reach of the government situated in Kabul. Within a three month period, Omar and his small army of Islamic students overtook twelve of the thirty four provinces not controlled by the central government.

Upon each conquest, the Taliban imposed Wahhabism on the residents of that area. Wahhabism is a radical interpretation of Sharia law that follows the teachings of Muhammad ibn Abd-al-Wahhab, which promotes the

purging of all things considered “ impure” within the Islamic faith. Women were restricted severely under the Taliban. They were not allowed to work, wear revealing clothing, take a taxi without a close male relative, not allowed to have an education, not allowed to receive any kind of health care, and they were not allowed to laugh loudly enough for others to hear. They were also required to wear a burqa, a dress covering the entire body except for the eyes at all times. Beheading and other forms of execution were common place in a public setting for all to see, as well as accused thieves having their hands and feet cut off even without proof of the crime. Filled with confidence and backed by Pakistan, Mullah Omar decided it was time for him to make his move towards the capital of Kabul where defense minister Ahmad Shah Massoud’s army had control.

The educated Ahmad was considered a military genius, even by western standards. He played a vital role in the Soviet Afghan war where he defeat the Soviet army nine times in Panjshir. In short, he would not fall as easily as the other warlords had before the Taliban. Realizing that the Taliban were planning to attack Kabul, Massoud struck first, wounding or killing approximately 3000 Taliban fighters. Massoud gave the Taliban their first defeat since they started their campaign. Determined, Omar decided not to give up on his god given right to rule Afghanistan.

On April 4, 1996 in Kandahar, Omar appears on a balcony in front of about a thousand religious leaders wrapped in a cloak that, according to legend, once belonged to the Prophet Mohammad. The wearer of the cloak is granted the title of Amir al-Mu’minin, “ commander of the faithful. ” Ahmad and the president of Afghanistan requested the help of an old ally from the <https://assignbuster.com/rise-of-the-taliban-essay/>

Soviet war, Osama bin Laden, in hopes that he would mediate between the two entities. However, this was not to be, as bin Laden believed in Mullah Omar's vision and interpretation of Islam. On September 26, 1996, the Taliban, now backed by Osama bin Laden and Pakistan, marched into Kabul with a massive force greatly outnumbering Massoud's army.

Knowing that he could not defeat the Taliban, Massoud retreated to fight the Taliban under more advantageous circumstances. As soon as they took control, the Taliban organized a hit squad tasked with finding and killing former president Najibullah. Both Najibullah and his brother were found in a United Nation compound and are both torture, killed and had their corpse hung from a stop light. The future looked very bleak for Afghans under this strict new regime, but in the North a sliver of hope begins to shine surrounding the efforts of Ahmad Shah Massoud. Since Mullah Omar and his Taliban regime were part of the ethnic group known as Pashtuns, their leadership was not taken well by the other tribes present in Afghanistan. As a result, a resistance was formed under the leadership of Ahmad Shah Massoud known as the Northern Alliance, consisting of all the ethnic groups opposing the Taliban rule. Mohammad Omar sent his army to destroy the Northern Alliance which eventually plunged Afghanistan into another civil war. Massoud, a Tajik, was allied with the Uzbeks and the Hazaras, who were said to be descendants of Genghis Khan's Mongol army.

The war was extremely brutal; especially for civilians who were not pardoned by the Taliban. Hunger was their main weapon in the winter of 1998 when the Taliban closed off all roads available to bring food and aid to the Hindu Kush Mountains, occupied by the Hazaras. There is also another major factor

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which adds fuel to the already roaring fire: religious differences. The Taliban are mostly Sunni Muslims, and the Hazaras are largely Shi'ites. Islam was split into these majority groups during the 7th century over a disagreement over which should be the successor of the Prophet Mohammad, causing these two sects to sometimes have bloody conflicts to this day. As such, the Taliban view the Hazaras as infidels or even worse, even sub human. An ethnic cleansing was in full effect by the Taliban, killing tens of thousands of Hazaras and displacing over 400, 000 more. On the battlefield, the Taliban greatly outnumbered Ahmed's army and had more sophisticated weapons but were constantly pushed back because they lacked the skills and strategies necessary to win battles.

Emptied madrassas, men sent from Pakistan, and bin Laden's budding Al Qaeda army were all aiding the Taliban in their fight against the Northern Alliance. Even though the Taliban was backed by Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, they were still not recognized by the rest of the world as the legitimate government of Afghanistan. As the battle between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance was in full swing Osama bin Laden calls a press conference and declares Jihad on America.

The target paid little attention to the threats made by bin Laden and would later pay for it in the form of the bombings of American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The US retaliated on August 20, 1998, with the bombing of a terrorist training camp in Khost operated by bin Laden. However, as he would prove to be in future attacks, bin Laden was not present at the time and an estimated 21 jihadists were killed. The USA now had both bin Laden and the Taliban under close observation and realized that the two were

almost a single entity. As time passed, Al Qaeda got bolder with their targets and attacked the USS Cole, a battleship, in October 2000. As a result of these attacks, Saudi Arabia withdrew their support of the Taliban, leaving Pakistan as the single provider for the Islamic regime. On September 9, 2001 a precursor to the most heinous attack on the US main land will commence on the Afghanistan Tajikistan border. Two suspected Al Qaeda members disguised as journalist travelled to the headquarters of Ahmed Shah Massoud in a suicide mission to kill the Northern Alliance leader.

As soon as the supposed interview began, the assassins sprung their trap. A bomb hidden in the camera obliterated the room and kills both journalists instantly. Massoud did not succumb to his injuries until he was on flight to a hospital in Tajikistan. Ironically Massoud toured Europe in his last days warning of the dangers presented by bin Laden and Omar's alliance.

This would prove to be frighteningly true for Americans 2 days following his unfortunate death. On September 11, 2001, 19 suspected Al Qaeda members hijacked four airplanes and intentionally crashed into the World Trade Center twin towers in New York City. One plane was crashed into the Pentagon building in Arlington Virginia and the other in a field near Shanksville in rural Pennsylvania, after passengers sprung an attack on their hijackers; there were no survivors. Approximately 3000 people were killed in these attacks and more than 6000 injured. This placed Osama bin Laden and the Taliban in the cross hairs of America's military and an ultimatum was delivered to Mullah Omar on September 20, 2001 by President Bush stating, " tonight the United States of America makes the following demand on the Taliban: deliver to United States authorities all the leaders of Al Qaeda who  
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hide in your land. " According to high ranking Taliban official Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef claims that Mullah Mohammad Omar said " I didn't know about September 11 and who was behind that. " Omar met with bin Laden to discuss the allegations that the US had made and bin Laden denied any involvement in the operation.

As a result, Omar resorted to his Pashtun traditions of protecting a guest received with one's life. On October 7, 2001, the US launched operation " Enduring Freedom" with goals of toppling the Taliban regime, dispose of Al Qaeda and capture or kill Osama bin Laden. With the use of unrivaled air power and the Northern Alliance army, America quickly took control of the battered country. Both priority targets, Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar, were successful in avoiding capture and it was believed that the Taliban were successfully eradicated. In fact, Mullah Omar manages to transmit a message to his followers stating " we should be quiet, and we should again be underground against America. " The Taliban were told to disarm themselves and go into hiding as ordinary civilians, while secretly launching an insurgent campaign against their foreign enemies. How did a prayer leader with no formal education achieve such greatness? How can one man bring a super power to its knees in one day? Both these questions can be answered if we look at the upbringing and mentality of each. Mullah Omar shares a very common bond with his people; his unshakable faith.

Afghans could readily identify themselves with him just on the premise of Islam. In a country gripped by war and corruption, Mohammad Omar showed people hope and that he was quite different from all the leaders of the past. There is no doubt that under his regime there were human rights atrocities

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that should not be excused under any circumstance, but he did fulfill every promise he made to the Afghan people. They had a government that ruled a majority of the country as opposed to just Kabul, the opium trade was virtually wiped out and the country had the security that they have not had in years. Omar basically appealed to the basic drive of the people and delivered things that they had yearned for so long. However, his methods of delivering these needs were something that the Afghans did not bargain for. Osama bin Laden basically brought America to its knees with one single event that still had an effect today. How did he achieve this? He did something that no other country has the military capability or manpower to do; he attacked the mainland.

America has long been in a state of safety in times of war because her borders are so far out of reach from her enemies. To do so would mean the attackers would have no viable way of returning to their home country alive. Therein lies the main difference between the Jihadists and the rest of America's enemies; they are willing to die for their cause. The Western world has always been told to cherish life because it is so precious and finite.

However, Islamic extremist cherish death; totally different upbringing and mentality. These men have no fear of our military or envy of our wealth and will fight and die if it means killing as many "infidels" as possible in the process. America now realizes that the once extinct Taliban was merely regrouping and strengthening their forces to retake what was one theirs. The lawless border of Pakistan and Afghanistan is a hotbed for recruitment as increasing resentment of US occupation and an impotent Afghan government increases. Many believe that the "War on Terror" can never be

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won on the battle field and they might be right. This is because our efforts only breed hatred and in effect, cause more young Muslim men to join the Jihadist cause. Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden are still at large and Afghanistan is being ruined more and more everyday by constant fighting. If Americans were to leave with the state of things as they are, any strong entity can come in and fill the void that will be left.

The main question is should we be as concerned about that or more concerned with protecting our borders at home? Only time will tell if there is a solution to this sensitive issue. ReferencesAfghanistan. (2008). In The Columbia Encyclopedia. Retrieved from <http://www.credoreference.com.proxy.devry.edu/entry/columency/afghanistan>

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