

# **Media Capture Strategies in an Islamic Authoritarian Context:**

## **The case of the Taliban**

**Author:** Faisal Karimi

Visiting Research Scholar at San Jose State University

### **Abstract**

This paper explores the Taliban government's media capture strategies since retaking the country on August 15, 2021 and how journalists and media outlets have responded to these strategies. In particular, it focuses on the Taliban government's approach to the media, given recent political transformation in Afghanistan and the religious and political ideologies of the Taliban regime. Qualitative mixed methods were employed for this research, including online, semi-structured, in-depth interviews and document analysis. Interviews allowed for a deeper investigation into the experience of journalists under what could be identified as the Taliban's media capture strategies. Thirty key media informants at the national level were recruited for in-depth interviews by applying a purposive sampling technique. In addition, document analysis allowed for the detailed consideration of relevant Taliban policies and records. Thematic coding was employed in the analysis of qualitative data using Nvivo 12 (software). Six media capture strategy emerged from the analysis of media directors and journalists interviews and relevant formal documents from the Taliban regime: (1) Regulatory interference, (2) Criminal prosecution of journalists, (3) Suppression of journalists, (4) Financial pressures on media outlets, (5) Developing media ownership, and (6) Limiting information flows. Furthermore, this study finds that the Afghan media community, including the media outlets, journalists, and media unions, employed four tolerance strategies in response to the media capture strategy of the Taliban government: (1) Self-imposed censorship, (2) Low resistance, (3) Stopping controversial content, and (4) Advocacy campaigns. These findings contribute to existing knowledge and literature on media capture frameworks, and how to apply them to understand media control in the context of an authoritarian Islamic state.

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**Keywords:** Media Capture; Taliban; Journalists; Censorship; Authoritarian