

Forum: Disarmament and International Security Committee (GA1)

Issue: Implementing measures to ensure the stability and territorial integrity of Afghanistan.

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TOPIC INTRODUCTION

The situation in Afghanistan has been the subject of heated debate for more than twenty years. Ever since the Soviet invasion in 1979, the state has served as a pawn in the hands of the world's great powers, influencing international politics while the country itself remains incredibly unstable, torn by war, violence, injustice, political unrest, and terrorism. Under the Taliban's rule, it eventually developed into a harbour for terrorist organisations and activities, leading up to the 9/11 attacks. It soon emerged as one of America's greatest rivals resulting in a 20-year conflict, the single longest and most expensive war in US history. The war was primarily a fight against terrorism and was passed on to four US presidents, with Joe Biden finally withdrawing all troops in the summer of 2021, with the hope that the US-sponsored Afghan government would stand against the Taliban threat. However, all those expectations were dashed, and in a matter of days after the US withdrawal, the Taliban seized control over Afghanistan.

This is the first time in twenty years that Afghanistan and its newly established Taliban-run government are not being sponsored by the U.S. The conflict has left the country in shambles and with the absence of foreign aid Afghanistan is struggling to face the economic and humanitarian crisis and consequences while the Taliban are vying for international recognition of their regime. The newly established Taliban government has failed to comply with the international community's requests for an inclusive and just administration, which could also provoke rebellion amongst the Afghan populace, further impeding the peace and stability processes. With questions concerning the resurgence of terrorism, the oversaturation of the market with illicit weapons, the compliance of the Taliban with human rights laws, and the structure of the new political administration, the future of Afghanistan is unclear.

DEFINITION OF KEY-TERMS

Capacity building

The term "capacity building" has a close connection to sustainable development and self-reliance. It emphasises sustainable transformation, indicating that it provides communities with the skills and resources they need to complete tasks successfully without relying on

external actors. It entails all initiatives to create the assets necessary for a certain community to endure and advance on its own.¹

Counterterrorism

Counterterrorism includes all efforts made by a state or organisation with the aim of combating or preventing acts of terrorism.² Some common counter-terrorism measures include higher surveillance, better border controls, and the limitation of accessible weapons.

Coup d'état

A coup d'état is the act of overthrowing a figure or body of authority, executed by a smaller group of rebels in an undemocratic and usually violent manner, with the ultimate goal of rising to power. Unlike an organised revolution, which usually aims for social, political, or economic change, "a coup is a change in power from the top that merely results in the abrupt replacement of leading government personnel."³

Extremism

Extremism is a concept used to describe religious, social, or political beliefs and ideologies that fall on the extreme side of the spectrum, seeking radical changes, often via objectionable means not acceptable by the vast majority of society.⁴ Extremism and terrorism frequently coexist since these radical ideologies often serve as the impetus for terrorist movements.

Insurgencies

An insurgency is a form of irregular warfare. It does not qualify as a revolution because it is not specifically organised, typically occurs in more remote areas of a state, and does not involve the armed forces of the country. Despite typically having the same objectives as a planned revolution, this type of uprising against the government lacks the necessary logistics

¹ "Capacity-Building." *United Nations*, United Nations, <https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/capacity-building>.

² "Counterterrorism Definition & Meaning." *Merriam-Webster*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/counterterrorism>.

³ "Coup D'état." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., <https://www.britannica.com/topic/coup-detat>.

⁴ "Extremism." *ADL*, www.adl.org/resources/glossary-terms/extremism.

and coordination, which limits its aftermath to corruption and limited damage rather than the complete overthrow of a political regime.⁵

Interim Government

An interim government is a temporary administrative body that operates between permanent governments, usually due to a crisis or an emergency situation. It is also referred to as a provisional or transitional government.

Jihad

The definition of "jihad" varies depending on the context; in the West, it is frequently used to refer to the "holy war," but it is incorrect to equate "jihad" with participating in armed conflict as religiously it refers to "the internal spiritual struggle of Muslims towards submission to Allah".⁶ Jihad has been equated by the West with war because Islam holds that when all other peaceful means have failed, conflict is acceptable and justified if it advances the greater Jihad goals such as re-establishing justice, defending rights and freedoms, and combating oppression.⁷

Landlocked

Landlocked is considered a country that does not have a coastline or is, in other words, bordered only by land.⁸ Afghanistan is one example of a landlocked country.⁹

Proxy War

A proxy war occurs when rival powers choose to wage an indirect conflict against one another through third-party actors.¹⁰ It was a very widespread strategy during the Cold War when the USSR and the USA tried to expand their spheres of influence and ideologies through their allies in a game of brinkmanship.

Sharia Law

⁵ "Insurgency Definition & Meaning." Merriam-Webster, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/insurgency>.

⁶ Slick, Matt. "Jihad: Holy Struggle or Holy War?" *Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry*, 16 Dec. 2020, <https://carm.org/islam/jihad-holy-struggle-or-holy-war/>.

⁷ "Religions - Islam: Jihad." *BBC*, BBC, 3 Aug. 2009, www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/beliefs/jihad_1.shtml.

⁸ "Landlocked Definition & Meaning." *Merriam-Webster*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/landlocked>.

⁹ "Historical Beginnings (to the 7th Century CE)." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., <https://www.britannica.com/place/Afghanistan/Historical-beginnings-to-the-7th-century-ce>.

¹⁰ "Proxy War." *Military Wiki*, https://military-history.fandom.com/wiki/Proxy_war.

Sharia Law is the code of conduct based on the Qur'an, the holy book of Muslims, concerning religious law in Islam, and it encompasses all societal aspects including politics, economics, family matters, sexuality, crime, fasting, hygiene, etc.¹¹ The Taliban adhere to a very strict interpretation of Sharia law.

Taliban

“The Taliban are an ultraconservative political and religious faction that emerged in Afghanistan in the mid-1990s following the withdrawal of Soviet troops, the collapse of Afghanistan’s communist regime, and the subsequent breakdown in civil order.”¹²

Territorial integrity

Territorial integrity and respect for territorial integrity is the principle of international law that prohibits the promotion or attempt of border changes in other states/ nations and the act of imposing border changes with military force.¹³

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Historical Background

¹⁴The long history of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has always been characterised by conflict, instability, and a series of brutal invasions dating back to Alexander the Great in 327 BCE, Genghis Khan in 1219, the British Empire in 1839¹⁵, leading up to the recent war of the last two decades. Due to Afghanistan's geostrategic importance, many external actors have tried to interfere in its internal affairs, as it lies between some important trading routes, connecting Europe to southern and eastern Asia as well as the Middle East. For millennia, the most ambitious of empire builders have attempted to conquer this landlocked nation, but all

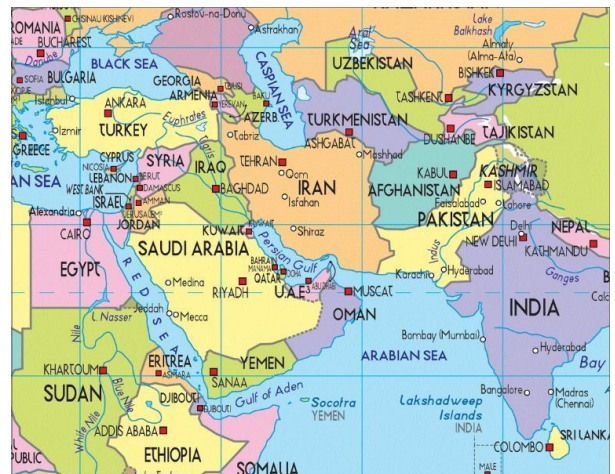


Figure 1: Political map showing the position of Afghanistan in the broader region⁴

¹¹ Admin. “Sharia Law.” *LAWS.com*, 23 Dec. 2019, <https://laws.com/sharia-law>.

¹² “Taliban.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Taliban>.

¹³ “Territorial Integrity.” *CSCE*, <https://www.csce.gov/issue/territorial-integrity>.

¹⁴ “Map of the Middle East.” *Afghanistan*, <https://marascowortmannafghanistan.weebly.com/map-of-the-middle-east.html>.

¹⁵ “Historical Beginnings (to the 7th Century CE).” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., <https://www.britannica.com/place/Afghanistan/Historical-beginnings-to-the-7th-century-ce>.

that has been left behind are the remnants of their vain attempts, complicating the history of this already unstable nation. Understanding Afghanistan's current state necessitates a more in-depth understanding of its turbulent past, as the underlying causes of the conflict are the result of decades of history and pre-existing tensions.

The Cold War era

From 1973 to 1978, the Afghan government was led by President Mohammad Daud Khan, who had seized power by leading a coup d'état, overthrowing the previous government and establishing a "republic" which, however, did not really have the characteristics to be classified as a republic but rather a monarchy. As soon as he took office, Daud Khan aimed to repress the left and minimise Afghanistan's reliance on the Soviet Union.¹⁶ In 1978, a pro-Soviet coup resulted in the defenestration and murder of General Daud, and the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan¹⁷, a coalition of two previously existing parties, rose to power. The newly established pro-Soviet administration received little support and was deeply resented by the predominantly anti-communist, Muslim Afghan population. While forging close ties with the USSR, the Party brutally repressed domestic opposition and enacted radical social and land reforms. Soon, urban and tribal groups began to rise against the government in Islamic-inspired, US-backed insurgencies that became known as the mujahideen ("those who engage in jihad")¹⁸. Soon, the government was essentially crippled by the mujahadeen-led opposition, violent intraparty strife, and coup attempts, which sparked the Soviets' invasion.

In December 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in an effort to support their beleaguered client-state, an act which is thought to have laid the groundwork for the protracted conflict that ensued through the following decades. With the start of the conflict that has come to be known as the Soviet-Afghan War (1979–1989), a Cold-War era proxy war, both the Soviet Union and the United States engaged in significant political interventions in Afghanistan in an effort to increase their respective spheres of influence over the country. The Soviets deployed 30.000 troops and appointed Babrak Karmal as the state's leader, who encountered heavy opposition from the populace. The Soviet Union vetoed a Security Council Resolution calling for an emergency assembly as they supported that the matter was of no threat or concern to

¹⁶ "Mohammad Daud Khan." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mohammad-Daud-Khan>.

¹⁷ " " Encyclopedia of the Modern Middle East and North Africa. . Encyclopedia.com. 21 Jun. 2022 ." *Encyclopedia.com*, Encyclopedia.com, 9 July 2022, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/peoples-democratic-party-afghanistan>.

¹⁸ "Mujahideen." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., <https://www.britannica.com/topic/mujahideen-Afghani-rebels>.

international peace and security. "Internal matter between Afghanistan and the USSR"¹⁹ was how both the Soviets and Afghanistan described the matter, and the Soviets claimed that their presence was welcome in the country, though the West blamed it on the instalment of their own government upon their invasion.

As the resistance from the mujahadeen grew with the support of the US, China, Pakistan, and the Arab States (mostly Saudi Arabia) and spread throughout the whole country, a raging war tormented the state, with the Afghan army initially meant to put down the insurrections led by the mujahadeen. The Afghan War quickly came to a standstill, with the Soviets controlling the majority of Afghanistan's major cities and the mujahadeen taking over the countryside, where, despite being repeatedly attacked, they managed to evade most of the strikes. In their campaign against the mujahadeen, the Soviets employed a variety of strategies, including bombing rural areas in an effort to reduce civilian support for the group. This ultimately resulted in a massive rural conflict and more than 4 million people seeking asylum in neighbouring Pakistan and Iran. It should be noted that even though the mujahadeen remained largely divided into groups throughout the war, they were still able to inflict severe losses on the Soviet opposition (15.000 dead and many more injured) thanks to the military assistance of their supporters, as well as the help of Muslim volunteers from all over the world who came to join the opposition (known as Afghan-Arabs)²⁰.

For the collapsing Soviet Union of the late 1980s, the war in Afghanistan was no longer to their advantage. They signed a settlement (["Agreements on the Settlement of the Situation in Relation to Afghanistan"](#)) with Afghanistan, the US, and Pakistan in April 1988 to withdraw their troops from the country under the supervision of the UN, despite having failed to accomplish their objectives in the country. Even after the Soviet troops were evacuated, the nation remained bitterly divided, and the civil conflict between the mujahideen and the communist government raged on; it was clear that it wouldn't be long before the war's effects became apparent.

The rise of the Taliban

Violence, political instability, poverty, inequality, and poor security set the basis for the emergence of a new prominent group, the Taliban. Even though prolonged periods of violence had been common throughout the entirety of Afghan history, the rise of the Taliban could be

¹⁹ DeYoung, Karen. "Overwhelming U.N. Vote Condemns Soviets." *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 15 Jan. 1980, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1980/01/15/overwhelming-un-vote-condemns-soviets/346d9a75-e904-48c5-9b58-c1b007926501/>.

²⁰"Afghan Arabs." Infogalactic, https://infogalactic.com/info/Afghan_Arabs.

considered the defining moment that turned Afghanistan into a terrorism-ruled state. Soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the communist government that had endured in Afghanistan was ousted from power in April 1992. A transitional administration was put in place, largely based on the mujahideen groups that had fought the Soviets. However, peace and stability remained a pipe dream as conflicting militias fought for power, the economy was in shambles, with racial tensions rising. As the situation worsened, the opposition to the then-president, who resisted handing over power after his two-year term had expired, launched rocket attacks, severely damaging Kabul, the capital city, and necessitating international and UN-based aid for the survival of the fragile nation. Outside of Kabul, the circumstances were even worse; warlords and powerful militia leaders exploited trade routes and used transit fees as a source of income, and crimes, such as kidnappings, became extremely common. In addition, the Soviet-Afghan war had left rebel groups heavily armed and the international community unable to determine the exact scope of their military capability.

This situation prompted the rise of the Taliban in the autumn of 1994, around the southern Afghan city of Kandahar. The same mujahideen fighters that the US supported in the 1980s to fend off the Soviets and oppose the expansion of their power started forming the core of the Taliban, an organisation that would go on to wage the longest and most expensive war in US history—a 20-year conflict and war of terror—against the US. The Taliban took over the majority of the nation over the course of two years, basing their rule on fundamentalist Islamic ideas and declaring it an Islamic emirate in 1996, as other mujahideen factions withdrew to the country's north.²¹

Following their takeover of Kabul in 1996, the Taliban imposed their strict interpretation of Sharia Law and Islam on the country, allowing punishments like public beheadings, stonings, and amputations. They also severely restricted the rights of women by forbidding them from working and limiting their access to education. In 1997, with more than two-thirds of Afghanistan now under the Taliban's control, they were recognised as the country's legitimate rulers by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. It looked like Afghanistan was turning into a safe haven for terrorist organisations, as concerns over their harbouring well-known terrorists grew internationally. On August 7th 1998, the then relatively unknown terrorist organisation, Al-Qaeda was accused of carrying out attacks on two US embassies—in Kenya and Tanzania—which left 224 civilians dead;²²

²¹ agencies, Gulf News Report and. "Afghanistan: The Rise, Fall and Resurgence of the Taliban." *Special-Reports – Gulf News*, Gulf News, 16 Aug. 2021, <https://gulfnews.com/special-reports/afghanistan-the-rise-fall-and-resurgence-of-the-taliban-1.1629107978245>.

²² (www.dw.com), Deutsche Welle. "When Al-Qaida Brought Terror to East Africa: DW: 06.08.2018." DW.COM, <https://www.dw.com/en/when-al-qaida-brought-terror-to-east-africa/a-44961662>.

The 9/11 Attacks

On September 11, 2001, 19 terrorists affiliated with the Islamic extremist organisation known as Al-Qaeda hijacked four aeroplanes and launched suicide attacks against American targets. Two of the aircrafts struck the World Trade Centre in New York, another hit the Pentagon just outside Washington, D.C., and the fourth plane crashed in a field in Pennsylvania, after passengers managed to regain control, though its intended target is thought to have been the White House or the US Capitol.²³ With over 3,000 fatalities, these attacks remain the most heinous terrorist attacks on US soil, and they served as the catalyst for the war on terror. Osama Bin Laden, a Saudi who had served as a mujahadeen fighter against the Soviets and the mastermind behind Al-Qaeda and the 9/11 attacks, was soon identified as America's main target and was allegedly being harboured by the Taliban in Afghanistan. On September 20th, US President George W. Bush demanded that the Taliban hand over Bin Laden, and their refusal to do so marked the beginning of the longest war in US history.

After a series of failed negotiations with the Taliban government, on October 4th, the United States invoked [Article V](#) of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)²⁴ and called for assistance from its allies, such as the United Kingdom, in the fight against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. The Invasion of Afghanistan by the United States officially began with the launch of its bombing campaign against the state on October 7th. On October 19th, the first American troops entered Afghanistan and seized Kandahar Airfield.²⁵ The Taliban quickly disintegrated and, by the end of 2001, the Northern Alliance, along with the U.S. and other foreign forces, had overthrown the Taliban-run government and were now theoretically controlling the majority of the nation, forcing Al-Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden to flee.

On December 5th, 2001, the [“Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions \(Bonn Agreement\)”](#)²⁶ was

²³ History.com Editors. “September 11 Attacks.” *History.com*, A&E Television Networks, 17 Feb. 2010, <https://www.history.com/topics/21st-century/9-11-attacks>.

²⁴ Nato. “The North Atlantic Treaty.” *NATO*, 6 Feb. 2019, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm.

²⁵ “US Invasion of Afghanistan .” *Study.com | Take Online Courses. Earn College Credit. Research Schools, Degrees & Careers*, study.com/learn/lesson/us-invasion-afghanistan-causes-controversy-war.html.

²⁶ “Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-Establishment of Permanent Government Institutions (Bonn Agreement) | UN Peacemaker.” *United Nations*, United Nations, <https://peacemaker.un.org/afghanistan-bonnagreement2001#:~:text=Agreement%20on%20Provisional%20Arrangements%20in%20Afghanistan%20Pending%20the,Authority%20is%20established%20by%20the%20emergency%20Loya%20Jirga>.

signed in Germany, establishing a transitional government with Hamid Karzai as interim president, paving the way for a more stable future. Per Annex I of the agreement, the UN Security Council, under [Resolution 1386](#)²⁷, authorised and established the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which was later taken over by NATO. In the implementation of the agreement, the UN Security Council also established the [United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan \(UNAMA\)](#).²⁸

As part of the war against terrorism, the US set out to capture Bin Laden, who had fled Afghanistan upon their invasion. Following the attacks of 9/11, the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) underwent significant changes, placing a high priority on terrorism prevention above all other threats to national security and law enforcement. To that end, it became more proactive and initiated the single largest investigation in its history.²⁹ After ten years of vain attempts and investigations, U.S. intelligence agencies discovered information that Osama Bin Laden was possibly residing in northern Pakistan. On May 2nd, 2011, after a raid by a special operations unit, Osama Bin Laden was captured and killed under orders from ex US President Obama.

US Objectives in Afghanistan

The first goal of the Bush administration, which was defeating the Taliban, was accomplished just two months after the US invasion of Afghanistan. However, this was merely the first item on the US agenda. Through the installation of the interim government, the US tried to force democracy on Afghanistan, a nation drastically underdeveloped and with a radically different fusion of political, cultural, religious, social, and ethnic values to those of the US. Failing to take into account Afghanistan's respective needs and values, the US's efforts to establish a government were deemed unrealistic and therefore highly ineffective. Instead of focusing on the establishment of a stable administrative body that would actually be able to produce an attainable level of unity among the Afghan population and provide them with an adequate degree of security and civil governance, the US attempted to create an underdeveloped copy of the United States in a state with absolutely no political experience and no way of maintaining such a structure. Having been built on Western and admittedly unrealistic standards that completely disregarded the real world-divisions and power structure of Afghanistan, the US-created government was destined to fail.

However, why was the US so motivated by the idea of establishing a westernised government in Afghanistan? The answer goes beyond counter terrorism measures and moral

²⁷ Resolution 1386, <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1386>.

²⁸ "Mandate." UNAMA, 17 Mar. 2022, <https://unama.unmissions.org/mandate>.

²⁹ "Osama Bin Laden." FBI, FBI, 13 May 2022, <https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/osama-bin-laden>

principles. If it were successful in toppling the Taliban regime and replacing it with a more stable, pro-Western government, the US would not only have defeated terrorism but also the rising ambitions of both Russia and China. “Afghanistan is the key to the western domination of Asia.”³⁰ Another key factor behind US motives that has not yet been mentioned is the Afghan oil reserves and the US’s long-sought Afghan oil route. Even before the 9/11 attacks, the Clinton administration's efforts to build a pipeline under Afghan and Pakistani soil were evident; negotiating and flying many Taliban representatives to Washington, D.C. to reach a deal. However, the political environment and the Taliban’s resistance did not facilitate the US’s goals. The September 11 attacks and the proclaimed “war on terror” provided the Bush team with the missing piece to utilise the US military to pave the way for the advancement of their economic objectives in Afghanistan.

Despite the setbacks and the ongoing assaults, the Taliban remained steadfast and continued to conduct attacks. Through the Bonn Agreement, the establishment of the International Security Assistance Force, and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, the US aimed to counter-terrorism and tackle conflict within Afghanistan while training Afghan forces to provide effective and sustainable security all across the nation. However, the U.S. failed to address excessive levels of corruption and unjust use of external aid and resources. The ultimate goal was to train Afghan forces to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a haven for future terrorist activities and to eventually withdraw all foreign forces once they become self-reliant. The role of the ISAF, one of the largest coalitions to this day,³¹ shifted through the course of the years, turning from a combat-centric body, fighting insurgencies, to an advisory body, training Afghan forces and assisting in capacity building. Though the Afghan forces grew in size, in practice, heavy reliance on U.S. air support or even from U.S. elite forces was a necessity, as the majority of the Afghan forces were highly ineffective in combat. In their efforts to train and upgrade Afghan security forces, the US supplied an estimated 28 billion dollars' worth of weaponry to Afghan forces between 2002 and 2017.³²

Withdrawal efforts

Up until 2011, the number of foreign troops present in Afghanistan continued to increase as the war against terrorism and Taliban-led insurgencies raged on. However, in June

³⁰ “Afghanistan: It's about Oil.” *Earth Island Journal*, https://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/magazine/entry/afghanistan_its_about_oil/.

³¹ Nato. “ISAF's Mission in Afghanistan (2001-2014).” NATO, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_69366.htm.

³² Brown, Lee. “Taliban Has Billions in US Weapons, Including Black Hawks and up to 600K Rifles.” *New York Post*, New York Post, 20 Aug. 2021, <https://nypost.com/2021/08/20/us-left-billions-in-weapons-in-afghanistan-with-black-hawks-in-talibans-hands/>.

2011, following the capture of Bin Laden, President Obama announced a withdrawal plan of US troops from Afghanistan, claiming that the military campaign was meeting their goals and that, with the help of Pakistan, they had managed to eliminate a lot of Al-Qaeda's prominent members, exerting pressure on the now decaying organisation.³³ The plan was to withdraw 33,000 U.S. troops by the summer of 2012 and all troops by 2014. In 2014, the United States, the United Kingdom, and NATO all formally ended their combat missions in Afghanistan, with NATO handing its role over to Afghan forces; yet 2014 marked the bloodiest year in Afghan history since 2001.

In the years that followed, the number of terrorist attacks and violent acts carried out by the Taliban showed no decline, and the group was still vying to seize control of various provinces and cities throughout the nation, impeding the withdrawal process. Eventually, in February 2019, the United States began peace negotiations with the Taliban in the hope of reaching a settlement. In early 2020, the US, NATO and the Taliban reached an [agreement](#)³⁴ that at the time seemed to be the first step towards finally achieving lasting peace. In exchange for the Taliban's promise not to harbour terrorist organisations, the US and NATO allies agreed to almost entirely withdraw their troops from the nation.³⁵ While in office at the time, the Trump administration followed through with the agreement and reduced its troop strength from 13,000 to 2,500, in spite of Taliban attacks on Afghan forces and what seemed to be the inclusion of Al-Qaeda members in the Taliban leadership positions.³⁶ Current US President Joe Biden began the final withdrawal efforts in May 2021 and set the symbolic date of September 11th, 2021, the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks,³⁷ as the date of full withdrawal from the state, despite the continuous violations of the agreement by the Taliban.

President Joe Biden, in his remarks related to the final withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, stated that the 300,000 Afghans and the other hundreds of thousands that had been trained and equipped over the last two decades would be able to sustain the US-enforced Afghan government;³⁸ something which was proven wrong in a matter of weeks. The final withdrawal efforts began on May 4th, 2021, and by August 15th, 2021, the Taliban had retaken

³³ Kassim, Aliza, et al. "Obama Announces Afghanistan Troop Withdrawal Plan." *CNN*, Cable News Network, 23 June 2011, edition.cnn.com/2011/POLITICS/06/22/afghanistan.troops.drawdown/index.html.

³⁴ *Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan as a State and Is Known as ...* www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Agreement-For-Bringing-Peace-to-Afghanistan-02.29.20.pdf

³⁵ "U.S.-Taliban Peace Deal: What to Know." *Council on Foreign Relations*, Council on Foreign Relations, www.cfr.org/backgrounder/us-taliban-peace-deal-agreement-afghanistan-war.

³⁶ <https://www.factcheck.org/2021/08/timeline-of-u-s-withdrawal-from-afghanistan/>

³⁷ "Biden Announces Full U.S. Troop Withdrawal from Afghanistan by Sept. 11." *U.S. Department of Defense*, www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2573268/biden-announces-full-us-troop-withdrawal-from-afghanistan-by-sept-11/.

³⁸ "Remarks by President Biden on The Way Forward in Afghanistan." *The White House*, The United States Government, 14 Apr. 2021, www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/04/14/remarks-by-president-biden-on-the-way-forward-in-afghanistan/.

control of the country.³⁹ Western countries rushed to evacuate their citizens and hundreds of Afghans flooded the airport of Kabul in despair, as US-led forces withdrew. In what he claimed to be an effort to “avoid bloodshed”, the President of the US-backed Afghan government fled the country as the Taliban insurgents, facing no resistance, marched into the capital. ⁴⁰

Current Situation

The Taliban government is fighting for international representation and recognition. While states have condemned the Taliban’s actions and violations, the UNSC has not issued a non-recognition policy against the Taliban since it rose to power;⁴¹ instead, it has envisioned a path towards the recognition of the Taliban as the official head of state of Afghanistan. Such recognition demands that the Taliban adhere to the international community’s standards concerning human rights, particularly those of women and minorities, counter-terrorism

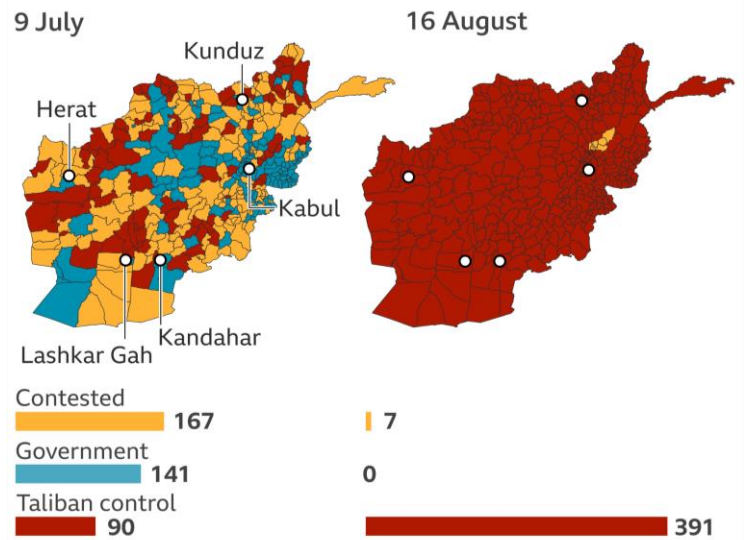
³⁹ agencies, Gulf News Report and. “Afghanistan: The Rise, Fall and Resurgence of the Taliban.” *Special-Reports – Gulf News*, Gulf News, 16 Aug. 2021, [gulfnews.com/special-reports/afghanistan-the-rise-fall-and-resurgence-of-the-taliban-1.1629107978245](https://www.gulfnews.com/special-reports/afghanistan-the-rise-fall-and-resurgence-of-the-taliban-1.1629107978245).

⁴⁰ Team, The Visual Journalism. “Mapping the Advance of the Taliban in Afghanistan.” *BBC News*, BBC, 16 Aug. 2021, www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-57933979.

⁴¹ Ekip, ANKASAM. “Recognition of the Taliban as a Legitimate Government.” *The Asia Today*, 31 Dec. 2021, theasiatoday.org/editorials/recognition-of-the-taliban-as-a-legitimate-government/

policies, and access to humanitarian aid, holding them accountable to any previously signed treaties, obligations, and commitments.

The Afghan economy practically relied on foreign aid and the presence of foreign forces. Therefore, the effects of their abrupt withdrawal and the cessation of international financial aid have been deeply felt by the Taliban government that is now urging the international community to release its frozen assets and provide them with financial help by recognising their rule. However, unless the Islamists significantly improve the state of human rights in Afghanistan, the West refuses to help them financially. Economic sanctions imposed by the U.S.⁴² have isolated the Taliban from the global market, further fuelling the economic and humanitarian crisis.⁴³



*Contested is where fighting is ongoing or strong Taliban presence

Source: BBC Research. Districts according to 2005 government boundaries **BBC**

Figure 2: map depicting the progress of the Taliban in Afghanistan from July 9th to August 15th

The takeover of the Taliban in August 2021 and the shattering economy of the state have resulted in one of the gravest humanitarian crises internationally. With more than 9 million people currently internally displaced and at least 6 million Afghan refugees⁴⁴ outside the borders of Afghanistan, international humanitarian aid is more critical than ever. Women and girls have been deprived of their fundamental human rights, seriously limiting their access to education and imposing rules that if breached may threaten their lives, and more than half the population, an estimated 23 million people, are currently facing acute hunger and are at risk of severe malnutrition. Afghanistan's crumbling economy has forced Afghans to sell everything they have—including their own children. Even though Afghanistan may have served as a playground for the world's superpowers and terrorist groups, the ones suffering real loss and atrocities are the millions of innocent Afghans whose fate and future were never in their hands;

⁴² Ioanes, Ellen. "US Policy Is Fueling Afghanistan's Humanitarian Crisis." Vox, Vox, 22 Jan. 2022, www.vox.com/2022/1/22/22896235/afghanistan-poverty-famine-winter-humanitarian-crisis-sanctions.

⁴³ Team, The Visual Journalism. "Mapping the Advance of the Taliban in Afghanistan." BBC News, BBC, 16 Aug. 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-57933979>.

⁴⁴ "Get the Facts: What's Happening Now in Afghanistan." *How to Help Refugees - Aid, Relief and Donations*, www.unrefugees.org/news/get-the-facts-what-s-happening-now-in-afghanistan/.

any solutions put forward should ensure the long-term protection of these people and aim for the creation of a better future for them.

Main Challenges towards stability

The increased demand for weapons and supplies is a logical effect of any conflict. With state actors and violent groups aiming to defend themselves or advance their political, social, religious, or ethical aspirations, large numbers of weaponry and firearms are acquired, bought and traded. The increased instability brought on by the conflict makes it difficult to prioritise effective border control and weapon tracking, which results in an abundance of untraced, illegal weapons. As a result, the smuggling of weapons becomes much less complicated. Small arms and light weapons, in particular, are usually the weapons of choice for many insurgent groups as their small size and low price facilitate their transportation, easy accumulation, and concealment.⁴⁵ In the aftermath of such conflicts, when those resources are no longer needed, the market is oversaturated with an overwhelming number of weapons, which are then traded, sold, and transported to other regions in need, whether through governmental channels or the black market, which enables the continuation of violence and prolonged armed conflict. In the case of Afghanistan, given the speed at which American troops left, millions of dollars' worth of weapons were left behind, with the worst part being that it is practically impossible to determine or even attempt to estimate the number of weapons circulating in the country. The White House has admitted that it does not have a clear picture of the number of weapons that have fallen into the Taliban's hands.⁴⁶ The wide accessibility of weapons is one of the biggest challenges towards the achievement of stability in Afghanistan, as it seriously threatens not only the Afghan population but also the peace and security of the broader region beyond Afghanistan's borders.

In addition, ever since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan, they have struggled to establish their own functioning government, which has been heavily criticised by the international community as it not falling under Western standards. In September 2021, the Taliban began efforts to form an all-male cabinet, including prominent Taliban figures, some of whom appear on U.N. and U.S. sanctions lists and are recognised as terrorists. The majority of the international community, including the United Kingdom, the United States, France, Iran, Russia, and Germany, have yet to recognise the Taliban as a legitimate political actor, citing the Taliban's failure to adhere to human rights standards, to meet the original requirement of an inclusive government, and forcefully gaining control of Afghanistan in the first place. A

⁴⁵ International Peace Institute- Small Arms and Light Weapons, 2009, www.ipinst.org/wpcontent/uploads/publications/salw_epub.pdf.

⁴⁶ Brown, Lee. "Taliban Has Billions in US Weapons, Including Black Hawks and up to 600K Rifles." *New York Post*, New York Post, 20 Aug. 2021, nypost.com/2021/08/20/us-left-billions-in-weapons-in-afghanistan-with-black-hawks-in-talibans-hands/.

generalised lack of trust in the Taliban administration is not helping in paving the way for stability and peace. The Taliban government has also been facing internal issues, all of which it has denied and has not addressed publicly, and since it does not seem to have a plan for the reconstruction of the war-torn country, progress and development in all sectors has been hampered.

Regarding mistrust, there is still cause for concern among the international community concerning the development of terrorist activities under Taliban rule and their potential consequences for the wider region. Admittedly, the threat of terrorism never fully went away. With the Taliban again in power, many promises have been made with the aim of gaining international recognition of their regime, but their true intentions remain questionable. It is unclear whether the regime will be able to provide adequate border security, particularly in the Pashtun area, the region of origin for many Taliban members, and avoid fuelling terroristic activities as promised by the commitments it has made with the international community.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

Afghanistan

Afghanistan is currently governed by a Taliban-led cabinet which overthrew the previous US-backed Afghan government in the summer of 2021. After more than 20 years of armed conflict, Afghanistan is now facing one of the gravest humanitarian and economic crises internationally. As it heavily relied on foreign aid, which has now been abruptly cut, the government is struggling to cover its basic needs with more than half its population living under the poverty line. With the US now opposing the central government of Afghanistan, Russia and China are believed to intervene in Afghanistan's internal affairs more heavily as a means to expand their spheres of influence in the highly unstable state. Afghanistan remains a very important player in the Middle East and in global relations as its vast natural resources are now more appealing than ever.

USA

Ever since the Soviet occupation, the US has deeply involved itself in Afghan affairs by providing funding and weapons to mujahideen militias. In the aftermath of 9/11, it began its bombing campaign, which led to the 20-year war on terror. However, the war on terror also doubled as a front to finally allow the US to advance its economic and political objectives in Afghanistan. By seizing control over Afghanistan, the US also aimed to accumulate an estimated 3 trillion dollars' worth of oil and natural resources and dominate in the Middle East. Its tenuous efforts to establish a pro-Western government and bring political stability to Afghanistan would be the key that would enable them to take advantage of those natural resources and build a

pipeline that would exclusively export oil to the West. With the withdrawal of its troops in summer 2021, the US quit a conflict that cost them the loss of 2.448 human lives, more than 20.000 U.S. soldiers wounded⁴⁷ and an estimate of 2.26 trillion dollars.⁴⁸ Ever since the Taliban retook control of Afghanistan, the U.S. has imposed economic sanctions on the Taliban regime, aiming to limit its power.

Russia

The Soviet-Afghan war marked the relations between the two states. Now, after nearly 40 years, Moscow is hoping to restore its relations with Afghanistan. It now seems that Russia is aiming to expand its influence within the country and its influence in the Middle East and use it as a means to oppose to the U.S., NATO and Europe after the severe economic consequences brought to the state following the Ukraine invasion. In June 2022, an agreement was signed between the two states aiming to enhance their trade relations at a time when they're both suffering from economic sanctions from the West.⁴⁹

Pakistan

Pakistan-Afghan relations have been a complex issue ever since the birth of the Pakistani state. Territorial disputes over the Durand line and the Pashtun population, which Afghanistan claims to be its own, have always complicated relations between the two countries.⁵⁰ Following the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan and the emergence of the mujahadeen, Pakistan became the base for the then-forming Taliban. After the U.S. invaded Afghanistan, Pakistan soon became a sanctuary for Taliban members, providing them with protection as well as its Inter-Services Intelligence to support their insurgencies. Pakistan's intelligence provided the Taliban with expertise on military matters and financial assistance, and it was believed to exert a certain level of control over the Taliban for years. However, Pakistan has made numerous attempts to improve relations with Afghanistan, including providing humanitarian aid and refuge to Afghans over the past 20 years—an act that Afghanistan has not acknowledged or seemed to appreciate. The Pakistani Prime Minister has denied allegations of providing military or economic support to the Taliban, and he claims to be in favour of

⁴⁷ Lock, Samantha. "Here's How Many U.S. Soldiers Were Killed in Afghanistan." *Newsweek*, Newsweek, 16 Aug. 2021, www.newsweek.com/number-us-soldiers-who-died-afghanistan-war-1619685.

⁴⁸ Gittins, William. "How Much Did the US Spend in Afghanistan?" *Diario AS*, 12 Nov. 2021, en.as.com/en/2021/08/17/latest_news/1629157989_792727.html.

⁴⁹ Dawi, Akmal. "Russia, Afghanistan Seek to Enhance Trade amid Sanctions." *VOA*, Russia, Afghanistan Seek to Enhance Trade Amid Sanctions, 24 June 2022, www.voanews.com/a/russia-afghanistan-seek-to-enhance-trade-amid-sanctions-/6632146.html.

⁵⁰ -, Tdi, et al. "Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations." *The Diplomatic Insight*, 3 Feb. 2022, thediplomaticinsight.com/pakistan-afghanistan-relations/.

negotiations. The situation is complicated even further by India, Pakistan's rival, which has been accused of deliberately sabotaging Afghan-Pak relations aiming to destabilise Pakistan.

Ever since the overthrow of the Afghan government and the resurgence of the Taliban in August 2021, Pakistan has helped facilitate the Afghan peace process by holding peace talks between the Taliban and the U.S. in Doha, despite the Taliban not being recognised by the international community. Pakistan also supports the creation of a Taliban-led Afghan government. However, disputes over the Durand line have re-emerged, with India trying to take advantage of the situation to increase tensions. Clashes in the Durand line between the two states have been reported⁵¹ as Pakistan has been trying to progress fencing efforts—an act which the Taliban opposes—as a means of ensuring peace and stability within the country by preventing terrorism, human and drug trafficking, and the smuggling of illegal migrants. All in all, Pakistan's foreign policy seeks to establish amicable relations with its neighbour based on shared respect for their territorial integrity and the right to self-determination,⁵² intentions which Afghanistan has failed to acknowledge.

India

In its efforts to expand its influence and become a dominant force in the broader region, India has always tried to play a role in Afghanistan's affairs. India has supported all U.S. efforts at establishing an Afghan government and has heavily opposed the recognition of the Taliban ever since their initial rise in 1996, which was only recognised by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.⁵³ Ever since the 9/11 attacks and the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, India has tried to establish close relations with Afghanistan and has contributed \$3 billion⁵⁴ to the country's infrastructure and economic growth. Its main objectives are to reduce Pakistan's influence and stop militants hostile to India from finding refuge in Afghanistan. In addition, Afghanistan is crucial for India's geostrategic importance as while the India-Afghan border remains active, Pakistan does not have the ability to expand its military strength along the Pakistan-India border. India has opposed past U.S. efforts to reach a settlement with the Taliban and has never been in favour of recognising them as a legitimate political actor, which ever since their resurgence in Afghanistan could contradict all their previous efforts to forge closer ties made over the past twenty years.

⁵¹ "Pakistan and Taliban Forces Clash Continue at the Durand Line| Latest World English News." [YouTube, YouTube, 31 Dec. 2021, www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCs3APwn5Ik..](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCs3APwn5Ik..)

⁵² "Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations." *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, mofa.gov.pk/testing-language/.

⁵³ civils360. "India-Afghanistan Relations International Relations: GS 2 Notes for UPSC." *Civils360 IAS*, 19 Jan. 2022, civils360.com/2022/01/09/india-afghanistan-relations/.

⁵⁴ "U.S.-Taliban Peace Deal: What to Know." *Council on Foreign Relations*, Council on Foreign Relations, www.cfr.org/backgrounder/us-taliban-peace-deal-agreement-afghanistan-war.

Iran

Iran's relationships with Afghanistan are very complex, and Iran has always worked to protect its interests in the war-torn state. As a result of their conflicting ideologies regarding Islam and the Taliban's gain of support from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE—all states with which Iran has tense relations—Iran has long seen the Taliban as a rival. However, their relationships are not that simple. Islam is distinguished into two main branches: Sunni Islam and Shiite Islam.⁵⁵ The Taliban, a radical Sunni Islamist organisation, holds views that are in opposition to those of Iran, which has a Shiite majority. The Iranian government should therefore oppose all Taliban efforts to control Afghanistan. However, throughout the years, it has contributed to the training of Taliban forces, providing them with weapons, artillery, and financial support; an action that is largely attributed to Iran's adversarial stance toward the United States and their efforts to undermine the US-led operation during their 20-year presence in Afghanistan.⁵⁶ As a result of Afghanistan's instability, Iran is able to manipulate the situation to their advantage.

China

China's objectives in Afghanistan primarily focus on the economic sector. Since the withdrawal of the U.S. troops in 2021, China has been the largest source of foreign humanitarian aid and investment and has been calling for the lift of sanctions against the Taliban imposed by the international community. China's main concerns in Afghanistan include securing its western frontiers by ensuring the dissolution of terrorism within Afghanistan and promoting its economic interests. Beijing hopes to integrate Afghanistan in its Belt and Road Initiative⁵⁷ which is one of the most far-reaching investment and development projects launched in the last years. Additionally, China is hoping to increase its influence in Afghanistan by taking advantage of its vast natural resources.⁵⁸

NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation)

Founded on April 4, 1949, NATO is a political and military alliance with the goals of fostering peace, ensuring security, and promoting democracy, as well as militarily supporting its

⁵⁵ About The Author Sandeep Bhandari Sandeep Bhandari is the founder of AskAnyDifference.com website. All the team management. "Difference between Sunni and Shiite Islam." *Ask Any Difference*, 24 June 2022, askanydifference.com/difference-between-sunni-and-shiite-islam-with-table/#:~:text=Sunni%20is%20an%20Arabic%20word.%20Shiites%20are%20the,lived%20in%20support%20of%20Ali%20were%20called%20Shiite.

⁵⁶ Kittleson, Shelly. "Why Iran Will Welcome the Taliban Takeover in Afghanistan." *Foreign Policy*, 18 Aug. 2021, foreignpolicy.com/2021/08/18/why-iran-will-welcome-the-taliban-takeover-in-afghanistan/.

⁵⁷ "China's Massive Belt and Road Initiative." *Council on Foreign Relations*, Council on Foreign Relations, www.cfr.org/backgrounder/chinas-massive-belt-and-road-initiative.

⁵⁸ Kuo, Mercy A. "China in Afghanistan: How Beijing Engages the Taliban." – *The Diplomat*, For The Diplomat, 24 Dec. 2021, thediplomat.com/2021/12/china-in-afghanistan-how-beijing-engages-the-taliban/.

member states when needed. After the 9/11 attacks against the US, NATO allies entered Afghanistan and from 2003 were leading the ISAF, a UN-mandated campaign which aimed to establish a better environment in Afghanistan in which an independent Afghan government would be able to exercise its authority. A major part of NATO's task in Afghanistan was to train and equip the Afghan security forces to uphold the US-based interim government after foreign aid eventually withdrew from Afghanistan. The task was completed in 2014, after Afghan forces claimed full responsibility for the defence of the country. After the collapse of the interim government and the resurgence of the Taliban in 2021, NATO's focus shifted to ensuring the safe departure of allied personnel and NATO-related Afghans.⁵⁹

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
327 BCE	Alexander the Great invaded and conquered Afghanistan.
1219	Genghis Khan invaded Afghanistan.
1839	The British Empire invades Afghanistan.
April 4, 1949	NATO is established.
July 17, 1973	Mohammad Daud Khan seizes power over Afghanistan in a bloodless coup.
April 27, 1978	Daud Khan is killed in a coup and
December, 1979	The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan
1979-1989	The Soviet - Afghan War.
April, 1988	The Soviet Union signed a settlement with Afghanistan, the US and Pakistan to withdraw troops from the country under UN supervision.
April , 1992	The communist government was ousted from power and a transitional administration was

⁵⁹ Nato. "NATO and Afghanistan." NATO, 10 June 2022, www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_8189.htm.

	put in place (largely based on mujahideen groups).
Autumn, 1994	The rise of the Taliban in Kandahar (south).
1996	Initial rise of the Taliban; The Taliban declare the nation an Islamic emirate and take over Kabul.
1997	The Taliban are recognised as the country's legitimate rulers by Pakistan, the UAE and Saudi Arabia.
August 7, 1998	Al-Queada is accused of attacking the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, resulting in 224 fatalities.
September 11, 2001	Al-Queada hijacked 4 aeroplanes attacking American targets (the WTC, NY, the Pentagon, WA D.C., Pennsylvania) with 3,000+ fatalities.
September 20, 2001	US President G.W. Bush demanded the Taliban hand over Osama Bin Laden and the refusal marked the beginning of the longest war in US history.
October 4, 2001	US invoked Article V of NATO
October 7, 2001	Invasion of Afghanistan by the US
October 19, 2001	The first US troops entered Afghanistan and seized Kandahar Airfield.
End of 2001	The North Alliance and US had overthrown the Taliban-run government.
December 5, 2001	Transitional government with Hamid Karzai, UNAMA is established
May 11, 2011	Osama Bin Laden is captured and killed after a raid by a special operations unit, in Northern

	Pakistan under orders of ex US President Obama.
June, 2011	President Obama announced a withdrawal plan of US troops from Afghanistan (33,000 by summer of 2012 and all by 2014).
2014	The US, UK and NATO all formally ended their combat missions in Afghanistan
February, 2019	The US started peace negotiations with the Taliban
Early 2020	The US, NATO and the Taliban reached an agreement for the latter not to harbour terrorist organisations and for the former to almost entirely withdraw their troops from the nation.
May 4, 2021	Former US President, Joe Biden began the final withdrawal of troops (set date 11/9/2021).
August 15, 2021	The Taliban took control of Kabul. Western countries rushed to evacuate their citizens, and Afghans flooded Kabul airport in an effort to leave the country.
September, 2021	The Taliban began efforts to form an all-male cabinet;
June, 2022	Russia and Afghanistan sign an agreement aiming to enhance their trade relations.

RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

[Security Council Resolution 1401 \(2002\)](#)

On the 28th of March 2002, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1401,⁶⁰ establishing the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, which aimed to support the implementation of the Bonn Agreement. It was most recently extended in March 2022 until March 2023 with [Resolution 2626](#) (2022)⁶¹, which laid out the renewed mandate of the mission adjusted to serve current needs in Afghanistan. The current mandate prioritises “the provision of good offices; support for the organisation of future elections; strengthening capacity in the protection and promotion of human rights, including the protection of children affected by armed conflict and prevention of child recruitment; support for gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment; the coordination and facilitation of humanitarian assistance; and support for Afghanistan’s development and governance priorities, including the rule of law, transitional justice as an essential component of the ongoing peace process, budget execution, and the fight against corruption throughout the country”.⁶² The long-standing Assistance Mission in Afghanistan is one of the UN’s only hopes as the circumstances do not permit the deployment of a robust peacekeeping mission,⁶³ which is usually the most common measure taken in armed conflict situations. The UNAMA must operate as effectively and organised as possible if any progress is to be noted.

[Security Council Resolution 2593 \(2021\)](#)

Resolution 2593 was the resolution adopted on August 30, 2021, following the resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan.⁶⁴ The resolution condemns the Taliban’s actions, particularly the attacks near Kabul airport on August 26th, while aiming on keeping the Taliban in check of their previous commitments concerning the combating of terrorism. It also emphasises the importance of unhindered access to humanitarian assistance provided to Afghans by UN affiliated organisations and partners, as well as any humanitarian aid entity, while noting the Taliban’s statement that Afghan nationals are free to leave the country at any time. Lastly, the Resolution encourages the negotiation of an inclusive political settlement that will uphold human rights obligations and adhere to the rule of law. UNSC Resolution 2593 is particularly significant for India, having been adopted during India’s one-month presidency of the Security Council in August, with officials supporting that it is pushing Resolution 2593 to

⁶⁰ *Resolution 1401*, [unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1401](https://www.un.org/peacekeeping/missions/unama/).

⁶¹ *Resolution 2626*, [unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/2626](https://www.un.org/peacekeeping/missions/unama/).

⁶² “Mandate.” *UNAMA*, 17 Mar. 2022, unama.unmissions.org/mandate.

⁶³ Williams, Paul D., et al. “The Pitfalls of UN Peacekeeping in Afghanistan.” *IPI Global Observatory*, 1 Sept. 2021, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2021/09/the-pitfalls-of-un-peacekeeping-in-afghanistan/>.

⁶⁴ “UNSCR Search Engine for the United Nations Security Council Resolutions.” *UNSCR*, [unscr.com/en/resolutions/2593](https://www.un.org/peacekeeping/missions/unama/).

strengthen international consensus on the Afghanistan crisis as part of its leadership agenda. It should be noted that India has long fought for a permanent seat at the Council.⁶⁵

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Bonn Agreement

One of the most significant efforts to promote political stability in Afghanistan has been the Bonn Agreement and the 20-year battle to put it into effect that followed its signature on December 5, 2001. As part of the Bonn Agreement, Afghan leaders, primarily mujahideen, consented to lay the groundwork for a democratic transition in Afghanistan. Nearly twenty years later, the Bonn agreement has formed modern-day Afghanistan; a torn nation plagued by insecurity, corruption, racial division, and a great majority of its population living in poverty. However, what was the reason behind the Bonn Agreement's failure to stabilise Afghanistan? The short answer is that priority was not given to the Afghans, the people whose interests would ultimately support and form the political system, thus making the attempt for a post-conflict transition to democracy bound to fail. Afghans, before and after the Bonn Agreement, played no active role in administrative positions, with only a limited number of strong elites, such as warlords, influencing decision-making. With their main objective being to maintain their power and status, they kept progress superficial and wasted billions of dollars' worth of development aid.⁶⁶

Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) efforts

DDR programmes in Afghanistan were not implemented until 2003 as the international community prioritized more direct counterterrorism strategies and DDR was also not included in the 2001 Bonn Agreement. When DDR strategies were officially launched it aimed to deal with anti-Taliban militias and violent groups. As a way to encourage former militia commanders to undergo DDR, the programme offered them individual appointments in political positions. Understandably, installing political appointees that had been accused by the public of violating human rights and contributing to corruption, had counterproductive effects, leading to the perception that counterterrorism was more significant than the protection of human rights and the rule of law. This solidified widespread mistrust in the Afghan government, which in turn

⁶⁵ "Explained: What Is UNSC Resolution 2593 and How Will It Contain the Afghanistan Crisis?" *Moneycontrol*, <https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/trends/current-affairs-trends/explained-what-is-UNSC-resolution-2593-and-how-will-it-contain-the-afghanistan-crisis-7577551.html>.

⁶⁶ Times, Published: by Kabul. "Even after a Peace Agreement, Afghanistan's Future Unclear." *The Kabul Times*, 13 Mar. 2021, [http://thekabultimes.gov.af/even-after-a-peace-agreement-afghanistans-future-unclear/#:~:text=Why%20did%](http://thekabultimes.gov.af/even-after-a-peace-agreement-afghanistans-future-unclear/#:~:text=Why%20did%20)

helped the Taliban gain support. Another reason behind the failure of the DDR programme was the absence of a peace accord which did not allow it to take hold. Some combatants who were demobilised by the programme eventually rejoined militias, while others entered the drug trade making DDR, at best, a waste of time and resources. At worst, the contentious political appointments that resulted from these initiatives increased Taliban recruitment and deepened public mistrust of the Afghan government. Eventually, the widespread political opposition to this strategy made it impossible for the programme to continue.⁶⁷

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Re-evaluate Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration strategies (DDR)

The 20-year conflict has left the Afghan market saturated with an overabundance of weapons. Considering that they are untraced and even illicit, the disarmament process becomes extremely complex. However, if there is to be any political stability in Afghanistan, disarmament is the first step towards a multiyear effort to build trust between the government and its people as well as the international community. Re-evaluating Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration strategies is one way to approach the situation. One of the main reasons why DDR programs have failed to achieve their objectives in the past is the lack of a neutral third-party which will assist the DDR process by offering protection to all sides as they disarm in the face of still-armed adversaries. The UN can help establish such a system in the form of a peacekeeping or peace observer force and ensure the disarmament of violent and terrorist groups within the country preventing corruption and mistakes made in the past.

Efforts towards the recognition of the Taliban

After all these years of trying to force a Westernised political regime in Afghanistan have failed it seems as if the official rule of the Taliban is inevitable. If the international community can't exterminate the Taliban perhaps it should work towards a path of modifying the Taliban's values to allow their rule while respecting basic human rights and humanitarian principles. While a solution like that seems impossible it is important to understand that the sanctions against the Taliban and the non-recognition of their political regime are seriously harming their economy and bringing them on the brink of collapse; for a solution like that to work having control and being able to exert power over their economic situation is key. Negotiating a comprehensive treaty that would clearly state the criteria for the eventual recognition of the

⁶⁷ International Security Sector Advisory Team (ISSAT). "Afghanistan: Mediation-Based DDR." *International Security Sector Advisory Team (ISSAT)*, <https://issat.dcaf.ch/Learn/Resource-Library2/Case-Studies/Afghanistan-Mediation-based-DDR#:~:text=DDR%20began%20in%20Afghanistan%20in%202003%20to%20address,accused%20of%20human%20rights%20abuses%20and%20corruption.%20>.

Taliban by the international community and the gradual granting of certain benefits could push the Taliban to comply under international requests and adhere to humanitarian law and counter terrorism policies. However, the effectiveness of such a solution is largely based on the cooperation and the united effort of all members of the international community, especially of the great powers, to provide support to the Taliban government only once the set criteria are met. It is important to take into consideration the fact that some nation's, due to opposing political or religious value and economic objectives could refuse recognising the Taliban regime as well as address the possibility of other Muslim groups arising worldwide in the case of such recognition.

Counter-terrorism measures

Terrorism in Afghanistan not only constitutes the gravest concern of the international community but is also one of the major—if not the major—reasons behind instability in Afghanistan. The implementation of effective border controls, with the aid of international bodies, is one of the many steps towards the elimination of terrorism and towards the establishment of trust between the Taliban and the international community. The promotion of better relations between Afghanistan and its bordering countries is also key to enhancing security within and outside of the nation while tracking not only terrorist movements but also the trafficking of illegal weapons, migrants, and drugs, thereby creating a more safe and secure Afghan state. However, in order for such efforts to be effective and credible, the direct assistance and oversight of their progress by reliable and objective organisations, such as the UN, is essential.

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