

Committee: SPECPOL

Topic: The topic of Afghanistan

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Summary

The conflict in Afghanistan has been going on since the 1970's and the invasion by the Soviet military. Following the political turmoil and unease caused by the constant switching of ruling systems and political beliefs it has left Afghanistan in a state of unrest. In recent years terrorist organisations such as Al-Qaeda and the Taliban has run rampant and have damaged a once prosperous country, the conflict caused by extremist terrorist groups has led to intervention from NATO, but mainly the United States. In response to numerous terrorist attack (suicide bombings and 9/11) by these groups the U.S. sent troops to intervene in Afghanistan. The introduction of U.S. troop seemed to cause more unease and more conflict within the country, this led to a power struggle between American and Afghan forces, along with multiple different parties and belief systems plaguing trains of thought and possibilities for peace treaties. As of Wednesday the 25th of August, the Taliban have control over the Afghan government and peace discussions, and negotiations are ongoing. This topic concerns multiple human rights issues along with questions concerning over-militarisation and foreign intervention.

Definition of Key Terms

Al- Qaeda - Broad-based militant Islamist organisation founded by Osama bin Laden in the 1980's.

The Taliban - 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 resulting breakdown of civil order.

NATO - The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, founded in 1949 and is a group of 30 countries from Europe and North America that exists to protect the people and territory of its members.

Kabul - The capital and largest city in Afghanistan.

ISIS-K - The Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISIS-K, ISKP, ISK) is the official affiliate of the Islamic State movement operating in Afghanistan.

People to Know:

- **Osama bin Laden** - Founder of Al-Qaeda, behind numerous terrorist attacks against the United States and other Western countries.
- **Barack Obama** - 44th president of the United States.
- **Donald Trump** - 45th president of the United States
- **Joe Biden** - 46th (and current) president of the United States.
- **Hamid Karzai** - First elected President of Afghanistan from 2004-2014.
- **Mohammad Omar** - Afghan militant leader of the Taliban who was the commander of Afghanistan from 1996-2001.
- **Ashraf Ghani** - President of Afghanistan from 2014-2021.
- **Haibatullah Akhundzada** - He was head of the Taliban high court for year until he became deputy leader following the death of Mullah Omar died, and then the leader after Mullah Mohammed Mansour was killed by the U.S.

Background Information:

Afghanistan is facing a rough socioeconomic climate; the world bank described their private sector as narrow. Employment is concentrated in low productivity of agriculture, and 60% of households get some income from farming, The country has a large illicit economy: there is illegal mining and opium production and related activities of smuggling. The drugs trade has been an important source of income for the Taliban. The Afghan economy has grown since the US invaded in 2001 but the figures for Afghanistan aren't reliable as they show the average annual growth of 9%+ from 2003-2013 but they suddenly slowed (most likely due to the lower levels of aid) to an average annual growth rate of 2.5% between 2015 and 2020. Afghanistan has a lot of mineral potential, yet it seems as the Afghan people have experienced barely gain from it.

Afghanistan is facing numerous violations of International Humanitarian Law. According to the UNAMA (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan), the Taliban were responsible for 45% of attacks that resulted in civilian deaths and injuries in the first 9 months of 2020, while pro-government forces were responsible for 27%. In 2020 the Ministry of Women's Affairs reported an increase in registered cases of violence against women including murder, assault, and rape. Later that year human rights organisations called for a total ban of "virginity tests" which are abusive procedures routine in a part of criminal proceedings yet the total lack of scientific validity. The Afghan penal code requires court order and consent, but these regulations are commonly overlooked.

The treatment of Media and Human rights defenders has not been much better as Fatima Natasha Khalil and Ahmad Jawid Folad (employees of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission) were killed by an IED attached to their car in Kabul detonated – the vehicle had government plates. While later the NDS detained two staff members of a human rights group for reporting the abuse of hundreds of schoolboys in the Logar province. Since then, the attorney general's office has arrested 18 people yet none of the police officers or senior officials allegedly involved has been detained. Furthermore, when Pajhwok Afghan New reported on 32 ventilators meant for Covid-19 patients being stolen and sold by government official, the editor was summoned for questioning concerning "acting against national security". ISKP killed two and injured six employees of Khurshid TV with an IED on their van. This constant prosecution of media and human rights group begs the question of how much information is truly being shared about what is happening in Afghanistan.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Afghanistan

The United States

- After American Ambassador Adolph Dubs is killed in 1979 the United States cuts off assistance to Afghanistan. This is during a very tense period in Afghan history as there is conflict between Afghanistan and the USSR.
- In 1988 during Afghanistan's war with the Soviet they begin to shift their focus to America, saying that the remaining superpower is the main obstacle to the establishment of a state based on Islam.
- Until the early 2000s, the US refuses to recognise the rule of the Taliban and al-Qaida bombs two American embassies. In response President Bill Clinton orders cruise missile attacks against bin Laden's training camps in Afghanistan but they **miss**.

Al-Qaeda

Beliefs:

- Anti-Semitic → According to their theology. The ideal man is the Muslim holy warrior who is prepared to be martyred for the sake of God and the Jews represent his opposite. The Jews are the Muslims' eternal enemy, and, unlike the Christians, cannot be converted or even accommodated as an inferior minority and therefore must be fought until their annihilated.
- "Declaration of war against the Americans occupying the land of the two holy places"

- Al-Qaeda is opposed to the continuous US military presence in Afghanistan – and states that America’s attitude towards terrorists is hypocritical and arrogant.
- Osama bin Laden declared a holy war on the United States and that has been continued by group, especially, due to frustrations towards the US for taking in certain Al-Qaeda members.

Affiliate Groups:

- Jemaah Islamiyah
- Abu Sayyaf Group
- The Salafist Group for Call and Combat
- Moroccan Islamic combatant Group
- Al Qaeda in Iraq
- Ansar al-Islam
- Ansar al-Sunna
- Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
- Lashkar-e-Taliban

The Taliban

Beliefs:

- An “innovative” form of Sharia Islamic law based on Deobandi fundamentalism and militant Islamism combined with Pashtun social and cultural norms known as Pashtunwali, most Taliban are Pashtun tribesmen.
- Previously when the Taliban was in power, they:
 - ❖ Banned television, music, and cinema
 - ❖ Disapproved of girls over age 10 going to school
 - ❖ Were accused of various human rights and cultural abuses
 - ❖ Introduced/supported punishments which aligned with their strict interpretation of Sharia law (e.g. public executions of murders and adulterers)

- ❖ Required men to grow beards and women to wear the fully body burka.
- ❖ They gained early popularity due to them stamping out corruption, curbing lawlessness and making
- ❖ The around and the areas under their control safe for commerce to flourish.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description
September 11 th , 2001	The event of 9/11 occurs where Hijackers commandeered four commercial planes and crash them into the world trade centre, the pentagon, and a Pennsylvania field: killing thousands. U.S. officials later state that Osama Bin Laden (who they suspect to be hiding in Afghanistan) is suspected in organising the attack.
October 7 th , 2001	In response to unanswered demand that the Taliban hand over bin Laden the U.S and British air force launch airstrikes against Taliban targets and bases in Afghanistan.
November 13 th , 2001	The northern alliance enters Kabul and the Taliban move south towards Kandahar.
December 7 th , 2001	Taliban troops flee their final stronghold in Kandahar and two days later they surrender their final territory: the province of Zabul. Afghan Islamic press declares that “the rule of Taliban in Afghanistan has totally ended”.
August, 2003	Among increased violence in Afghanistan, NATO takes responsibility of Kabul.
2007	Afghan government and NATO confirm that Mullah Dadullah (Taliban commander) was killed in a U.S. led operation.
2008	International community pledges over 15 billion dollars in aid to Afghanistan.
2009	President Barak Obama announces new strategy for the Afghanistan war which will dispatch more military and civilian trailers in addition to the 17,000 troops he had previously ordered.
2011	The U.S. troops take over compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan. Al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden is killed on May 2 nd .

2012	Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai calls for American troops to leave Afghan villages after a U.S. soldier killed 16 Afghan civilians inside their homes.
2013	The Afghan army takes over all military and security operations from NATO.
December, 2014	NATO officially ends its mission in Afghanistan, but U.S. led NATO troops remain to train and advise Afghan forces.
October 15th, 2015	Obama forgoes plans to withdraw troops from Afghanistan by the end of his presidency, and by the end of his term there are still 5,500 troops remaining.
February 2019	U.S. and Taliban sign agreement on peace deal.
September 2019	President Donald Trump calls off peace agreement after U.S. soldier is killed in a Taliban attack.
November 2020	U.S. shares plans to cut troop numbers in Afghanistan down to 2,500 by January.
April 2021	President Joe Biden announces aim to have complete U.S. troop withdraw by 9/11.
July 5th, 2021	U.S. leaves Afghan airfield without notifying the new Afghan commander.
August 10th, 2021	U.S. officials state that Taliban takeover “is not inevitable” after the U.S.’ rapid withdraw from Afghanistan.
August 15th, 2021	The Afghan government collapses as the Taliban takes over Kabul.
August 17th, 2021	Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid promises an inclusive government, security for aid agencies and embassies and women’s rights to work and go to school, but within his group’s understanding of sharia law.
	US President Joe Biden pledges to remove all US citizens from Afghanistan, and that all American soldiers will stay until they leave.
August 18th, 2021	The Taliban kill at least one person and injure six more while breaking up a protest in Jalalabad.
August 20th, 2021	News of targeted killing spark the fear that the Taliban will become just as strict with their ruling as they did when they were previously in power. This fuels the exodus of thousands of refugees to Kabul’s airport.

August 23rd, 2021

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson states that he will convene G7 for emergency discussions concerning Afghanistan.

August 26th, 2021

Explosions near the entrance of Kabul’s airport kill 12 members of the US military and injured another 15, these are the first troops to be killed in action in 18 months. At least 60 Afghan civilians were reported killed and another 140 injured – the US placed blame on ISIS-K. (they later took responsibility for the suicide bombing)

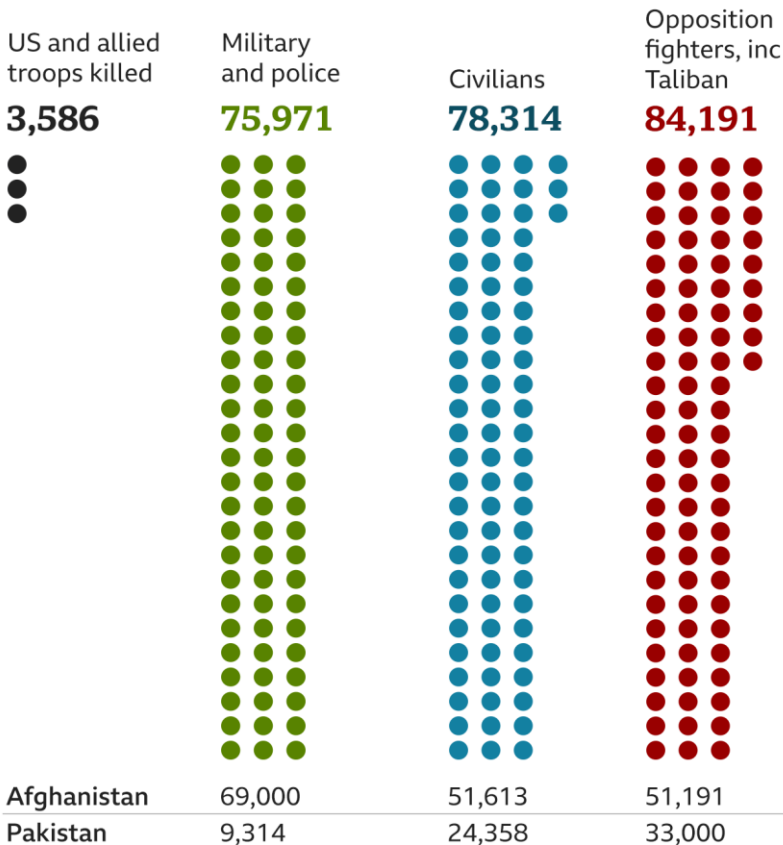
August 27th, 2021

The death toll from the explosion increases to more than 180 people – 169 Afghans and 13 US troops. US troops claim they killed the ISIS-K member responsible for the planning of the bombing through a drone strike.

Helpful Statistics:

Thousands of civilians in Afghanistan and Pakistan have died in the conflict, 2001-21

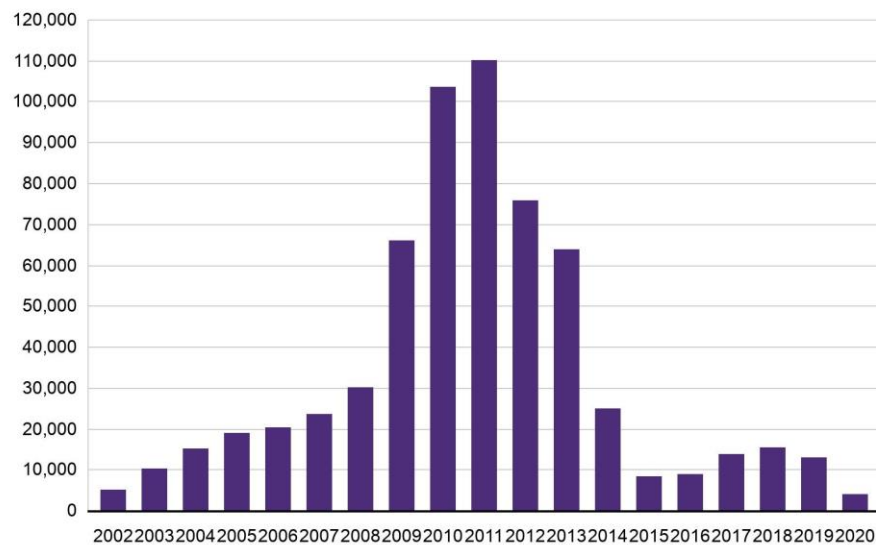
● 1 = 1,000 victims




Note: Civilian numbers include aid workers/journalists/contractors
 Source: Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, Brown University (All numbers are estimates)

US troop levels in Afghanistan

2002 - 2020



2020 figure as of December

Source: Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), Congressional Research Service 

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Secretary-General urges Security Council to ‘Stand as one’ to ensure that human rights are respected in Afghanistan, while Delegates call for protection of civilians. (16th of August 2021)
- Adoption of Resolution 2513 which aimed for “Bringing peace to Afghanistan” and was signed by the US and the Taliban. (10th of March 2020)
- Report on the 1988 Afghanistan Sanctions committee – includes details of US sanctions on Afghanistan (14th of December 2018)

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

- 2013 à The Obama administration starts formal peace talks with the Taliban.
- 2015 à Peace talks occur between the Taliban and Afghan officials.
- 2019 à Talks between Zalmay Khalilzad (the US special representative for Afghanistan reconciliation) and the Taliban produce a cautious agreement in the direction for peace.
- 2020 à The U.S. and the Taliban sign a peace agreement on February 29th. The two sides agree on the terms that the U.S. withdraws troops and the Taliban stops attacks on Americans.

Possible Risks

- The question of women's right in Afghanistan
- The question of possible increased rates of xenophobia or race/religion related hate crimes following in the U.S. following the Taliban's rule (similar events happened after 9/11)
- The question of the safety and security of the Afghan people as many have recently died trying to seek refuge and the U.S. (at the moment) seems focused on saving American lives first.
- The possibility of a witch hunt for Afghan civilians who previously opposed the Taliban or supported allied forces.

Possible Solutions

A solution is difficult given the history and political situation within the region, the main concern is limiting the amount of lives lost, limiting the damage to Afghanistan, and trying to combat and settle the power imbalance. There is search for a political solution from NATO allies which inspires hope for a solution. Through collaboration and cooperation from member states a solution is possible, meanwhile, temporary solutions such as aid and rescue to Afghan civilians might be helpful.

- Temporary solutions
 - o Sending in troops to aid with evacuation
 - o Donating funds or providing aid to ensure the safety of Afghan civilians
 - o Figuring out a way to evacuate vulnerable Afghan civilians without causing further conflict
- Re-recognition of the peace treaty between the U.S. and the Taliban.
 - o Continue discussion on amendments to treaty which suit the people of the U.S. and those of Afghanistan.

Bibliography

USEFUL WEBSITES:

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- More in depth and further back timeline:
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