

**Forum:** Historical Security Council (HSC)  
**Issue:** The Question of Afghanistan  
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**Position:** President Chair

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## Introduction

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is a landlocked South Asian nation sharing its borders with Pakistan, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and China. Not only is an immense expanse of its territory covered by the Hindu Kush mountain range, others with fertile plants and the remaining with desert, Afghanistan is also strategically situated along with Silk Road. Historically, the nation has seen involvement with a variety of military campaigns, notable ones including those by the Muslim Arabs, Mongols, Soviets, Alexander the Great and in recent times, the United States and NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) countries. Regardless, it maintains its title as unconquerable, or the “graveyard of empires”. Currently, Afghanistan remains a unitary presidential Islamic republic with a diverse ethnic population of Uzbeks, Tajiks, Pashtuns and Hazaras. Along with being a member state of the United Nations, it is also a member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Group of 77, Economic Cooperation Organization and Non-Aligned Movement.

The Taliban grew to prominence in 1996, when they were in control of Kabul and subsequently most of Afghanistan, implementing a regime identified by the Physicians for Human Rights as “methodological” and “violent”. Between 1996 and 2001, alongside conflicts between the government and non-state actors, al-Qaeda also operated inside Afghanistan, raising concern from nations such as the United States. Following the official overthrow of the Taliban government in 2001, Hamid Karzai was instituted as the head of the Afghan Interim Administration which gained support from the UN Security

Council backed International Security Assistance Force to provide security. While coalition troops began rebuilding Afghanistan, Taliban forces were attempting to regroup in a neighboring nation, Pakistan. Despite Afghanistan remaining a poor nation due to not only this insurgency but inherent corruption and lack of foreign economic involvement and investment, the government was able to build semblances of democratic structures and attempt to reform healthcare, economy, education, agriculture and transport technologies with support from foreign investors. In light of a Taliban shadow government forming in certain Afghani regions around 2009, the government - under the Karzai administration - sought to hold peace negotiations with these non-state actor leaders which were rebuffed until 2015.

To apprehend the growing power of the Taliban, the United States invasion of Afghanistan occurred and was renamed as the U.S. War in Afghanistan, or otherwise Operation Enduring Freedom - Afghanistan. Spanning from 2001 and currently still in progress, the war began with support from the United Kingdom and Canada, and now bears support from a 40-nation coalition including all member states of NATO. The stated intent of the war was to dismantle al-Qaeda and restore safety to Afghanistan by stripping the Taliban of power. It is speculated that the war originates from the Taliban's refusal to extradite Bin Laden without evidence after the September 2001 attacks, leading to the declaration of war. The United States and UK were joined by the Northern Alliance and ISAF, eventually with support from NATO. As UN initiated peace talks have occurred between involved parties, the United States announced the end of combat operations in 2014, Nato ended ISAF combat operations and British forces handed over bases to the Afghan government. However, till date, nearly 13,000 foreign troops remain in Afghanistan as a fight against the Taliban as a clause of Operation Resolute Support, led by NATO. Thousands of soldiers, contractors, national security force members, civilians and non-state actors have been killed in the light of this war and the many conflicts that surround it.

## Major Parties Involved and Their Views

### The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA)

The PDPA was formed and elected in a time period during which parliamentary elections and the organization of political parties were promoted, otherwise known as the period of constitutional reform. The party came into being in 1965 under secretary-general Mohammad Taraki. The PDPA's political ideology saw a shift from national democratic and progressive to Marxist-Leninist. The two factions of the PDPA - Khalaf and Parcham - united in 1978 to stage a coup, successfully taking control of Afghanistan. Once in power, they institutionalized radical social reforms in light with their non-religious and anti-clerical ideologies. Reforms such as land tenure, women's rights and education were too progressive for the religious Afghan society and thus tensions mounted in 1979 to a guerrilla war, causing the rise of non-state actors and the major conflict in Afghanistan. What's key to note is that the Taliban did not have to fight their way into Afghanistan's provincial capitals in the capture that took place over the month of August 2021, but rather brokered a series of surrenders, says Jack Watling, a research fellow for land warfare and military sciences at the Royal United Services Institute in London. Over the last few years of fighting, the group managed to gain control of some 50% of the country by seizing rural areas. And when they began making headway in cities, many Afghan forces gave in to them, convinced that the government in Kabul would not back them up. This goes to show the level at which the PDPA's control and their decisions to leave the country amidst this turmoil of crisis forcing the surrender of the Afghan National Security Force.

### Taliban

The emergence of the predominantly Pashtun Taliban occurred in northern Pakistan during the early 1990s, the same time as Soviet troops were withdrawn from Afghanistan. Their objectives upon formation were to restore Sharia law, as well as peace and security, in Afghanistan. When in power, they instituted radical reforms such as the

banning of media, certain physical or appearance standards, educational reforms that oppressed girls and public executions. While Pakistan denies being involved in the formation of the Taliban, it is also noteworthy that they were the last nation to officially break diplomatic ties with the group. The Afghan Taliban were accused, in the months following the September 11 attacks in New York, of providing sanctuary to al-Qaeda; they were quickly apprehended and stripped of power however quickly regrouped and re-emerged. By 1998, the Taliban were in control of approximately 90% of Afghanistan, including Kabul and Herat. Not only did the regime engage in violations of international human rights, they also engaged in various cultural abuses and damage to Afghanistan's heritage and cultural infrastructure. Despite the Taliban facing threat from lower troop numbers compared to foreign powers and the rising strength of the Islamic State militants, they remain in the news today, wreaking havoc in a conflicted Afghan society. The first official negotiations between the Taliban and the Afghan government was during July 2015 after Afghan women met Taliban representatives in Oslo. In August of 2021, The Taliban claimed victory in Afghanistan after taking over the capital Kabul, bringing to a swift end almost 20 years of a US-led coalition's presence in the country. Taliban forces and fighters loyal to local leader Ahmad Massoud battled in Afghanistan's Panjshir Valley, more than two weeks after the Islamist militia seized power, as Taliban leaders in the capital, Kabul, worked to form a government. Mujahid said the announcement of a new government was a few days away, while Taliban official Ahmadullah Muttaqi said a ceremony was being organised at the presidential palace.

### **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)**

NATO, in 2003, took over the United Nations' International Security Assistance Force whose purpose was to "enable the Afghan government to provide effective security across the country and develop new Afghan security forces to ensure Afghanistan would never again become a safe haven for terrorists," (NATO, 2015). Originally intended to secure Kabul, it gradually expanded to span over all of Afghanistan and had 130,000 deployed troops at its peak. As the conflict progressed, ISAF's presence

became engaged in the counter-insurgency fight as well as a national reform and rebuilding effort. Being a pro-government force, ISAF provided assistance to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) to conduct security operations and reduce the spread and power of insurgent forces. Post 2011, NATO and ISAF transferred security responsibilities to the ANSF which was fully completed in 2014. Their responsibilities changed from combat to training and advisory roles. Currently, ISAF runs a smaller mission called Resolute Support to provide training, advice and reforms in governance and socio-economic development. ISAF was arguably one of history's largest coalition; it was a combination of troops from over 51 NATO members and other partner nations.

### The Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF)

The Afghan National Security Forces, also abbreviated to the ANDSF, currently comprising of the Afghan Armed Forces, the National Army, Air Force, National Police, Local Police and National Directorate of Security, are a security force authorized with autonomy and full power to conduct security operations and minimize threats of insurgent forces in 2014. Their power transcended from support provided by the International Security Assistance Force which was regulated by a NATO coalition. While theoretically a power to curb the impacts of non-state actors in Afghanistan, recent reports bring to light flaws in the transitory process and cracks in the ANSF's facade. Business Insider draws upon conclusions made from a SIGAR report that the \$70 billion that the US have invested in the ANSF have been futile. SIGAR chief John Spoko states that "the US government was ill-prepared to conduct [security-sector assistance] programs of the size and scope required in Afghanistan." Enough has not been done to support the security sector, build trust in soldiers and has instead created dependency issues between trainers and troops. Additionally, transparency and corruption issues in Afghanistan add to the complication, with nearly 200,000 of the alleged 350,000 ANDSF troops are ghost soldiers. These issues, among others, weaken the defense force at the forefront of the fight against non-state actors and the insurgency and conflict in Afghanistan. After the US troops were ordered to leave Afghanistan, the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) faced a tough endeavor functioning wholly on their own for the first time. Regrettably but unsurprisingly, the ANSF have suffered high casualty rates and struggled to deter an increasingly active insurgency. In particularly contested areas, the ANSF have struggled to hold district centers and have been tied up in tit-for-tat engagements that required "tactical retreats" until enough reinforcements could be mustered, oftentimes aided by coalition air support and intelligence. Forced essentially into either a defensive or reactive posture, the ANSF has rarely been able to dislodge the Taliban from locations where they have traditionally held de facto sway.

## The United States and The Northern Alliance

Otherwise known as the United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan, the Afghan Northern Alliance was a united military front formed in 1996 following the Taliban’s capture of Kabul. It was composed of key leaders of the Islamic State of Afghanistan and leaders of other ethnic groups and fought a defensive war against the Taliban’s regime with support from nations such as Tajikistan, Iran, Russia, India and Turkey. Upon the US invasion of Afghanistan, the Northern Alliance were cornered and only were in control of 10% of Afghanistan, thus they benefited from the American troop provision in the ground war which was won in 2001. At that period in time with the rise of the Taliban not foreseen, the Northern Alliance were disbanded and members joined the Karzai administration. President Biden’s address came just 11 days before the 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks that precipitated the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan. “My fellow Americans, the war in Afghanistan is now over,” Biden said from the White House. At 3:29 p.m. ET on Monday, one minute before midnight Kabul time, the last C-17 cargo aircraft carrying U.S. forces took off from Hamid Karzai International Airport, effectively ending America’s two-decade military campaign in Afghanistan. Since the takeover by the Taliban, the US has deployed thousands of troops to help remove its staff and the Afghans who assisted with its mission. Helicopters transporting embassy personnel could be heard over the city, and there were reports of smoke rising near the embassy compound as important documents were destroyed.

### Development of Issue/Timeline

Date	Event	Outcome
1986	Proxy and civil wars in Afghanistan following the installment of Najibullah’s cabinet	Contributes to unstable and fragile political and social situation, creating necessary conditions for relevant non-state actors to take beginning measures for insurgency.
September 11th, 2001	Terrorist attacks at the World Trade Center Twin Towers New York, the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. and Shanksville, Pennsylvania.	Increases tensions between Afghanistan and America, leads to a series of disputes - diplomatic and combat - between American government and troops, and non-state actors in Afghanistan, notably leaders of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.
September 18th, 2001	President George W Bush legislates the use of force against personnel involved	

	in the 9/11 attacks, declaring a war on terrorism.	
2003	NATO takes over the UN's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)	ISAF flourishes as a military force with a strong defense, powerful as a combat force but also engaged in rebuilding Afghanistan and supporting the Afghan National Security Forces.
February 17, 2009	Obama recommits to Afghanistan, announcing his plans to send 17,000 troops to the war zone	
2014	ISAF disbanded, number of troops reduced and role of the ISAF changed.	Power transitioned to ANSF who arguably struggled under the new burden and lack of proper training and support from the United States.
2018	Taliban launches major attacks in Kabul killing 115	President Trump signals prolongation of Afghan war. Indication that despite all efforts, international support, aid and past military coalitions, Afghanistan still remains volatile, highly engaged in conflict and at constant risk of attack from non-state actors.
January 28, 2019	The Taliban and the United States reached a draft agreement after the end of the fourth round of peace talks in Doha, which included the withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan, and the non-use of the country by terrorist organizations as a base.	
April 14, 2021	US President Joe Biden announced that the withdrawal of his forces from Afghanistan will begin on May 1, and end on September 11, ending the longest American war in history. This	

	represents an extension of an earlier deadline for withdrawal, May 1, agreed between Washington and the Taliban.	
May, 2021	The United States and NATO begin withdrawing 9,500 troops, including 2,500 Americans who were still in Afghanistan.	The Taliban took control of the Narkh district, just outside the capital, Kabul, Americans withdrew from Kandahar Air Force One and the Taliban took control of two districts in Wardak Province near Kabul, before capturing two districts in Ghazni Province.
June, 2021	Senior government officials said more than 150 government soldiers were killed in 24 hours as the fighting raged. They added that fighting is taking place in 26 of the 34 states.	Faced with the rapid advance of Taliban fighters, President Ashraf Ghani appoints two new interior and defense ministers.
July, 2021	American forces quietly withdrew from Bagram, their main military base in Afghanistan and handed it over to government forces	It was understood to be effectively ending their intervention in the war. Biden announces that the withdrawal of his forces, "will be completed on August 31." The Taliban announces control of three borders with Pakistan, Iran and Turkmenistan in Herat. According to a senior US general, Taliban militants now control half of Afghanistan.
August, 2021	The Taliban swiftly took control of major provincial capitals, including Kandahar, Lashkar Gah and Shebergan.	The United States issued the deployment of 3,000 (slowly became 5,000) combat troops to help evacuate diplomats, civilians and Afghans who aided the United States during the war.
August 15, 2021	Incumbent president Ashraf Ghani flees the country	The Taliban announce the Fall of Kabul



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