



Future Generations *CalsMUN 2022*

Research Report

Forum: Security Council

Issue: The Question of Preventing Further Escalation Regarding the Afghan War

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Personal Introduction

Pieter van Lelyveld

Hello delegates,

My name is Pieter van Lelyveld, I'm 15 years old and I will be the main chair for this year's edition of the Security Council. I live in Haarlem where I attend the Stedelijk Gymnasium Haarlem and help organize HMUN as the DSGA. In my free time I like to breakdance and play sports. I have been doing MUN for as long as I can remember and CalsMUN will be my 10th conference. I hope you guys are looking forward to CalsMUN and I will see you there!



Oliver Remans



Introduction

The historical context of Afghanistan is defined by consecutive periods of intense armed conflict. Most recently, the United States of America withdrew its troops from the region, ending the 2 decade-long Afghanistan war that has resulted in an estimated 243,000 deaths. Following the evacuation of troops, the Taliban rapidly regained control over the capital city of Kabul on the 15th of August 2021, and re-established the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

Regarding the decision to withdraw troops, President Joe Biden of the USA stated that the choice was between leaving or further "escalating the conflict" into a third decade of conflict. However, despite promises of peace¹ and a blanket amnesty against individuals that worked with the former government, the Taliban has so far failed to ensure security and order in Afghanistan. Facing the threat of terrorism, a collapsing economy and the withdrawal of international support, Afghanistan is likely to experience escalated conflict in coming months and years. This research paper aims to give delegates a fundamental understanding of the unstable situation in Afghanistan, so that they may suggest targeted solutions that will prevent further escalation.



Definition of Key Terms

Sharia

These are rules enshrined within the Quran that make up part of some Islamic traditions. Some nations implement interpretations of this “divine law” into their national judicial system, such as the Taliban. The Taliban are notorious for their harsh version of Sharia law, which includes corporal and capital punishment, and exclusion of woman from social, economic and political life.

Doha Agreement

Officially known as the Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan, this is an agreement signed by representatives of the United States’ government and the Taliban on February 29th 2020. It outlined the planned NATO exit from Afghanistan in 2021, which would mark the end of the war in the region. In return, the Taliban pledged that Afghanistan would never again become a safe haven for terrorist organisations, such as Al Qaeda.



General Overview

The complex modern history of conflict in Afghanistan started with a 1973 coup d'état that replaced the Kingdom of Afghanistan, led by King Mohammed Zahir Shah, with the equally autocratic one-party Republic of Afghanistan, led by Daoud Khan. This government was short-lived, as it was overthrown in 1978 by a second coup d'état, the Saur Revolution, in which the communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) took control of the government and established the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. In order to protect their interests in the region, and support the new communist state, the USSR invaded Afghanistan in 1979. The communist regime and the Soviet occupation was deeply unpopular among radical Islamic rebels, which formed a mujahideen (jihad) that fought against the Soviets for 9 years. After having suffered heavy casualties, and facing political instability in Moscow, the USSR pulled out of Afghanistan in 1989 and the USSR collapsed entirely in 1991. Consequently, Kabul fell to the mujahideen in 1992. The Taliban emerged as a militia faction within the loosely-associated mujahideen groups, and was funded by Pakistan to quickly take control of several Afghan provinces in the Afghan Civil War. In 1996, Kabul fell to the Taliban, and the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan was formed.

Meanwhile, Osama bin Laden had been expelled from Saudi Arabia and now resided in Afghanistan under the protection of the Taliban, where he managed his Al Qaida terror group network. In Resolution 1333 in late 2000, the Security Council strongly condemned "the use of the areas of Afghanistan for the sheltering and training of terrorists" by the Taliban. About 9 months later, a series of deadly terrorist attacks, known as the 9/11 attacks, committed by Al Qaeda prompted the USA to prepare an invasion of Afghanistan after the Taliban refused extradite Osama Bin Laden. This sparked the War in Afghanistan in 2001, in which the Taliban were initially defeated and fled to neighbouring Pakistan to reorganise. In 2003, the Taliban, under new leadership, launched an insurgency against the new government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Hence continued the almost two decade-long conflict, spanning 4 US presidents, marked by countless war crimes and atrocities committed on either side.

In August 2021, the United States of America, in accordance with the Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan (otherwise known as the Doha Agreement) of 2020, withdrew



its forces under the pretext that the Taliban would no longer harbour Al Qaeda. With American and NATO troops gone, Kabul once again fell on August 15th amid a chaotic American evacuation from Kabul International Airport. With virtually no resistance from the Afghan military, the Republic was replaced by the *de facto* rule of the Taliban government, in the restored Islamic Emirate. Resistance efforts are ongoing in the Panjshir province, where Republic soldiers, resistance members and allied groups are engaged in conflict with the Taliban.

The Taliban has promised an “inclusive government” that “represents all the people of Afghanistan”³. However, few efforts have been made to realize these promises. The new cabinet is exclusively male and Taliban, and mostly of the Pashtun ethnicity.⁴ The new government is far from being unified either, as there are political divisions between hardliners and moderate cabinet members. These ideological differences has sparked disagreements and squabbles⁵ that may escalate into more significant infighting. To this extent, the volatile nature of religious political extremism may threaten the organisational cohesion of the Taliban leadership, resulting in fragmentation. Before coming into power, the Taliban had been described as prone to factionalism; being not much more than a “disorganized” and “loose network”⁶. This leaves little faith that the Taliban is able to effectively lead Afghanistan or prevent descent into civil war. For now, the Taliban has mostly crystallised its control over Afghan institutions, yet it’s ability to maintain law and order will be tested by the emerging humanitarian and banking crises.

Furthermore, the Taliban has pledged security for Afghans; however, they have already failed to address the growing threat of terrorism. The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan (ISIL-K) had claimed responsibility for hundreds of attacks in 2021 alone, targeting civilians and religious minorities. Historically, ISIL-K and the Taliban have clashed ideologically; and conflict between the two groups will carry over now that the Taliban has emerged victorious in the Afghan war. Although the group is currently weakened, the US withdrawal and anarchic political landscape is likely to benefit it. If the Taliban is unable to provide security, ISIL-K may increase its influence in rural areas of the country and make territorial gains that threatens the Taliban promise of “peaceful living”⁷. In August, ISIL-K claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing that took place in Kabul Airport during the



American evacuation, that killed almost 200 people. Notably, the suicide bomber was an individual that had been imprisoned only days earlier, until the Taliban has indiscriminately freed prisons during its Kabul takeover. Similar incidents occurred at Shia mosques in Kandahar and Kunduz, killing 65 and 50 people respectively. Evidently, the new Taliban government is ill-equipped to suppress ISIL-K, and terrorist activities are likely to only increase in frequency and intensity. Additionally, an ISIL-K resurgence also has international repercussions as they are likely to engage in transnational attacks.

Some have speculated that Afghanistan will likely erupt into a new civil war due to rising poverty and political division. Joint Chiefs Chairman General Mark Milley of the United States of America has stated that “the conditions” are “likely to develop [into] a civil war” due to the Taliban’s inability to establish effective governance⁸. He has also spoken on a possible resurgence of terrorist activity in the nation within the next “12, 24, 36 months”. Similarly, Pakistan’s Prime Minister Imran Khan has expressed concerns over civil war if the government is unable to “include all the factions” of the Taliban⁹.



Major Parties Involved

Organisations

Islamic Movement of Taliban

The Taliban are an Islamic fundamentalist political and jihadist group that have formed the *de facto* government of Afghanistan. The Taliban has its origin as a faction of the loosely-associated Mujahideen which fought against the USSR during the Soviet-Afghan war. They were ousted from power during the United States' invasion of Afghanistan in 2001; thereafter launching an insurgence campaign against the occupying NATO militaries and the new Afghan government. Following the withdrawal of NATO troops in August 2021, the Taliban has removed the acting government from office, seized American military equipment, and once again imposed Sharia law on the citizens of Afghanistan. The Taliban has expressed its intent to form an "inclusive government" with more modern interpretations of Sharia law. However, their return to power has resulted in the erosion of woman's and girl's rights to education and work.

Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

This is the only internationally recognised government of Afghanistan. They were in charge of the country since 2004, and was supported economically and militaristically by the United States and NATO, until they were ousted by the Taliban late last year. Notably, Republic representatives were not present when the Doha Agreements were signed in 2020, which outlined a NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan. Once American support had departed, the Afghan Armed Forces gave practically no resistance to advancing Taliban forces, which swiftly took control of Kabul on the 15th of August. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani fled the country to the UAE, although the Republic has not formally surrendered to the Taliban. The current United Nations seat is held by the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan as the Taliban regime is unrecognised internationally. When addressing the Security Council on the 16th of August 2021, the delegate of Afghanistan stated that we must "prevent Afghanistan from descending into civil war" and that the Security Council must use every means at its disposal to call for an "immediate cessation of violence" and respect for human rights¹⁰.



Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant – Khorasan Province (ISIL-K)

ISIL-K is an Islamic terrorist organisation affiliated with the Islamic State that is mostly active in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Although they share Islamic extremist views, the Taliban and ISIL-K have historically been adversaries. The Taliban, nationalistic in nature, has the goal of ruling Afghanistan with Sharia law; whereas ISIL-K is dedicated to establishing a caliphate that stretches across Central Asia and South Asia. The influence of ISIL-K is likely to grow now that American and Afghan Armed Forces are no longer present. Additionally, the group preys on poor Afghans that are vulnerable to extremist ideas, which means they will take advantage of the emerging humanitarian crises to grow their numbers¹¹.

North American Treaty Organisation (NATO)

NATO is a political and military alliance between governments mostly in North America and Europe. NATO allies invaded Afghanistan in 2001 after the Taliban refused to hand over Osama Bin Laden following the 9/11 attacks. In accordance with the Doha Agreement, NATO withdrew from Afghanistan in 2021, and has suspended all activities in the nation.¹²

Countries

Afghanistan

Afghanistan has seen almost perpetual war for over 40 years. Now that the Taliban has established the new Islamic Emirate, all international aid has been cut off. As a result, the country has entered an economic crisis as well as a hunger crisis that the Taliban is unable to handle. About half of the population, almost 20 million people, are facing acute food shortages. Meanwhile, the rise of poverty is proving beneficial to the growth of terrorist organisations across the country. The United Nations seat for Afghanistan is held by a representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, rather than the unrecognised Taliban government.

United States of America

The United States' involvement in Afghanistan began with the invasion in 2001, after the Taliban refused to extradite Osama Bin Laden. After 20 years of war, the US signed the Doha agreement with the Taliban – agreeing to withdraw all NATO troops as long as the



Afghanistan never becomes a safe haven for terrorist organisations again. The final US aircraft left Afghanistan on the 30th of August 2021, leaving the country under full Taliban control. In addition to this, the United States abandoned billions of dollars' worth of military equipment, which the Taliban have now seized. Ultimately, the United States have been accused of a state-building failure in Afghanistan that has contributed to the Taliban's return to power.

Pakistan

The Pakistani government has been accused of supporting the Taliban financially and militaristically since its origin out of the mujahideen¹³. The government has repeatedly denied these accusations. Whilst addressing the United Nations General Assembly, Prime minister Imran Khan expressed her support for “strengthening and stabilizing the current government” for the sake of the people of Afghanistan. Pakistan has not yet formally recognised the Taliban government.



Timeline of Key Events

Date	Description of Event
<i>July 17th 1973</i>	Coup d'état under Daoud Khan
<i>April 27th 1978</i>	Saur Revolution
<i>December 24th 1979 – February 15th 1989</i>	Soviet-Afghan War
<i>April 16th 1992</i>	Democratic Republic of Afghanistan collapses
<i>September 27th 1996</i>	Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan established under Taliban rule
<i>September 11th 2001</i>	9/11 attacks against the United States of America
<i>October 7th 2001</i>	United States invasion of Afghanistan
<i>October 7th 2001 - August 15th 2021</i>	War in Afghanistan
<i>January 26th 2015</i>	ISIL-K formed
<i>February 29th 2020</i>	Doha Agreement signed
<i>August 15th 2021</i>	Kabul falls to the Taliban
<i>August 17th 2021</i>	National Resistance Front (NFR) established in Panjshir
<i>August 26th 2021</i>	ISIL-K suicide bombing at Kabul Airport
<i>August 30th 2021</i>	US withdrawal finalised
<i>September 14th 2021</i>	European Parliament passes resolution deploring Taliban takeover
<i>December 22nd 2021</i>	Security Council adopts Resolution 2615



Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

The Kabul takeover has been strongly condemned by several international organisations. In September 2021, the European Parliament passed a resolution deploring the Taliban's use of "force of arms" to take power, and for its failure to "uphold promises for an inclusive government"¹⁴. The World Bank and IMF have suspended all financial support flowing into the country, which had previously made up 40% of Afghanistan's GDP. In Resolution 2615 (2021), the Security Council decided that humanitarian aid efforts into Afghanistan are permitted, as long as they don't benefit the Taliban or other terrorist organisation (in accordance with Resolution 1988 (2011)). Besides these efforts, little has been done to prevent escalation of conflict in Afghanistan.

Possible Solutions

Delegates may consider clauses that call for the formation of an inclusive government in Afghanistan, especially one that involved female representatives. Delegates may also call for international organisations and governments to refrain from recognising the Taliban as the *de jure* government of Afghanistan, in order to encourage reform. Lastly, delegates may consider how to facilitate the movement of refugees out of Afghanistan to escape persecution. Ultimately, in order to prevent further conflict, delegates must attempt to counter the terrorist threat in Afghanistan and find a way to ensure that human rights are being respected in the region.



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