

GECMUN 8

Background Guide

Security Council 1

Promoting Peace and Stability in Afghanistan

SDG: 16. Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

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Committee Introduction

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is the leading force for resolving any existing acts of aggression in the world. UNSC holds the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, as well as developing friendly relationships among nations, cooperating in solving international problems and in promoting respect for human rights, and being a center for harmonizing the actions of nations.

The Security Council calls upon the parties to a dispute to settle it by peaceful means and recommends methods of adjustment. In some cases, the Security Council can impose sanctions or even authorize the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security. Based on these missions, the Security Council has the responsibility to ensure the protection of every other members' rights. It has 15 Members, and each Member has one vote.

Agenda Introduction

The current situation in Afghan political unity remains fragile. Most civilians of Afghanistan overwhelmingly desire peace. However, various challenges that Afghanistan faces make this country one of the most fragile and insecure states in the world. Some examples of those hardships are: economy crumbling, bad living conditions, Afghanistan war, terrorism, gender inequality, and many human rights violations.

Letter from the Chairs

Welcome delegates,

We are Eunju Seo, Flora Park, and Joona Kim from North London Collegiate School Jeju. It is our greatest pleasure to be serving you as co-chairs for the United Nations Security Council at GECMUN 8. Throughout the conference, we will be helping you to engage in a fruitful debate regarding pressing international issues with fellow delegates and devise effective resolutions.

In the Security Council, you will be discussing the agenda: promoting peace and stability in Afghanistan. When researching for the conference we would advise you to make efficient use of various online and offline resources such as, but not limited to, the CIA World Factbook, government statistics, journal articles, and most importantly, this chair report. We highly recommend that all delegates acquire sufficient background knowledge on this topic as strong research will serve you well during the conference, helping you to formulate effective and practical solutions.

If you have any further inquiries about the procedure or topic, please don't hesitate to contact us at any time. We wholeheartedly look forward to meeting you at the conference!

Kind regards,

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Key Terms

Coup

a sudden illegal, often violent, taking of government power, especially by part of an army

Coalition

a group formed of different organizations or people who agree to act together, usually temporarily, to achieve something

IED

An improvised explosive device (IED) attack is the use of a “homemade” bomb and/or destructive device to destroy, incapacitate, harass, or distract

Osama bin Laden

founder of the militant Islamist organization al-Qaeda and mastermind of numerous terrorist attacks against the United States and other Western powers

Reconnaissance

the process of getting information about enemy forces or positions by sending out small groups of soldiers or by using aircraft

Sovereignty

supreme power especially over a body politic; freedom from external control, autonomy

Surveillance

the careful watching of someone, especially by an organization such as the police or the army

Taliban

ultraconservative political and religious faction that emerged in Afghanistan in the mid-1990s

Historical Background

Afghanistan, a landlocked country in south-central Asia, holds its geographical significance as an important trading route that connects southern and eastern Asia to Europe and the Middle East. Due to its prized location, this piece of land has endured a long history of domination by various empire-builders such as Darius I of Babylonia, Alexander the Great of Macedonia, and Mahmud of Ghazni. Despite Afghanistan’s long history of conflicts, the country is currently still part of a prolonged conflict - one that has been on for over 20 years. The Afghanistan war, being the longest war in U.S. history, is an ongoing war following the invasion of Afghanistan by the US forces in 2001. But before the explanations of the war itself, understanding the change of power (leading up to the war) becomes crucial for the overall comprehension of the instability in Afghanistan.

Change of power throughout history

1747	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Founding of the nation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ahmand Shah Durrani conquers the area, marking the last of the Afghan empires
1830-1895	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “The Great Game” between Great Britain and Russia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Struggle for the control of central and southern parts of Asia ● This led to the invasion of Afghanistan by Britain, causing the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839-1842) and the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-1880)
1919	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Afghans win independence from the British empire ● Declared as a sovereign and fully independent state by King Amanullah Khan
1964	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The last king of Afghanistan, Mohammed Zahir Shah, creates a new constitution based on modern democracy
1974	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mohammed Daud Khan stages a coup and institutes a republican government <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ He becomes Afghanistan’s first president
1978	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The communist People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan seizes power <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This leads to a civil war between the new Soviet-backed government and the mujahideen (backed by the Pakistani government)
1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The government falls to the Taliban

Taliban is a strictly conservative religious and political group that seized power in the 1990’s in Afghanistan. This government had imposed its extreme Islam beliefs on the

entire country, perpetrating countless human rights against its citizens and turning a blind eye to the suffering of its people (from poverty, starvation, etc.). Taliban is the party that supported and protected al-Qaida and his armed forces from the United States, triggering the start of war to some extent.

Considering the following, Afghanistan’s political standpoint gives an explanation to the contemporary government and the situation in 2001. On September 11, 2001, 3,000 people were killed from the 9/11 terrorist attacks on Washington D.C. and New York. The United States believed that Osama Bin Laden, the head of al-Qaeda, was the man behind these attacks and threatened to use its armed forces unless the Taliban handed him over. As a response to the refusal, a US-led coalition begins to bomb Afghanistan, targeting bin Laden’s al-Qaeda fighters and the Taliban. This incident marked the start of the Afghanistan war.

The aims of the international conflict can be categorised into 3 main phases according to the flow of time:

Phase 1 (first 2 months) → toppling the Taliban	
Oct. 2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US begins bombing Afghanistan
Nov 2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US and several other countries like the UK assist the Northern Alliance take control of Kabul, the capital of Afghan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ This incident drove the Taliban out of Kabul • After the fall of Kabul, the major Afghan powers are invited to the United Nations conference in Germany
<p>...Following the conference, the Bonn Agreement was signed by these factions on December 5th, 2001. Uphold by the UNSC Resolution 1383, Hamid Karzai is assigned as the interim administration head and an international peacekeeping force is created to maintain peace and security in Kabul..</p>	
Phase 2 (2002 - 2008) → US strategy of defeating the Taliban military → rebuilding the core institutions in Afghan state	
April 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President George W. Bush calls for the reconstruction of Afghanistan
June 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hamid Karzai is appointed as the head Afghanistan’s transitional government <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Presidential powers are balanced out by giving authority to the elected parliament ◦ (e.g. to veto senior official nominees and to impeach presidents)
May 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donald Rumsfeld, the Secretary of Defense, declares an end to “major combat” during a briefing with the reporters in Kabul

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President George W. Bush declares that the “mission [is] accomplished”, signifying the end to fighting in Iraq
Jan 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A constitution is agreed by an assembly of 502 Afghan delegates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ This act was seen as a positive development towards democracy
Oct 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hamid Karzai becomes the first democratically elected head of Afghanistan • Three weeks after the election, Osama bin Laden releases a videotaped message saying, “We want to restore freedom to our nation, just as you lay waste to our nation”
July 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insurgencies rapidly increase in number <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Intense fighting erupting in the south ◦ Number of suicide attacks quintuples from 2005 to 2006 (27 to 139)
May 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mullah Dadullah, a Taliban military commander, is assassinated in a joint operation by Afghan, U.S., and NATO forces in the south of Afghanistan

Phase 3 (2008-present)

→ protecting the population from Taliban attacks

→ supporting to regenerate the insurgents into Afghan society

Jan/ Feb 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By January of 2009, there are thirty-seven thousands troops in Afghanistan, lead by US and NATO • US president Barack Obama announces plans to send seventeen thousand more troops
July 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involving around four thousand Marines, US launches a major offensive in southern Afghanistan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ This represents a major test for US military’s counterinsurgency strategy
2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With a long term goal of maintaining political partnership, Nato and Afghanistan sets up the Enduring Partnership in 2010 • That is further strengthened in 2016 after the NATO Summit in Warsaw
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Osama bin Laden is found in Pakistan by American soldiers; he is shot and killed there
May 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US president Barack Obama announces the withdrawal of the majority of the US forces by the end of 2016

Jan 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The NATO launches a Resolute Support Mission (RSM) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To train, assist and advise the Afghan security forces and institutions
April 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● US drops powerful non-nuclear bombs at a cave complex in eastern Nangarhar Province <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This highlights the emergence of the Islamic State in Afghanistan ● US Marines are dispatched to the Helmand Province
Aug 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● US president Donald Trump addressed the troops in Arlington, VA, by outlining his Afghanistan policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This signified a prolonged Afghan War, meaning that achieving a political settlement with the Taliban will take more time
Jan 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Taliban launches terrorist attacks on US, killing over 100 citizens <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This heightens the tension as more US troops are deployed to Afghanistan
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● By February, there is progress in negotiations and peace talks between the Taliban and US <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There are talks about the withdrawal of troops and a cease-fire ● However, these peace talks were called off by US president Donald Trump in September

Current State of Affairs

War and Armed Forces

2020 was the first year of official negotiations among the United States, Afghanistan government forces, the Taliban, and other armed groups to collectively bring closure to the stagnant, two-decade war. A significant push toward the reduction of violence across forces was suggested after former President Donald Trump visited the U.S. troops in Afghanistan on November 24, 2019, when the initiation of the final peace agreement with the Taliban was first presented. On February 29, 2020, the United States and Taliban finally signed a peace deal in Doha, Qatar, that ensured the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan and suggested future political reigns of the Afghan government. The U.S. military withdrew from Bagram Airfield, its last major base in Afghanistan, and handed full control to the Afghan National Security and Defense Force on July 1, 2021. President Joe Biden's order to remove all troops by September continues to affect the direction of all future operations until the absolute end to this war. Biden allocated \$3.3 billion USD to aid Afghan forces in an attempt to begin its "over-the-horizon" operations that include support outside Afghanistan territory. Through aircraft controls, finances, and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), the United States is providing support that does not include direct involvement of the troops in Afghanistan.

A reduction of civilian casualties was recorded in 2020 compared to the previous years, despite its numbers in the high thousands. As seen from 6,000 Afghan civilian fatalities recorded from January to September of 2020, the reduction of casualties from the decline of urban attacks and airstrikes by the Taliban and U.S. military was opposed by the increased attacks of the Taliban using improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and the Afghanistan government airstrikes. Through IEDs alone, 1,274 civilians lost their lives. Mostly planted by the Taliban, they increased their use of roadside, magnetic, and pressure-plate IEDs by 43% compared to their use in 2019. Within the 6,000 civilian deaths during the first nine months, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) calculated the Taliban to cause 45% of the casualties, and 27% was predicted to be caused by the Afghan government and their pro-government groups. Although the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP) and Afghanistan branch of Islamic State (ISIS) attacks declined, their bombings had destructive effects on the civilians nevertheless. Within these deliberate Afghan civilian attacks, 44% of victims were women.

In 2020, increased airstrikes and mortar attacks by the Afghan government killed and injured 70% more civilians than in 2019. Within these casualties, 60% were women and children. On June 29, 2020, one of the deadliest airstrikes and mortar attacks occurred at a market in Sangin, Helmand, which had killed at least 19 civilians and injured 31. Although President Ashraf Ghani of Afghanistan banned night raids in September of 2019, night operations by the Afghan government forces continued, as seen in December of 2019 when a 15-year-old boy was killed in Laghman. Although the U.S. military declined its activity after the US-Taliban peace agreement, the U.S. was

responsible for several airstrikes that caused civilian casualties, including the attack on February 17, 2020, in Herat that killed three women and five children. A CIA-involved night operation with the National Directorate of Security (NDS) killed Amer Abdul Sattar, who was a significant Afghan politician.

Uninvestigated crimes and raids left injuries and deaths to be lost without the knowledge of the forces responsible for attacks. On May 12, 2020, shooting within the maternity wing of the Dasht-e Barchi hospital run by the Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) caused 24 deaths, including women in labor, recent-birthers, healthcare workers, and children. As a hospital located near several ISKP attacks, MSF declared to stop their support of this hospital when no governmental or international authorities intervened to investigate and find the responsible party.

Repeated violations of the International Humanitarian Law were seen from the Afghan forces. Taliban increased their activities of abducting, killing, and targeting Afghan government officials, politicians, and civilians, whereas several Afghan government officials were also charged for sexual assault, torture, and deaths of civilians. On March 5, 2020, the International Criminal Court (ICC) judges retracted their rejection in 2019 to allow thorough investigations of war crimes and invasion of human rights by all Afghan parties.

Violations of international humanitarian law

According to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the Taliban were responsible for 45% of attacks that caused civilian deaths and injuries in the first nine months of 2020. Attacks by the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP), the Afghan branch of the Islamic State (ISIS), declined, but the group was responsible for several deadly bombings, and consequences of citizen's death.

A successful political settlement of the conflict that aims for inclusive and sustainable peace must be addressed to tackle these deep-rooted challenges.

COVID-19

Even before the proliferation of the Coronavirus, Afghanistan's healthcare system was in ruins as they were underfunded and understaffed for years from war and frequent civilian casualties that included hospitals and healthcare facilities. Hospitals often had little to no capacities available for new COVID-19 patients, 30-40% of whom were declined access to care. Women, girls, and individuals with disabilities were given fewer chances, which worsened their already lack of access to healthcare and services. As of June of 2020, the government hospital located in Herat reported the highest COVID-19 cases, and detailed a lack of proper personal protective equipment (PPE) and pay to the 200 healthcare professionals. This emergency with COVID caused the suspension of polio vaccines in children from March to July 2020 and thus led to an increase in polio cases across the nation.

The social implications of COVID-19 presented further difficulties to civilians. Because only 14% of Afghans have access to the internet, education in children decreased significantly when schools that hosted 10 million children were closed from March of 2020. The already insufficient education and literacy rates decreased further. The lockdowns in major cities challenged lower socioeconomic individuals, who are daily wage earners. According to the United Nations, around 14 million people, which make up 40% of the Afghan population, were urgently in need of humanitarian support that required \$1.1 billion in U.S. dollars. The instability of food gaps, inadequate health care, and casualties of war continue to detrimentally affect civilians of Afghanistan.

Economic crumbling, lack of humanitarian aid, poor living conditions

The Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey (ALCS) reported that the national poverty rate has risen from 38% in 2011–12 to 55% in 2016–2017, with the slowing economic growth and a deteriorating security situation as two causes. Over half of the population is living off less than a dollar a day. COVID-19 situation also brought tremendous consequences for the citizens with severe poverty, food insecurity, and for people's health and income. This led to economic insecurities as well. The cost of basic essentials also increased dramatically, which left a third of the population to face food shortages and malnutrition.

Women's rights and violence, sexual orientation and gender identity

There were multiple cases of sexual harassment, assault, rape and cases of women's rights being violated in Afghan recently. However, all of them were neglected and ignored by the government. Also, in February 2018, Afghanistan adopted a new penal code that explicitly criminalizes consensual same-sex relations, which is a solid criticism towards minority people, and violating their basic human rights. Women and children comprised more than 60 percent of civilian deaths and injuries.

Stances of Parties

China

Although Chinese involvement in the Afghan War has been mostly limited, both countries have maintained close diplomatic and economic relations, with China providing millions of dollars in aid over the course of the conflict. China signed the 2002 Kabul Declaration on Good Neighborly Relations along with five neighboring countries of Afghanistan, declaring its commitment to peace and stability in the country. In 2015, China joined the Quadrilateral Coordination Group comprising Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the United States to alleviate the regional conflict – and has maintained a mediating role between Afghanistan and Pakistan ever since. Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen stated in July 2021 that the group sees China as a “friend” and welcomes their investment in the reconstruction project in Afghanistan.

Estonia

In 2003, Estonian Defence Forces were deployed in the southern region of Afghanistan as part of NATO’s International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Estonia has reinforced its commitment to eradicating international terrorism and threats to Estonian security in Afghanistan from the beginning of the conflict until the Estonian Contingent ceased its operations in 2014. The remaining Estonian personnel and NATO personnel are expected to withdraw from Afghan territory by the end of 2021 due to continued threats by the Taliban to comply with the recent peace agreement. “The daily targeted killings of civil society representatives and civil servants is unacceptable,” addressed Estonian Undersecretary for Political Affairs Rein Tammsaar to the UNSC in February 2021. “We are working with our partners and allies to create the necessary conditions for taking the peace process forward.”

France

As a member of NATO, France has operated in the ISAF and US Operation Enduring Freedom since late 2001. Nevertheless, French forces have refused to participate in the provincial reconstruction team. By the end of 2009, 4,000 French personnel and 150 gendarmes were deployed, whose operations cost 450 million euros. As part of the ISAF, France played a significant role in protecting the security of the Kapisa Province. The murder of four French soldiers by an Afghan soldier in 2012 was influential to the complete withdrawal of France’s combat troops from Afghanistan several months later. As of today, only the logistical contingent remains in the country.

India

India is the biggest regional donor of humanitarian and reconstruction aid to the Afghan government. For instance, the Indian Border Roads Organization constructed major roads and transportation facilities in remote areas of Afghanistan, partially to prevent Afghan economic dependence on Pakistan. In the aftermath of the 2008 bombing of the Indian embassy in Kabul, the Afghan Foreign Minister visited the embassy and reinforced that “the enemies of Afghanistan and India’s relationship cannot hamper our relationship by conducting such attacks.” In April 2017, Afghanistan’s ambassador to India said 200 schools and 1,000 scholarships have been provided by

India which hosted more than 16,000 Afghan students. Indian leadership has been more popular than that of the US or China among Afghan adults, according to a 2010 Gallup poll.

Ireland

Ireland has maintained a diplomatically and militarily neutral position since the 1930s, while also being a peripheral supporter of NATO's peace operations. Between 2002 and 2016, Ireland supplied 120 Irish staff officers and non-commissioned officers to work with Allied forces in Afghanistan. Since 2006, Irish Aid has funded more than 9.5 million euros to HALO Trust's demining programs in Afghanistan, which cleared contaminated land of explosive remnants of war (ERW).

Kenya

Kenya has not been directly involved in the War in Afghanistan, although it has maintained close relations with the United States especially after its return to multiparty democracy in 1992. Since the establishment of their diplomatic ties, Kenya has been largely supportive of American policies in the United Nations, while the United States provided consistent foreign assistance. In the 2010 Pew Global Attitudes survey of 22 countries, Kenya was the only one to support continued NATO presence in Afghanistan by a majority (57%).

Mexico

Despite being geographically far distanced from the conflict in Afghanistan, Mexico has been receiving Afghan migrants who are attempting to reach the United States. Many of them are forced to wait in Mexico while their asylum cases are being reviewed by the United States, according to a 2019 report by the Judicial Watch. This has added to the immigration pressures at the US-Mexico border, potentially drawing negative implications for their foreign relations. Mexico and Afghanistan established diplomatic ties in 1961 but neither has prioritized their development.

Niger

Niger has been maintaining good diplomatic relations with the United States and NATO since its independence but lacks bilateral relations with Afghanistan. Niger has remained detached from the Afghan War and never issued an official statement on the conflict; however, it is likely to support American interests over those of other major powers.

Norway

Norway was one of the strongest supporters of the war, especially among Scandinavian countries. "The United States is Norway's most important ally. Norway is already providing intelligence assistance to the United States," stated Bjorn Tore Godal, who had served as the Norwegian Defence Minister at the beginning of the War on Terror. A member of NATO, Norway has participated in the ISAF mission, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation Harekate Yolo. A total of 10 Norwegian fatalities and at least 26 non-fatal casualties have been reported as of October 2013.

Russia

Russia has been reluctant to be involved in Afghanistan after the September 11 attacks due to their decades-long involvement in the Soviet-Afghan War and the Afghan Civil War. However, Russia provided military assistance to the Afghan government and the Northern Alliance in the early stages of the conflict, which contributed to the overthrow of the Taliban regime. In recent years, Russia has been actively involved in business investment, diplomatic programs, and military support for the Afghan government, although no Russian troops have been directly deployed. Experts say that Moscow is likely to be “relieved at the US withdrawal” and could well expand its influence in the region.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

In a speech addressing the resolution 2513 on peacebuilding in Afghanistan in 2020, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines congratulated the steps towards conflict resolution added that “as a member of the Group of Friends of Women in Afghanistan, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines welcomes the resolution’s recognition of women’s critical role in the peace process.” The delegation had also praised UN support for Afghanistan back in 2002, as the War on Terror was unfolding.

Tunisia

Tunisia has been keeping good relations with the United States for more than 200 years. Since 2015, Tunisia has been designated as a Major Non-NATO Ally by President Obama. Nonetheless, Tunisian Defense Ministry rejected 3 million euros of NATO grant to support joint military operations in Tunisia and the fight against terrorism; Tunisian authorities appear to have prioritized sovereignty over national security. Tunisia does not have an established bilateral relationship with Afghanistan, nor has been involved in the Afghan War.

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom had deployed 9,500 personnel to Helmand province in 2006, initially to support reconstruction projects but were later drawn into combat operations. In July 2021, Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced that most British troops had been withdrawn from Afghanistan and promised it would not be “the end of commitment” to the country. The UK pledged £100 million in development assistance this year. Concerned members of Parliament, especially from the Labour Party, accused Boris Johnson of undoing advances in women’s rights and the 20-year-long efforts of British veterans as they foresee the Taliban regaining control of Afghanistan. Chief of Defense Staff General Nick Carter stated “not a day goes by” without thinking of the 457 British lives lost over the course of the intervention.

United States of America

Evidently, Afghanistan has been central to US foreign policy over the past few decades. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) reports that the United States had invested approximately \$130 billion for security and reconstruction in Afghanistan between 2002 and 2019. A large portion of the funds had been allocated to the infrastructure project including a 3,200-kilometer loop road connecting four of the country’s largest cities, only to be redirected away from Afghanistan since the beginning of the Iraq war. Both President Joe Biden and former

President Donald Trump emphasized that they had no intention to “nation-build” in Afghanistan and pushed forward the withdrawal of American troops from an “unwinnable war.” Yet, increasing insecurity, uncertain US funding for a post-peace settlement, and widespread corruption – not to mention the Taliban’s claim to control 85% of Afghan territory in 2021 – remain pertinent threats to the country’s stability amid retracting US support.

Viet Nam

Although Vietnam has had little bilateral diplomatic interaction with Afghanistan, the context and consequences of the Vietnam War have often been compared to those of the US invasion of Afghanistan by many foreign policy experts. The government of Vietnam hasn’t been vocal on the Taliban or the ongoing peace process. However, they could provide valuable perspectives, lessons, and foresight to the social, economic, and political consequences of US withdrawal.

Possible Solutions

Although the Taliban leadership is expecting the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghan territory by the end of 2021, they have acknowledged the necessity of international development aid to build durable peace in Afghanistan. Given the current circumstances, it is helpful to recall that the fall of the former Mohammed Najibullah regime was precipitated by the discontinuation of Soviet aid, not the withdrawal of Soviet troops. In the absence of military support, coalition assistance should continue to play a crucial role in promoting social and economic security, in addition to alleviating the difficulties of the pandemic; a mere 0.6% of the country's population had been fully vaccinated for COVID-19 by June.

However, flooding the Afghan government with excessive foreign aid had been observed to aggravate corruption and violence, leading to widespread public distrust in the standing administration. Direct financial assistance would be more effective if provided under clear conditions, such as upholding the rule of law or protecting the rights of women and girls. Small amounts of direct cash transfers to households have been proven effective in the past. Besides, future reconstruction projects will yield greater success from addressing local priorities in cooperation with local partners, taking into account Afghanistan's diverse population. In other words, the initial implementation of peacebuilding programs must adopt a bottom-up approach, targeting smaller communities before full-scale implementation.

Another significant challenge will be to reintegrate and unify the population of Afghanistan, which is severely fragmented along ethnic and tribal lines. To solidify the central government's power, it will be key to address the needs of the major factions in Afghan society. Furthermore, the peacebuilding process must create positive prospects for the rising youth population. According to the US Census Bureau, the population in Afghanistan has risen from 22.5 million in 2000 to 35.8 million in 2019 and is estimated to reach 45.7 million by 2030. This will create massive demand for new jobs in the near future; if left unchecked, it will apply additional pressure to the already pervasive unemployment. Moreover, the large number of former insurgents should not be overlooked in reintegration schemes. To prevent their potential radicalization and further social unrest, there need to be sufficient job opportunities, vocational training, and hope for the future in general.

Ultimately, in order to advance sustainable solutions, it is indispensable that the Afghan government reduce reliance on foreign leadership and build resilience to abrupt changes in its internal affairs. As the World Bank and SIGAR report, the current government remains critically dependent on outside aid, while the de facto governance of the Taliban is continuing to expand. The international community will need to find an adequate balance between overseeing the Afghan government's reconciliation efforts and paving the way for their political autonomy. Diplomats and NGOs will be allowed to continue their operations within the Afghan territory; therefore, member states should be reminded that multilateral assistance is still a viable and preferable solution over unproductive unilateral efforts.

Questions to Consider

- How should member states of the Security Council respond to the expanding influence of the Taliban over disputed or Afghan government-owned territories?
- Should there exist a permanent platform for reconciliation and communication between the Afghan government and the Taliban? Or should there be ad hoc meetings? Should there exist any at all?
- In precise terms, what measures are necessary to improve the quality of medical services, protect women's rights, increase access to education, and alleviate the impact of COVID-19 on the civilian population?
- In what manner should US and Coalition funding be planned and allocated across peacebuilding programs to prevent its potential misuse from corruption?
- Should all funds be delivered to the civilian population via political institutions, or should they receive direct cash transfers to avoid losses from bureaucratic processes?
- What are the specific conditions under which the Afghan government, or other relevant regional stakeholders, may receive material assistance?
- What strategies should be employed for the current administration to regain public trust and build resilience to changes in foreign policy, political leadership, or internal affairs?
- In what ways must the Afghan government prepare tangible opportunities for the youth population and former insurgents? Should the proper development of local infrastructure be prioritized over offering immediate vocational training? Is either of the solutions feasible?
- How could Afghanistan invest in economic and human capital without excessively relying on foreign aid?
- What are the duties of the government in uniting the fragmented Afghan population? Is it fair to satisfy the demands of major factions over those of minority groups?
- How will Afghanistan transition from an opium-dependent economy to a more sustainable one which can support the country's youth population in the future?
- To what extent should the international community assist in the peacebuilding programs by the Afghan government while refraining from infringing upon the US-Taliban peace deal?
- How could the safety of diplomats, NGO workers, and international aid volunteers be assured, especially in conflict-ridden regions within the country?
- To what extent should regional players, such as China, be more actively committed to peacebuilding in Afghanistan compared to the rest of the international community?

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