



# Southern China International MUN

*Security Council: On measures to relieve the Afghanistan crisis, considering both urgency and permanence*

*Agenda overseen by: Jane Li*

## **1. Description of the Issue**

### **1.1 History of the Issue**

The 20-year long war in Afghanistan has exacerbated the problems of violence, poverty, inequality, lack of healthcare, and many more in Afghanistan, drawing especial attention from the global community.

#### *9/11 and the Battle of Tora Bora*

The Afghanistan War was first triggered by the September 11th Attacks in 2001, otherwise known as 9/11. On that date, militants from the Islamist extremist organization Al Qaeda carried out four terrorist attacks after hijacking planes in the United States. The Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre located in New York City collapsed after two of the planes flew into them, and 189 people lost their lives at Pentagon, a US military headquarter, after one of the other planes flew into it.<sup>1</sup> The last plane crashed in Pennsylvania. The FBI coined the September 11 Attacks as “the most lethal terrorist attacks in history, taking the lives of 3,000 Americans and international citizens”<sup>2</sup>.

After 9/11, countries all over the world expressed their support and allied with the US. After refusals of US demands to terminate Al Qaeda activity by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the US and its allies, along with British support, launched an attack in October 2001 to oust the Taliban and destroy the Al-Qaeda headquarters in Afghanistan. Within just a few weeks, they overthrew the Taliban.<sup>3</sup> During the Battle of Tora Bora, militants targeted Osama bin Laden, the leader of Al Qaeda and the 9/11 attacks. However, bin Laden was still able to escape from US-led forces.<sup>4</sup> In December of 2001, Hamid Karzai was established as the interim president and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), consisting of troops from many NATO nations, was created by the United Nations Security Council to maintain security in Afghanistan’s capital Kabul.<sup>5</sup> Shortly after, the Taliban surrendered their last piece of Afghan territory as Mullah Omar, Taliban leader, fled Afghanistan. Nonetheless, there continued to be Al Qaeda leaders remaining and hiding in Afghanistan.<sup>5</sup>

### *Reconstruction and Counter Insurgency*

After the overthrow of the Taliban until 2009, US troop numbers in Afghanistan grew quickly and the countries spent billions of dollars to support the reconstruction of healthcare, agriculture, and education systems in Afghanistan.<sup>5</sup> US President George W Bush initiated a fund, similar to the Marshall Plan that revived Europe after WWII. However, the fund didn't come close to the amount of money put into the Marshall Plan. The Marshall Plan was worth \$135 billion in current standards while the Afghanistan fund approximates to over \$38 billion.<sup>6</sup> In 2003, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) took on the role of controlling ISAF. However, even after an establishment of a presidential system in Afghanistan, police forces were difficult to set up. This created a lack of security in the country that allowed for a violent resurgence of suicide attacks and bombings. Soon enough, the Taliban group grew quickly in size and power.<sup>5</sup>

### *The Afghan Government vs. Taliban*

Between 2009 and 2014, President Barack Obama initiated and adopted strategies to escalate the Afghanistan mission and sent thousands more of U.S. troops to Afghanistan, with the objective of combatting a Taliban resurgence. In May 2011, Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden was found and killed by U.S. forces in Pakistan, a country where Afghan officials claimed was acting as a safe haven for terrorist groups including the Taliban.<sup>5</sup> After growing the Afghan government and training Afghan armies, NATO signed a declaration in 2011 agreeing to hand over the responsibility of keeping security in Afghanistan to the Afghan government by 2014.<sup>8</sup> Despite agreement to hand over control to the Afghan government, tensions between the U.S and Afghanistan continue to build as incidents deteriorate the U.S.-led mission. The alleged murder of more than 15 Afghan citizens<sup>5</sup> as well as the accidental burning of Qurans, "the sacred scripture of Islam"<sup>7</sup> by U.S soldiers engendered protests from outraged Afghan citizens and urges from Afghan government officials for troops to remain in military bases rather than villages.<sup>9</sup>

### *Escalation of the War*

Facing pressure from both Afghans and NATO member states, Obama announced the withdrawal of more than 20,000 troops from Afghanistan.<sup>5</sup> The control of security in Afghanistan was gradually being handed over to the Afghan government, but casualties and violence remained at a high rate. Meanwhile, member states were being pressured to withdraw their troops due to the continued escalation of the war even after great sacrifices were made. 2014 marked the official end

of NATO’s combat mission, and ISAF departed. Yet, some troops still stayed in Afghanistan to help train Afghan militants and army to continue fighting the Taliban. Shortly after, Ashraf Ghani was elected as the president of Afghanistan.<sup>10</sup> The war continued to escalate as the Taliban grew. They insisted on fighting until they’ve rid of all foreign forces in Afghanistan. In 2017, President Donald Trump announced the plan for sending more U.S. troops to Afghanistan and prolonging the war in order to further prevent terrorist activity there.<sup>10</sup> In response, amidst the increasing number of U.S troops being deployed in Afghanistan, the Taliban launched a series of major terror attacks on Kabul that killed more than 100 people.<sup>5</sup> In 2019, President Donald Trump tweeted and called off “peace talks after U.S. soldier is killed in a Taliban attack”.<sup>10</sup>

### Causes and Effects

According to ‘Letter to the American People’ written by bin Laden, the September 11th Event happened because of the West’s continued oppression and attack on Muslims. Examples ranged from implementing sanctions on Iraq to the creation and support of Israel. Osama bin Laden stated that what they wanted out of 9/11 was for the West to stop spreading lies and oppressing Muslims, and to desist from supporting immoral acts of gambling, homosexuality, and on.<sup>11</sup> Such views originate from the fact that Taliban are strict followers of the Islamic Shariah law, which is known for stringent restrictions, especially on the daily activities and education of women, and

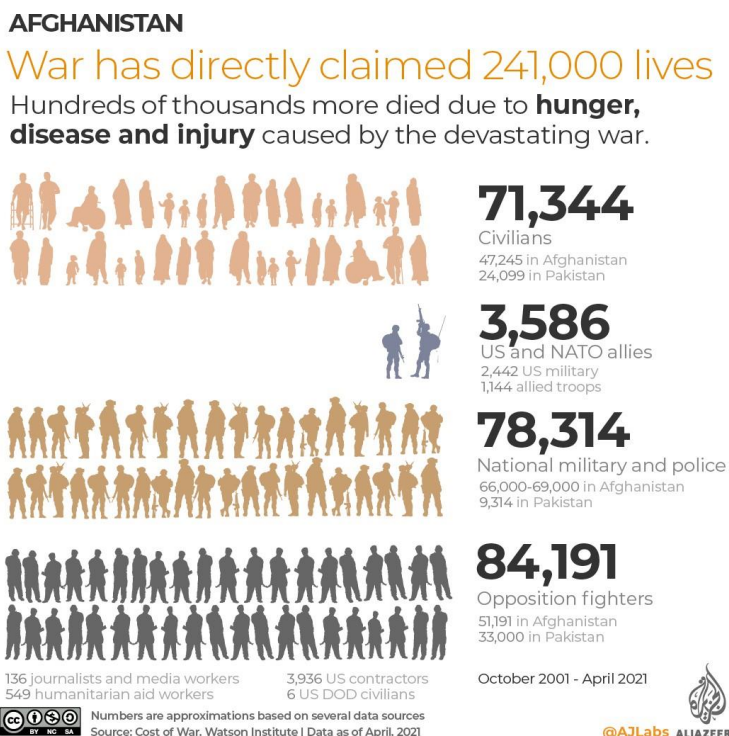
components that would be considered human rights violations today.<sup>12</sup>

After the September 11 attacks, President George W Bush demanded the handing over of all Al Qaeda leaders.

However, after rejection from the Taliban, the 2 decade war began.

The Afghanistan war has “directly claimed 241,000 lives”.<sup>14</sup> The estimated cost for the U.S. on the war is around 2 trillion American dollars.<sup>14</sup> Amidst the economic crisis, “. . .97 percent of the population is at risk of sinking below the

poverty line”<sup>15</sup> with up to “. . .6 million. Afghans who have been



Stelzenmüller, Constanze. “The War in Afghanistan Has Shaped an Entire Generation in the West.”  
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forcibly displaced from their homes”.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, the country’s healthcare system is “on the brink of collapse,” with “all aspects” of the country’s COVID-19 response” dropped off, “... from surveillance to testing and vaccination”.<sup>17</sup> In this crisis, Afghan citizens are faced with the dilemma of staying in Afghanistan and enduring violence, inequality, and starvation, or risking their lives to become a refugee.<sup>19</sup>

## **1.2 Recent Developments**

In February 2020, the United States and the Taliban signed a peace treaty involving the withdrawal of large numbers of foreign troops from Afghanistan under the agreement that the Taliban will ensure the eradication of any terrorist activity in the country.<sup>5</sup>

In April 2021, U.S President Joe Biden announced the complete withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan by September 11th of 2021.<sup>5</sup>

After this, the Taliban started to send groups of their fighters to “government-controlled rural outposts, striking deals with low-level representatives of the standing Afghan government through bribes or safety guarantees”.<sup>34</sup> In August of the same year, the Taliban swept into Kabul and entered the presidential palace. The president Ashraf Ghani fled Afghanistan and the already unstable Afghan government collapsed. According to a former senior adviser to the chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, “the Afghan forces sometimes lacked coordination and suffered from poor morale. The more defeats they had, the worse their morale became, and the more emboldened the Taliban were”.<sup>33</sup> One of the first cities to fall to the Taliban was Kunduz. After days of negotiations between tribal elders and the Taliban, the city surrendered. After that, many other areas fell to the Taliban through negotiated deals. “These deals with the Taliban typically involved surrendering control of the cities in exchange for safe passage home or payoffs”.<sup>34</sup> In just over a weeks time, the Taliban managed to seize nearly all of Afghanistan.<sup>18</sup> Afghan citizens feared the Taliban’s rule as well as the human rights violations such as public executions, banning women from education and employment, banning women from leaving the house without a male family member, and preventing aid for citizens from entering the country.<sup>35</sup> Although the Taliban reassured citizens “that there would be no reprisals against the civilian population,” thousands of citizens tried to flee out of the country after the takeover. In order to escape, some citizens clung to sides of a leaving US military plane, resulting in two fatal falls.<sup>36</sup> No country has yet to acknowledge the Taliban as the official government of Afghanistan<sup>19</sup>, and the humanitarian crisis continues to worsen.

### **Key Terms**

**Terrorism** - “the calculated use of violence to create a general climate of fear in a population and thereby to bring about a particular political objective.”<sup>20</sup>

**Refugee** - “someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence”<sup>21</sup>

**Insurgency** - “a civil war characterised by a power asymmetry between...” a weaker group, also known as the insurgent party, and the government. With violence and “...social manipulation of the general population, the insurgent party ultimately seeks to transfer political power from the government to itself.”<sup>22</sup>

## **2. Emphasis of the Discourse**

### **2.1 Right Wing Approach**

Before addressing the stance of left-wing and right-wing approaches, it's important to mention that there is no standard criteria for defining a country as left or right-wing, and that most countries are often mixed with a different ratio of both approaches. The approach of right wing and left wing political groups to the situation in Afghanistan can depend heavily on other factors like religion, as demonstrated below.

The Taliban is often seen as a conservative religious group. US online forums have seen far-right political groups advocating for the Taliban victory, as well as supporting their opposition of LGBTQ rights and gender equality. Far-right extremists have found parallels with Islamist terrorists' rejection towards Liberal views as well as ideas such as feminism and minority rights.<sup>23</sup>

However, "far-right groups in India and other non-Muslim countries in South Asia are more religiously oriented"<sup>23</sup>, compared to far-right groups in the United States. Many of the far-right Hindu groups in India have suspicions and often feel threatened by the Muslim community.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, the Taliban, a fundamentalist Islamic group, rising to power has brought major concerns to far-right groups in India. Moreover, Taliban's control in Afghanistan could act as a safe haven for anti-Indian terrorist groups, which has been demonstrated in previous periods when Afghanistan was under the Taliban's rule.

### **2.2 Left Wing Approach**

The left often have characteristics of advocating for freedom and equality, which is contrasting from what has been said about the rulings of the Taliban.<sup>24</sup>

A commonly accepted paradigm of left-wing political parties has been liberal interventionism. Liberals often believe that the United States has the moral obligation to intervene in the Afghanistan crisis to protect liberty and human rights.

However, in recent decades, the view on liberal interventionism has shifted. The 9/11 attacks and Afghanistan War has highlighted the dangers of liberal interventionism, and many Liberals have shifted their focus to a belief "...that saving liberal democracy means defending it where it already exists"<sup>25</sup> and using nonviolent means to help those in distress. For example, a more modern left-wing approach to the situation in Afghanistan would be taking in more refugees, sending humanitarian aid to those in Afghanistan, and empowering Afghan women by giving them a voice on social media to share their experiences.

The benefits of this approach, on a national perspective, is that it usually entails less money, soldiers, and resources used to fight against the Taliban. Too many resources put in to fight against the Taliban can have adverse opportunity costs, so this approach allows the money originally meant to be used for war with the Taliban to be used instead for national purposes and protecting national liberal democracy.

On the other hand, some problems with this approach is that it can be difficult to actually have an effect on the Taliban and truly help Afghan citizens. Without resistance, the Taliban will be in full control, meaning that it would be difficult to ensure that Afghan citizens receive the aid they need. Moreover, if countries only focus on primarily sending humanitarian aid, it won't be a suitable long-term solution as sending aid comes with costs and won't mitigate the issues pertaining to inequality and violence in Afghanistan.

### **2.3 Stance of Intergovernmental Organisations**

#### **NATO:**

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization has continuously expressed its determination to ensure Afghanistan doesn't become a safe-haven for terrorist groups like it once did under Taliban rule.

In 2003, NATO took on full command of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), with a goal to help maintain stability in capital of Afghanistan: Kabul.<sup>5</sup> However, conflicts started to arise when member nations expressed different stances on the issue in Afghanistan. For instance, some nations were said to be only contributing to maintain good relations with the US, and was doing the bare minimum to actually help with stabilization. Furthermore, there were also

differentiating views on how NATO should operate in response to situation in Afghanistan: countries like Germany saw counter-insurgency (COIN) as unimportant and believed stabilization to be more important, while countries such as US, Canada, and UK saw COIN as a central part of ISAF's operation in order to achieve its objectives.<sup>26</sup> Because of the lack of cohesion, it became time-consuming and difficult to share the burdens of the operation properly or establish and implement a coherent strategy that was agreed upon by all NATO nations.

NATO's operations in Afghanistan relied heavily on the United States, whether it was logistics, military power, or intelligence. Thus, in March 2021, NATO had to follow through with Joe Biden's decision to withdraw International forces.<sup>27</sup>

Despite ending the mission without success, the NATO deputy secretary general has a more optimistic stance on the situation and doesn't believe Taliban will have full control over Afghanistan.<sup>28</sup> Up until now, NATO still constantly emphasizes the continuation of their support for Afghanistan outside of the country, specifically by encouraging inter-afghan peace talks.

## **UN:**

Despite mass international troop withdrawal, the UN has expressed their commitment to staying in Afghanistan and delivering aid. The UN is concerned about the situation of women's rights in Afghanistan, and expresses that it will continue advocating for equal rights and promoting peace in Afghanistan.<sup>29</sup>

The Secretary general has constantly urged countries to open borders to receive more Afghan refugees, and the UN has called for the suspension of forced returns to Afghanistan for refugees as well as rejected asylum seekers.<sup>29</sup>

The UN believes strongly that nations need to work together as one united voice to speak for women's rights, protect lives, and support humanitarian needs in Afghanistan.

## **2.4 Stance of Developed Countries**

The stance of countries towards the situation in Afghanistan can be determined by other factors such as religion, culture, political structure, relationships with Afghanistan, distance from the land of Afghanistan, and on.

Anyhow, developed countries are more likely going to want to preserve their country's security by containing the war and instability in Afghanistan. Thus, many of them now focus on helping Afghan citizens from outside Afghanistan: funding for humanitarian aid, funding for healthcare, letting in more refugees, et cetera.<sup>32</sup> The United States has spent nearly \$4 billion

providing “humanitarian aid in Afghanistan and for Afghan refugees”<sup>37</sup>. The United States currently provides these aids through independent organisations by issuing “specific licenses to allow U.S. government agencies, contractors, and grant recipients to continue to provide”...“humanitarian aid to the people of Afghanistan”.<sup>38</sup> It’s important for developed countries to find ways to protect human rights, increase stability, and ensure that Afghanistan is sharing similar humanitarian values as rest of the developed countries.

## **2.5 Stance of Developing Countries**

Many countries around Southern Central Asia or neighboring Afghanistan are more threatened by the crisis because of the mass populations of refugees and migrants

Take for example, more than 4000 Afghan refugees are fleeing to Iran everyday. With Iran’s economic downturn and high inflation rates, the spillover effects of the Afghanistan refugee crisis can lead the country closer to a humanitarian crisis. “ In 2016, a representative of Iran’s parliament blamed Afghan refugees for a water shortage: ‘We have close to 4 million Afghans in Iran. If each person uses daily 100 liters [of water], the Afghans living in Iran use 400 million liters.’”<sup>30</sup> Developing countries neighboring Afghanistan, without enough support from the international community, might face the same issue and be worse off.

Because these countries are still developing, they’re likely to focus more on protecting their own interests. Take China, which supports international community efforts in Afghanistan but doesn’t participate militarily in anyway, and addresses Taliban cautiously.<sup>31</sup> Solutions and stance of developing countries are thus likely to also protect their own interests at the same time.

## **3.) Possible Solutions**

### **3.1 Pertaining to Stance and Ability of Developed Countries**

Developed countries often have more money and power, and therefore a wider range of methods to try to mitigate the crisis in Afghanistan.

With focus on urgency, direct aid could be a feasible solution for developed countries. These countries can provide humanitarian aid, financial support and investments for economic systems, refugee aid, support for neighboring countries in managing spillover effect of the refugee crisis, and on.

The aid delivery process must be transparent, and it would be most effective if all countries established a stable and vigorous aid program to ensure humanitarian aid is received by Afghan citizens. Moreover, financial support can be provided to local non-governmental organisations



(NGOs) to spread awareness for women's rights. It's also important to establish communication channels with Afghan citizens, whether it's through UN troops or local organizations, to ensure Afghan citizens are able to communicate their needs.

Another solution pertaining to developed countries is imposing sanctions and other consequences such as cutting of economical aid when human rights continue to be violated by the Taliban. The benefits of strong sanctioning is that it's a non-violent way to diminish the Taliban's power, and Afghanistan is highly in need of financial aid in order to sustain their economy and citizens. Therefore, this could be an effective method to negotiate with the Taliban and set restrictions. However, there are also potential risks and drawbacks to this solution. The economy is Afghanistan is already crippling, and the strong sanctions will only further destroy it, making Afghan citizens who are already in poverty even poorer. These citizens are already struggling to meet their basic needs, and these sanctions targeted towards the Taliban might in turn harm the citizens. Moreover, this can lead to the Taliban blaming sanctioning nations for the economic crisis, which will create even more tension between the Taliban and developed nations. Problematic relationships can lead to the Taliban's violations of negotiations and agreements relating to the human rights of Afghan citizens, which can further put lives at risk.

### **3.2 Pertaining to Stance and Ability of Developing Countries**

Because developing countries are more in need to protecting their own interests and sustaining their own country, it's likely more difficult to provide aids and financial support compared to developed countries.

Instead, developing countries can continue putting pressure on the Taliban to allow for human rights and women's rights to be met. Developing countries can continue not recognizing Taliban as the governing body of Afghanistan. This can allow room for negotiations between UN countries and the Taliban since the Taliban are highly in need of recognition from nations to become a legitimate body of power. Developing countries can continue encouraging and advocating for human rights as well.

With focus on permanence, developing countries can work together with other nations to establish a list of human rights, including women's rights, that have to be met. Together, countries can communicate and insist directly how the Taliban needs to imprison and prosecute violators. This solution should ensure the list of rights are met or else are faced with no recognition, no economic aid, and more sanctions imposed.

#### **4.) Keep in Mind the Following**

During the research process, it's crucial for delegates to have background knowledge about how the situation in Afghanistan affects their country, as well as their country's relations with the Afghan government and the Taliban. Moreover, when developing ideas for solutions, delegates should keep in mind the economical, political, and social status of their country, as well as to what extent is the solution feasible and in coordination with their country's stance. Below are some guiding questions delegates should consider answering in their research process:

- 1.) How has the delegate's country engaged in Afghanistan war? What methods has the delegate's country used to contribute to either parties?
- 2.) What are your country's policies and stance on religion, women's rights, and LGBTQ rights? Has your country expressed their views on these topics in relation to the situation in Afghanistan?
- 3.) What types of solutions does the delegate's country have the ability and willingness to implement? What effects will these solutions have on the people and security in Afghanistan?
- 4.) What types of solutions can various countries in the UN, whether they're developed or developing, adopt to not only mitigate immediate conflicts, but also protect security in the long-term?
- 5.) What was the delegate's country's stance on the focus of NATO and how the project in Afghanistan should be operated? What did the delegate's country think about the withdrawal of international troops in Afghanistan?
- 6.) How will Taliban control have an effect on the delegate's country? Are there large religious groups that might be or feel threatened by Taliban control in Afghanistan? What types of consequences will ensue from the result of Taliban control?

#### **5.) Evaluation**

The Crisis in Afghanistan has been continuing for 20 years, leaving the country in a state of instability and violence. Afghan people are faced with poverty, starvation, lack of access to health care, violence and torture, and inequality. More than 2 million refugees flood into neighboring countries, and more than 3 million Afghans are left displaced in the country. Negotiations with the Taliban to protect human and women's rights in Afghanistan have been extremely difficult, but not impossible. The situation in Afghanistan is complicated, and the results of the war, combined with ongoing instability in the country, have yet to be resolved. It's of utmost importance for delegates to come together to address this multi-layered issue, and to find a balance between solutions to

mitigate urgent conflicts and protect human rights and stability in the long-term. Delegates are encouraged to develop innovative ideas outside of the established framework of approaches, as it can become crucial components of properly addressing the crisis.

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