



## **SECURITY COUNCIL: Topic 1**

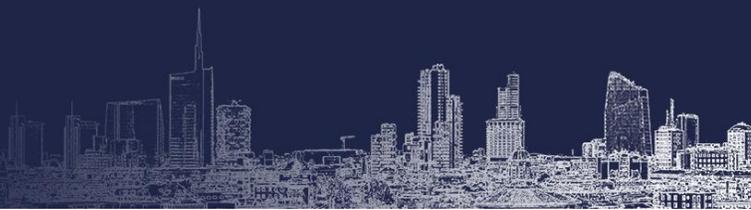
# **THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN 2020/2021**

### **Background, 1973-2018:**

With the toppling of King Zahir Shah by his cousin Mohammed Daoud Khan in a bloodless coup in 1973, Afghanistan's political order began to crumble. Since 1953, Daoud Khan had served as Prime Minister, promoting economic development, women's emancipation, and Pashtun nationalism. This was a threat to Pakistan, which was dealing with its own restive Pashtun people. Pakistani Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto began encouraging Afghan Islamic leaders like Burhanuddin Rabbani and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar to resist the regime in the mid-1970s. Daoud Khan was assassinated in 1978 by the Afghan Communist Party, and his former government partner, known as the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) took control.

By banning arranged marriages, fostering mass literacy, and restructuring land ownership, the PDPA strove for a socialist transition. The PDPA's repression and undermining of the traditional tribal order provoked hostility from Islamic leaders across rural areas, eventually contributing to open revolt, like Ismail Khan's Herat Uprising. Internal leadership conflicts plagued the PDPA, which was weakened by an internal coup on September 11, 1979, when Hafizullah Amin deposed Nur Muhammad Taraki. Sensing PDPA weakness, the Soviet Union intervened militarily three months later, deposing Amin and installing a new PDPA faction commanded by Babrak Karmal. After the Soviet forces left Afghanistan in May 1989, Najibullah's PDPA dictatorship lasted until 1992, when the Soviet Union collapsed, cutting off the party's source of funding, and the defection of Uzbek commander Abdul Rashid Dostum cleared the way to Kabul. Following the removal of Afghan socialists from the political stage, the remaining Islamic warlords fought for control. Bin Laden had already fled the nation at that point, but returned in the intervening years. The US's interest in Afghanistan has waned as well.

After the Taliban government's refusal to extradite their leader, Osama bin Laden, following the September 11th 2001 attacks on the World Trade Centre by Al-Qaeda, on the 7th October 2001, the US launched Operation Enduring Freedom, invading Afghanistan and rapidly removing the Taliban from power. The United Kingdom was a key ally to the US, providing military support in the wake of the Afghan Civil War (1996-2001). In December 2001, the United Nations Security Council established the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to oversee military operations in the country and train Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). In August 2003, NATO took a portion of Afghan forces and became involved in the alliance with half the troops remaining directly under US command whilst the rest operated under NATO command. In 2004 popular elections elected Hamid Kadzai as the President of Afghanistan. The Taliban leaders refused to officially recognize the movement and launched an insurgency against the allied forces in 2002. When the US led combat mission ended in 2014, the Afghan government was left in control of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF). They had difficulty retaining territory and defending populated centers whilst the Taliban continued threatening major cities with regular suicide attacks, while continually attacking rural districts despite the US troop increase in 2017. The group briefly seized the capital of Farah province and captured the capital of Ghazni province in 2018 before being forced out by Afghan and US troops.



### **Current Situation, 2020-2021:**

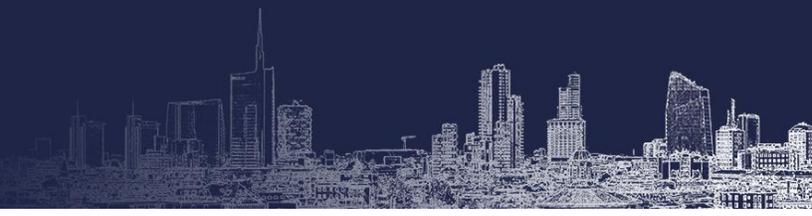
The US government and the Taliban signed a peace agreement in February 2020, after more than a year of direct negotiations, setting a schedule for the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan. Under the terms of the deal, the US promised to reduce its troop strength to around 8,500 within 135 days and execute a full pullout within 14 months. In exchange, the Taliban agreed to prevent terrorist groups from using areas under their control and to engage in talks with the Afghan government. However, there was no formal cease-fire in existence. The Taliban promptly resumed attacks on Afghan security forces and civilians after a brief lull in hostilities. The security situation is extremely dangerous and may become increasingly volatile at short notice. There is an ongoing and extreme risk of terrorism throughout Afghanistan. With the withdrawal of all US military forces from Hamid Karzai International Airport and the end of the evacuation operation on 31 August, the ability to help individuals on the ground is very limited. The humanitarian situation in Afghanistan has become untenable with the UN warning of an acute food shortage as approximately 22 million people there face drought driven by climate change on top of all the other problems caused by the fall of Kabul to the Taliban. The crisis is already dwarfing food shortages in other war-torn countries like Syria and Yemen. The onset of the harsh Himalayan winter makes things even worse, forcing a large part of the population to choose between migration, which is very difficult for the poor under Taliban suppression, and outright starvation.

### **Important resolutions:**

- Resolution 2593(2021) adopted by the Security Council at its 8848th meeting, on 30 August 2021
- Resolution 2543(2020) adopted by the Security Council at its 8759th meeting, on 15 September 2020
- Resolution 1988(2011) adopted by the Security Council at its 6557th meeting, on 17 June 2011
- Resolution 1267(1999) adopted by the Security Council at its 4051st meeting, on 15 October 1999

### **Important bloc positions:**

- **US**  
Interested in attempting to preserve the many political, human rights, and security gains that have been achieved in Afghanistan since 2001. The Taliban takeover of the country could once again turn Afghanistan into a terrorist safe haven, as the group is believed to maintain ties with al-Qaeda
- **Pakistan, India, Iran, and Russia**  
All likely to compete for influence in Kabul and with subnational actors.



### **Possible solutions:**

- Negotiation with the Taliban to set up democratic parties in the government
- Fund locals against the Taliban
- Work with the Taliban for sending humanitarian aid
- Work without the Taliban to send humanitarian aid
- Recognize/denounce the Taliban as a new government

### **Further reading:**

- [Agreement for bringing peace to Afghanistan – 29.02.2020](#)
- [Afghanistan - BBC News](#)
- [Current political situation of Afghanistan in 2021- statistics & facts | Statista](#)
- [Current Situation in Afghanistan | TON South Asia Focus](#)

### **Bibliography:**

- Council on Foreign Relations. “War in Afghanistan.” Global Conflict Tracker, 2021, [www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/war-afghanistan](http://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/war-afghanistan). Accessed 9 Nov. 2021.
- Mashal, Mujib. “Taliban and U.S. Strike Deal to Withdraw American Troops from Afghanistan.” The New York Times, 1 Mar. 2020, [www.nytimes.com/2020/02/29/world/asia/us-taliban-deal.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/29/world/asia/us-taliban-deal.html). Accessed 9 Nov. 2021.
- Rahim, Najim, and Mujib Mashal. “Taliban Ramp up Attacks on Afghans after Trump Says ‘No Violence.’” The New York Times, 4 Mar. 2020, [www.nytimes.com/2020/03/04/world/asia/afghanistan-taliban-violence.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/04/world/asia/afghanistan-taliban-violence.html). Accessed 9 Nov. 2021.
- Stancati, Margherita. “U.S.-Led Forces Formally End Afghanistan Combat Mission.” Wall Street Journal, 28 Dec. 2014, [www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-led-forces-formally-ending-afghanistan-combat-mission-1419741070](http://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-led-forces-formally-ending-afghanistan-combat-mission-1419741070). Accessed 9 Nov. 2021.
- United Nations. “United Nations Security Council |.” Un.org, 2015, [www.un.org/securitycouncil/](http://www.un.org/securitycouncil/). Accessed 9 Nov. 2021.