Introduction

For 18 years, Afghanistan has been torn by war. The September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center led to the withdrawal of the Bush Administration’s previous Afghanistan policy, which focused on imposing economic and political pressure on the Taliban while refraining to aid the Afghan Northern Alliance with military. Instead, it led to the the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEC), also known as the ‘Global War on Terrorism,’ by the Bush Administration that conducted a military takeover of coordinated airstrikes. In 2001, the US led an invasion to target Al-Qaeda’s safe haven in Afghanistan. Since then, The Taliban, an Islamist fundamentalist political party and rulers of Afghanistan from 1996-2001, have increased their control over 10.8% of Afghanistan’s population (according to the New York Times). Afghanistan was a strategic location for Al-Qaeda to hide and host their training camps, thus the Bush administration aimed to eliminate their safe havens.

Though the Taliban regime ended on November 9th 2001, the Taliban still remains active in Afghanistan to a lesser extent. Several agreements such as the Bonn agreement between the Afghan Northern Alliance and other prominent factions (such as the mujahideen groups led by the former commander, Ahmed Shah Massoud) secured periods of peace by establishing an interim government. Legal, civil, and democratic frameworks were put in place with an agreed constitution in 2004 which took a positive step towards democracy, utilizing aid from the United States and its allies. President Hamid Karzai, a Pro-American secular leaning candidate, was elected with nearly half of the casting ballots belonging to women. Many aspersions were cast on the voting procedure with over 1,000 official complaints of corruption levelled at President Karzai’s administration and the UN officials overseeing the Electoral count.

The coalition's progress to rebuild and strengthen Afghanistan’s government were staggered when insurgency started to spread throughout the country, jeopardizing the fragile but positive progress achieved after the downfall of the Taliban. According to the Council of Foreign Relations (a US based non-governmental organisation), suicide attacks rised at alarming rates from 27 to 139 in the span of a year (2005-2006) and remote bombings doubled from around 800 to 1677. Without basic services such
as an adequate police force, collateral damage and civilian casualties are mounting. Former President of the USA Barack Obama committed even more troops until the pinnacle of 100,000 in 2009, to try and soothe the resurgence and dismantle Al-Qaeda whilst training the Afghan army and police force, which caused even more terrorist attacks in Afghanistan to repel the troops. For context, the size of the Afghan Army is approximately 300,000, and the population of Afghanistan is 35 million, making Afghanistan the highest country in the world for number of military personnel per capita. Despite this heavy military presence, the death toll from terrorist attacks continues to rise month by month with over 450 civilians killed and over 700 injured in August 2019 alone.

The withdrawal of US military presence was announced to begin in July 2011 whilst NATO members ratified full security handover to Afghan forces by the end of 2014. All national affairs regarding a police and military force were to be handed to the Afghan National Security Forces trained by the available foreign troops in Afghanistan. The US strategy shifts from combat to support campaigns against the Taliban are fought alongside the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF).

By June 22nd 2011, Obama confirms that the United States are holding peace talks with the Taliban to try and negotiate ceasefires. The Taliban agrees to mediate with the opening of an office in Qatar to host peace talks but US-Afghan tensions flare as controversial events such as the burning of
Qurans by US soldiers occurs leading them to back out from preliminary talks. Peace talks do resume after an office is set up in Doha but the US denied any involvement with the Afghan government as they are concerned that any progress made with the Taliban will be jeopardised.

On the 13th of April 2017, as President Donald Trump authorizes the launch of The United States’ most powerful nonnuclear bomb to an Islamic State cave complex south of Jalalabad, Kabul experiences a steep escalation of suicide bombings that claim 5,243 civilian casualties in the first six months of 2017 alone. The number continues to rise as tension festers and military pressure from the US intensifies. According to the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, the Taliban are now in control over a third of the country’s districts and continue to violently contest for territory. They increase major attacks in Kabul that claim the lives of 115 more people by 2018.

As the war between the United States and the Taliban reaches a new stretch of uncertainty, it is imperative to contribute to uplifting Afghan civilians from the consequences of war and internal political turmoil that annihilate their chance to an adequate quality of life. The protection of civilians in armed conflict can be achieved if the core of this issue is severed from the complex branching issues of being a post-colonial nation. Not enough specialised pro-active aid is being implemented and the maximum military pressure aggravates the Taliban rather than aiding the Afghan government to a position of national authority due to the festering of corruption. The Afghan National Security Forces are undermanned and exhausted from the territorial disputes against the Taliban. They need to be further strengthened and supported by the United States through training. Countries have to acknowledge these problems and work together to find a middle ground between restoring safety and campaigning against terrorism, whether they are playing an influential role in Afghan affairs or not. The latest US Led secret peace talks with the Taliban and Afghanani Government 2019 were cancelled abruptly in response to a car bombing attributed to the Taliban, which killed 12 people. In response, the Taliban retaliated and killed a further 450 civilians in August 2019.

**Definition of Key Terms**

**Depose**

To remove a leading party or person from their position of power, authority and control over the ruling office of that country.

**Coalition**

A political alliance between two or more different political parties that cooperate to form and run a government/constitution under a common agenda. Coalition governments are usually created
under times of national crisis in order to eliminate political strife whilst building a collective political identity. Parties competing for power negotiate and collaborate to work together under one goal.

**Insurgence**

The act of revolting against the country’s established government or constituted authorities with arms and violence. It is not established as a state at war, therefore is not protected by or subjected to the laws of war. Insurgence does not reach reach capacity or organisation of a revolution. For example, the coordinated suicide attacks during the election campaign of President Hamid Karzai on the 17th of September 2019 or the on going territorial disputes around the ring road in Kabul with the Afghan National Security Force.

**Transitional/Interim Government**

A temporary governmental authority that is set up to handle internal and external affairs of the country between periods of political transition or previous collapse of the governing administration.

**Ceasefire**

An agreement between two or more parties to halt hostilities/firing for a period of time in order to negotiate and discuss peace.

**Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs)**

A bomb constructed by non military or military components and deployed unconventionally thus can be planted on or hidden anywhere (eg: strapped to a person, under cars etc.) and activated in a variety of ways. Employed frequently by rebels or insurgents as a weapon against the conventional military force.

**Preliminary Talks**

Introducing and preparing for an important event or significant occurrence using dialogue and discussion, such as the discussion between the US and the Taliban before creating a bilateral draft framework deal so that Afghan territory would never house terrorist activity.

**Invasion**

The act of taking control of a country using means of force and arms by another country until it is under their rule.

**Counter Terrorism**
A practice that utilizes the military, government, law enforcement, business and intelligence agencies to combat against terrorist attacks and implement safety measures to protect citizens.

**Nexus**

The act of linking two groups or parties together with a central connection due to shared characteristics or in this case ideologies and actions. For example, the link between Al Qaeda and The Taliban as terrorist bodies.

**Background Information**

**Historical context**

To understand the current situation in Afghanistan, one must also understand how the political climate of the past has influenced the present. Once Afghanistan gained its independence from the British, it witnessed a relatively stable period from 1926 to 1973 after establishing itself as a monarchy. In 1973, King Mohammed Zahir Shah was overthrown by former prime minister Mohammed Daoud Khan. Under Khan, the newly declared republic had close ties to the USSR and established several social reforms, many of which advanced the rights of women in the public.

Khan’s short lived regime came to an end after he was murdered in the 1978 communist coup. The communist regime maintained close yet independent ties with the Soviet Union, basing their rule on Islamic principles and Afghan nationalism. Conflict within the communist party diminished its power, and led to the development of an armed resistance movement known as the Mujahadeen. The US-backed Mujahadeen united against the communist Afghan army and the Soviet Union after the USSR invaded in 1979 to support the declining communist regime. The power vacuum created by Soviet withdrawal in 1989 led to the rise of the Taliban. In 2001 during the US-led invasion of Afghanistan, US forces helped secure Hamid Karzai as the chairman of the transitional government. By 2004 Karzai won the presidential election, making him the first democratically elected Afghan president. Karzai was succeeded by current president, Ashraf Ghani, in 2014.

**The Taliban**

The Taliban is an Islamic extremist group that originated in the Pashtun region of Southern Afghanistan and northern Pakistan. The name Taliban comes from the Pashto word for “student”, as the Taliban’s founders were students in Islamic schools. The south of Afghanistan has persistently been underrepresented by the central government, leading to a lack of investment and development in the region. As a result, the south of Afghanistan is a primary source of Taliban recruits and supporters. The Taliban first began to exert their influence in 1989 after the Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan. By
2001, the Taliban controlled the vast majority of the country. They promised to reduce corruption and increase security, doing so by enforcing a harsh interpretation of Islamic (Shari’a) Law. This included banning music, cinema, television, destroying non-muslim relics, and limiting female education and empowerment. Under the Taliban, Afghanistan became the world’s largest producer of opium. The trade of poppy to create opium constitutes a significant source of funding for the Taliban, along with taxing travellers and business ventures in electricity and minerals. The central governments of neighboring Pakistan and Iran have denied funding the Taliban, though it is suspected that individuals within these countries fund the terrorist group.

The Taliban’s leaders do not accept the current Afghan central government as legitimate rulers, serving as a drawback in peace negotiations. However, the US and the Taliban began peace talks in 2018. Nine rounds of peace talks have been held at the Taliban office in Doha, Qatar. The talks have consistently centered around four main subjects: the withdrawal of NATO and US troops, dialogue between Afghan factions (such as the Taliban and central government), ceasefire, and a Taliban pledge not to support foreign armed groups. However, in September of 2019, the Taliban were deemed responsible for an attack that killed an American soldier. As a result, US President Donald Trump announced that negotiations between the US and the Taliban are now “dead”, despite failure to reach an agreement.

Afghanistan’s current President, Ashraf Ghani, has announced that he would be willing to negotiate a ceasefire with the Taliban. Additionally, President Ghani has offered that the Central Government is willing to negotiate with the Taliban directly on contentious issues. The Taliban has not accepted either of these offers from the Central Government. Failure to reach a consensus by major parties will result in continued conflict and ineffective governance. The Central Government’s ongoing war against the Taliban means that government is not able to conduct the necessary infrastructure development to prevent the proliferation of new threats.

**Humanitarian conditions**

Afghanistan is currently facing one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), 6.3 million people are in need of humanitarian aid for their survival. This constitutes as one fifth of the population. Droughts and the subsequent food shortages have affected 3.9 million people and contributed to the 2 million children that are malnourished. Additionally the threat posed by floods and other sudden-onset natural disasters have affected up to 300 thousand more people.

The UNOCHA runs several programs to organize and deliver humanitarian assistance throughout the country. For example, in the first half of 2019, The UNOCHA partnered with WHO Health Clusters in Afghanistan to deliver trauma and psychosocial care to over 43,000 civilians. They also set up mobile
health teams to assist people in remote conflict ridden areas, as well as areas affected by natural disasters. In 2019, over 300,000 people were affected by flash floods and subsequent landslides across 32 provinces. The UNOCHA were able to provide up to 265,300 of those affected with food, clothing, and shelter within 24 hours.

Persisting military engagement in the country, including deliberate attacks on aid workers, schools, and health facilities have increased civilian casualties and restricted the flow of aid. Several factors complicate humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan, the primary issue being the lack of funding. The current plan for humanitarian response is only 43% funded, meaning that the resources to fully address the issue have not been allocated. The increasing number of attacks on aid workers is an additional obstacle in the donation and reception of aid.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

United States of America

The United States is one of the key players in the Afghan situation, actively engaging militarily, economically, and diplomatically for almost 20 years. In October of 2001, the US began airstrikes in Afghanistan for sheltering al-Qaeda, the Islamic terrorist group deemed responsible for the fatal attacks that occurred on September 11th of 2001 in New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. The US soon deployed thousands of troops, who were able to overthrow the Taliban and replace them with an interim administration led by President Hamid Karzai. Though several other NATO-allied countries have deployed troops to Afghanistan, the vast majority of troops are from the United States. By August of 2010, the US had over 100,000 troops in Afghanistan. During a US-led raid in 2011, al-Qaeda leader, Osama Bin Laden, was found and killed in Pakistan by US forces, prompting the US’s gradual military withdrawal from Afghanistan.

At the beginning of President Trump’s administration, more troops were deployed to Afghanistan, raising the number up to 14,000 troops. According to the US Department of State, troops currently in Afghanistan have two primary goals: to carry out the bilateral counterterrorism operation with the Afghan National and Security Forces (ANSF) against groups such as the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and ISIS-Khorasan (ISIS-K) and to support the ANSF in maintaining order.

As of recent, the current US administration is now in favor of resuming military withdrawal. Unlike his predecessor, President Trump has not supported a definite timeline for withdrawal, rather he states that withdrawal will occur based on how the situation progresses. A main point of negotiations between the US and the Taliban throughout 2019 was that the US would agree to complete military withdrawal if
the Taliban commits to non-violence. The Taliban has not accepted this offer. Since the current US government is already in favor of withdrawing troops from Afghanistan, political strategists argue that this will not be effective in bargaining with the Taliban. Economically, the US has allocated upwards of 29 billion US Dollars towards civilian aid in Afghanistan. Additionally, US exports to Afghanistan increased 525% from 2004 to 2017, indicating the complexity of the US’s engagement in Afghanistan.

**Pakistan**

Pakistan lies along Afghanistan’s southern border, making it a natural stakeholder in the war in Afghanistan. Pakistan has accepted millions of Afghan refugees as a result of the crisis, and their central government has been consistently involved in shaping the Afghan political sphere. During the late 1970’s, Pakistan provided a safe haven for the formation of armed groups that would rebel against Soviet interference in communist Afghanistan. The power vacuum left by the USSR was then filled with several other influences, including Pakistan. The Taliban’s operations spread into Pakistan, thus the Pakistani government has played a major role in US-Taliban negotiations. Additionally, the Taliban is managed and supported through Pakistani Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI). As of September 2019, the US’s role in Afghanistan is under question, as Donald Trump has announced the end of peace talks with the Taliban and the removal of American troops from Afghanistan. Decreased diplomatic presence by the US in Afghanistan could mean that Pakistan or even Russia could have a more important position at the negotiating table, as both nations have expressed desire to aid in resolving the situation in Afghanistan.

**North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)**

NATO has played a major role in supporting the Afghan government military. NATO’s most influential mission in Afghanistan was leading the UN-mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) that aimed to improve Afghan security and prevent the spread and rise of terrorism in Afghanistan starting in 2003. Lasting until December 2014 and consisting of 130,000 troops, the ISAF contributed to the reconstruction of Afghan provinces outside of Kabul in order to maximize development within the nation. Once the ISAF ended their mission and left Afghan authorities incharge, the mission was replaced with the Resolute Support Mission (RSM) which aided the government non-militarily through financial and operational planning, as well as enforcing compliance of security forces with rule of law.

**Qatar**

Due to Qatar’s neutrality in the Afghanistan conflict, senior officials of the Taliban established an office in Qatar as a grounds for remediating political tensions. Since 2013, Qatar has hosted nine rounds of peace talks between the Taliban and the USA, mediating between them to promote peace in Afghanistan. Qatar’s role in incorporating women and civil society activists are targeted to promoting Intra Afghan dialogue and peace talks. A notable outcome of negotiations was a prisoner
exchange in which the Taliban would release U.S. Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl in exchange for 5 imprisoned Taliban leaders known as the Taliban Five. The negotiations have also showed signs that the Taliban would be willing to pledge an end to the violence and support for women’s rights, but no binding conclusions have been set. Qatar, along with the Afghan Government, has taken the stance that long-term stability can only be brokered by fostering intra-Afghan dialogue; however, the Taliban has so far refused to hold direct talks with the Afghan government, accusing them of being stooges of the US government. While several senior Afghan officials have commended Qatar for facilitating peace, the talks have suffered occasional periods of disruption over the years. Qatar’s role has exposed the nation to accusations of providing a safe haven for terrorist organisations such as the Taliban and Al Qaeda from the US and then Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and Bahrain, amongst others, resulting in a 2 year long blockade which continues to this day.

**Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF)**

The ANSF consists of the Afghan National Army (ANA), Afghan National Police (ANP), and Afghan Air Force (AAF). The ANSF is an extension of the Afghan Central Government, and aims to maintain peace and stability through military engagement with opposition such as the Taliban. When the ISAF ended their mission in 2014, responsibility for security conditions in Afghanistan were put entirely into the hands of the ANSF. Despite support by RSM, the ANSF still struggles to meet their goals. For example, there has been debate as to which level of the ANSF the RSM must focus on, leading to a somewhat disorganized system lacking strong leadership. The Central Government also struggles to retain sufficient levels of recruitment because of the appeal of other militant groups within Afghanistan such as the Taliban, al-Qaeda, or IS-Khorasan. The root of this issue is rampant corruption within the ANSF. As a result, their resources are not allocated effectively, troops are underpaid and undertrained, and the weapons are out of date.

**Extremist Groups (al-Qaeda and Islamic State-Khorasan)**

Defeating al-Qaeda and preventing the spread of other terrorist organizations was one of the primary goals of the US when they first invaded Afghanistan in 2001. Even after al-Qaeda leader Osama bin-Laden was killed by US forces in addition to al-Qaeda in 2011, the group has continued its militant operations.

The Islamic State spread their activity into Afghanistan in 2015 and are referred to often as Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K) (Khorasan is the region that consists of parts of Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan). IS-K is supported by leaders of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and developed as a result of ISIS’s loss of territory around 2015. IS-K aims to establish an Islamic Caliphate in South and Central Asia ruled by Sharia Law. IS-K has lead several civilian attacks and clashed with Afghan and Pakistani forces in an attempt to destabilize these regimes and began their rise to power.
**Timeline of Events**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description of event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19 August, 1919</td>
<td>Afghanistan officially declares independence from Britain through the Treaty of Rawalpindi</td>
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<tr>
<td>17 July 1973</td>
<td>King Mohammed Zahir Shah is overthrown by former Prime Minister Mohammed Daoud Khan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>27 April 1978</td>
<td>The Saur Revolution: President Khan is murdered by the communist party's military forces, and their leader, Nur Muhammad Taraki, is appointed as President of Afghanistan.</td>
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<td>24 December 1979</td>
<td>The Soviet-Afghan war begins, as Soviet forces invade Afghanistan in order to support the faltering communist regime. The Soviet Union will have forces deployed in Afghanistan for the next ten years.</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 1994</td>
<td>The Taliban forms in the south of Afghanistan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>27 September 1996</td>
<td>The Taliban conquer the capital of Kabul and establish themselves as the rulers of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and execute the former president Al-Qaeda hijacks commercial airlines and crash them into the World Trade Center in the United States</td>
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<td>11 September 2001</td>
<td>The United Nations Security Council identify The Taliban and Al-Qaeda as terrorist entities and impose sanctions on arms, travel and shipments</td>
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<td>15 October 1999</td>
<td>The US and the UK begin their aerial bomb campaign: Operation Enduring Freedom, aimed at the Taliban</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 December 2001</td>
<td>Hamid Karzai appointed as the head of the Interim Administration International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) is created by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1386. The force will be operated by NATO troops by 2003</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 December 2001</td>
<td>Under U.S. President George W. Bush, the US begins their plan for reconstruction and humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan. By 2009, the U.S. Congress will have allocated 38 billion dollars towards this initiative.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17 April 2002</td>
<td>Afghanistan signs their first constitution, signifying a stronger democratic future that will unite ethnic groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 May 2003</td>
<td>Karzai president in the first Afghan election since 1969 parliamentary elections</td>
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The U.S. government sends 17,000 more troops to fight terrorism and taliban however promises to abide by schedule that will have most troops withdrawn by 2011. Troops are committed to assisting the Afghan police force and army to prevent the spread of terrorism in Afghanistan.

1 May 2011  
Osama bin Laden was killed by U.S. forces.

21 September 2014  
Ashraf Ghani is elected as president of Afghanistan

28 December 2014  
ISAF ends their mission and the Afghan National takes over

October 2018  
U.S- Taliban Peace talks begin in Doha

**Relevant UN Treaties and Events**

- The United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in Afghanistan, 12th June 2017 (CAT/C/AFG/CO/2)


- International Convention against the Taking of Hostages Treaty, 18 December 1979


- Agreement Between the Government of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Governing the Voluntary Repatriation of Afghan Citizens Living in Pakistan, 16 August 2013


- The Geneva Convention on the Protection of Civilians In Armed Conflict, 7th December 1979

- Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions, 5th December 2001 (0/2001/1154)
Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

Some parties such as the United States have tried to solve the issue by intensifying military action. Whether increasing troops or air strikes, the United States has increased their military action under the Bush administration. This claimed the lives of many civilians caught in crossfire and was ineffective in dampening the insurgency. Under the Obama Administration, troops had been withdrawn and the remaining US soldiers had been assigned to train Afghanistan's security forces for the full US-Afghan handover ratified by NATO which was to be completed by the end of 2014. This was only successful in the short term and as the Taliban's attacks intensified, the security forces numbers dwindled. Undermanned and under equipped they are still fighting an ongoing war against the Taliban's attacks, but can not keep up with the sheer increase of civilian casualties. Under the Trump administration, military action and air strikes were once again intensified. These airstrikes targeted the Taliban's opium labs and gardens in hopes to deplete their resources but have barely made a dent in the amount of arms/explosives bought and manufactured by them. The airstrikes have also caused an excessive amount of Taliban casualties and some experts even deem them more dangerous than the Taliban's attacks as they possibly have taken more lives.

The Afghan Government has contributed efforts to establish temporary peace. Particularly, Afghanistan’s president Ashraf Ghani has hosted Kabul’s second Process Conference for Peace in order to discuss foreign troops, prisoners and the current constitution. 25 countries had attended in hopes to, ‘end insurgence,’ but only managed to a unilateral ceasefire which the Taliban refused to extend. The Taliban resumed their operations on the Afghanistan National Security Force (ANSF) after the 20th of June 2018 which ultimately led to more pressure put on the President by allies to negotiate with the Taliban. The Taliban has also set up office in Doha, Qatar to participate in peace talks with the United States but have reneged multiple times. The US has not permitted Afghanistan to participate in these talks which hindered the ability to compromise equally and input the Afghans best interests. However in September 2019, Trump cancelled negotiations which halted all discussions to secure peace.

Possible Solutions

There are multiple conditions currently preventing stability in Afghanistan, thus any attempt to improve the situation in Afghanistan must address multiple levels of society. Solutions must also be “bottom-up”, meaning that they consider the diverse regions and ethnic groups of Afghanistan and
support development and infrastructure starting at a local regional level, and then move up towards higher levels such as the government.

The international community, especially the U.S., have been engaged in intensive military campaigns in Afghanistan for over 18 years that have not progressed internal conditions. As a result, more states and their citizens are becoming critical of the war in Afghanistan, and more supportive of military withdrawal. U.S. President Donald Trump has made it clear that military withdrawal from Afghanistan is a priority for the U.S., and a plan of withdrawal has been put in place by the U.S. and NATO for several years. Complete withdrawal must be gradual to ensure that militant groups such as Islamic State-Khurasan do not completely destabilize the nation.

In order for military withdrawal to be possible, the Afghanistan National Security Force (ANSF) must be capable of assuming full responsibility for security in Afghanistan. This could be improved through developing sustainable training programs for troops and equipping them weapons and other necessary resources. Leadership within the ANSF must also be clearly delegated to individuals that are capable of commanding the force appropriately. Checks and balances must also be put in place to fight corruption among said leaders and verify that resources are being allocated responsibly and effectively.

As of September 2019, the U.S. has suspended peace talks with the Taliban; however, negotiations must resume in order for the parties involved to agree on a course of action. Additionally, negotiation will allow other states to maintain a degree of influence in Afghanistan in the event of military withdrawal. In addition to the U.S., Pakistan, Russia, India, and China are important regional powers that have expressed interest in participating in Afghan reconstruction. For example, China has security and economic interests in Afghanistan, meaning that negotiation and compromise is possible between the two countries. Most importantly, the Afghan Central Government must be included in peace talks with the Taliban. President Ashraf Ghani has announced that he is open to negotiation with the Taliban on several contentious issues such as the presence of foreign troops, release of political prisoners, and reelection. President Ghani has also proposed a ceasefire between the Taliban and the ANSF, but neither of his requests have been taken up by the Taliban who still fails to recognize the Central Government as the legitimate ruling body of Afghanistan. Revising the executive, legislative, and judiciary branch of the Afghan Central Government to ensure that it is representative of all regions and major ethnic groups within the country could potentially increase the government’s legitimacy.

Guiding Questions

1. What measures can be taken to ensure that the current Central Afghan Administration is representative of the country’s various ethnic groups?
2. How can cooperation be ensured between the central government and the Taliban?
3. How would the state of security change following complete military withdrawal from the U.S. and NATO?
4. Who should be involved in the Afghan Peace process, and who should hold the largest stake?
5. Afghanistan has become increasingly reliant on international trade and aid, particularly from the US. What measures can be taken to ensure that Afghanistan possesses the economic framework and means to support themselves as a nation?
6. What can be done to ensure the reconstruction of crucial infrastructure in Afghanistan and ease the humanitarian crisis?

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