



ISLMUN

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

CHAIR: M. HAROON OSMAN

TOPIC: AFGHANISTAN CRUMBLES: THE RETURN OF TALIBAN

About the Committee

The UNSC is the only UN body with the authority to issue binding resolutions on member states. Like the UN as a whole, the Security Council was created after World War II to address the failings of the League of Nations in maintaining world peace

The United Nations Security Council is one of the six main organs of the United Nations. Under the Charter, all Member States are obligated to comply with Council decisions. Ever since its first session in January 1946, the main role of the United Nations Security Council was maintaining international security and global tranquility. The Security Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It has 15 Members, and each Member has one vote. Under the Charter of the United Nations, all Member States are obligated to comply with Council decisions.

The Security Council takes the lead in determining the existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression. It calls upon the parties to a dispute to settle it by peaceful means and recommends methods of adjustment or terms of settlement. In some cases, the Security Council can resort to imposing sanctions or even authorize the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security.

Mandate

The United Nations Charter established six main organs of the United Nations, including the Security Council. It gives primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security to the Security Council, which may meet whenever peace is threatened.

According to the Charter, the United Nations has four purposes:

- to maintain international peace and security;*
- to develop friendly relations among nations;*
- to cooperate in solving international problems and in promoting respect for human rights;*
- and to be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations.*

All members of the United Nations agree to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council. While other organs of the United Nations make recommendations to member states, only the Security Council has the power to make decisions that member states are then obligated to implement under the Charter.

Introduction:

Afghanistan, a landlocked country characterized by tribal, ethnic and social heterogeneity, lies in the heart of Asia. Its geostrategic and geopolitical importance stems from its neighbouring borders with China, Pakistan, Iran and other Central Asian countries.

Famously known as the Graveyard of Empires, Afghanistan has been the epicentre of innumerable historical battles since its inception, drawing in some of the most vicious invaders from history including the likes of Alexander the Great and Genghis Khan. It has therefore had a long history of political instability, ethnic conflict and a continuous uncertainty with regards to peace, development and growth. Today, the ongoing war in Afghanistan remains the most lethal conflict in global history with heavy repercussions for all key stakeholders but most importantly, for the people of Afghanistan.

The history of the Afghan crisis can be loosely traced back to the Cold War and its resultant power struggle between the U.S and the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. During the early Cold War period, Afghanistan successfully managed to retain its non-aligned status by maintaining good relations with both the U.S and the Soviet Union and receiving aid from both the key players to advance its economic interests. It chose to not align with either one of the super powers and preserved a neutral stance. However, the effects of the Cold War inevitably spilled over into Afghanistan when the U.S and the USSR simultaneously began to facilitate structural reforms in the country. Even then, Afghanistan relied more assistance from the USSR as compared to the U.S. Resultantly, after years of providing aid and backing communist ideologies such as those of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), the Soviet Union had gradually gained considerable influence in Afghanistan. As a result, in December 1979, much to the world's

shock, it openly invaded and occupied most of Afghanistan to strengthen the communist government of the PDPA and declare victory in its proxy war with the U.S in Afghanistan.

The forced occupation of Afghanistan was met with fierce rebellion and unrest throughout the country as the new puppet government installed by the USSR took measures which did not align with the religious and cultural values of the Afghans. These measures were quite unpopular among the majority population due to their modernist nature which threatened the existing power structures and traditional mind-set in Afghanistan.

Therefore, groups of religious insurgents emerged throughout the country against the new regime. Such factions attracted the attention of various international actors including the U.S, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, China, Iran and Egypt who heavily backed the Afghan resistance (the Mujahedeen) financially and militarily against the USSR owing to their own political interests in the region. Although the USSR spent billions of dollars and deployed thousands of troops in the war in Afghanistan, it was unable to sustain its position against the Mujahedeen who were heavily armed and supported by the U.S and other key regional stakeholders. Thus in 1989, the Soviet Army completely withdrew its forces from Afghanistan after failing to establish a stable, communist government thereby ending the decade long Soviet-Afghan war. It left Afghanistan, an already poor country, in a state of complete chaos and large-scale destruction as approximately one million civilians, 90,000 Mujahedeen fighters, 18,000 Afghan troops and 14,500 Soviet soldiers were killed. Moreover, millions of Afghans were also displaced from their homes and forced to take refuge in Pakistan and Iran. The defeat in Afghanistan came as a major blow to the Soviet Union and is often thought of as a

major contributing factor towards its eventual collapse afterwards.

After the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan and the victory of the Mujahedeen warlords, the various factions of insurgents who had previously maintained a united front to fight off the USSR fell prey to infighting and disintegration. Thus, the beginning of a power struggle for the control of Afghanistan between the different warlords was to pave way for the next phase of civil war in the country. The period after 1989 was characterized by the elimination of any remnants of communism in Afghanistan with the country officially being declared as an Islamic state. At the same time, most of the guerrilla factions in Afghanistan, contending for power over the country managed to reach an agreement and decided to form a coalition government as per the Peshawar Accord. However, with such fundamental differences in ideologies and the scale of their internal rivalries, the truce was far too fragile to withstand any conflict and this was proven by the fall of Kabul in 1992.

During such critical times, a group of Sunni students of the Quran called, the Taliban emerged under the leadership of Mullah Omer. They vowed to fight the atrocities committed against the civilians of their country. Their mission to form a regime based on the simple, fundamental principles of Islam highly appealed to the masses and by 1996, the Taliban captured Kabul and by 1998, they controlled 90% of Afghanistan. However, their popularity in Afghanistan suffered a major blow due to the imposition of extremist laws based on Islamic fundamentalism which were also partly influenced by their alliance with al-Qaeda.

During the period leading up to 2000, they committed several human rights violations, especially against women, in the pursuit of forming a government ruled by the Islamic Sharia. The ruthless reign of the Taliban gave rise to the Northern Alliance, a coalition of militant groups controlling parts of Northern Afghanistan, which would side with anyone to topple the rule of Taliban in Afghanistan. However, the terrorist attacks on the eve of 9 September 2001 completely changed the course of Afghan history when two hijacked airplanes flew into the World Trade Centre at New York City, killing 3000 innocent women, men and children. Washington immediately accused al Qaeda's Osama bin Laden for orchestrating the 9/11 attacks and demanded his immediate hand-over from the Taliban. The Taliban refused to comply with the U.S government and instead, gave him refuge within Afghanistan. Consequently, the United States officially launched Operation "Enduring Freedom" on 7 October 2001 to oust the Taliban and demolish their rule with additional support from the Northern Alliance. The relentless military force deployed by the U.S destroyed Taliban settlements and drove them towards Southern Afghanistan and across the border into Pakistan where they relocated and began to rebuild their military strength.

A new government was formed in Afghanistan under President Hamid Karzai and a special security mission led by NATO, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), was installed by the UN Security Council to ensure basic peace and stability in the region. The next several years of the U.S- Afghan War has since then been characterized by continuous bloody clashes between the Taliban on one side and the ISAF and Afghan troops on the other as the Taliban fight to regain control over Afghanistan. The

U.S along with its allies have pumped billions of dollars into fighting the Taliban with the deployment of thousands of troops but have been unable to fully defeat them. "According to the US Department of Defence, the total military expenditure in Afghanistan (from October 2001 until September 2019) was \$778bn. In addition, the US State Department - along with the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and other government agencies - spent \$44bn on reconstruction projects. That brings the total cost - based on official data - to \$822bn since the war began in 2001, but it doesn't include any spending in Pakistan, which the US uses as a base for Afghan-related operations". Hence, the 19- year war following the 9/11 attacks has continued to the present day with the key stakeholders of the crisis stuck in stalemate due to opposing interests in Afghanistan. The U.S wished to preserve the structural reforms and development achieved in Afghanistan by ensuring a peaceful transfer of power to a government at that will further the development of the resilient Afghan nation. On the other hand, the Taliban hoped to establish a government based on the Islamic Sharia Law and have had huge reservations over the current Afghan government which they consider a puppet of the U.S.

Role of Pakistan and US:

Under the Operation Cyclone US funding rose from \$20-\$30 million per year in 1980 to \$630 million per year in 1987 which also includes the economic and military packages to Pakistan of six years, CIA deployed Special Activities Division paramilitary officers to equip the mujahedeen forces against the Soviet army and handing out and repossession of the U.S.-built Stinger anti-aircraft missile (to counter the air activities of Soviets).

All of the effort to enable local afghans for war cost US taxpayers \$3 billion plus they faced corruption from the Pakistani side when air aided weapons (from US) were sold in local markets of Karachi. Pakistan had a large role in guiding mujahedeen; training and assisting them against the civil and soviet backed Afghan governments. Pakistan built the backbone of Taliban when it trained influential future leaders like Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Burhanuddin Rabbani and Ahmed Shah Masood, to target the Afghan government. It supplied US arms and money through the Haqani network and it had huge control over the management of Afghan power between guerrilla groups as the US gave Pakistan this responsibility during the regime of General Zia.

The ISI trained 80,000 fighters against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in training camps situated in Afghanistan and Baluchistan, according to one Taliban commander, 80% of his troops were trained by ISI. Pakistan's training agenda was so successful that they used it to their benefit when they overthrew Sardar Mohammad Daoud Khan. He was involved in anti-Pakistan movements by supporting ethnic Pashtuns and Baloch militants thus he came in conflict with ISI which led to the gathering to Islamic militants from all around the world plus the Iranian support of anti-Daoud groups. Apart from going against the soviets Pakistan also backed warlords to form their own government.

In the 1992-1996 Afghan civil war Gulbuddin Hekmatyar went against the negotiations and ISI backed his forces to form a government in Kabul but it resulted in his defeat even after the truck loads of firearms and troops from the Pakistani side. Thus Pakistan turned in the favour of a united coalition of Dostum, Hezb-i Wahdat and Hezb-i islami's forces (the Taliban) which was a

favourable ally.

Pakistan was heavily involved in the guerrilla movement and pretty much decided which force is going to take over Afghanistan.

Israel as an ally of the USA also supported the Taliban with the cooperation from the Pakistani side under the Operation Cyclone. Despite the fragile relations with Pakistan, Zia-ul-Haqq agreed to get Israeli instructors for the training of Taliban (which was basically Pakistani operation if seen as a whole). So, Israel did train thousands of Afghan fighters but also sold Soviet-made weaponry to CIA which they seized from Palestinian militants (who were backed by Soviets).

In a way Israel also favoured Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. His forces were backed by Pakistan but Israel had a role in training Gulbuddin's force as well.

Other nations involved:

There were other nations who took advantage of this war as the fighting parties needed a lot of military hardware.

Egypt, Turkey, Britain and Switzerland all sold weapons to the CIA which included anti-aircraft missiles and guns from European nations, Turkey sold their WWII stocks, lastly at that time Egypt was upgrading its military so it sold their old weapons to Americans.

In all of that the anti-aircraft systems did not have a lot of use but China gave most usable weapons for the guerrilla warfare in Afghanistan.

United Nation's aid:

The UN had a huge role in providing Afghanistan with

humanitarian aid plus with the political support from the international community through UNSC's resolutions from 1980's till now.

For humanitarian aid it did invest billions through its own bodies but also collaborated with local NGOs.

The collaboration's main purpose was to attain manpower, extraction of data and extra resources needed to meet the requirements of millions of afghan refugees. The collaboration had its own expenses as billions were spent for NGOs so they could function to a certain standard. Like in Pakistan

"We don't have the kind of human resources that they have at their disposal. We can't imagine even having something like that. It is an obvious plus," said the UNHCR officer.

Apart from that, the UN has been investing billions for refugees, as in 1979 UNHRC spent \$1 billion dollars for camps in Pakistan and \$150 million dollars to Iranian camps. These investments happened under UNHRC and The World Food Program spent 1.4 billion in Pakistan alone for Afghans.

Furthermore, with all that UNHCR also helped in the migration of refugees. In 1992 1.2 million Afghans returned from Pakistan within six months but through very limited resources. Another 300,000 returned from Iran during the same period.

United Nation's resolutions:

In UN resolutions 1368 and 1373 of 2001, the countries recognized the terrorist acts on New York and violation of peace in the region, it condemned these acts and encourages to take control of the terrorist situation within each state's own borders. It also addresses the increase in their(country's) efforts from 1269(1999) resolution.

For 1269(1999) it recognizes the humanitarian law and human rights and they plan to combat against international terrorist through the cooperation between the states. This resolution does condemn any power who contributes to terrorists' safe haven. In addition, they encourage the development of new international instruments to counter the terrorist threat.

In 50/53(1996) 1995 the secretary general's report was examined.

<https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/secretary-generals-reports-submitted-security-council-1995>

In 49/60(1994);

Invites the Secretary-General to inform all States, the Security Council, the International Court of Justice and the relevant specialized agencies, organizations and organisms of the adoption of the Declaration It also recognizes the violation of the state's constitution by the terrorist groups.

The exit strategy:

With the end of George W. Bush's presidency and the election of President Barack Obama in 2008, the President promised to end the war in Afghanistan and aimed to "dismantle, disrupt and defeat Al-Qaeda". The President aimed to build an effective and stable Afghan government rather than 40 completely reconstruct the government as 'it is Afghans who must build their nation'.

Obama essentially increased the US presence in Afghanistan through a new military escalation to reverse the Taliban momentum. This new escalation of the conflict coincided with the height of the Taliban insurgency and by 2010 and 2011, coalition casualties in those two years were much heavier than throughout the previous years of the conflict. The United States aimed to

promote social and economic development along with a civilian insurgency to give the Afghan state a sense of legitimacy.

The US initiative was combined with strong leadership from NATO in order to help the transition to the Afghan government. By 2011, Obama announced the start of the withdrawal of US troops in Afghanistan. The US withdrawal from Afghanistan began “according to the initial plan by which NATO and the United States had been preparing for a gradual transition to Afghan self-reliance with regards to all three pillars: security, governance and development”. The issue which this brought in practice was that the United States and NATO gave a quick transfer of power to an Afghan government which still lacked democratic legitimacy and security resources.

Taliban seize control:

The Taliban were removed from power in Afghanistan by US-led forces in 2001, but the group has seized control of the country once again following a rapid offensive.

The capital, Kabul, was the last major city to fall to the offensive that began months ago but accelerated as the hard-line Taliban gained control of territories.

The group entered direct talks with the US back in 2018, and in February 2020 the two sides struck a peace deal that committed the US to withdrawal and the Taliban to preventing attacks on US forces. Other promises included not allowing al-Qaeda or other militants to operate in areas it controlled and proceeding with national peace talks.

But in the year that followed, the Taliban continued to target Afghan security forces and civilians, advancing rapidly across the country

The Taliban took some areas from government by force. In other areas, the Afghan National Army withdrew without a shot being

fired.

Although renewed clashes had been going on for several weeks, from 6 August the Taliban made a more rapid advance across the country, as they took control of provincial cities.

Pulling out a mistake?

This was a mistake the United States will pay for in the years to come. Two decades after 9/11, a status quo had taken hold. The Taliban insurgency was alive and well, but Afghan security forces were holding their own with a steadily diminishing number of U.S. and NATO troops. Then Washington ran out of strategic patience. A year after proclaiming that the U.S. presence in Afghanistan was based on conditions, not calendars, former president Donald Trump authorized direct U.S.-Taliban talks without the Afghan government present. This met a long-standing Taliban condition: readiness to talk to the Americans, but not with their puppets in Kabul. Partial media said at the time that these talks were about American capitulation, not peace. And that is what they turned out to be. The indelible image of this catastrophic U.S. failure will be that U.S. Air Force C-17 plane taxiing for take-off from Kabul surrounded by an Afghan mob desperate to get out of the country. The damage to U.S. national security and America's reputation will be considerable. The United States has emboldened Islamic radicals everywhere as the Taliban produce a narrative of righteous believers defeating the infidels on the field of battle. The Taliban are back in control, and they will bring their al-Qaeda allies with them. This is not a hypothetical security threat. These are the groups that brought about 9/11, and they have not become kinder and gentler in the interim. At the same time, wholesale withdrawal will degrade U.S. intelligence capabilities, making it more difficult to identify emerging threats.

The United States has also placed those who have already risked their lives to support U.S. efforts in even greater danger. These potential recipients of Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) will have to make their way to the airport through Taliban checkpoints. For those outside of Kabul, the danger is far greater. Afghan women and girls have been put at risk too. From the beginning, U.S. officials urged them to step forward. To pursue education. To run for office, establish businesses, and join the military. They did so, with the assurance that the Americans had their backs. Until we didn't. They will pay a steep price for Washington's lack of strategic patience.

It did not have to happen this way. There was a working and sustainable status quo. Driven by impatience, Trump initiated a policy to withdraw completely from Afghanistan, which U.S. President Joe Biden embraced with the results seen today. Biden accepts no responsibility for any aspect of how this withdrawal has been managed, instead blaming the Afghan government and security forces. When I was ambassador in 2011 and 2012, each week there was a solemn ceremony at the NATO-led military mission headquarters in which the names of those killed in action were read. The last to speak was always an Afghan officer. He did not read names. He simply said a number: 142. Or 137. Or 153. The number of fatalities that week. For the U.S. president to blame Afghan security forces for failing to fight after the sacrifices they have made and after he joined Trump in a calculated effort to delegitimize them is beneath the dignity of his office.

The threats by Taliban:

International media received a warning that the Taliban were attacking collaborators. The warning about the Taliban targeting "collaborators", came in a confidential document by the RHIPTO Norwegian Centre for Global Analyses, which provides intelligence to the UN.

"There are a high number of individuals that are currently being targeted by the Taliban and the threat is crystal clear," Christian Nellemann, who heads the group behind the report, told the BBC. "It is in writing that, unless they give themselves in, the Taliban will arrest and prosecute, interrogate and punish family members on behalf of those individuals."

He warned that anyone on the Taliban's blacklist was in severe danger, and that there could be mass executions.

Women in Afghanistan:

Over the past several days, analysts have described the Taliban's rapid takeover of Afghanistan as a massive "intelligence failure." Yet for many Afghan women's rights activists, the Taliban's advances were anything but a surprise. For years they have been warning that the insurgents' territorial expansion posed a threat to women's security, and that an ill-prepared U.S. exit could erase women's hard-won gains. As the United States rushed to evacuate its diplomatic personnel from Kabul on Sunday, many women voiced their sense of abandonment, anger, and despair.

Since 2001, the U.S. government has invested more than \$787.4 million in promoting gender equality in Afghanistan, including in programs focused on maternal health, girls' education, and women's political participation. In some areas, international support helped local gender equality advocates achieve important gains. Other aid programs failed to have much of an impact, and

violence and insecurity—including U.S. military actions—continued to undermine women’s mobility, health, and access to services. Overall, U.S. support for women’s rights in Afghanistan always remained subordinated to other strategic goals. As the White House’s focus shifted toward a peace agreement between the Afghan government and the Taliban, the concerns of women’s rights advocates and peacebuilders were increasingly side-lined. Of course, Afghan women are not monolithic: they hold diverging views about the U.S. occupation and their country’s future. And Afghanistan today is different than it was in the 1990s. Women’s education as well as their economic and political participation is much higher than it was in the past. Yet even though the Taliban now claim that they are committed to upholding “women’s rights under Islam,” eyewitness accounts from Taliban-controlled areas tell a different story. Women have already been turned away from schools and universities, ordered not to leave their homes without a male guardian, and flogged for breaching Taliban-imposed rules. There have also been reports of forced marriages and targeted attacks against women and girls.

Although the situation on the ground remains highly fluid, Afghan women who have stood up for gender equality, democracy, and human rights clearly face imminent risks. In this context, the U.S. government and its NATO allies have a responsibility to ensure that Afghan gender equality activists, women journalists, and judges are considered a priority group for evacuation, emergency visas, and relocation support, and to mobilize humanitarian aid for refugees and those who are internally displaced. The international community also needs to use its limited leverage to press the Taliban to respect women’s rights, as even limited concessions will make a difference in a bad situation. And it needs to support those

within the country and from abroad, rather than disengaging politically at this critical moment.

Evacuations and the emigrants:

Foreign powers are continuing efforts to get their nationals out of Afghanistan. A NATO official said on Friday that more than 18,000 people have been evacuated in the last five days from Kabul airport.

Some 6,000 more, among them former interpreters for foreign armed forces, are on standby to be flown out late on Thursday or early Friday.

The aim is to double evacuation efforts over the weekend, the official said.

Outside the airport the situation remains chaotic. The Taliban have been blocking Afghans trying to flee, with one video showing a child being handed to a US soldier.

President Joe Biden, who has come under scathing criticism over what his opponents say is a "shambolic" US withdrawal, is expected to speak on Friday about the evacuation effort.

The situation in Afghanistan has undergone major changes. We respect the will and choice of the Afghan people. The war in Afghanistan has been dragging on for over 40 years. To stop the war and realize peace is the shared aspiration of the more than 30 million Afghan people and the common expectation of the international community and countries in the region.

Crisis from the eye of Pakistan:

Pakistan's military-backed prime minister, Imran Khan, has endorsed the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan by saying that Afghans have "broken the shackles of slavery." Several ministers in his cabinet, retired generals close to the army's high command,

and the country's main Islamist parties have openly welcomed the group's triumph in Afghanistan as a victory for the Muslim world. Pakistan's leaders believe Taliban rule will increase their leverage in Afghanistan and side-line their arch-rival, India, which they believe had expanded its diplomatic and political footprint in Afghanistan at Islamabad's expense during the rule of former presidents Hamid Karzai and Ashraf Ghani. With the U.S. exit from Afghanistan, Pakistan's proximity to landlocked Afghanistan and the depth of its influence over the Taliban will position Islamabad as the primary diplomatic conduit between the Taliban regime and the international community. This stature will put Islamabad at the forefront of communicating with the Taliban leadership, channelling humanitarian assistance, and potentially helping conduct future U.S. counterterrorism operations if transnational terrorist groups like al-Qaeda are able to reconstitute themselves in Afghanistan.

But Taliban rule in Afghanistan is not risk-free and could embolden militant groups inside Pakistan. Pakistan should be especially on guard against more empowered fighters in the ranks of the Deobandi Pakistani Taliban (Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan), a collection of jihadists and sectarians who aim to topple Pakistan's government from their perch along the Afghan border.

After conducting a spree of terrorist strikes in Pakistan in the late 2000s and early 2010s, the group sought refuge in Afghanistan to escape reprisals from the Pakistani government. More recently, the group has stepped up violence against the Pakistani military. It also has carried out deadly terrorist attacks against Chinese interests in Pakistan, such as a bombing that killed several people in July 2021, including Chinese workers on a Beijing-funded hydropower project. The Pakistani Taliban have ideological and operational ties to the Afghan Taliban, but it certainly isn't a given that the jihadi group's

Afghan compatriots will feel any strong obligation to rein them in. For Pakistan's ruling generals, these risks are collateral damage in their pursuit of their country's perceived national security interests vis-à-vis India and quest for greater geopolitical influence in Afghanistan. What degree of domestic unrest and regional fallout this decision will produce remains to be seen.

Threat to India:

Indian officials have engaged with Taliban representatives in Doha and elsewhere for some time, though Indian diplomats still face thorny choices ahead. Critics argue that this form of engagement could have been better organized, but contacts nonetheless exist. Taliban commanders and former leaders have gone out of their way to remark on India's development investments in Afghanistan. On August 14, a day before Taliban fighters entered Kabul, Taliban spokesperson Suhail Shaheen stated that the group appreciated India's efforts and "everything that has been done for the people of Afghanistan."

This outreach notwithstanding, there are at least three sets of issues that Indian leaders will need to wrestle with as they craft a new strategy.

First, past experiences with the Taliban will shade India's advance. India had no diplomatic presence in Afghanistan during the first Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. In 1999, an Indian commercial plane hijacked by terrorists from Pakistan, with 160 passengers, landed in the southern Afghan city of Kandahar. The plane was released after three terrorists languishing in Indian prisons were freed. They were escorted from Kandahar to the Pakistani border by the Taliban. This memory has not faded.

Second, the Haqqani network, allied with the Afghan Taliban and the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence directorate, has attacked

Indian interests in Afghanistan, including the Indian embassy. Sirajudin Haqqani, the present leader of the group, claims to see the importance of “maintaining friendly relations with all countries,” but this sentiment will be of little solace to Indian officials. As it formulates its strategy, India will need to confront the bitter reality that Pakistan has essentially won in Afghanistan.

Third, despite the limited available options, India is also uniquely positioned as a country with close working ties to European states, Iran, Russia, and the United States. If the Taliban practice what they have been preaching, which seems unlikely, India might just be able to find a workable balance between remaining engaged in Afghanistan without necessarily legitimizing the Islamic emirate. India could support an international conference, such as a Bonn Conference 2.0, to discuss the transition of power in Afghanistan with all notable stakeholders, including Afghan politician Abdullah Abdullah, former Afghan president Hamid Karzai, and other former senior government officials still in Kabul. In the best-case scenario, by supporting such an international effort, India could be a part of a global partnership of countries invested in Afghanistan’s future. In the end, every strategic permutation will be dependent on the conduct of the Taliban government. Deeds rather than words are what matter.

China and the Taliban:

China has noted that the Afghan Taliban said yesterday that the war in Afghanistan is over and that they will hold talks aimed at forming an open, inclusive Islamic government in Afghanistan and take responsible actions to protect the safety of Afghan citizens and foreign diplomatic missions. China hopes these remarks can be implemented so as to ensure a smooth transition of the situation in Afghanistan, keep at bay all kinds of terrorism and

criminal acts, and make sure that the Afghan people stay away from war and can rebuild their homeland.

While countries like the U.S., U.K. and India have been rushing to evacuate diplomats and citizens from Afghanistan, China decided to keep its embassy in Kabul open. But, it is advising Chinese citizens to stay indoors.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said Beijing expects a smooth transfer of power and called for crime and terrorism to be contained.

Foreign minister Wang Yi met with senior leaders of the Taliban last month.

Kugelman said that China will be in a strong position to seek the Taliban's cooperation for its two main interests in Afghanistan: a secure environment for Chinese infrastructure projects, and the isolation of Uyghur militants.

Beijing has been widely accused of detaining more than 1 million Uyghur Muslims in re-education camps in the north-western region of Xinjiang, conducting invasive surveillance on people there and using forced labour. China has repeatedly denied mistreatment of the ethnic minority and has characterized its efforts in Xinjiang as "counterterrorism and de-radicalization."

But some analysts allege the treatment of Muslim minorities in China has strengthened the hand of Uyghur militants, who view China as an oppressor. Militants have sought a haven in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border regions for years, and China has reportedly attempted to negotiate with local parties in both countries to deprive them of that refuge.

Russia and the Taliban:

Even a few years ago, Russian policymakers concluded that the Taliban would ultimately win in Afghanistan and began to brace for

it. At the diplomatic level, Moscow established contacts with the Taliban. At the military and security level, it began to strengthen its alliances and partnerships in Central Asia and started exercising with regional forces. Just last month, the Russian foreign ministry hosted a Taliban delegation for talks in Moscow—despite the fact that the Taliban have been banned in Russia since 2001. Just last week, Russia completed military drills with Uzbek and Tajik troops along the Afghan border. With the Taliban entering Kabul, the Russian mission did not evacuate from Afghanistan and stayed to remain in contact with the new authorities and watch the developments from within.

Essentially, Russia's problem is not who rules Afghanistan, but whether Afghanistan again becomes a base for extremist forces. Over the past two decades, the Kremlin viewed U.S. military presence in Afghanistan, on balance, as more positive than negative for Russia. While they blamed Washington for condoning an explosive rise in drugs production and trafficking from Afghanistan, they also recognized that U.S. troops prevented extremists from taking over the country and thus posing a threat to Russia's neighbours in Central Asia.

If U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan was widely expected, Russian observers were surprised by the virtually instant implosion of the Afghan government and its security and armed forces. Many compare this with the Soviet troops departing from Afghanistan in 1989, leaving in place a government that held out for another two and a half years. The Moscow-friendly regime might have stayed in power longer, if it hadn't been for the collapse of the Soviet Union itself and Russia's new authorities deciding to cut all supplies to Kabul.

The present chaotic circumstances have allowed Moscow to spread two messages. One, mostly aimed at the domestic

audience, is the accelerating decline of U.S. global leadership. The other one, mostly beamed abroad, is the unreliability of the United States as an ally. This latter message is particularly directed at Ukraine.

Sober strategists, however, understand that America's defeat is not necessarily Russia's win. The fall of Kabul to an Islamist radical movement has enthused many extremists across the Muslim world, who are likely to pose a threat to Russia and its neighbours in Central Asia. It was to avert that same threat that provoked Moscow to intervene in Syria in 2015.

Despite all the reputational damage it has sustained, the United States, many Russians would agree, has finally washed its hands of its long and hopeless war. The resultant mess has now landed in the lap of Afghanistan's neighbours, including China, Iran, and Russia. Unlike Washington, however, Moscow cannot walk away.

Iran government with the Taliban:

In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, the Islamic Republic of Iran cooperated with the United States in ousting the Taliban from Afghanistan and helping to assemble a post-Taliban Afghan government. Twenty years later, Iran's revolutionaries celebrated the U.S. withdrawal and the return of the violent, intolerant, Narcotrafficking Taliban that will undoubtedly bring instability, intolerance, and economic ruin to Afghanistan. Why?

Iranian calculations in Afghanistan shifted partly because of the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, which Tehran interpreted as part of a plan to bring down the Iranian regime. Rather than cooperate in making the United States' wars in Iraq and Afghanistan a success, Tehran felt incentivized to make them a smouldering failure, even if that instability spilled over its borders.

In time, as the Afghan government proved feckless and the Taliban

proved resilient, Iran began to hedge its bets, simultaneously providing financial and military support to both the government of Afghanistan and the Taliban. Iran routinely delivered bags of cash to Afghanistan's elected presidents while arming the Taliban and paying bounties for U.S. soldiers the Taliban killed.

Iran's strategic duplicity in Afghanistan also reflects the inherent tension between Iran's national interests and the revolutionary ethos of its Islamic government. Although tenuous stability in Afghanistan served the national interests of Iran, a U.S. presence in Afghanistan was anathema to the revolutionary values of the Islamic Republic. In the choice between two long-time adversaries, Tehran prefers Taliban-led disorder to U.S.-backed order.

Although the Sunni, fundamentalist Taliban may once have been Shia Iran's adversary—the two sides nearly went to war in 1998—today the primary driver of Iranian revolutionary ideology is not religion but opposition to the United States and Israel. The Islamic Republic is happy to partner with nonreligious allies in Pyongyang and Caracas, as well as Sunni radical groups—including Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Taliban, and even at times al-Qaeda—with whom Tehran shares common adversaries.

The U.S. withdrawal and the Taliban's return will also increase Afghan refugee flows and drug exports, which could prove costly for Iran. Iran was once home to 2 million Afghan refugees, more than half of whom returned home after the 2001 U.S. removal of the Taliban. The return of many of these refugees and the sudden influx of cheap Afghan labour in Iran could exacerbate social tensions given Tehran's inability to meet the economic and employment needs of its own citizens.

More than 80 percent of the global heroin supply originates in Afghanistan, much of which is transported westward via the porous Iran-Afghanistan border. Iran spends hundreds of millions of

dollars annually, and loses thousands of soldiers, to counter the flow of cheap drugs into the country, which (coupled with unemployment and social repression) have given it one of the world's highest rates of drug addiction.

Tehran was quick to recognize the Taliban's return to power, and Iran's state media ordered its journalists not to criticize the Taliban. If the Taliban resume their persecution of Afghanistan's Hazara Shia minority, however, Tehran may feel compelled to mobilize its approximately 30,000-strong Afghan Shia militia—known as the Fatemiyoun Brigade—which it cultivated to defend Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime.

The first impact of the Taliban's ascendance may not be felt on Iran's border but instead in its ongoing nuclear negotiations with the United States. Having badly managed to empower one group of anti-American Islamists in Kabul, U.S. President Joe Biden's administration may be compelled to take a tougher negotiating stance with Iran.

European reaction:

The Taliban's rapid takeover of Afghanistan has made a mockery of the EU's security and defence policy.

Most Western governments were unprepared for the extraordinary speed with which the Taliban took over the provincial capitals, arriving in Kabul on August 15.

But the German embassy, for one, had asked the defence ministry in Berlin several weeks ago to make preparations for evacuating its staff and local employees. That request was rejected.

As Kabul airport now becomes a security nightmare for evacuation operations, Germany, like other European countries, is finally trying to airlift out their staff and employees.

Instead of combining forces, each European country is doing its

own thing. Despite years of calling for pooling and sharing resources, the crisis in Afghanistan has shown once again that Europe's security policy, even on a civilian level and at this scale of urgency, does not exist in practice.

That deficit coincides with this crisis rekindling a debate over what policy the EU and European governments should have toward Afghan refugees.

Few governments want a repeat of 2011, after which 6 million refugees fled the war in Syria, with close to 1 million finding safety in Germany.

Even before the Taliban took over Afghanistan, EU leaders were getting ready to shut down the hatches. In early August, as if anticipating a crisis, a joint letter signed by the interior ministers from Germany, Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, Greece, and Denmark addressed to the EU's executive, the European Commission, asked that deportations to Afghanistan for rejected asylum applicants should continue, despite the situation on the ground. "Stopping returns sends the wrong signal," the letter read. With the Taliban now in control, Chancellor Angela Merkel told her conservative party colleagues that Germany must evacuate up to 10,000 Afghans, including support staff, human rights activists, and others at risk.

But Armin Laschet, leader of the governing Christian Democrats who is hoping to become the next chancellor despite a miserable position in the polls, warned: "We should not send the signal that Germany can take in everyone in need. The focus must be on humanitarian aid on site, unlike in 2015."

In France, President Emmanuel Macron said: "We must anticipate and protect ourselves against major irregular migratory flows that would endanger those who use them and feed trafficking of all kinds."

Whatever decision EU leaders make over Afghan refugees, the crisis deals a heavy political and moral blow to the transatlantic relationship.

Neither NATO nor EU leaders were briefed in any detail about the practicalities and the consequences about U.S. President Joe Biden's plans to take troops out of Afghanistan.

So much for the much-lauded transatlantic honeymoon Biden promised when he took office seven months ago. So much too for European governments fantasizing about "strategic autonomy" when Donald Trump was in the White House. So much also for the EU's unquestionable belief in its ability to export values via its soft power instruments of development aid.

In short, the collapse of the West's goals in Afghanistan leaves the transatlantic alliance vulnerable and weak as a security, political, and moral beacon. The Taliban takeover reveals a painful truth: Europe's and the Americans' ability to export values, democracy, or security has failed.

Britain's reaction:

Many will try to make what is happening in Afghanistan an American tragedy or a Western calamity. But the reality is that the NATO alliance over the past twenty years brought more costs to the Afghan people than it ever did to NATO members. That goes not only for the United States but also for the UK and Germany, who had the largest number of troops in Afghanistan following the U.S. contingent.

U.S. President Joe Biden and his administration have largely sought to blame the Afghan government for the current situation, shifting responsibility away from successive U.S. administrations for going to war without a plan for peace, for failing to effectively counter corruption in the Afghan administration (and arguably enabling it),

for legitimizing the Taliban openly, and for such a needlessly chaotic withdrawal.

This tendency to shift blame has not surfaced in London, as the impetus for such a narrative is not politically necessary for UK leaders. The UK wasn't in the driving seat of NATO's mission in Afghanistan, and all attention will be directed toward the United States. It is telling that British, European, and Western power is almost completely reduced to what the White House does or doesn't do.

There won't be any critique of Washington's approach from Downing Street. Since the UK has now left the EU, there will be less of a need for London to engage with louder European voices that are cynically talking about the need to stop refugees from coming, which has been the line already emanating from France and Hungary. When the topic of values in European diplomacy arises, it won't be lost on the world that French President Emmanuel Macron and Hungarian President Viktor Orbán raised this as a primary concern rather than empathizing with the fears of those refugees.

That means that other voices in London are given space to lobby for taking in refugees and to insist that London live up to at least some of its responsibilities to Afghans who wish to come to the UK, many of whom worked with British forces over the past twenty years in a myriad of capacities. These voices will be lobbying against the backdrop of significant anti-migrant sentiment; in this case, however, they will be aided by some significant figures on the right wing of British politics that feel some responsibility.

London will, nevertheless, also focus on the need to prevent the strengthening of international terrorist groups. What that focus will look like remains an open-ended question, given that British troops will be removed once the full evacuation is completed in the next

few days.

US and the new Afghan Government:

U.S. policymakers face difficult choices as they consider how best to interact with the Taliban's emerging government. For now, the U.S. government should actively but cautiously engage with the Taliban with three goals in mind.

First, in the near term, U.S. officials should act to enable the evacuation of both the expatriate community and Afghans who helped the U.S. and NATO effort or are at high risk of retaliation due to the Taliban's victory, while also creating space to provide necessary humanitarian relief to the Afghan people. The tenuous modus vivendi that appears to have developed between the Taliban and U.S. and NATO forces at Hamid Karzai International Airport needs to be sustained to facilitate the ongoing evacuation effort. The unfortunate reality is that the current construct of this evacuation, even of high-risk individuals, requires Taliban cooperation. Policymakers also need to ensure that the Afghan people continue to have access to food, water, and basic health and education services.

Second, U.S. officials need to keep nudging and encouraging the Taliban to maintain basic women's rights and protect minority groups. The Taliban appear to be implementing a deliberate plan in these early days to renovate their international reputation and offer reassurance to Afghan groups. The images of Taliban officials encouraging female doctors and nurses to continue working in hospitals, meeting with Kabul's small Sikh community, and attending Muharram services with Kabul's Hazara Shia minority are all part of these efforts. There is too much history to take these measures at face value but assuming they are all deception will effectively guarantee a bad result. If policymakers treat the Taliban

as a pariah, they will almost certainly become a pariah; if policymakers engage with the Taliban and encourage them to be a more responsible government this time, they might well still turn into a pariah, but there is a chance for a better outcome for U.S. interests and for the Afghan people. It is important that U.S. and international engagement, through both diplomacy and humanitarian assistance, be designed to prompt the Taliban to fill in actions behind the words of Taliban spokespeople.

Third, U.S. policymakers need to keep focused on the security risk profile associated with the Taliban's return to power. Media reports indicate that General Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, warned members of Congress that the speed of the Taliban's victory could embolden militant groups and increase the terrorism threat. The February 2020 U.S.-Taliban agreement was premised on a set of basic assurances that the Taliban will not allow Afghan soil to be used by terrorist groups who threaten the United States and U.S. allies, but these assurances were both insufficiently concrete and have been overtaken by events. While terrorist groups today now have multiple territorial options from which they can threaten U.S. and international security, a hostile and uncooperative relationship with a Taliban-dominated government could pose a significant threat to regional and international security.

Having said that, the emerging Taliban emirate faces many tests, including consolidating control of territory outside of Kabul and other cities and standing up a new governing authority, ideally with the inclusion of other Afghan political groups. There seem to be more opportunities for the situation in Afghanistan to deteriorate than there are for it to improve. But continuing engagement with the new regime is the best option available to avoid even worse outcomes.

Questions A Resolution Must Answer

- 1) What should be the role of international community in regards to the current crisis?
 - 2) How can safety of women and human rights be ensured?
 - 3) How can instability within Afghanistan be fixed in regards to the future of Afghan people?
 - 4) What implementable solutions should be presented to solve humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan?
 - 5) Is consistency of aid and economic programs important? If yes, how can this be guaranteed?
 - 6) How can strict punishments imposed by the Taliban be tackled?
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Further reading:

Almukhtar, Sarah. "How Much of Afghanistan is Under Taliban Control After 16 Years of War with the US?" The New York Times. 23 August 2017.

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/08/23/world/asia/afghanistan-us-taliban-isis-control.html>

This article provides recent maps and data on the Taliban's territorial control and attacks in Afghanistan. BBC News.

"Afghanistan Profile – Timeline." 4 September 2017.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12024253>

This timeline from the BBC provides a brief but useful history of Afghanistan.

Guterres, Antonio. "The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security: Report of the Secretary-General." A/72/392-S/2017/783. September 15, 2017.

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2017/783.

This recent report from the UN Secretary General gives a comprehensive update on all aspects of the security situation in Afghanistan.

Human Rights Watch. "Asia: Afghanistan." Available at

<http://www.hrw.org/asia/afghanistan>

Human Rights Watch is a non-governmental organization that tracks human rights in various countries. This page provides access to reports on various topics, including the civilian effects of US and NATO operations, the treatment of Afghan refugees, and the Karzai government's policies on civil rights.

Katzman, Kenneth, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy," Congressional Research Service, 22 August, 2017. Available at

<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf>

This recent report by a Middle East expert who works for the US Congress provides a comprehensive history of US military operations in Afghanistan, as well as a good summary of the political history of Afghanistan. This source also addresses many of the current security concerns facing Afghanistan and does so on the basis of interviews with US policy makers and military officials.

Livingston, Ian S. and Michael O'Hanlon. "Afghanistan Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction and Security in Post 9/11 Afghanistan." Brookings Institution. 25 May 2017. Available at

<https://www.brookings.edu/afghanistan-index/>

This report from the Brookings Institution, a foreign policy think tank, uses a variety of data to evaluate the progress Afghanistan has made since 2001 in various aspects of security. It is a terrific way to get a sense of historical trends and current challenges. It addresses everything from civilian living standards to the readiness of the Afghan military and recent casualties.

Posen, Barry. "It's Time to Make Afghanistan Someone Else's Problem." The Atlantic. 18 August 2017.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/08/solution-afghanistan-withdrawal-iran-russia-pakistan-trump/537252/>

While focused heavily on the US's interests, Posen presents a case that the situation in Afghanistan could be ameliorated by the US (and by extension NATO) withdrawing from the region.

United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA).

Website. Available at <https://unama.unmissions.org/>.

This is the website for the UN organization that coordinates all UN activities in Afghanistan. It has a wealth of historical and current information, as well as links to all Security Council and GA resolutions. See also the UNAMA mid-year report, which provides information on The protection of civilians in armed conflict as it relates to Afghanistan. The document is available at:

https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/protection_of_civilians_in_armed_conflict_midyear_report_2017_july_2017.pdf

Mujib Mashal, "U.S. Plan for New Afghan Force Revives Fears of Militia Abuses," New York Times, 15 September 2017,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/15/world/asia/afghan-local-police.html?mcubz=1>.

This article discusses the potential creation of a new militia force in Afghanistan. It also details the problems that Afghanistan experienced with human rights abuses from a similar force in the past.

12
