

# Withdrawal of US and NATO Forces from Afghanistan: Development and Security Situation in Afghanistan

Naeem Shahzad<sup>1</sup>, Hafiza Rukhsana Khuram<sup>2</sup>, Shahbaz Nawaz<sup>3</sup>,  
Rani Siti Fitriani<sup>4</sup> and Ayesha Akter Anie<sup>5</sup>

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## Abstract

*According to an agreement reached between the United States and the Taliban in Doha, the capital of Qatar, on 29 February 2020, the United States and its allies will withdraw troops from Afghanistan in 14 months, and no action will be taken by the Taliban during this period. This article focuses on the consequences of the US troop withdrawal and the real facts that will help predict Afghanistan's future. This article discusses US engagement in Afghanistan, particularly the withdrawal within a 14-month period. The United States and NATO must eliminate Osama bin Laden and the Al-Qaeda terrorist network from Afghanistan, remove the Taliban from power, and bring stability to Afghanistan and establish a democratic state. This article will analyse the current security environment in Afghanistan as the conflict escalates and expands geographically, resulting in significant civilian casualties and displacement, as Afghan National Security Forces respond to insurgent groups' efforts. On April 14, 2021, the United States announced its plan to withdraw all of its troops from Afghanistan on September 11 of this year, effectively ending the longest war in American history. This decision was made after nearly two decades of fighting the Taliban and trying to establish a democratic government in Afghanistan. The withdrawal of US and NATO forces raises concerns about the security situation in Afghanistan. The Taliban, with the support of regional actors, has recently shown a resurgence in its power and control over territories, raising fears of a potential civil war after the US and NATO forces leave.*

**Keywords:** US, Taliban, Future, US troop withdrawal, Peace, Afghanistan

## Introduction

The United States invaded Afghanistan in 2001 in response to the September 11 terrorist attacks, which were orchestrated by the extremist group al-Qaeda. The attacks were carried out by hijacking commercial aeroplanes and crashing them into the World Trade Centre towers in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., resulting in the deaths of nearly 3,000 people. The U.S. government held al-Qaeda responsible for the attacks and demanded that the Taliban, the ruling power in Afghanistan at the time, hand over Osama bin Laden, the leader of al-Qaeda, who had taken refuge in Afghanistan. The Taliban refused to comply with the demands, leading to the U.S. military intervention.

<sup>1</sup>PST, School Education Department, Govt of the Punjab, and Department of Statistics, National College of Business Administration & Economics (NCBA&E) Lahore. Corresponding Author Email: [naeembukhari26@gmail.com](mailto:naeembukhari26@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Govt. Post Graduate College for Women Samundri, GCU Faisalabad.

<sup>3</sup>School of Quantitative Sciences, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Kedah, Malaysia.

<sup>4</sup>Postgraduate Program Universitas Pasundan Bandung, Indonesia.

<sup>5</sup>Lecturer, Department of English, Hamdard University, Bangladesh.



The primary objective of the invasion was to dismantle al-Qaeda and remove the Taliban regime, which was providing a safe haven for the terrorist group. The U.S. believed that by removing the Taliban from power and disrupting al-Qaeda's operations, it could prevent future terrorist attacks and bring stability to Afghanistan.

The Invasion, known as Operation Enduring Freedom, began in October 2001 with airstrikes targeting Taliban and al-Qaeda positions. It was followed by a ground campaign involving U.S. and allied forces working alongside Afghan opposition groups. The initial military operations successfully ousted the Taliban from power, but the conflict continued as the U.S. and its allies faced challenges in stabilising the country and establishing a functioning government. In the years that followed, the mission in Afghanistan evolved into a broader counterinsurgency campaign aimed at supporting the Afghan government, promoting democracy, and building security forces capable of maintaining stability in the country. However, the conflict persisted for more than two decades, with the U.S. gradually reducing its troop presence in recent years.

The 246 passengers on board the four hijacked planes, including the hijackers, did not survive. The New York City government has estimated the damage from the World Trade Centre crash at \$ 31.75 billion. Immediately after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the American Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) launched the largest FBI inquiry in U.S. history, and under a preliminary investigation, the terrorist attacks were linked to Osama bin Laden and his accomplices. On October 7, 2001, US forces invaded Afghanistan after the Afghan government failed to meet US demands. In the initial attacks, the USA relied heavily on the air force, which bombed Kabul and other key locations, while the CIA and US National Forces launched ground attacks. The first significant victory for the USA and its allies in the US-led operation to achieve independence in Afghanistan was the occupation of the Mazar-e-Sharif area. The area of Mazar-e-Sharif is considered very important due to its proximity to two major airports and the highway leading to Pakistan. On November 9, 2001, Northern Alliance forces, led by Abdul Rashid Dostum and Ustad Ata Muhammad Noor, seized control of the Mazar-e-Sharif area from the Taliban government. Thus, the United States and its allies overthrew the Taliban government in Afghanistan in December 2001.

America's longest and most costly war, spanning two decades, has reached its logical conclusion. In this war, a superpower equipped with full resources, strategy, trained forces, and modern technology faces many smaller powers that are weaker than itself, with fewer numerical and financial resources, less trained forces, and no modern technology or support, yet with the spirit of patriotism. Brave, fearless and full of the strength of faith, by sacrificing the life of an ungrateful nation, he took a historic retreat before the world community, which will be remembered as a lesson to the world to come. There are many reasons for the US military's defeat in modern-day wars, the most important being a lack of understanding of local culture. Wars like Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Libya are big civil wars. Neither military nor material power guarantees victory in these wars.

The U.S. government blamed al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden for the 9/11 attacks. The Taliban, who controlled Afghanistan, provided bin Laden with sanctuary and refused American extradition demands. One month after the attacks, the United States launched airstrikes against both the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Within two months, the United States, its international and Afghan allies launched a major war against the Taliban government. The Taliban were defeated, and some of these elements hid in Pakistan's tribal areas bordering Afghanistan. But the Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters just disappeared, but their influence began to grow in their own country, and they began to consolidate their positions there.

A new US-backed government was formed in Afghanistan in 2004, but the Taliban's devastating attacks continued for many years. International forces continued to repel the attacks with new reinforcements. The Taliban have at times suffered heavy defeats over the past two decades, but this weak period has never lasted long. In 2014, the end of the worst period of the war since 2001 and when US troops were tired of the idea of an indefinite stay in Afghanistan, they called off the fighting, and the Taliban handed over war work to Afghan security forces.

According to a UN report published in February 2019, 32,000 civilians have been killed. The Watson Institute at Brown University estimates that 42,000 Taliban fighters have been killed.

Dobbins et al. (2019). As mentioned earlier, it is widely believed that there is no military solution to the war in Afghanistan, losing is optional, and abrupt deviations should be avoided, no matter how reasonable. US and Taliban officials have been engaged in publicly recognised negotiations for over a year. These negotiations were supported by the appointment of a senior, experienced US envoy. For these efforts to succeed, Taliban leaders need to be convinced of two things. First, if there is a deal, the US military will leave, and second, if there is no negotiation, the US military will stay. President Trump's recent move will likely confirm the former but fatally undermine the latter. Shahrani (2015) in Afghanistan, UN sanctions were imposed to punish Taliban and al-Qaeda terrorists, and an effective government was formed to prevent the withdrawal of US and NATO forces (except for the remainder) to ensure the rise of the Taliban and security in the country. Afghanistan. The military that trains and conducts great operations (terrorism). Mission failed: Tobacco Democracy was created.

Akhtar (2008) after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Afghanistan became more divided. The Taliban became an important political and military force in 1996.

### **Objective of the Study**

- What were the key factors and motivations behind the decision to withdraw US and NATO forces from Afghanistan?
- How has the withdrawal of foreign forces impacted the political landscape and power dynamics in Afghanistan?
- What is the current security situation in Afghanistan following the withdrawal, and how has it evolved compared to the pre-withdrawal period?
- What are the implications of the withdrawal for regional stability and the influence of neighbouring countries in Afghanistan?

### **Afghan Geography & Demographics**

Afghanistan is a landlocked country located in Central Asia. It shares borders with several countries: Pakistan to the east and south, Iran to the west, Turkmenistan to the northwest, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to the north, and China to the northeast. Geographically, Afghanistan is characterised by its mountainous terrain. The Hindu Kush mountain range stretches across the central and eastern parts of the country, with its highest peaks reaching altitudes of over 23,000 feet (7,000 meters). The country's climate varies from region to region. Generally, Afghanistan experiences a continental climate with hot summers and cold winters. Some parts of the country receive more precipitation and have milder temperatures, while others are characterised by arid or semi-arid conditions. Afghanistan has a diverse population with various ethnic groups. The largest ethnic group is the Pashtuns, making up around 42% of the population. Other significant ethnic groups include Tajiks (27%), Hazaras (9%), Uzbeks (9%), Aimaq, Turkmen, Baloch, and others. The majority of Afghans practice Islam, with Sunni Muslims comprising about 85-90% of the population and Shia Muslims making up around 10-15%. Islam is also the official religion of the country. Afghanistan has a population of approximately 38 million people as of 2021. While Afghanistan has historically been a rural country with a predominantly agrarian economy, urbanisation has increased in recent years. Major cities in Afghanistan include the capital, Kabul, as well as Herat, Kandahar, Mazar-e-Sharif, and Jalalabad. Afghanistan is a landlocked country, which means it does not have direct access to the sea. The nearest coastline, as you mentioned, lies along the Arabian Sea, approximately 300 miles (480 km) to the south.

### **Challenges and Uncertainty**

Despite international efforts, Afghanistan has faced significant challenges in achieving lasting peace, stability, and development. Ongoing insurgency, political instability, corruption, and regional rivalries have hindered progress. The withdrawal of foreign troops in 2021 and the subsequent Taliban takeover of Kabul have further complicated the situation, leading to concerns about human rights, security, and the country's future trajectory.

Figure 1: Afghanistan map



Source: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Afghanistan>

Figure 2: Map of Afghanistan in South Asia



Source: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Afghanistan>



### Historical Overview of Afghanistan

The country has indeed experienced a tumultuous history marked by external invasions, internal conflicts, and shifting alliances among its ethnic factions.

The series of wars in Afghanistan during the 19th, 20th, and early 21st centuries were characterized by a complex web of political, ideological, and strategic factors. The involvement of various external powers, including Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States, played a significant role in shaping the outcomes of these conflicts.

The First Anglo-Afghan War took place in 1839-1840 when the British Empire sought to counter Russian influence in the region and establish a friendly government in Afghanistan. However, the British forces faced strong resistance from Afghan tribes and suffered a major military defeat, leading to their withdrawal and the restoration of Afghan independence.

The Second Anglo-Afghan War occurred from 1878 to 1880, driven by the British Empire's concerns over Russian expansionism and their desire to install a pro-British ruler. The war resulted in the signing of the Treaty of Gandamak, which allowed the British to control Afghan foreign affairs while maintaining Afghan independence.

In 1919, the Third Anglo-Afghan War broke out when the Afghan king declared full independence from British influence. The Afghans successfully repelled the British-led Indian forces, resulting in the recognition of Afghanistan as an independent nation.

The Afghan War, also known as the Soviet-Afghan War, started in 1979 when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan to support the communist government that had come to power through a coup in 1978. The Soviet Union aimed to stabilize the regime and prevent the spread of Islamic insurgency. The Afghan resistance, known as the mujahideen, received support from various countries, including the United States, who saw an opportunity to counter Soviet influence. After a decade of fighting, the Soviets withdrew in 1989, leaving a power vacuum and a fragile Afghan government.

The rivalry between imperial Britain and tsarist Russia, known as the "Great Game," played a significant role in shaping Afghanistan's modern boundaries. Afghanistan served as a buffer state between the two empires, and both powers sought to exert influence and control over the region.

The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979 to prop up a communist regime, triggering a decade-long conflict known as the Soviet-Afghan War. The war resulted in widespread destruction and loss of life and fueled the rise of various resistance groups, including the mujahideen.

Following the withdrawal of Soviet forces in 1989, Afghanistan descended into a period of civil war as different factions vied for power. The communist regime held on for a few years, but it eventually collapsed in 1992. This was followed by a period of rule by mujahideen groups, which was marked by instability and internal fighting.

During this time, the Taliban, an ultraconservative Islamic movement, emerged and gradually gained control over most of the country. From 1996 to 2001, the Taliban established a theocratic regime characterized by strict interpretations of Islamic law. Their rule drew international condemnation due to their treatment of women, human rights abuses, and harboring of international terrorists, including Osama bin Laden.

In 2001, after the September 11 attacks in the United States, a U.S.-led coalition invaded Afghanistan to remove the Taliban from power. The aim was to dismantle terrorist networks, including Al-Qaeda, which had found safe haven in Afghanistan. The intervention marked the beginning of the post-Taliban era and efforts to stabilize the country, establish a democratic system, and promote development.

Afghanistan has undergone efforts to rebuild and establish a democratic system. A new constitution was adopted, and democratic elections have been held. However, the country continues to face significant challenges, including ongoing violence, insurgency, political instability, and the presence of extremist groups.

The capital city of Afghanistan is indeed Kabul, which is also the country's largest city. Historically, Kabul was known for its beautiful mosques and gardens during the reign of Emperor Bābur, who founded the Mughal dynasty in the 16th century. It was an important city along the Silk Road, serving as a significant trade hub.

However, Afghanistan has faced a turbulent past, particularly during the long and violent Afghan War. The country, including Kabul, was left in ruins, and its economy suffered greatly. The war caused widespread devastation and displacement of the Afghan people. It is true that an entire generation of Afghans grew up amidst ongoing conflict and were affected by the consequences of war.

The study is completed with a secondary source of data and the study relies on a qualitative approach based on secondary sources of analysis of the latest books, research articles, reports and newspaper articles.

## Discussion

### Key points of the agreement

Under the agreement, the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan will be completed in 14 months. In the first phase, the number of 13,000 troops stationed in Afghanistan will be decreased to 8,600 in four and a half months. After that, the remaining troops will be withdrawn in nine and a half months.

- 1- US and coalition forces will evacuate five military bases in Afghanistan.
- 2- The Taliban and the United States will hand over a final list of prisoners before inter-Afghan talks in Oslo.
- 3- According to the Taliban, 5,500 of their captives are in US custody, while the Taliban will release about 1,000 hostages. The prisoners will be released within three months.
- 4- During the intra-Afghan talks, the United States will lift sanctions on Taliban leaders by August 27.
- 5- Under the agreement, the Taliban will guarantee that Afghanistan's territory will not be used against terrorism.

The United States will continue to provide economic assistance to Afghanistan after the reconstruction and inter-Afghan dialogue for a new political system, but will not interfere in Afghanistan's internal affairs.

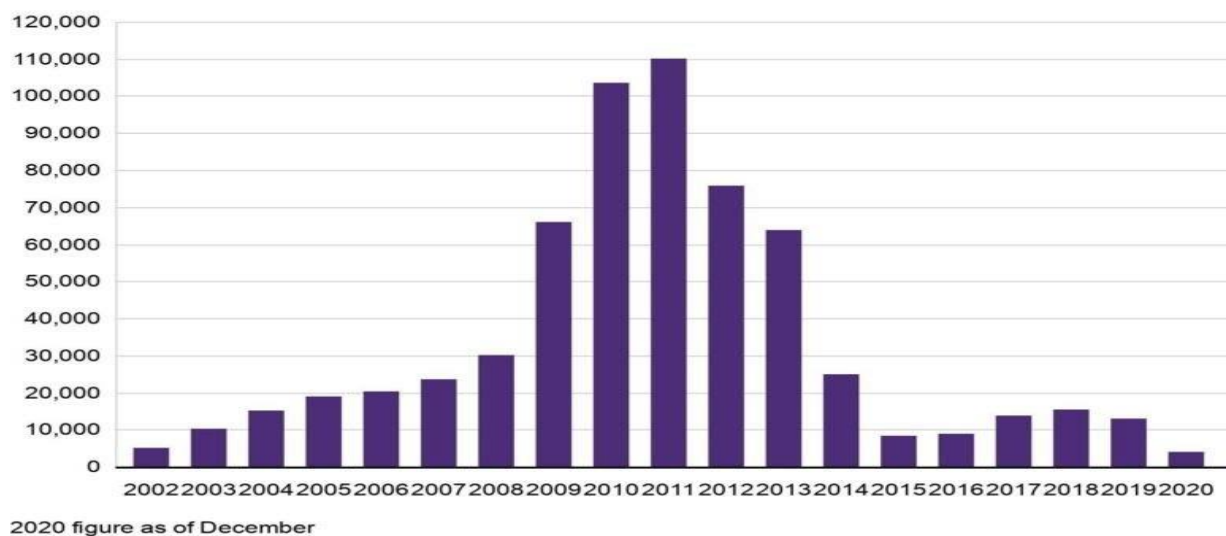
The peace agreement between the US and the Taliban aims to advance inter-Afghan dialogue between all groups, with all parties involved drawing up a roadmap for the future. One of the goals of the agreement signed in Doha on February 29 is the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan, who have been stationed there for the past 18 years. According to the agreement, if the Taliban fulfills all its security guarantees, the United States will withdraw its Forces from Afghanistan in the next 14 months. Anthony Blanken said the Taliban had been in the strongest military position since 9/11, following Trump's agreement with the Taliban in 26 February 2020 and the withdrawal of US troops.

### When did you come to America, what did you lose and what did you gain

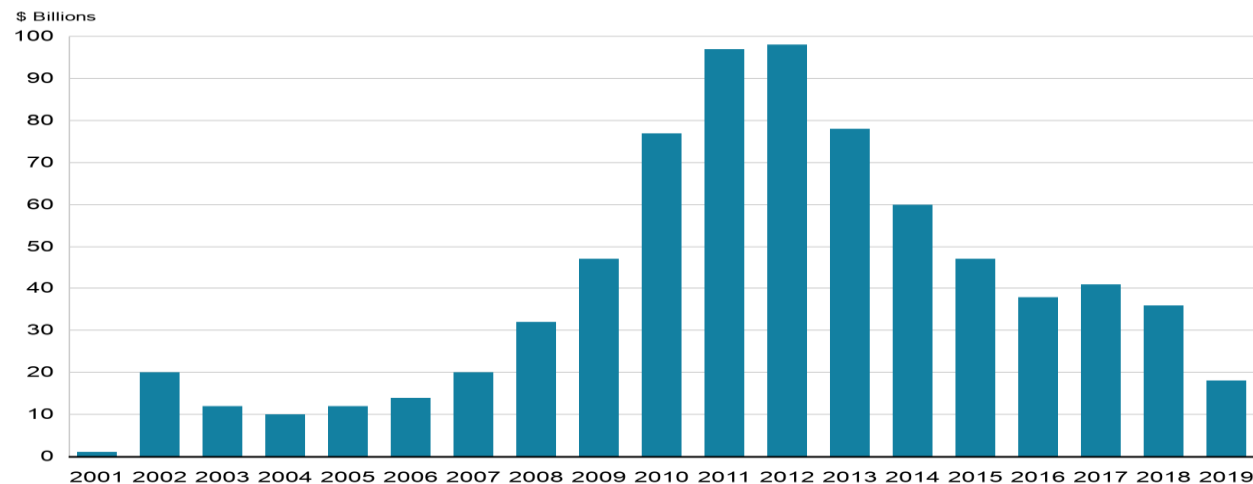
The United States has been fighting in Afghanistan for nearly two decades, during which time US and NATO forces have carried out several operations. The United States decided to invade Afghanistan after the 9/11 attacks in the United States. The attack was apparently carried out against al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban, but has resulted in a large number of Afghan civilians being killed and injured. In those two decades, some 22,000 US troops have been attacked, killing 2,400. The US Congress has approved some 144 billion dollars for war, reconstruction and rehabilitation in Afghanistan. The US invasion removed the Taliban from power in Afghanistan and replaced it with an elected government.

Javaid, U., & Javaid, R. (2016), the scenario of conflict between traditional rivals in South Asia, India and Pakistan, is emerging in Afghanistan with a new dimension. Therefore, India is trying to play a significant soft role in achieving its broader goals through Afghanistan and justifying its presence there. Although the US presence in Afghanistan will be largely sustained, the Indian presence will provide local socio-economic infrastructure and military and political services to promote peace and sanctuary in a civil, war-torn country that is a source of fear and anxiety for Pakistan.

The increase in US troop numbers in Afghanistan comes as Washington spends billions of dollars to fight the Taliban insurgency and fund reconstruction. Between 2010 and 2012, when more than 100,000 US troops were in Afghanistan, the cost of the war increased to 1 trillion a year, according to US government figures. These costs fell sharply as the US military shifted its focus from offensive operations to training Afghan forces. Annual spending was about 40 billion dollars between 2016 and 2018, and is estimated to be 38 billion Dollars for 2019 (as of September).

**Figure 3: US troop levels in Afghanistan****US troop levels in Afghanistan**  
2002 - 2020

Source: SIGAR

**Figure 4: US cost of war in Afghanistan****US cost of war in Afghanistan**  
2001 - 2019

Source: US Department of Defense

The resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan set a new milestone in the country's history by defeating the Afghan security forces in a very short time. It was after 9/11 that the whole world was affected by the attacks of Al Qaeda, a non-state actor who forced the United States and its allies to take action against them globally. The victory of the Taliban is not only a defeat for the Afghan security forces but also a defeat for the United States and its allies who have been in Afghanistan for the last 20 years. The study aims to analyze the future policies of the Taliban in resurrecting and shaping the country into the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (Kosar, 2021).

According to the US Department of Defense, total military spending in Afghanistan (October 2001 to September 2019) was 778 billion dollars. The US State Department, the United States Agency for

International Development (USAID) and other government agencies spent 44 billion dollars on reconstruction projects.

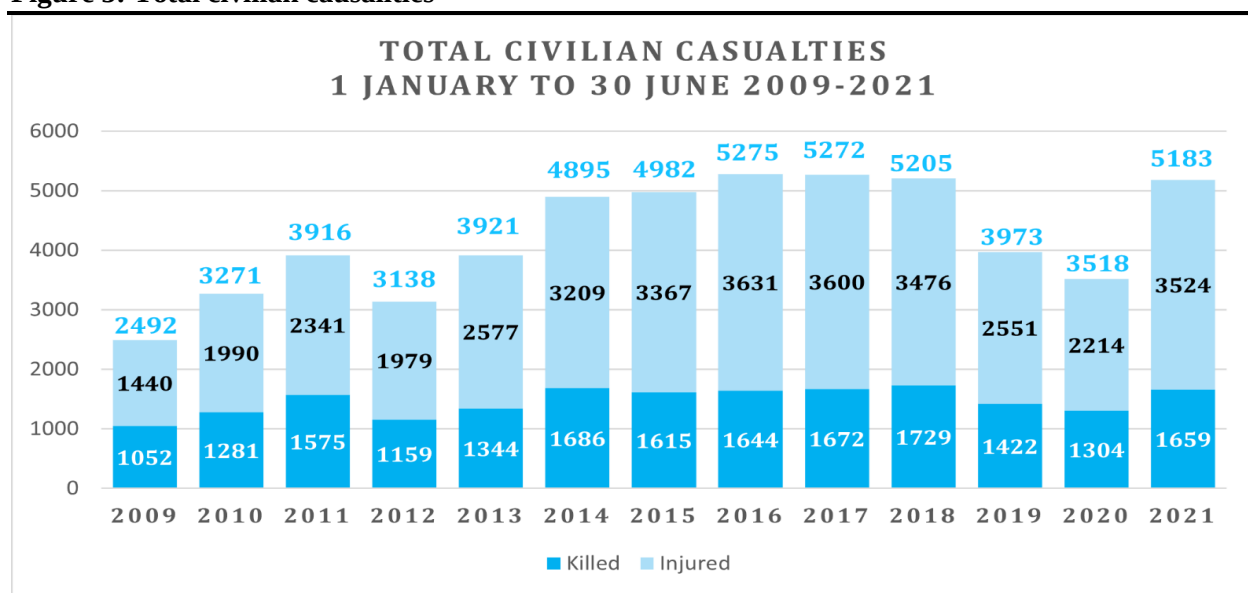
According to official figures, the total cost of the war since 2001 has reached 822 billion dollars. But that doesn't include spending in Pakistan, which the United States has been using as a military base for Afghan-related operations. Much of this money has been spent on counterterrorism operations and on the needs of US troops, such as food, clothing, medical care, special salaries and benefits.

Official figures show that the United States paid about 16 percent of the total reconstruction effort in Afghanistan over the past 18 years, or 143.27 billion dollars. And more than half of that, 88.32 billion dollars, was spent on training Afghan security forces, including the Afghan National Army and Police. The rest was spent primarily on improving governance and infrastructure, as well as economic and humanitarian aid and counter-narcotics measures.

The United States has spent an average of 1.5 million dollars on counter-narcotics efforts, or 9 billion dollars from 2002 to September last year. Nevertheless, UN figures show that the increase in the area under opium cultivation in 2017 has reached a record high.

In 2017, the Reconstruction Watchdog said about 19 billion dollars had been lost on "waste, fraud and misuse" over the past 11 years. According to the watchdog, that number is probably only a fraction of the total amount lost. He added that the US profession "often escalates conflicts, leads to corruption and strengthens support for the insurgency."

**Figure 5: Total civilian casualties**



Source: UNAMA targeted killing figures include both targeting of civilians and civilians incidentally impacted from targeting of other non-civilian individuals. See UNAMA Protection of Civilians Annual Report 2020 glossary

Between 1 January and 30 June 2021, UNAMA recorded 5,183 civilian casualties in Afghanistan: 1,659 killed and 3,524 injured. This was a 47% increase from the first half of 2020, ending four years of declining casualties. Civilian losses rose to levels last seen between 2014 and 2018 and affected all age and gender groups. UNAMA noted a particularly troubling rise in casualties among women, girls, and children overall. Compared to early 2020, killed or injured female children and adults nearly doubled, while male child and adult casualties increased by 36% and 35%, respectively.

In the first half of 2021, civilian casualties from non-suicide IEDs used by Anti-Government Elements rose sharply, reaching the highest level since UNAMA began systematic documentation in 2009. Civilian injuries from ground engagements, mostly involving the Taliban and Afghan national security forces, also increased. Targeted killings by Anti-Government Elements stayed high, and airstrikes by Pro-Government Forces, mainly from the Afghan Air Force, led to more civilian casualties.



### The Current Economic Situation

The statistics on Afghanistan are not very reliable, but according to the World Bank, the average annual growth rate since 2003 has been nine per cent. Since then, it has slowed down (a major reason for which may be the reduction in foreign aid). From 2015 to 2020, the growth rate averaged 2.5%.

Afghanistan is among Asia's poorest countries, with most people still living under a tribal system while the world advances into the 21st century. The country's 30 million population relies heavily on foreign aid. Afghanistan's economy is almost fully dependent on international aid and opium farming, its largest income source. In 2017, farmers sold over 9,000 tons of opium, worth about \$4 billion. Opium production rose by 37% last year, despite COVID-19.

Over 80% of the world's opium and heroin comes from Afghanistan. Economists warn that Taliban rule could devastate the country's economy. Afghanistan's long history of political instability also leads to economic instability.

Afghanistan's total GDP in 2020 was less than 20 billion dollars (19.8 billion dollars), according to World Bank figures. The per capita GDP is 2,000 dollars while the country's population is 39.7 million. The United States announced an additional 266 million dollars in funding on June 4, 2021, according to a report by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). This funding comes at a critical time, as growing humanitarian needs in 2020 have driven people to flee their homes due to conflict, and the coronavirus has worsened economic woes, leading to food shortages. Prices are rising. However, aid as a share of GDP fell from 100% in 2009 to 42.9% in 2020.

This article provides an economic overview of mine clearance in Afghanistan. Key benefits include increased agricultural productivity, reduced transportation and operating costs, and life- and cost-saving benefits for refugees and internally displaced persons. A \$100 million investment between 1988 and 1998 is expected to yield an annual return of \$50.3 million between 1999 and 2008. This is in stark contrast to NPV projections (Weinbaum, 2021).

Pakistan and Afghanistan are partners in the fight against terrorism, which has a huge impact on their economies. Bilateral relations became difficult because Afghanistan accused Pakistan of interfering in its internal affairs as the war in Afghanistan spread to Pakistan. Economic factors are related to non-economic factors; they are mutually determined (Zingel, 2014).

Ahmadzai and Aryobi (2021) study aims to identify the factors influencing food security in rural areas of Paktia Province, Afghanistan. A structured questionnaire was used to conduct personal interviews with male and female heads of household. The survey found that 59.1% of households were food insecure, with an average of 48.1% experiencing food shortages, 38.3% having borderline food security, and 13.6% having acceptable food security. As a consequence of the regression, low income, farm size, household size, flooding, food prices and internal migration factors determine food insecurity.

### An Atmosphere of Chaos

Pakistan is concerned about the growing internal turmoil in Afghanistan, as the escalation of violence there could affect Pakistan. More Afghan refugees may come to Pakistan. The internal turmoil in Afghanistan could make it easier for the Pakistani Taliban and their allies to continue using Afghan territory for terrorist activities inside Pakistan. Internal turmoil could enable India to provide logistical and financial support to anti-Pakistan groups in Afghanistan. And be able to counter political and military interests in Afghanistan; at this stage, however, such an ideal situation is unlikely to emerge. One solution to this problem is for the states and major powers involved in Afghanistan to agree with the Kabul government and the Taliban on internal peace and a broad-based government, and to support such arrangements.

With the current peace efforts, the Taliban will have to become part of a new system of government in Afghanistan. This means ending the war and establishing a new Afghan government that will be a success for the United States, the powers in the region and the Afghans. The people of Afghanistan and the world may face a security vacuum that could provide a favourable environment for extremist organisations such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. Rising drug production and the migration of refugees to other countries could pose a threat not only to the region but to the world as a whole. October 15, 1999: The United Nations,

through Resolution 1267, declares Al Qaeda and the Taliban terrorist groups and imposes sanctions on them.

Tariq and Marwat (2015) explored that phase 5 of the withdrawal is important as the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan marked Afghanistan with civil war, a power vacuum, an ongoing power struggle between ethnic minorities, and the Taliban's rise to power in Kabul. This document discusses NATO's withdrawal from Afghanistan and its impact on Afghanistan.

Laub (2014) the United States and Afghanistan are eager to negotiate with the Taliban, but the negotiations have not had much momentum as international forces prepare to withdraw in late 2016, ending the battle in December 2014.

### **Regional dynamics and tremendous power competition**

Chinese strategic interests in Afghanistan revolve around two key factors. Firstly, there is concern regarding the ethnic minorities in China's Xinjiang region who have connections with ethnic groups residing in neighbouring regions that share borders with China. China is particularly worried about the possibility of its Uighur minority aligning with the Taliban. Secondly, China is also economically invested in the region, as instability could negatively affect the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a major component of its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). To address this concern, China has been actively engaging with Pakistan.

Pakistan, an "all-weather friend" of China, has a strong strategic advantage in Taliban-run Afghanistan. China and Pakistan have developed an axis of convenience to leverage the benefits from this arrangement. China and Russia also share a strategic alignment on Afghanistan, aiming for a win-win outcome for both. At the latest summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, held in September 2021, China and Russia took a coordinated stand, with Afghanistan at the top of the agenda. At the United Nations, Russia and China blocked a US resolution that proposed case-by-case exemptions to sanctions on the Taliban. Although both nations are sceptical of the current Taliban regime, the American military's exit from Afghanistan is a reason for them to rejoice at this strategic victory. In the event of either of the two recognising the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the other will follow suit. China is also eyeing Afghanistan's mineral resources and is already scouting opportunities to access the country's lithium and copper deposits. A peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan is in China's interest, and China is working to fully operationalise the Belt and Road Initiative here. China is working with major powers to bring peace to Afghanistan and telling other powers how India was spreading terrorism in Afghanistan.

Brenner and Wallin (2021) following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, former US President George W. Bush declared war on terror. We will focus on our promises and stand firm. This war can continue and will be resolved, but make no mistake.

Hussain et al. (2021) China's significant role in international politics is attracting the world, and as a result, world politics is shifting from the West to Asian countries. The changing situation in South Asia is having a huge impact on Pakistan. Due to the huge investment in CPEC in Pakistan, especially in the neighbouring country, India has many concerns. It will be seen as a victory not only for Pakistan, China, and Afghanistan, but also for the whole region. India is engaged in various conspiracies against Pakistan to eliminate CPEC. A Virtual meeting on May 18, 2020, was held among Pakistan, Russia, China, Iran, and Afghanistan, and discussed the overall situation in Afghanistan and the future of Peace in Afghanistan. A statement was issued after the meeting of the four countries in which these things were agreed upon.

Even before that, the United States had lauded Pakistan for its important role in bringing peace to Afghanistan, along with other countries, and China had not backed down after Pakistan's statement, in strong words. Condemned and attributed terrorism to any country, while Pakistan has already done so much against terrorism.

The four special envoys for Afghanistan;

1. Wholly Afghan ethnic groups and parties, including the Taliban, are urged to create a situation in which inter-Afghan dialogue is possible, and he hoped that this development would accelerate the start of inter-Afghan talks.
2. It is hoped that UN Security Council Resolution 2513 (2020) will be implemented with due regard.

3. Reaffirms Afghanistan's commitment to mitigating the effects of the Corona Global Outbreak, then welcomes the provision of international assistance to Afghanistan on the basis of humanitarian assistance. It was stressed that the international community should assist in the timely and dignified return of Afghan refugees.
4. The people of Afghanistan must respect their freedom of speech and their country. Talks between two central political leaders have raised hopes that they could mark the start of inter-Afghan relations. In this new journey of peace, Afghan inter-talk raises the hope that the dilemma can be solved.

### Development Situation

One of the primary implications of the withdrawal has been the uncertainty surrounding the country's development. The Taliban, which had been ousted from power by the US-led coalition in 2001, has regained control of much of the country, including key cities and provinces. The Taliban's takeover has led to widespread displacement and a humanitarian crisis. The lack of security and stability has also negatively impacted the country's economy, leading many businesses and investors to leave.

### Security Situation

The security situation in Afghanistan has also deteriorated significantly since the withdrawal of foreign forces. The Taliban's resurgence has led to increased violence and instability, with attacks on government forces, civilians, and infrastructure becoming more frequent. The Afghan security forces, which have been trained and supported by the US and NATO, have struggled to maintain control of the country in the face of the Taliban's offensive. In addition, the withdrawal of foreign forces has left a security vacuum that could be exploited by other militant groups, including ISIS and al-Qaeda.

### Implications

The withdrawal of US and NATO forces from Afghanistan has significant implications for regional and global security. The Taliban's resurgence has led to concerns that Afghanistan could once again become a safe haven for terrorist groups, posing a threat to regional stability and global security. The Taliban's links to other militant groups, including al-Qaeda, also raise concerns about the potential for cross-border terrorism. In addition, the humanitarian crisis caused by the Taliban's takeover has led to concerns about the displacement of millions of people, with many seeking refuge in neighbouring countries.

### Causes of US Failure in Afghanistan

1. *Insurgency and Taliban Resurgence:* Despite efforts to combat insurgency and establish stability, the Taliban, an Islamist extremist group, was able to regroup and launch a significant insurgency campaign. Their ability to exploit local grievances and establish control in certain regions undermined the Afghan government's authority.
2. *Corruption and Governance Issues:* Widespread corruption within the Afghan government weakened its legitimacy and eroded public trust. Rampant corruption undermined the effectiveness of institutions, hindered development, and fueled social and economic inequalities.
3. *Inadequate Afghan Security Forces:* The Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) faced challenges in terms of training, morale, and corruption. Despite years of international support and training, the ANSF struggled to maintain stability and lacked the capacity to effectively counter the Taliban and other militant groups.
4. *Lack of Political Unity and Fragmented Society:* Afghanistan is a diverse country with various ethnic, tribal, and sectarian divisions. Political fragmentation and infighting among different factions hampered efforts to establish a cohesive and stable government, making it easier for the Taliban to exploit these divisions.
5. *Weak Infrastructure and Economic Dependency:* Afghanistan has long suffered from a lack of basic infrastructure, including roads, electricity, and clean water. The economy heavily relied on foreign aid and the illicit drug trade, which created vulnerabilities and hindered sustainable development.

6. *Regional and Geopolitical Factors:* Afghanistan's geostrategic location made it a battleground for competing regional and global powers. Regional actors, such as Pakistan, Iran, and India, pursued their own interests and often engaged in proxy conflicts, further complicating the stability of the country.

### **Afghan National Army (ANA) Trust Fund**

The Failure of the Afghan National Army (ANA) Trust Fund emerged from the challenges faced by the ANA, which was established to secure and defend Afghanistan following the overthrow of the Taliban regime in 2001. The ANA Trust Fund was established to support the development, training, and sustainability of the Afghan National Army. The primary objective of the ANA Trust Fund was to ensure that the Afghan National Army had the necessary resources, equipment, and training to build a capable, self-sustaining force. The fund was intended to provide financial assistance to Afghanistan, enabling the country to maintain and strengthen its security forces, particularly the Afghan National Army. However, despite the establishment of the ANA Trust Fund and significant investments made by the international community, the Afghan National Army ultimately faced numerous challenges and failed to achieve the desired outcomes. Several factors contributed to the failure of the ANA Trust Fund and the Afghan National Army as a whole.

As for NATO's military contributions, the costs are divided among the member countries. The organisation has played a significant role in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan, which involved military operations, training, and support to Afghan forces. NATO member countries have made financial contributions based on their capabilities and national budgets. According to NATO estimates, the total spending by NATO member countries on the ISAF mission from 2001 to 2014 was approximately \$40 billion. However, it's important to note that these figures do not include the costs incurred by individual member countries outside of the ISAF mission, such as bilateral aid or ongoing support efforts (defence expenditure of NATO countries).

The financial cost of the U.S. and NATO military contributions in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2021 is substantial, with the United States being the largest spender.

From table 1 below, as of February 2021, NATO data indicated that over US\$3.4 billion had been contributed to the ANA Trust Fund. Australia was reported to be the second-largest contributor, providing US\$80 million per year, for a total of US\$680 million. The Australian contribution was equivalent to approximately A\$105 to A\$107 million per year, depending on the exchange rate, as provided by the Department of Defence.

**Table 1: Afghan National Army (ANA) Trust Fund Contributions (All amounts in US dollars - rounded figures)**

|                        |             |
|------------------------|-------------|
| Australia              | 680.000.000 |
| Azerbaijan             | 2.988.000   |
| Belgium                | 72.253.000  |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | 9.000       |
| Bulgaria               | 1.214.000   |
| Canada                 | 254.210.000 |
| Czech Republic         | 4.565.000   |
| Denmark                | 36.601.000  |
| Estonia                | 1.898.000   |
| Finland                | 19.568.000  |
| Georgia                | 3.000.000   |
| Germany                | 810.008.000 |
| Hungary                | 2.700.000   |
| Iceland                | 100.000     |
| Ireland                | 231.000     |
| Italy                  | 508.620.000 |
| Japan                  | 55.301.000  |

|                                   |               |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| Kazakhstan                        | 6.100.000     |
| Latvia                            | 3.500.000     |
| Lithuania                         | 3.052.000     |
| Luxembourg                        | 58.153.000    |
| Montenegro                        | 2.400.000     |
| Netherlands                       | 134.158.000   |
| North Macedonia                   | 451.000       |
| Norway                            | 115.517.000   |
| Portugal                          | 6.830.000     |
| Romania                           | 2.971.000     |
| Slovakia                          | 5.000.000     |
| Slovenia                          | 4.057.000     |
| South Korea                       | 319.048.000   |
| Spain                             | 5.427.000     |
| Sweden                            | 14.999.000    |
| Switzerland                       | 186.000       |
| Turkey                            | 115.983.000   |
| United Arab Emirates              | 10.000.000    |
| United Kingdom                    | 141.509.000   |
| United States (ASFF) <sup>1</sup> | 40.369.000    |
| Total                             | 3.442.976.000 |

NATO, 'Afghan National Army (ANA) Trust Fund', media backgrounder, 5 February 2021.

## Conclusion

Whether the US withdraws from Afghanistan or remains outside Afghanistan, peace and stability in war-torn Afghanistan seems a long way off. The government was threatened not only by the Taliban, but also by ISIS. The conflict between the Taliban and ISIS, which could plunge the country into civil war, is also embarrassing. The increasing role of India, Iran and Russia is also dangerous for Afghanistan's prospects, as they could turn to the Taliban or ISIS. No military solution to the Afghan problem is possible, but political dialogue between Afghans is the only solution. International forces working for peace in the region need to adopt a joint strategy to prevent and protect international guarantors from undermining the process. The issue of Afghanistan must be resolved through dialogue and negotiation, and a peaceful transfer of power must be found that is comprehensive as well as broad so that all groups in Afghanistan can be represented in it and peacefully, find a solution for Afghanistan's future. The focus of the Taliban, the US, the Afghan government, and other forces and international organizations should be on the peace and distress of the Afghan people, who are being affected by the severe cold weather in Central Asia. If the Afghan government does not make a decision until the weather changes, a major humanitarian tragedy could occur in Afghanistan. The withdrawal of US and NATO forces from Afghanistan and the subsequent development and security situation in the country present significant areas of research.

*Security dynamics:* Given the evolving security situation in Afghanistan, further research could explore the changing dynamics among various armed groups, including the Taliban, ISIS, and other regional and local actors. This could involve analyzing their strategies, territorial control, and potential threats to regional stability.

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