

## ISSUE DESCRIPTION

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## Introduction

The War in Afghanistan was a conflict that took place from 2001 to 2021 in the South-Central Asian country of Afghanistan. Following the death of Osama bin Laden in 2011, the leaders of NATO decided on an exit strategy and expressed hope on ending this armed conflict using diplomatic ways. In February 2020, the Trump administration and the Taliban signed the *Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan*, also known as the *Doha Agreement*, without participation by the Afghan government, in which they concluded the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Afghanistan. In return, the Taliban will prevent al-Qaeda from operating in areas under Taliban control. It has also been proposed that future negotiations should be held between the Taliban and the Afghan government to maintain a permanent ceasefire. As part of the *Doha Agreement*, the Trump administration has agreed to an initial withdrawal of US troops from 13,000 to 8,600 by July 2020 and a full withdrawal by May 1, 2021, if the Taliban keep their promise. However, following the withdrawal of U.S. forces, the Taliban launched massive offensives, and seized the capital Kabul on August 15, 2021, occupying most of Afghanistan. On the same day, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani fled the country. The Taliban declared victory and the war in Afghanistan was over. Restoration of Taliban rule has been confirmed by the United States as well. One question remained open: what is the future of Afghanistan with the last US aircraft taking off from the country on August 30, ending nearly two decades of Western military presence?

## Definition of Key Terms

**Afghanistan Peace Agreement:** A peace agreement signed by the United States and the Taliban on February 29, 2020, aimed at ending the war in Afghanistan. This agreement is also known as the Doha Agreement.

**Taliban offensive (2021):** a military offensive by the Taliban and other allied militants against the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in 2021. This led to the fall of Kabul and marked the end of the nearly 20-year-old war in Afghanistan. Also known as the Summer Offensive.

**Special Immigrant Visa:** programs for receiving a US visa for Afghan nationals under certain conditions, such as working for or on behalf of the US government.

**US Forces Afghanistan Forward:** a United States command based in Kabul, whose main purposes are: protect the US Embassy in Kabul, support peacekeeping missions at Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul, provide continued advice and assistance to the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces, and support US counterterrorism effort.

**United States House Committee on Armed Services:** a committee of the United States House of Representatives, which is accountable for the oversight of the Department of Defense, US Armed Forces, and the Department of Energy.

**National Defense Authorization Act:** a series of United States federal laws specifying the annual budget and expenditures of the U.S. Department of Defense.

## General Overview

### WITHDRAWAL OF THE US TROOPS

The concept of the withdrawal of American troops was first mentioned in 2011 when US President Barack Obama stated that the US could withdraw from Afghanistan by the end of 2014. Consequently, a huge number of American troops has been withdrawn through 2014, leaving 9,800 soldiers in Afghanistan for numerous peacekeeping missions.

In 2017, Donald Trump has become the forty-fifth president of the US. Under the Trump administration, the US modified their military approach in Afghanistan. This may be defined as training, recommending, and helping Afghan forces. In July 2017, the numbers of US troops in Afghanistan changed to 8,400. However, this number was modified to 11,000 on the 30th of August 2017, as the Department of Defense disclosed that there have been more troops in Afghanistan than formerly acknowledged. Later 2017, the Trump administration dispatched another 3000 soldiers to Afghanistan, and therefore, there are 14,000 soldiers in Afghanistan in total. In October 2019, after the peace talks with Taliban a month prior, US General Miller introduced that US forces could be decreased to 13,000.

On the twenty-ninth of February 2020, the *Doha Agreement*, or the *Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan*, was signed by US diplomatic envoy Zalmay Khalilzad and the Taliban. "All military forces of the United States, its allies, and Coalition partners, including all non-diplomatic civilian personnel, private security contractors, trainers, advisors, and supporting services personnel within 14 months (i.e., by 1 May 2021)" was stated in the agreement. The condition for the US withdrawal was that the Taliban would "not to allow al-Qaeda or any other extremist group to operate in the areas they control". Accordingly, the US decreased its forces in Afghanistan through approximately 5,000 troops to 8-6 hundred within 135 days. NATO additionally promised to lessen the wide variety of NATO's soldiers from around 16,000 troops to approximately 12,000.

However, matters were modified barely in July 2020. Different media reviews regarded the capability of Taliban participation in an alleged Russian bounty program to turn against US troops. Accordingly, the US House Armed Services Committee voted for a National Defense Authorization Act amendment to set extra situations to be met before President Trump continue the withdrawal from Afghanistan. Such situations have been including requiring an evaluation on whether any country has supplied incentives for the Taliban to assault the US and coalition troops. It additionally refused to fund withdrawal to underneath 8,000, and once more at 4,000,

except the Trump administration certifies that doing so would not compromise American interests in Afghanistan. This caused speculations of capability Iran-Taliban ties, which have been additionally noted as a part of the justification for the assassination of Qasem Soleimani in January 2020.

On 17 November 2020, the United States introduced further withdrawals of troops through 15 January 2021, leaving 2,500 troops in Afghanistan and Iraq, down from the amount of 4,500 and 3,000, respectively.

The new presidential candidate of the United States, Joe Biden, supports the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan. However, he left room for the opportunity that the United States could be “open to keeping a few troops withinside the country whose task could focus solely on counterterrorism operations”.

Eventually, The Trump administration finished its reduction of forces to 2,500 troops in January 2021, the lowest number of American troops in Afghanistan since 2001. On 14 April 2021, Biden introduced his aim to withdraw all US troops by 11 September 2021, the twentieth anniversary of the 11th of September attacks. At the same time, Biden admitted that once almost twenty years of war, it was clear that the United States army couldn't transform Afghanistan right into a modern democracy.

## **FALL OF KABUL**

On 15 August 2021, the result of a military offensive that started in May 2021, caused the overthrowing of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan below President Ashraf Ghani and reinstation of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan below the Taliban. After the offensive and the autumn of the relevant government, the United States and its coalition partners released the largest non-combatant evacuation operation in US navy history, with evacuating greater than 123,000 people from Afghanistan via airlifts from Kabul's Hamid Karzai International Airport.

Following the Taliban takeover, western countries suspended humanitarian aid, and the World Bank and International Monetary Fund additionally halted payments to Afghanistan. The Biden administration iced over about \$9 billion in assets belonging to the Afghan central banks, blockading the Taliban from getting access to billions of dollars held in US financial institution accounts. On the one hand, those measures avoided the Taliban from receiving economic assistance. On the other hand, this additionally brought about a large humanitarian disaster in Afghanistan. In October, the UN said that greater than 1/2 of Afghanistan's 39 million people

confronted an acute food shortage. Experts additionally are expecting different consequences will be brought, including drought destroying food production, and the constant military actions not only disrupting basic services but also displacing many to cities. On October 20, the Taliban's chief spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid concluded this situation, by stating “On the one hand they say a million children will die, but on the other, the US is holding our money. The US should release our money, so we can save more children.”

## Major Parties Involved

**United States:** the US plays the most significant role in the War in Afghanistan. It invaded the country in 2001, and withdrew its armed forces in 2021, after fighting the longest war in United States history. Its invasion and withdrawal caused several humanitarian crises in the country.

**NATO:** NATO Allies are closely monitoring the situation in Afghanistan. They have deployed military forces for almost two decades under a United Nations (UN) Security Council mandate. Their armed forces also took part in the evacuation in August.

**Taliban:** A political movement in Afghanistan designated as a terrorist organization by some countries. The term also refers to the territories they control as the Islamic emirates of Afghanistan. They signed the Doha Agreement with the US and launched the Summer Offensive throughout the summer in 2021, finally capturing the Afghan capital Kabul.

**Al-Qaeda:** A multinational paramilitary Sunni Islamic extremist network of Salafi jihadists founded in 1988 by Osama bin Laden. After the September 11 attacks in 2001, the US demanded the extradition of Bin Laden, of which, refusal led to the invasion of the US. After the withdrawal of the US, top United States security officials are concerned about the potential threat to the US from al-Qaeda.

## Timeline of Events

**September 11, 2001:** U.S. officials declare that bin Laden, the Saudi exile, is highly suspect in the Sept. 11 attack.

**October 7, 2001:** U.S. and British forces launched airstrikes towards targets in Afghanistan.

**November 13, 2001:** Foreign troops enter Kabul.

**May 2014:** Obama announces a timetable for considerably decreasing U.S. troop sizes in Afghanistan by 2016.

**December 2014:** NATO formally ends its combat mission in Afghanistan. Troops stay to train and advise Afghan forces.

**February 29, 2020:** Signing of the Doha Agreement.

**August 10, 2021:** White House says Taliban takeover “is not inevitable” following the U.S.’ rapid withdrawal from the country.

**August 26, 2021:** Two suicide bombings occurred outside the Kabul airport, killing a minimum of 169 Afghans and thirteen soldiers from the U.S. troops.

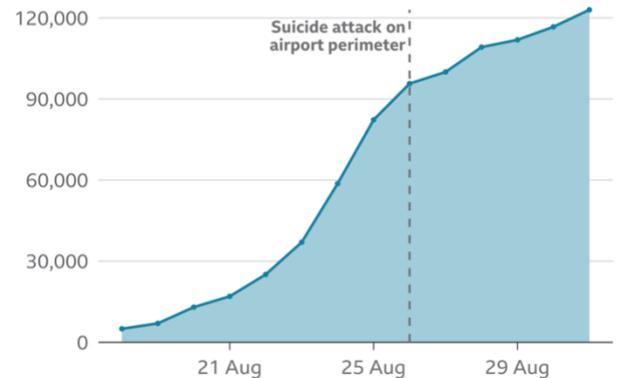
**August 30, 2021:** The U.S. transports the very last contingent of troops from Kabul Airport, formally finishing America's longest war.

## Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

On 22 July 2021, the US House of Representatives voted in favor of the ALLIES Act, a bill that could improve and offer visas for Afghan interpreters who worked for American employees all through the war. The initiative is a part of the Special Immigrant Visa, which was created in 2006 by Congress. The UN has called on its member states to assist the Afghan people in “their darkest hour of need” – however, whilst a few nations have supplied refugees a secure haven, others have indicated they'll now no longer be giving sanctuary to the ones fleeing the crisis. Neighboring nations, together with Pakistan and Iran, have accepted a big quantity of Afghanistan's refugees and asylum seekers. Around 1.5 million fled to Pakistan in 2020, whilst Iran hosted 780,000. Nonetheless, both Pakistan and Iran have stated that they cannot receive more Afghan refugees. Uzbekistan has stated it's going to assist transfer Afghans to third nations, however, will only host refugees temporarily. The Turkish authorities have stepped up the creation of a border wall with Iran to thwart the ones getting into the country illegally. France evacuated greater than 2,800 people from Kabul airport, mainly Afghans, and has indicated it's going to receive more refugees. Germany is inclined to just accept as many as 40,000 people from the country. The UK will take in 5,000 Afghans in 2021 as a part of a scheme to resettle 20,000 over the following few years, which specialize in the ones at greatest risk from the Taliban. The US has authorized \$500m for "unexpected urgent refugee and migration needs of refugees". Canada has stated that it's going to resettle 20,000 Afghans, whilst Australia has stated it's going to take in 3,000. Other EU nations, like Austria, Poland, and Switzerland have stated they'll now no longer receive any new Afghan arrivals and are upping their border safety to prevent unlawful arrivals.

### More than 120,000 people were airlifted out of Kabul airport after Taliban took control

Total number of people evacuated by US and coalition planes

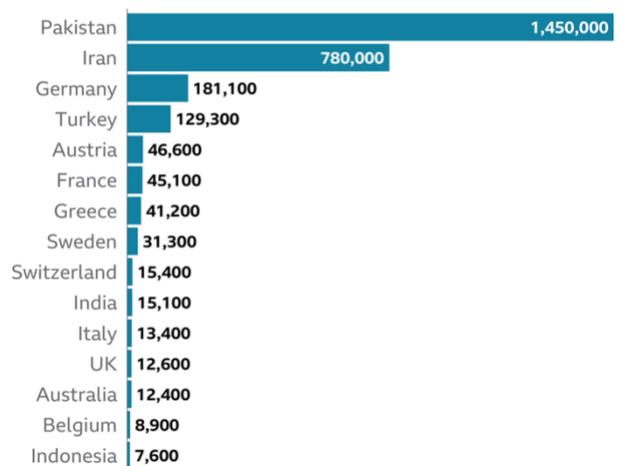


Source: Briefings from US Defense Department and the White House

BBC

### Neighbouring countries took in the highest number of Afghans in 2020

Countries with the most Afghan refugees and asylum seekers



Source: UNHCR data for 2020

BBC

## Possible Solutions and Approaches

Afghanistan faces 2 essential threats: the military danger from the Taliban regime, and the economic, humanitarian disaster. After the withdrawal of the United States troops, and the reestablishment of the Taliban regime, many Afghans feel insecure about their motherland. Countries must bear in mind whether or not to provide asylum to those who want to depart the country. In more extreme cases, we have to additionally reckon, whether or not it might be vital to reestablishment army presence inside the country.

To solve the humanitarian crisis, we need to work closely with different bodies of the UN, including UNHCR and FAO. Close relationships should also be set up with financial institutions, inclusive of the World Bank.

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