

# VICTORIA SHANGHAI ACADEMY MODEL UNITED NATIONS



*15-16th April 2023*

## **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** Chair Report

Topic 2: Addressing the regional security issues arising  
from NATO's withdrawal from Afghanistan  
Chairs: Yoyo Ngai and Maximus Han



## Message from the Chairs

Welcome to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization! This committee will be chaired by Yoyo Ngai, a G10 student from St. Paul's Convent School, and Maximus Han, a G11 student from Victoria Shanghai Academy. We are honoured to be your chairs for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) at VSAMUN 2023!

NATO, as a consensus decision-making committee embodies a type of diplomacy that delegates will not find in other committees. One cannot simply look for a bloc of friendly countries or work towards a majority. NATO is a test of compromise, wide ranging solution building, inclusion, and discussion. This combined with a comprehensive knowledge of the subject of discussion, turns NATO into a very challenging and fun committee. We hope that this conference is able to enhance your view on the important topics discussed and provide new insights that can not be achieved through research alone.

Please bear in mind that while the chair reports serve as good starting points and guidance for your research, they are by no means conclusive. All delegates are strongly encouraged and advised to conduct their own research regarding their respective delegation's stance. In order to facilitate meaningful and comprehensive debate, delegates are advised to come prepared with background information and notes to the conference.

Furthermore, delegates should keep the spirit of diplomacy, trust-building and unanimity at heart throughout the conference. With all of that being said, the chairs hope that all the delegates thoroughly enjoy themselves during the conference. Should any enquiries arise, please feel free to contact us via the email addresses below.

Best regards,

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## Background Information

### *Background of NATO's involvement with Afghanistan*

Security issues in Afghanistan can be traced back to the Cold War and the Soviet Afghan war, when the Soviet Union had occupied Afghanistan. The war ended when the Soviet Union withdrew due to Afghanistan's guerrilla tactics, ambush attacks in the Afghan mountains, and local homefront advantages, combined with superior firepower provided by the international communities, particularly Pakistan and the United States. Many Afghan militant groups widely known as the Mujahideen rose to fight against the communist rule during this time as well which contributed to the withdrawal of the Soviet Union. This was a decisive loss for the Soviet Union at the height of the Cold War. After the Soviet Union's collapse, the United States had no intention to provide further aid to the war-torn Afghanistan after the war had ended. This led to a gaping power vacuum and a civil war in Afghanistan due to differing political ideologies and an inadequate government left to govern which caused many warlords to rule Afghan people by force in different regions as the major influential groups in Afghanistan are military, rather than political, organisations.

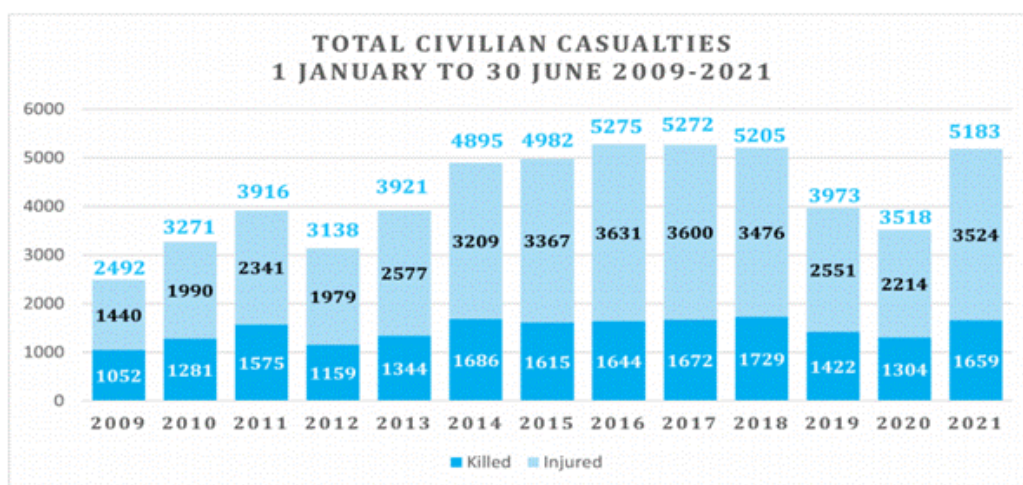
Following the Soviet retreat from Afghanistan and collapse of the communist, the Mujahideen then split into a variety of radical groups and remnants of the military aid provided by international forces. These groups were known as Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. At Afghanistan's hour of weakness, Al-Qaeda, led by Osama Bin Laden, soon began directing the organisation towards continuing the cause of jihad (holy war) through violence and aggression since its first emergence in the 1980s. Al-Qaeda's tactics and methods included setting up training camps, providing military and intelligence instruction in areas such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Sudan. Eventually, Al-Qaeda started launching attacks and bombings in various nations to further its violent aims. Bin Laden was particularly hostile to the United States and actively opposed the U.S. military presence in Saudi Arabia and Somalia and sought to drive our nation's personnel out of these areas by force, going as far as openly declaring war on the United States.

Meanwhile, the Taliban that emerged in 1994 was formed in response to the power vacuum left by the Afghan government's collapse. The Taliban gained popularity quickly by promising peace to the Afghan people by rescuing them from the tyranny of warlords and restoring the country to Islamic rule. With support from Pakistan and indirectly, the United States, the Taliban had swept through the country swiftly and placed Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan under siege before taking the capital entirely. Under the Taliban's protection, Bin Laden, Al-Qaeda and many terrorist groups coordinated widespread activities and attacks that sustained and developed the terrorist capabilities of these groups further.

Despite this, NATO and US led coalitions' direct involvement only began in 2001, after the 911 incident. Until 2021, NATO has been present in Afghanistan for over two decades, numerous agreements have specified the importance of NATO and US led coalitions' presence in Afghanistan and the improvements of security, governance, institutions and



economy made. However, in the fight against terrorism and the collapse of the Afghan government, only key areas and main cities such as Kabul have been secured in Afghanistan. The Taliban began regrouping and consolidating power by recruiting both Pashtun fighters and non-Pashtun fighters in rural areas where scattered Taliban forces primarily reside. In order to tackle the growing forces of the Taliban in rural areas, US precision bombs and all-seeing drones have been employed. However, many of these bombings have mistakenly affected citizen areas, hitting houses away from the front lines and causing more than 1300 hidden reports of civilian casualties. Only a handful of these records were made public and there are no records on the accountability of these wrongdoings or disciplinary action conducted. Despite many of these victims left with disabilities, less than a dozen condolence payments were made. The US' strengthened mujahideens have also ruled over many rural areas as warlords, terrorising citizens with US supplies. This further contributed towards growing resentment towards foreign interference.



<sup>1</sup> 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 for details.

Figure 1: Total civilian casualties recorded by the UNAMA from January 2009- June 2021

### ***The Taliban's rapid advance***

Almost immediately after the U.S' final troops' hasty retreat from Afghanistan, the country underwent a rapid takeover by the Taliban. The Afghan security forces sudden collapse was due to a combination of factors, including fundamental flaws in how the security forces were constructed and managed, Afghan government incompetence, popularity of the Taliban amongst the Afghan people and a cascading series of events set off by the U.S. withdrawal from the country such as the quick collapse of Afghan Government control over much of the rural outskirts followed by regional capitals such as Kandahar, then the capital itself. The US' sudden retreat without prior notice during the night allowed the Taliban to easily grasp the opportunity to reestablish their regime, including using the weapons and military equipment that the US has left behind. The Taliban have been expanding its control on the country as early as 2004 when it regrouped and consolidated power and especially after the peace deal with the U.S. which left the Afghan government even weaker, with most rural areas and even



some urban areas under the Taliban's control. This allowed the Taliban to quickly advance after NATO and U.S led coalitions' withdrawal.

Besides the successful tactics of the Taliban, the inertia of the incompetent and corrupt Afghan government also contributed to the swift takeover. Despite the U.S stating that there were more than 300,000 members in the Afghan security forces, many 'ghost' fighters consisting of soldiers and police that never showed up reduced the number of Afghan forces significantly. There was also a high turnover rate within the military, leaving crucial positions in the forces vacant or filled by underprepared Afghan citizens. The ruling class or leaders of the Afghan government focused on their own personal gains and acquiring power instead, therefore many of the funds sent to the government were almost never used to build planned institutions and facilities for the Afghan people throughout the country.

### ***Status quo of Afghanistan***

Since the Taliban's takeover two years ago, the situation for the Afghan people is worsening. The economic situation is dire, there is an ongoing humanitarian crisis that led to 18 million Afghans requiring assistance, and continuous migration and internal displacement. Under the rule of the Taliban in Afghanistan, women are banished from the workforce, forbidden an education, and prohibited to leave their homes unless a close male relative escorts them. In public, they must wear a special dress (burqa) that completely covers the body and leaves only a small mesh-covered opening through which they can see. Windows of women's houses visible to the public must be painted black. Religious minorities and secular individuals also suffer intolerance under the Taliban regime. Opposition is completely eradicated and international terrorists such as Al-Qaeda still receive protection under the Taliban.

### ***The International implications of the Taliban's takeover***

The destabilisation of Afghanistan would most affect the neighbouring countries as extremist groups in these countries rise to ally with the Taliban. For example, the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan has directly strengthened the Pakistani Taliban, which have been waging a guerilla war against the Pakistani government in hopes of uniting the Pashtun people. The Taliban takeover has also raised the concern of more Afghans fleeing the country to surrounding states which would cause a refugee crisis. Although that has yet to happen, bordering countries struggle to take in and host any more refugees from Afghanistan.

Yet despite sharing similar threats, these states are pursuing very different goals in Afghanistan that impede effective regional cooperation. Vacuums of stability created by conflict and absence of governance in Afghanistan creates risks of Afghanistan once again becoming a platform, safe haven for international terrorists and a site to plan and organise attacks against the international community. The threat of terrorist violence from Afghanistan and within Afghanistan has become an international responsibility to ensure security and stability in Afghanistan to prevent organised and widespread attacks with many casualties.



## Key Terms

### Regional security

Regional security refers to the protection of a person, building, organisation, or country against threats such as crime or attacks by individuals and organisations. Regional security issues arise when such protection fails.

### Mujahideen

People who engage in fights and wars on behalf of God. In this council, it is used to refer to the guerilla-type militant groups led by the Islamist Afghan fighters in the Soviet-Afghan War which consisted mostly of unionists and university students.

### Al-Qaeda

Al-Qaeda, “the base” is an Islamist broad-based militant Islamist organisation founded by Osama bin Laden in the late 1980s. Al-Qaeda began as a logistical network to support Muslims fighting against the Soviet Union during the Afghan War. When the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989, the organisation dispersed but remained and continued to oppose what its leaders considered corrupt Islamic regimes and foreign.

### Taliban

The Taliban, also known by its state name, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, is a hardline Islamic militant political group in Afghanistan that emerged in the early 1990s following the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. Its government has not yet been recognized by any country and has been criticised for restricting human rights in Afghanistan

### U.S.–Afghanistan Strategic Partnership Agreement (SASPA)

SASPA was an agreement between the former government of Afghanistan and the United States of America that provided the long-term framework for the relationship between Afghanistan and the United States of America after the drawdown of U.S. forces in the Afghanistan war.

### International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)

The ISAF was a multinational military mission in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2014 established by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1386, which outlined the establishment of a permanent Afghan government following the U.S. invasion in October 2001. ISAF played an extremely crucial role in Afghanistan regional security and had the primary goal of training the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and assisting Afghanistan in rebuilding key government institutions. NATO had also assumed control of ISAF in 2003.

### Resolute Support Mission (RSM)

The NATO-led, non-combat mission, RSM lasted from 2015 to 2021. The mission was established at the invitation of the Afghan government and in accordance with United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 2189 of 2014. Its purpose was to help the Afghan security forces and institutions develop the ability to defend Afghanistan and protect its citizens in the long term.



# Key Clashes

## 1. Diplomatic engagement with the Taliban

As of now, no country has recognised the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan as the legitimate successor of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. However, to effectively mitigate the economic, financial and humanitarian troubles of the Afghan people, engaging with the Taliban without recognising them the Taliban regime is necessary. The international community should strive to leverage previous agreements with the Taliban to ensure the Taliban delivers its commitments in the peace and prosperity of the Afghan people, namely through the health, education and financial sectors. Delegates should debate on how to interact with the Taliban to strengthen facilities and institutions to address the needs of the Afghan people without emboldening the Taliban.

China, Turkey and India have previously held diplomatic talks or meetings with Afghanistan officials appointed under the Taliban regime. Qatar has also served as the main diplomatic hub of the Taliban since 2012. The Taliban's Political Office is currently opened in Qatar with the assistance of the Qatari government.

## 2. How can NATO ensure safety and security for citizens in Afghanistan

National stability should be maintained through mitigating the economic crisis and ensuring inclusive humanitarian assistance that reaches Afghan people in rural areas as well as cities. Aid to Afghanistan must be delivered through reliable sources such as through international bodies like the UN or Red Cross to ensure all members of society including women and children have access to support in any form including food and shelter without falling into the wrong hands. While the Taliban government has strengthened physical security, many Afghan people live in fear under the rise in attacks from groups targeting religious and non-religious minorities. Delegates should strive to address both short-term security concerns and long-term gender inequality issues and threats for bordering countries.

## 3. How can NATO ensure protection and equality for Afghanistan women

In mid-December of 2021, the Taliban introduced further restrictions on Afghan women such as excluding them from secondary and tertiary education along with being barred from working in NGOs. These decisions have stripped women of their rights that were hard earned and regressed a lot of progress on women rights in Afghanistan. Moreover, humanitarian aid has been hindered and forced into an operational pause due to the necessity of female staff for the delivery of aid particularly to children and other women.

International organisations should strive to engage and include local women organisations to effectively design programmes and deliver aid to slowly re-integrate women into society. Moreover, the international community should pressure the Taliban to enable women's full participation in daily-life and use these commitments as leverage to recognise the Taliban regime, despite certain states proclaiming to never recognize the Taliban government.



## Key parties involved

Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan	The Taliban has overthrown the internationally recognized Islamic Republic of Afghanistan by force and ruled Afghanistan as the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan since 2021. The takeover is criticised globally and there are many concerns towards the human rights violations committed by the new de facto government therefore no countries have recognised the new government yet. The Taliban government has caused many concerns about human rights violations and its effect on bordering countries.
Canada	Canada's military involvement in post-Cold War conflicts is mainly as a peacekeeping force and the Canadian commitment to US operations in Afghanistan was originally planned to last until October 2003. However, Canada's military involvement in Afghanistan continued until 15 March 2014, ending Canada's twelve-year military presence in the country with major educational projects completed during its time in Afghanistan. Canada's largest bilateral development program was to Afghanistan.
Pakistan	Pakistan has kept its embassy open to communication with the Taliban regime without recognising the de facto government. As a country bordering Afghanistan, the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan has been affecting the security situation in Pakistan severely. Moreover, as the Taliban's closest ally since the Cold War, Pakistan is facing increased activity by the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) which is allied to the Afghan Taliban.
Turkey	55% of Afghan asylum seekers globally are hosted by Turkey prior to the Taliban takeover and more refugee numbers are estimated to increase drastically which would threaten to destabilise Turkey and increase difficulty in assimilating refugees





United States	The United States had always taken an active, leading role in issues involving Afghanistan, especially after the 9/11 incident. NATO's presence in Afghanistan had been dependent on the US and the relations of US with the Afghani government due to reasons not limited to but including the US' air power, intelligence and aid in improving Afghanistan's security, governance, institutions and the economy.
Uzbekistan	Uzbekistan has emerged as the Central Asian country most actively engaging with the Taliban government and has shown willingness to do business with the Taliban. Moreover there are citizens in Uzbekistan who are part of extremist groups alliance with the Taliban which causes a safety concern.
Bordering countries of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan	These states are most affected by the Taliban takeover due to security concerns stemming from the terrorists in Afghanistan or terrorists in their own country rising to ally with the Taliban and gaining protection and support from them.



## Timeline

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description of event</b>
1979	The Soviet military invades and occupies Afghanistan, beginning a decade-long conflict.
1988	Formation of Al-Qaeda
1989	Osama bin Laden founded the al-Qaeda network.
1994	Formation of the Taliban, or Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan
1996-2001	The Taliban begins to severely restrict women's role in society through actions such as banishing them from the workforce
11 September 2001	terrorist attacks in New York, the United States of America by the Al-Qaeda
2001	NATO allies went into Afghanistan
2001	the UN mandate established the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)
August 2003	NATO assumed control of ISAF
May 2012	“strategic partnership” agreement between the US and Afghanistan signed
June 2013	NATO hands over control of the remaining ninety-five districts, Afghan forces take the lead in security responsibility nationwide
December 2014	End of ISAF's mission



January 2015	NATO launched the Resolute Support Mission (RSM)
February 2020	The United States and the Taliban signed an agreement on the withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan by May 2021, also known as the Doha Agreement
November 2020	President Donald Trump ordered a drawdown of US forces in Afghanistan.
January 2021	US forces in Afghanistan had reduced to 2,500 personnel
13 April 2021	the Biden administration announced all remaining US personnel would withdraw from Afghanistan
14 April 2021	The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Resolute Support Mission (RSM) in Afghanistan commenced a full withdrawal towards a 1 May 2021 deadline
September 2021	RSM terminated
August 15 2021	The Taliban recaptured Kabul, the Afghan government collapses
August 30, 2021	The last US military forces depart Afghanistan, leaving it under Taliban rule



## **Past Actions by NATO/ other councils**

For nearly 2 decades, NATO Allies and partner countries, especially the United States, had military forces deployed to Afghanistan under a United Nations (UN) Security Council mandate. During NATO's involvement in Afghanistan, allies and partners have engaged in a range of political and military operations. The primary aim of these initiatives were to let the Afghanistan government regain control, exercise authority over Afghanistan territory to maintain stability in Afghanistan and maintain a capable and stable government to guarantee peace in the region. Due to the wide range of actions by NATO during its years in Afghanistan, only crucial operations or developments will be included. Delegates are highly advised to conduct their own further research.

### ***International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)***

The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was a multinational military mission in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2014, later succeeded by the RSM. ISAF was first deployed in 2001 on the basis of a request for assistance by the Afghan authorities and a United Nations (UN) Security Council mandate. ISAF's primary goal was to secure the Afghan capital of Kabul and its surrounding area against opposition forces to rebuild key government institutions, train the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF).

The operation was originally limited to the Kabul area, and its command was assumed by ISAF nations on a rotational basis. In August 2003, NATO assumed control of ISAF at the request of the UN and Afghan government, expanding NATO/ISAF's role across the country and marking its first deployment outside Europe and North America as ISAF's mission included providing and maintaining security beyond Kabul. Gradually, ISAF took responsibility for the entire country by 2006 and subsequently engaged in the broader war in Afghanistan against the Taliban insurgency. It became NATO's first operational commitment outside of Europe.

One crucial role that the multinational force played was that it helped increase the capacity and capabilities of the Afghan forces, as to allow responsibility for security to shift to Afghan lead. This also caused the ISAF to shift from a combat-centric role to providing training and advice from 2011 onwards.

### ***Resolute Support Mission (RSM)***

Following the completion of the mission of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), NATO launched and led the non-combat Resolute Support Mission (RSM) in Afghanistan on 1 January 2015. It aimed to provide further training, advice and assistance for the Afghan security forces and institutions. The RSM allowed NATO and other countries to work closely with different elements of the Afghan army, police and air force.

The legal framework for RSM was provided by a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) and had defined the terms and conditions under which NATO forces were deployed in Afghanistan as part of Resolute Support, as well as the activities that they were set to carry



out under this agreement. The legal framework underscored the importance of continued international support for the stability of Afghanistan.

However, the RSM was always intended to play a temporary and transitory role and it gradually withdrew its forces, which numbered around 10,000 at the start of 2021. In April 2021, the Allies decided to start the withdrawal of RSM forces by 1 May 2021 and the mission was terminated early September 2021.

### ***Bonn Agreement***

The Bonn Agreement was the initial series of agreements passed on December 5, 2001 during an international conference on Afghanistan held in Bonn that allowed 25 prominent Afghans to be met under UN auspices. They discussed the re-creation of the Islamic State of Afghanistan after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan that followed the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. As there was no previously nationally agreed-upon government in Afghanistan since 1979, the Afghan Interim Authority (AIA) was formed for the transition period.

Although the Bonn Agreement aimed to lay the foundation for U.S. and NATO-backed state-building efforts in Afghanistan through methods including but not limited to: establishing a new constitution, an independent judiciary, free and fair elections, and the protection of rights of women and minorities, the Bonn Agreement turned out to be a large setback in the development of Afghanistan as a state. The state-building roadmap that was created by the Bonn Agreement proved to be ineffective and even led to a range of issues, including government corruption, incompetence and even spurred an internal war in the country.

Nonetheless, the Bonn Agreement provided a framework for the later constitution that was established in 2004 and the presidential and parliamentary elections that followed. It emphasised the need for strong, centralised government institutions but ultimately failed to account for the state's cultural and political history, as the country had previously relied on informal, regional power structures to deliver security and services.



## **Possible Solutions**

### **Collaborating with the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan Government**

Collaborating with the people of Afghanistan and the government itself can be an effective and solid strategy in order to reestablish a stable and reliable government. Local insight and social context or situations that cannot be sufficiently provided by NATO intelligence can be provided by local governments and parliaments. Facilitating communication with the Afghani government also allows sidelined members of the community such as women to be involved in conversations in positions of power that is a good strategy to employ towards attaining long term peace deals. Collaborating with the Afghani Government reinforces a legitimate central authority capable of ensuring political stability in Afghanistan can effectively prevent terrorist groups' continued use of Afghanistan as a safe haven. However, an appropriate amount of intervention and collaboration should be discussed in order to not allow the Afghani government to be too reliant on international support.

### **Humanitarian aid**

Addressing the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan should be of greatest importance at this moment as more than 20 million Afghans are on the brink of famine and the country faces near-universal poverty in the next six months. The financial system has completely collapsed, with healthcare and education soon to follow. Afghan women and girls continue to suffer disproportionately under the Taliban regime.



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