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Assessing Taliban's violations of humanitarian rights in Afghanistan

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Issue: Assessing Taliban's violations of humanitarian rights in Afghanistan

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Introduction

Afghanistan is a landlocked country located in Southern Asia, with its neighboring countries including Pakistan and Iran. The Hindu Kush mountain range covers the majority of the country, with high mountain peaks, valleys, and caves, essentially isolating the communities within the country from each other. The population, consisting of roughly 38 million people, is mostly spread out in rural areas and divided into many polarized ethnic groups. Additionally, Afghanistan regards a fundamentalist approach, and variations regarding Islamic interpretation are a major source of conflict between ethnic groups.

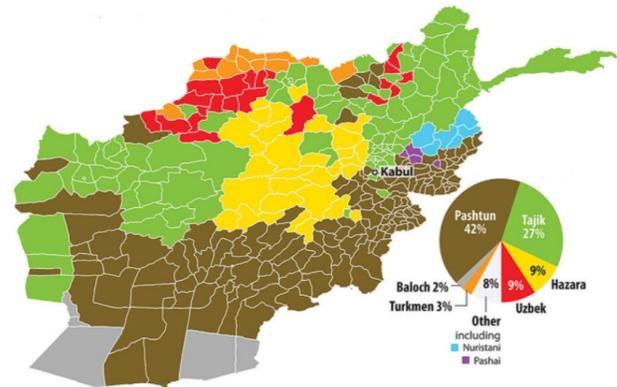


Figure 1: A map demonstrating the distribution of the ethnic populations of Afghanistan

As of 15 August 2021, the Taliban has taken control of Kabul, the last Taliban-free region and also Afghanistan's capital city. Understanding the geopolitical status of and the variety of isolated ethnic groups and cultures present within Afghanistan is key to grasping the Taliban's success in taking over Afghanistan, as well as the failures of major global powers. Sadly, this same success of the Taliban has come at the cost of various human rights violations and the suffering of civilians.

In contrast to this international image, the new leaders of the Taliban have openly pledged to respect Human Rights, in addition to allowing womens' employment and education under strict conditions. However, the credibility of this promise is highly questionable, and recent events have proved that human rights abuses persist to be a major issue in Afghanistan. Moreover, violence against women and the recruitment of child soldiers to fight is a major issue in terms of human rights violations.

Definition of Key Terms

Insurgency: an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict¹.

Terrorism: the unlawful use or threatened use of force or violence against individuals or property in an attempt to coerce or intimidate governments or societies to achieve political, religious, or ideological objectives¹.

Human Rights: the collection of rights given to people of all ethnicity, gender, and age by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

General Overview

Throughout history, Afghanistan has been invaded by the British, Soviets, and more recently by the United States of America (USA). The isolated ethnic communities within Afghanistan have been polarized from each other and formed a strong hatred against various global powers. This lack of unity allowed the Taliban to take control of Afghanistan for the second time. The causes behind the Taliban's re-emergence lie in the failed reconstruction following the Afghanistan War.

The Afghanistan War began following the 9/11 attacks in the USA, with the goals of overthrowing the Taliban, eliminating Osama Bin Laden, and rebuilding the country. A joint coalition mainly between the USA and the United Kingdom swiftly invaded Afghanistan in a couple of months. This forced high-ranking Taliban officials to flee to Pakistan, temporarily achieving the first goal. The second goal was achieved in 2011, with a military raid by the coalition.

Later on, reconstruction attempts began, as the senate of the USA approved bills providing millions of dollars for aid. A democratic government for Afghanistan was formed and the Afghan national army was founded. However, numerous warlords remaining from the resistance to the Soviet and British invasions still held great power and occupied various political offices. Considering the mountainous terrain of Afghanistan, coalition forces needed the cooperation of these warlords to maintain control of the isolated country. Henceforth, corruption and abusive behavior against communities became widely common. This, together with civil casualties due to miscalculated drone strikes, aggravated rural communities against the coalition. The situation especially became dire when the USA declared war against Iran and reduced monetary assistance to Afghanistan. As a result, the newly-formed Afghan government had to prioritize urban areas and ignore rural regions. All of these factors allowed the Taliban, which was regrouping and gaining strength in Pakistan, to be welcomed back to Afghanistan.

Taliban fighters easily re-entered the country via the mountainous borders. By sabotaging strategic mountain passes like the Khyber Pass, the Taliban prevented Afghan and coalition forces from getting re-supplied. With support from more ethnic communities than their first invasion, the Taliban easily outnumbered Afghan forces, who still managed to protect urban regions. However, when the US withdrew air support, Afghan forces could not persist and were dissolved when the Taliban entered Kabul. Soon after, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) was declared.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Taliban

The Taliban is a fundamentalist, insurgent group that has taken control of the country of Afghanistan, once again. The IEA governed by the Taliban is not recognized by any country and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) reaffirmed that the United Nations (UN) will not recognize the Taliban regime until human rights concerns are eliminated. Even though the Taliban has pledged to respect human rights, this promise was soon broken with targeted killings of civilians, who had previously helped the USA.

The United States of America

The USA has occupied Afghanistan for a period of 20 years, following the events at 9/11. The invasion initially witnessed great success. However, years of accidental civilian killings in airstrikes, corruption, and rural areas that were surrendered to warlords led to increased support for the Taliban and was home to numerous human rights violations.

Timeline of Events

Date of Event	<i>Description of Event</i>
September 1996	The two-year-old fundamentalist Taliban takes control of Kabul.
September 11, 2001	The 9/11 attacks took place in the USA.
October 2001	A successful joint American-British invasion of Afghanistan takes place.
August 15, 2021	Taliban takes control of Kabul. The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan collapses.
August 30, 2021	The USA completes its military withdrawal from Afghanistan.
September 7, 2021	Taliban declares the IEA

Treaties and Events

[Universal Declaration of Human Rights \(UDHR\)](#)

The UDHR, which was proclaimed by the General Assembly (GA), is the basis of all human rights. Articles 3, 18, and 19 declare the universal right to life and freedom of expression (religion, speech, thought...). Articles 5, 9, and 10 prohibit torture and inhumane treatment and emphasize the right to an unbiased, fair trial. Article 26 declares access to education a human right. Additionally, articles 1, 2, and 30 affirm that people of all ethnicity, gender, and age must always be treated according to the UDHR.

[Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women \(A/RES/22/2263\)](#)

The Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women is a resolution adopted by the GA, that is key to ensuring women's rights. Article 4 affirms women's right to vote and take political office. Article 9 declares that women of all ages and statuses have the same rights as men regarding education, and article 10 declares the same for social and economic life. Article 11 reaffirms the UDHR and the United Nations Charter (UNC), asserting that practices that violate the resolution will also be in violation of the UDHR and the UNC.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

The Afghanistan War, between 2001 and 2014, is the most large-scale attempt to solve human rights violations in Afghanistan. Even though the war was initially successful, the latter reconstruction attempts were disorganized. The Afghanistan Ringroad project that aimed to connect the isolated communities of Afghanistan failed miserably, due to insufficient labor force, funding, and safety. Henceforth, the resultant lack of transportation infrastructure allowed the Taliban to take control of the divided and polarized communities of Afghanistan.

Possible Solutions

A diplomatic solution with the Taliban is the only hope for human rights in Afghanistan, as major global powers are unwilling to take any further military action. However, as supported by the brutal Taliban rule between 1996 and 2001, the Taliban can not be trusted in such relations and must be under strict monitoring. One possible solution is the continuation of negotiations between the Taliban and the world. In these negotiations, global powers can compromise by removing sanctions and recognizing the IEA, and, in return, the Taliban can allow UN observers to be deployed in Afghanistan to ensure that they are fulfilling their obligation of implementing the UDHR. Member states can also encourage the UNSC to consider military repercussions, with regards to the findings of UN observers. Other favorable solutions include providing humanitarian aid, in collaboration with non-governmental organizations, to Afghanistan, with permission and safety pledges from the Taliban. In order to help decrease violence against women and children, crisis hotlines and remote safe areas could be built. Delegates will need to create comprehensive and detailed solutions to this complex issue.

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Figure 1: https://wikihmong.com/en/Ethnic_groups_in_Afghanistan