

**Forum:** United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)  
**Question of:** Measures to ensure the smooth integration of Afghan refugees  
**Student Officer:** William Chung, Assistant President

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## Introduction:

When thinking of our theme - “Bonds of Unity” - this year, something that you may not consider is the literal millions of refugees on earth who are stranded - more specifically, Afghan refugees. Afghan refugees currently have little unity to look forward to; taking this into consideration, there is still some light visible at the end of the tunnel for these individuals. There are 206 sovereign nations in this world and they’ve proven that, when working together towards a unified goal, anything can be resolved. It takes just a handful of these nations bonding together in order to give these Afghan refugees some feeling of unity, and we as a community will be able to give peace of mind to those who need it most.

Historical events that have caused the creation of Afghan refugees are many, this section will list and explain the most notable ones that have either directly or indirectly caused the movement of hundreds of thousands of citizens. The Soviet-Afghan war of 1979-1989 was a war between the Soviet Union, the Mujahideen, and the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan(DRA). In the war, there were little to no boundaries of what was too far, and as a result, millions of refugees fled to neighboring countries for shelter<sup>1</sup>. From 1995-1999 a 4-year drought caused around ~1,000,000 Afghan refugees to flee to Pakistan and Iran<sup>2</sup>. This can be attributed to the formation and takeover of the Taliban in 1994. As the Taliban focused on arms and spreading Islamic values, many things were left unfixed - lack of fix in infrastructure, such as water pipes, directly affected most of the population<sup>3</sup>. The last historical event introduced in this introduction will be the US war in Afghanistan. The start of the war was 2001, soon after 9/11, when members of Al-Qaeda hijacked commercial planes and flew them into the twin towers<sup>4</sup>. It is important to note that tension between Al-Qaeda and the US had been brewing since 1998 when the group bombed two embassies in Africa. Al-Qaeda and its head Osama Bin Laden took refuge in Afghanistan, where the Taliban proceeded to

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<sup>1</sup> Taylor, Alan. “The Soviet War in Afghanistan, 1979 - 1989.” The Atlantic. Atlantic Media Company, August 4, 2014. <https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2014/08/the-soviet-war-in-afghanistan-1979-1989/100786/>

<sup>2</sup> Desk, News. “A Historical Timeline of Afghanistan.” PBS. Public Broadcasting Service, May 4, 2011. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/asia-jan-june11-timeline-afghanistan>.

<sup>3</sup> Dube, Oeindrila, Joshua Evan Blumenstock, and Michael Callen. “Measuring Religion from Behavior: Climate Shocks and Religious Adherence in Afghanistan.” SSRN, June 16, 2022. [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=4129399](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4129399).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

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welcome them with open arms<sup>5</sup>. This led to a 21-year-long war between the US, Al-Qaeda, and the Taliban. During this war, an estimated ~5,000,000 Afghan refugees sought refuge in Pakistan and Iran<sup>6</sup>. The current issues for these refugees will be explained in the following section.

Currently, there are three issues that affect most of the Afghan refugee population: lack of funding for safe havens, borders of nations that have historically accepted the majority of refugees closing, and an impending influx of refugees who may have little choice in their future safety. As most governments who take in Afghan refugees do not send much funding, many safe havens are reliant on public donations in order to stay open<sup>7</sup>. This is problematic because most donators donate because an issue is currently plastered everywhere, when the issue subsides so do the donations: This phenomenon can be observed in the nine United States' (US) safe havens, where seven have shut down just six months after opening because of lack of funding<sup>8</sup>. While safe havens certainly are important, Afghan refugees having a nation where refuge is promised that is accessible via land is almost as important. Pakistan and Iran have historically accepted millions of Afghan refugees, but since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, they have closed their borders to Afghan refugees, leaving many locked in their own borders. Lastly, ~3.5 million refugees are currently displaced throughout Afghanistan itself<sup>9</sup>; with the Taliban's history of incompetency towards its own citizens most will likely consider emigration as the answer - most will also have trouble finding a nation to emigrate to or find resources that can help integrate them into a new society.

More in-depth explanations for the causes of issues for these refugees appear when safe havens start to shut down. While seemingly a perfect solution on the surface - a place with unending support for refugees when they have just been forced to flee from their homes, and many members of groups who have the connections necessary to give aid - the problem with these establishments only arise when the question of funding is taken into consideration. Many safe haven workers will agree with the words given by a member of the Afghan Liberty Project (ALP), a Christian charity organisation aiding Afghan refugees' housing and relocation, who has said in interviews that "fundraising dried up"<sup>10</sup> for these safe havens, reasoning that the main issue with saving havens is that

<sup>5</sup> Congressional Research Service. "Taliban Government in Afghanistan: Background and Issues for ... - Congress." crsreports, November 2, 2021. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/r/r46955>.

<sup>6</sup> History.com Editors, ed. "Afghanistan War." History.com. A&E Television Networks, August 20, 2021. <https://www.history.com/topics/21st-century/afghanistan-war>.

<sup>7</sup> Grim, Ryan. "Network of Safe Houses in Afghanistan to Shut down as Funding Dries Up." The Intercept. The Intercept, June 23, 2022. <https://theintercept.com/2022/06/23/afghanistan-safe-houses-closing-funding/>.

<sup>8</sup> Prescott, Stanford. "As Us Closes 'Safe Haven' Government Facilities Hosting Afghans, IRC Calls Attention to Local Resettlement Needs in the US." International Rescue Committee (IRC), February 16, 2022. <https://www.rescue.org/press-release/us-closes-safe-haven-government-facilities-hosting-afghans-irc-calls-attention-local>.

<sup>9</sup> "Afghanistan Refugee Crisis Explained." How to Help Refugees - Aid, Relief and Donations. UNHCR, June 29, 2022. <https://www.unrefugees.org/news/afghanistan-refugee-crisis-explained/>.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

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government funding is very little, and public donations only suffice as long as the issue is talked about in the public eye. The member of the ALP later revealed that the number of refugees in their safe havens had been 400, but a lack of funds to pay rent forced over half of the refugees out into the world. This phenomenon of safe havens focusing on Afghan refugees closing because of lack of funds is not an isolated event only to those who rely on public donations, with 7 out of 9 of the United States' official safe havens created under the mission dubbed "Operation Allies Welcome" for Afghan refugees shutting down within 6 months<sup>11</sup>.

While the issue mentioned above is certainly concerning to refugees who might be left stranded in a nation foreign to them, another concern for many is the ability to leave the nation altogether. Through years of war and incompetency, many millions of Afghan refugees have decided to seek refuge in nearby nations such as Iran, Pakistan, etc. While this was a solution that worked for many decades, it was only a matter of time before the governments decided that it was too much. For context, since the Soviet-Afghan war, a total of ~ 8-9 million Afghan refugees have sought refuge in Pakistan and Iran - around 4 million were a result of the Soviet-Afghan war<sup>12</sup>, 1 million because of severe drought and lack of aid<sup>13</sup>, and 5 million because of the US war in Afghanistan<sup>14</sup>. After years of allowing refugees to seek cover within their borders, Pakistan's National Security Adviser Moeed Yusuf's response to the United States pulling out of Afghanistan was blunt: "As a matter of fact, we are not in a position to accept any more refugees"<sup>15</sup>. Iran's response to the influx of refugees was more under the radar, with the UNHCR reporting that, of the ~500,000 - 1,000,000 Afghan refugees seeking refuge in Iran, "65% of all new arrivals are returned by the government"<sup>16</sup> - This was done without any notable comments from the Iranian government. These two facts hammer in the fact that Afghan refugees are currently in a dilemma: having not only hardship in finding safe havens but also not having the choice of emigrating on foot. This issue is further compounded when taking into account the amount of displaced Afghans still within the borders of Afghanistan.

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<sup>11</sup> Prescott, Stanford. "As Us Closes 'Safe Haven' Government Facilities Hosting Afghans, IRC Calls Attention to Local Resettlement Needs in the US." International Rescue Committee (IRC), February 16, 2022. <https://www.rescue.org/press-release/us-closes-safe-haven-government-facilities-hosting-afghans-irc-calls-attention-local>.

<sup>12</sup> Desk, News. "A Historical Timeline of Afghanistan." PBS. Public Broadcasting Service, May 4, 2011. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/asia-jan-june11-timeline-afghanistan>.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Furqan, Ali. "Pakistan Refuses to Host Additional Afghan Refugees." VOA. Pakistan Refuses to Host Additional Afghan Refugees, July 13, 2021. [https://www.voanews.com/a/south-central-asia\\_pakistan-refuses-host-additional-afghan-refugees/6208191.html](https://www.voanews.com/a/south-central-asia_pakistan-refuses-host-additional-afghan-refugees/6208191.html).

<sup>16</sup> "Operational Data Portal." Country - Iran (Islamic Republic of). UNHCR, May 31, 2022. <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/irn>.

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~3,500,000 Afghans are displaced within the borders of Afghanistan<sup>17</sup>. This can be attributed to constant war, which destroys land and housing, and has forced a large portion of those living in urban areas to the countryside. All this is to say that of these ~3,500,000 Afghans displaced within the nation's borders a good portion will most likely consider fleeing the nation. This issue is already causing concern; however, it is further compounded by the already explained issue of nearby nations refusing to accept any more refugees coming in from Afghanistan. Lesser places accepting Afghanistan refugees and an increase in the number of refugees cause an international issue as to where these refugees will live - the reason for a sudden jump of Afghan refugees in the United States and the United Kingdom might be related to this.

Previous attempts to solve these issues have been somewhat unsuccessful in the long term: the first, and most often seen solution, is to allow for Afghan refugees to find refuge in nearby nations, the most prominent of which are Pakistan and Iran; the second solution was seen recently after the United States military pulled out of Afghanistan, which was to airlift refugees out and create safe havens in order to let them integrate into their newfound societies. Both of these attempts are somewhat unsuccessful because they aren't sustainable in the long term: Pakistan and Iran have refused to allow any more refugees to immigrate into their borders, even sending some back even in periods of war<sup>18,19</sup>, and safe havens have been struggling immensely for a lack of funds.

As stated before, millions of Afghan refugees have little to no say in what their future may entail. There already seems to be rampant harassment, disenfranchisement, and stress given to those who make it into nearby nations, something which has become a massive hurdle in itself. I am confident that all of the intelligent individuals who will participate in this year's UNHCR committee will have the brainpower necessary to give a solution that will provide some sort of hope of unity to these extremely unfortunate human beings.

### **Key Terms:**

#### **Afghan Refugee/Refugee**

First and foremost what a refugee is should be defined as it is the most important term in this entire document. Refugees are those who have been forced to flee their nation in order to take refuge to find safety in another nation because of climate, war, famine, and more. Based on the definition of refugee Afghan refugees can then be defined as those who have been forced to flee the nation of

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<sup>17</sup> "Afghanistan Refugee Crisis Explained." How to Help Refugees - Aid, Relief and Donations. UNHCR, June 29, 2022. <https://www.unrefugees.org/news/afghanistan-refugee-crisis-explained/>.

<sup>18</sup> Furqan, Ali. "Pakistan Refuses to Host Additional Afghan Refugees." VOA. Pakistan Refuses to Host Additional Afghan Refugees, July 13, 2021. [https://www.voanews.com/a/south-central-asia\\_pakistan-refuses-host-additional-afghan-refugees/6208191.html](https://www.voanews.com/a/south-central-asia_pakistan-refuses-host-additional-afghan-refugees/6208191.html).

<sup>19</sup> "Operational Data Portal." Country - Iran (Islamic Republic of). UNHCR, May 31, 2022. <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/irn>.

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Afghanistan because of war, drought, lack of care for citizens, and more. The reason this term has to be clearly defined, and known in general, for this document is that this document will use this term approximately 300 times whenever discussing the history, issues, solutions, nations' viewpoints, and conclusion. It is imperative that any and all who read this report have a rock-solid understanding of what a refugee is.

### **Safe Haven**

In short, safe havens are locations in nations that have taken in refugees which do the following and more, house refugees, feed refugees, provide a general sense of security for refugees, look for permanent housing for refugees, and so much more. In this report, this term will surface many times when discussing current issues with safe havens in nations providing refuge for these Afghani refugees and when discussing possible solutions for this raging issue.

### **Taliban**

The Taliban is, in a literal definition, a group of Israelites who were formed during the Afghan Civil war of 1979 in order to bring traditional values back to a war-ruined Afghanistan<sup>20</sup>. Originally many were in support of the group as they had somewhat stopped the opium trade, installed traditional values, and provided a sense of peace. Soon the Taliban amped up their tactics, resorting to beating, jailing, and executing any and all who opposed them, even executing the president<sup>21</sup>. In a historical sense, the Taliban has been the origin for most Afghani refugees deciding to flee the nation: failing to serve their own citizens while also being in constant wars with certain nations. The Taliban will be mentioned in this report many times not only because of the historical problems the group created, but also because they are a factor in bringing an end to the creation of Afghani refugees.

### **Al-Qaeda**

Al-Qaeda is very similar in nature to the Taliban. The group was founded by a group of Israelites, with Osama Bin Laden being one of the most notable, during the Soviet-Afghan War of 1979 in order to have the ability to continue fighting<sup>22</sup>. Al-Qaeda's end goal was to create a pure Islamic state that had Islamic leaders, the group would just use itself as a tool to reach this goal. While Al-Qaeda is currently dismissed as a terrorist group, the impact that the group had on Afghanistan's public image and during the United States' war in Afghanistan is very clear and will be mentioned from time to time in the following report.

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<sup>20</sup> Congressional Research Service. "Taliban Government in Afghanistan: Background and Issues for ... - Congress." crsreports, November 2, 2021. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/r/r46955>.

<sup>21</sup> Desk, News. "A Historical Timeline of Afghanistan." PBS. Public Broadcasting Service, May 4, 2011. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/asia-jan-june11-timeline-afghanistan>.

<sup>22</sup> J. T. Caruso. FBI Federal Bureau of Investigation. December 08, 2001. <https://archives.fbi.gov/archives/news/testimony/al-qaeda-international>

## **Coup**

A coup is a sudden and usually violent take over of a government's power. It will be used in the report sparingly yet effectively to realise how much power the Taliban has had in the past. It is important to know this term because somewhat recent events such as the Myanmar coup have given the word a powerful contemporary power that sheds new light on the Taliban.

## **Mujahideen**

The Mujahideen are gorilla fighters located in Islamic countries such as Pakistan and Afghanistan who fight each other and non-Muslim forces in the name of God and for the name of God<sup>23</sup>. These wars have been the sole factor for millions of refugees fleeing the nation, looking for safety in neighbouring nations. This term will be used when describing parties involved in certain wars that took place in Afghanistan - The Civil War and the Afghan-Soviet War.

## **Refugee Quotas**

Refugee quotas are the number of refugees allowed to immigrate into a nation judged by the president's judgement. We will use this term heavily in the possible solutions segment of this report because removing these quotas and/or extending these quotas may allow many Afghan refugees to find sanctuary in new nations

## **Timeline of Key Events**

As expected, reasons for Afghans to seek refuge from Afghanistan have been present well before the Taliban's recent coup in Afghanistan some notable ones are the Soviet-Afghan war, resulting in a movement of ~4 million Afghans, a 4-year drought with a lack of support, resulting in a movement of ~1 million Afghans, and the US War in Afghanistan, resulting in the movement of ~5 million Afghans<sup>2324</sup>. While learning about the long history of Afghans' reasons for leaving the nation, an understanding of the sheer volume of refugees who need assistance will become apparent.

### **The Soviet-Afghan War(1979 - 1989):**

Even before the formation of the Taliban the reason for emigration from Afghanistan has existed, by far the most notable is the Soviet-Afghan war. In short, the Soviet-Afghan war was a

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<sup>23</sup> Desk, News. "A Historical Timeline of Afghanistan." PBS. Public Broadcasting Service, May 4, 2011. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/asia-jan-june11-timeline-afghanistan>.

<sup>24</sup> History.com Editors, ed. "Afghanistan War." History.com. A&E Television Networks, August 20, 2021. <https://www.history.com/topics/21st-century/afghanistan-war>.

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no-boundary-too-far war between the Soviet Union, the Mujahideen, and the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan(DRA)<sup>25</sup>. Because of its incredibly high death toll, 500,000 to 2,000,000 Afghan deaths, and its primary location, which was within the borders of Afghanistan, many Afghans left the nation in order to find safety. It is estimated that around 2.8 million Afghans fled to Pakistan for refuge; another 1.5 million Afghans reported fled to Iran for refuge<sup>26</sup>. These two nations should be kept in mind for the reason that many refugees find them easier to immigrate to because of their similar culture and proximity

### **Al-Qaeda is formed(1988):**

Al-Qaeda has an important space in Afghanistan's history. Formed in. In September of 1988, Osama Bin Laden and a group of Islamists formed the group with the goal of continuing the fight in the Soviet-Afghan war<sup>27</sup>. Their main goal, however, is to create a completely pure Islamic state, similar to the Taliban's goal of spreading Islamic values - Al-Qaeda is purely a tool that would be used to make this a reality. After a peace treaty is signed by the Soviet Union in 1989 Al-Qaeda moves its focus onto the United States, believing that the last supination is the main obstacle between them procuring a purely Islamic nation. Al-Qaeda, while being formed and based in Pakistan for a period of time, eventually moved to Afghanistan, where the Taliban welcomed them<sup>28</sup>. Many argue that the Taliban's welcoming of Osama Bin Laden was a major factor in causing the US War in Afghanistan. Further information can be found lower on this list, under **Al-Qaeda: The U.S. Embassy Attacks(1998)**.

### **Afghan Civil War(1992 - 1996):**

Civil war had broken out in Afghanistan between five mujahideen armies, armies that fight for God and in the name of God, because one of the militias, known as the Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin, decided against joining forces with the other mujahideen groups; instead, they attempted to claim Kabul, the capital, for themselves<sup>29</sup>. This resulted in immediate rebellion from the four other mujahideen armies. Bombs, shootings, rockets, and rape were rampant in the city of Kabul for years

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<sup>25</sup> Taylor, Alan. "The Soviet War in Afghanistan, 1979 - 1989." The Atlantic. Atlantic Media Company, August 4, 2014. <https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2014/08/the-soviet-war-in-afghanistan-1979-1989/100786/>

<sup>26</sup> Desk, News. "A Historical Timeline of Afghanistan." PBS. Public Broadcasting Service, May 4, 2011. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/asia-jan-june11-timeline-afghanistan>.

<sup>27</sup> J. T. Caruso. FBI Federal Bureau of Investigation. December 08, 2001. <https://archives.fbi.gov/archives/news/testimony/al-qaeda-international>

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Congressional Research Service. "Taliban Government in Afghanistan: Background and Issues for ... - Congress." crsreports, November 2, 2021. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/r/r46955>.

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until the Taliban, a newly formed militia, came in and overthrew them all. By 1996 the Taliban had initiated a coup over Kabul and had control of a majority of Afghanistan<sup>30</sup>.

### **Taliban is formed(1994):**

Soon after the Afghan Civil war, a militia group known as the Taliban came out stronger than ever, the recent war had already given them a headstart in weaponry. Originally the Taliban was simply an Islamic group of former fighters who wanted to spread traditional Islamic values and create peace, they succeeded in some aspects such as reducing the opium trade in Afghanistan. As soon as 1996 the group had control over ~2/3 of Afghanistan and had started to use violence in order to enforce Islamic law(public execution, torture, etc)<sup>31</sup>. At first, the United States government refused to acknowledge the Taliban's status as the government of Afghanistan. As expected, the Taliban didn't appreciate this, launching attacks against parts of US soil in retaliation.

### **Al-Qaeda: The U.S. Embassy Attacks(1998):**

In 1998 Al-Qaeda bombed two US embassies in Africa, located in Kenya and Tanzania. In total the death count for Americans was just 12 citizens<sup>31</sup>. This is further compounded when Al-Qaeda moves forces into Afghanistan, where the Taliban waits with open arms. The Taliban quickly gives resources to Al-Qaeda and the group follows the path of the Taliban: using resources in order to spread the word of Al-Qaeda, recruiting members, creating an army, and effectively becoming a copy of the Taliban. As they execute more attacks on US territory tension rises and their leader, Osama Bin Laden, gets Al-Qaeda ready for war. All of this takes place in Afghanistan, giving many nations around the globe the impression that the Afghanistan government is behind these attacks.

### **The 4 Year Long Drought(1995 - 1999):**

While seemingly plain on the outside, a 4-year long drought from 1995 to 1999 reveals a lot about the status of the nation and its leaders, the Taliban a new Iranian militia that focused deeply on installing traditional Iranian values - it should be noted that the Taliban was formed in 1995 and took majority control over Afghanistan in 1996. Suffering from years of prior warfare from the soviet union, Afghanistan was in harsh debt, had little land for farming, and was taken over by the Taliban in a coup<sup>32</sup>. While regaining funds and morale after a war can be an impossible task for any type of leader, the Taliban's handling of the situation made it much harder for two reasons excluding lack of funds: lack of qualified personnel and unending devotion to religious beliefs. The first reason outside

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> East African Embassy Bombings. FBI Federal Bureau of Investigation, <https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/east-african-embassy-bombings>

<sup>32</sup> Congressional Research Service. "Taliban Government in Afghanistan: Background and Issues for ... - Congress." crsreports, November 2, 2021. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/r/r46955>



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of lack of funds is that the Taliban simply does not and did not care much for infrastructure, this is connected to the second reason of strict devotion to religion. The Taliban just doesn't give much care to fixing infrastructure because it does not heavily impact their goal of spreading traditional values. The complete devotion to religious beliefs has further created roadblocks when attempting to fix old water infrastructure in events such as having a woman in the household while a male attempts to fix the pipelines; in this case, the male cannot go into the household to fix the pipelines. As a result of the Taliban failing to aid in this 4-year-long drought, ~1 million Afghans fled to nearby Pakistan as climate refugees<sup>33</sup>.

### **The US War in Afghanistan(2001 - 2021):**

The last major historical event that forced the emigration of many Afghan citizens is the US war in Afghanistan. After years of tension between the US and Taliban - even going as far as to bomb US embassies and Bin Laden's training camps<sup>34</sup> - September 11th, 2001 was the breaking point. Soon after Bin Laden sends 2 hijacked planes into the twin towers he flees to Afghanistan and is allegedly sheltered by the Taliban. The United States demanded that the Taliban hand over Bin Laden, but the Taliban refused. 20 years of war between the Taliban and the US military later, the US pulls out. The US pulling out of Afghanistan meant that all of the tens of thousands of US troops stationed in Afghanistan would return to the US. Soon after the US pulled out of Afghanistan, the Taliban quickly took control of Afghanistan once again, seizing all of the equipment that the US military left behind. During the 20-year war, a whopping ~5 million Afghan refugees fled to Pakistan and Iran looking for safety<sup>35</sup>. It was after the Afghanistan coup that ~250,000 Afghan refugees would spread to nations where life would be completely foreign to them, such as the ~73,500 refugees who flew to the US, or the ~15,000 who flew to the UK<sup>36</sup>.

The Taliban's failure to serve their own population in a manner that benefits its citizens combined with the extreme actions taken throughout the years makes clear that the motive for the emigration of many Afghan refugees, whether caused by recent events or compounding events, can be traced back to the Taliban. In the next section, current issues, we will discuss the current issues that many of these refugees face in their newfound homes.

### **Position of Key Member Nations and Other Bodies:**

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<sup>33</sup> Desk, News. "A Historical Timeline of Afghanistan." PBS. Public Broadcasting Service, May 4, 2011. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/asia-jan-june11-timeline-afghanistan>.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> History.com Editors, ed. "Afghanistan War." History.com. A&E Television Networks, August 20, 2021. <https://www.history.com/topics/21st-century/afghanistan-war>.

<sup>36</sup> The Visual Journalism Team. "Afghanistan: How many refugees are there and where will they go?" BBC. British Broadcasting Channel, August 31, 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58283177>

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### **Pakistan:**

As Afghanistan is a landlocked nation it is implied that many of the refugees will rush to the nation whose border is shared most with Afghanistan, which is Pakistan. Pakistan's government has had a rocky relationship with allowing Afghan refugees to seek refuge in their borders: allowing the influx of refugees during the Soviet-Afghan war, a whopping ~2,800,000<sup>37</sup>, and the US war in Afghanistan, another whopping ~1,300,000<sup>38</sup>, whilst finally having the nation's National Security Adviser Moeed Yusuf's slam down the law and announcing that the government "[A]s a matter of fact, [we are] not in a position to accept any more refugees"<sup>39</sup>. This seemingly sudden closing of borders to Afghan refugees is not so surprising when realising that Pakistan's relationship with Afghanistan has been on thin ice since the 1940s - when Pakistan's independence was given by the UN, with Afghanistan being the only vote against this independence. Yusuf later announced that the reason for closing the borders on Afghanistan wasn't purely out of growing disdain, rather it was for the safety of the nation's people: "There are fears that members of the banned terror outfits like the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (the TTP or Pakistani Taliban) might enter Pakistan from Afghanistan in the guise of refugees and create unrest in the country"<sup>40</sup>. Pakistan's view on Afghan refugees as it currently stands can simply be labeled as strained.

### **Iran:**

Iran is the second-largest recipient of Afghan refugees, just behind Pakistan. As expected, the relationship between Iran and Afghanistan is also an extremely bumpy road. With diplomatic stress occurring since 1979 when the Iranian revolution and Soviet-Afghan war both occurred at the same time. During this uncertain time in which both nations underwent extreme changes, ~3 million Afghan refugees sought safety in Iran<sup>41</sup>. Surprisingly, the Iranian government allowed for many of these refugees to obtain an education, job opportunities, etc, with only slight blockages such as the inability to own shops<sup>42</sup>. These immigrants cost lots of money to maintain, and with little to no international

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<sup>37</sup> Desk, News. "A Historical Timeline of Afghanistan." PBS. Public Broadcasting Service, May 4, 2011. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/asia-jan-june11-timeline-afghanistan>.

<sup>38</sup> "Afghanistan Refugee Crisis Explained." How to Help Refugees - Aid, Relief and Donations. UNHCR, June 29, 2022. <https://www.unrefugees.org/news/afghanistan-refugee-crisis-explained/>.

<sup>39</sup> Furqan, Ali. "Pakistan Refuses to Host Additional Afghan Refugees." VOA. Pakistan Refuses to Host Additional Afghan Refugees, July 13, 2021. [https://www.voanews.com/a/south-central-asia\\_pakistan-refuses-host-additional-afghan-refugees/6208191.html](https://www.voanews.com/a/south-central-asia_pakistan-refuses-host-additional-afghan-refugees/6208191.html).

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Rich, Sebastian. "Refugees in Iran." UNHCR Iran, 2021. <https://www.unhcr.org/ir/refugees-in-iran/>.

<sup>42</sup> "Unwelcome Guests Iran's Violation of Afghan Refugee and Migrant Rights." HRW, November 20, 2013. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/11/20/unwelcome-guests/irans-violation-afghan-refugee-and-migrant-rights>

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aid the Iranian government, in 1992, started to push for the repatriation of these Afghan refugees. Many Afghan citizens reportedly were heavily harassed by Iranian police and had their legal status cards revoked against their will<sup>43</sup>. Finally, we make it to the present, after the United States pulled its military out of Afghanistan an explosion of Afghan refugees went to Iran for safety from the Taliban's newfound power. As mentioned before the UNHCR has reported that of the ~500,000-1,000,000 Afghan refugees who immigrated to Iran around "65% of all new arrivals [were] returned by the [Iranian] government"<sup>44</sup>. While we haven't heard explicit mention by a spokesperson that Afghan refugees are not welcome, the push for repatriation since the 1990s has made it clear that the government is not too keen on allowing many more refugees to call Iran their new home.

### **Turkmenistan:**

Turkmenistan has been under the radar from the media for a long time regarding its relationship with Afghan refugees, mainly because there is not much it has done. Turkmenistan has followed the footsteps of Pakistan and Iran, with the Foreign Policy Institute(FPI) commenting that they "adamantly rejected refugees from Afghanistan" and have instead "rushed military forces to the Afghan border"<sup>45</sup>. The history of Turkmenistan's relationship with Afghanistan is just as simple, having good historical relations with Afghanistan: and exporting lots of goods to Afghanistan. This is very expected of Turkmenistan as its ministry has stressed the importance of peaceful coexistence in its history: "Turkmenistan is a strong adherent of peaceful resolution of all the issues ... through political and diplomatic"<sup>46</sup>. It is easy to deduce that Turkmenistan's current view of Afghan refugees is to give them support while not accepting them into their own borders.

### **Uzbekistan:**

Uzbekistan shares a smaller border with Afghanistan, one that is just about 150km in length. This isn't to say that its opinion of Afghan refugees is smaller - in fact, it is quite the opposite. Uzbekistan government officials have stated that any Afghan refugee who "illegally crosses"<sup>50</sup> to Uzbekistan will be "suppressed harshly"<sup>47</sup>. In other words, Uzbekistan's official opinion towards Afghan refugees is to punish any who decides to immigrate to its nation; it is implied that the

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> "Operational Data Portal." Country - Iran (Islamic Republic of). UNHCR, May 31, 2022. <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/irn>.

<sup>45</sup> Bayar, Gozde. "Turkmenistan Says It Is Attentively Observing Situation in Afghanistan." Anadolu Ajansı, August 19, 2021. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/turkmenistan-says-it-is-attentively-observing-situation-in-afghanistan/2340220>.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Mijares, Mary. "Central Asia's Response to Afghan Refugee Crisis." The Organization for World Peace, August 31, 2021. <https://theowp.org/central-asias-response-to-afghan-refugee-crisis/>.

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reasoning for this extreme caution is to prevent any even minuscule chance for potential Taliban infiltration or targeting in Uzbekistan.

### **Tajikistan:**

Possibly the most interesting central Asian position regarding this issue of how and where to integrate Afghan refugees, Tajikistan has an oxymoron of a stance. Tajikistan has somewhat become the main adversary to the Taliban and a major supporter of Afghanistan, a stark opposite to the acknowledgment given by other central Asian nations such as Russia and China. The main actions by the nation have been open refusal to acknowledge the Taliban, constant sympathising of the president towards the situation in Afghanistan, and being the only nation in the region at the time to pledge the “accept[ance of] up to 100,000 [Afghan refugees].”<sup>48</sup> This all becomes much more convoluted when the fact that all of this talk has stayed on paper. Most likely caused by the startling amount of internal outcry ridiculing the government’s promises, the government has yet to accept any notable amount of Afghan refugees into the nation. It is safe to say that Tajikistan’s stance on Afghan refugees was extremely open, with the citizen’s opinions seemingly being the only interference.

### **United States:**

As the most recent increase of Afghan refugees can be related to the United States pulling out of Afghanistan, and an indirect catalyst for the Taliban’s uprising, its position towards Afghan refugees has almost been forced to be extremely supportive. The United States has been a part of Afghanistan’s recent history for its majority, beginning even before the 9/11 attacks, and the subsequent 20-year-long war. The United States has tried very hard to remain in good relations with Afghanistan because of the leverage it provided when dealing with the Taliban and the supposed terrorists that it sheltered - without the Afghanistan relationship, the US has almost no way to stage its military near Taliban headquarters. As soon as the US pulled out of Afghanistan they realized that the Taliban would reclaim Afghanistan, as a result, the US decided that airlifting as many Afghans out of imminent danger would make for the best future for these refugees - in just two months well over 70,000<sup>49</sup> refugees were taken across the world to the land of the US. In the US nine safe havens were created in order to relocate and ensure the safe integration of these refugees into their new homes<sup>50</sup>. It can reasonably be assumed that the US will continue to ensure the safety of these ~70,000 refugees in

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<sup>48</sup> Umarov, Temur. “Why Tajikistan Is Taking a Stand against the Taliban.” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 26, 2021. <https://carnegiemoscow.org/commentary/85649>.

<sup>49</sup> The Visual Journalism Team. “Afghanistan: How many refugees are there and where will they go?”. BBC. British Broadcasting Channel, August 31, 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58283177>

<sup>50</sup> Prescott, Stanford. “As Us Closes ‘Safe Haven’ Government Facilities Hosting Afghans, IRC Calls Attention to Local Resettlement Needs in the US.” International Rescue Committee (IRC), February 16, 2022. <https://www.rescue.org/press-release/us-closes-safe-haven-government-facilities-hosting-afghans-irc-calls-attention-local>.

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the States; however, it is unsure whether the US will attempt to airlift or accept any more major population of Afghan refugees in the future. The relationship between the US and Afghan refugees has and most likely will continue to be positive.

### Suggested Solutions

Currently, it is clear that there are three main issues surrounding the integration of Afghan refugees in any nation: safe havens which have played a vital role in allowing refugees to integrate into different societies have shut down rapidly because of lack of funding, major nations such as Pakistan and Iran closed their borders in when faced with a possible influx of Afghan refugees, and severe displacement of citizens in Afghanistan itself almost guaranteeing a future increase in refugees who will have little choice in their future safety. While creating measures to ensure international integration of these refugees may seem daunting to even brainstorm, the next section will provide instances

While it may seem that most nations nearby Afghanistan refuse to give help to those in need, the list of solutions isn't completely empty. Nations nearby Afghanistan refuse to give aid because they have a possibility of accidentally initiating conflict with the Taliban; however, this isn't true for many nations away from Afghanistan - almost 100 nations outside of central Asia are willing to house tens to tens of thousands refugees. Possible solutions to aid these refugees would include some of the following, lifting refugee quotas, supporting NGOs that aid refugees in general such as USAID(United States Agency for International Development), and allowing for more visas such as SIV(Special Immigrant Visas), the creation of bills such as the AAA(Afghan Adjustment Act).

The first of many solutions that may be put in use to help these refugees may be to lift or extend refugee quotas. Refugee quotas are the allowable number of refugees that a nation will accept in a given year, this is almost always determined by the current president or leader of the nation. The goal of removing a quota would be to allow the nation to accept more refugees per year if desired by the nation. The removal of these quotas would further allow for nations to accept an influx of Afghan refugees in case another future event causes some of the ~3,500,000<sup>51</sup> citizens displaced in the nation to seek refuge.

Supporting NGOs such as USAID can prove to be extremely beneficial to those who have already made it into another's nation. NGOs are almost always the sole support behind most safe-havens, but these safe havens almost always close in less than a year after opening for the sole reason that they do not have adequate funds to house, feed, relocate, and care for the refugees they have. It is almost a guarantee that if these NGOs had adequate funding they would be able to give aid

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<sup>51</sup> "Afghanistan Refugee Crisis Explained." How to Help Refugees - Aid, Relief and Donations. UNHCR, June 29, 2022. <https://www.unrefugees.org/news/afghanistan-refugee-crisis-explained/>.

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and integrate these refugees into any society if prompted. Funding for these NGOs can come from anywhere, from the current solution of public donations to possible support given by governments.

The US has given an interesting solution to many of the Afghan refugees that were airlifted after the United States pulled the military from Afghanistan: the SIV visa. The SIV visa is given to those who have special circumstances; an example would be refugees of any degree (climate refugees, war refugees, famine refugees)<sup>52</sup>. After the pulling of the military thousands of SIV visas were given to Afghan refugees. Many of these refugees can now be integrated into the nation's society: finding jobs, buying houses, adopting children, etc. If other nations can find justification for similar types of visas then refugees may be able to find NGOs willing to move them to these nations which will provide a solution to their societal integration issue.

Similar to the aforementioned visas such as the SIV, the creation of bills such as the United States (AAA) Afghan Adjustment Act may provide specific and exponential help for these Afghan refugees. In short, the AAA is a proposed bill that would allow for certain Afghan refugees to receive citizenship after one year of being paroled in the United States<sup>53</sup>. The AAA would help immensely in the integration process of Afghan refugees into society. Nation states should strongly consider bills such as this if they are serious about accepting these refugees as permanent residents; *however*, it is imperative that nation states that are serious enough to propose this bill realize that further aid should be given to these citizens after they are given the status of smooth integration is truly the end goal.

In conclusion, there are many possible solutions to this problem, including examples such as but not limited to lifting refugee quotas, supporting NGOs financially through public or private means, supplying special SIV-esque visas, and proposing and supporting bills such as AAA. While all of these examples pertain to the integration of refugees into a nation's society *after* they've made it into said nation, it is still imperative that these solutions be considered when trying to answer the issue of how to ensure smooth integration and safety of Afghan refugees into the world.

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<sup>52</sup> "Special Immigrant Visas for Afghans - Who Were Employed by/on Behalf of the U.S. Government." FOIA. Office of the Inspector General, July 20, 2022, <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/immigrate/special-immg-visa-afghans-employed-us-gov.html>.

<sup>53</sup> "Factsheet: Afghan Adjustment Act." HIAS, December 2021. [https://www.hias.org/sites/default/files/factsheet\\_afghan\\_adjustment\\_act\\_november\\_2021.pdf](https://www.hias.org/sites/default/files/factsheet_afghan_adjustment_act_november_2021.pdf)

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