



## AUSTRALIA'S ETHICAL OBLIGATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN

After 20 years of waging war in Afghanistan, Australia, the United States and its allies have withdrawn from the field – leaving the Taliban back in power. In retreat, what is the obligation of countries like Australia to the Afghan people?

“Some might challenge the idea that Australia is bound by any obligation to the Afghans. After all, it might be said, have we not already invested a small fortune?” writes **Dr Simon Longstaff, Executive Director of The Ethics Centre.**

“My answer begins with the simple truth that, for the most part, we found ourselves expending blood and treasure for our own benefit – and not, primarily, for the good of Afghanistan. Much as we might be comforted by the rhetoric of ‘noble causes’ and ‘high ideals’, when it comes to the *realpolitik* of statecraft, our politicians send our forces into harm’s way in service of what they plainly believe to be the national interest.”

Even then, Longstaff argues that “there is much to be proud of in terms of Australia’s overall contribution. [But] that legacy is at risk of being sullied by the manner of Australia’s departure and the sense that we will do the minimum that decency requires – and then wash our hands of the whole thing, leaving our faithful collaborators to pay the price of our failure.” **[READ MORE](#)**

*Dr Simon Longstaff AO is Executive Director of The Ethics Centre. He is available for interview and comment.*

*The Ethics Centre is a not-for-profit organisation designed to bring ethics to the centre of personal and professional life.*

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