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UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

DESCRIPTION OF THE COMMITTEE

Under the United Nations Charter, the Security Council is charged with the responsibility of maintaining international peace and security. While other United Nations bodies may only make recommendations, the Security Council has the ability to pass resolutions with binding action for all member states. It is this unique ability that makes the Security Council the most important body within the United Nations.

The Council meets throughout the year and is made up of 15 states: five permanent members, known as the “Permanent Five”, and ten rotating members chosen by the General Assembly for two-year terms. The “Permanent Five” consists of the People’s Republic of China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America. Each of these nations has veto power, meaning that if any one of them votes “no” on a resolution, that resolution automatically fails. According to protocol, in order for a resolution to pass, there must be nine or more affirmative votes, and the absence of any vetoes from the five permanent members.

The Security Council may deal with international conflict in many ways. When conflict erupts, the Council’s first response is oftentimes to call for a ceasefire – an end to immediate hostilities. The Council also maintains the option of sending peacekeeping forces to a given area to ensure the safety of civilians and to make certain that U.N. resolutions are being carried out. The Security Council also has the ability to call for economic sanctions – measures that prevent a country from receiving money or conducting trade. In the most serious of circumstances, the Council is also authorized to call for the use of military force.

TOPIC: SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan still remains largely ungoverned. The **Taliban** has likely gathered significant gains in manpower since 2006, conducting operations against the **International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)** and Afghan forces around the country, effectively achieving de facto control over areas of Afghanistan, as well as spillover violence against Pakistani forces in **Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP)** and **Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)**. Osama bin Laden, leader of **Al-Qaeda**, still remains at large, though much of Al-Qaeda’s senior leadership has been killed or captured and has suffered a significant losses in its ability to carry out operations outside of the region. The government still has weak control over vast swaths of the Afghan countryside where



the cultivation of **poppy**, the key ingredient in heroin, has become a key source of finance for Taliban forces. Violence has forced many development organizations out of the Afghan countryside, eroding the gains made in human rights and quality of life since the U.S.-led invasion.

A **Loya Jirga**, or grand council of tribal elders, was called together in December 2001 to appoint an interim government led by Hamid Karzai, who remains the current president. The Afghan government is rife with corruption and has backtracked on many democratic reforms. Roving gangs are bringing back the strict Taliban moral codes, forcing women from schools and to apply strict dress standards. The social progress made by the overthrow of the Taliban is slowly giving way to an a sustained Taliban advance.

The United Nations has taken only a limited role thus far in rebuilding Afghanistan and assisting ISAF forces in securing and developing the country. This committee will focus on building UN programs, both locally and regionally, to raise standards of living for people in Afghanistan, deny terrorist organizations safe have and support, and disrupting narcotics flows outside the region. These issues play into one another and the UN has a large toolkit to confront these issues. However, each member state has its own vision of what the ideal future for the Afghan state should be.

BACKGROUND/HISTORY

Afghanistan is a state plagued by weak rule since the time of Alexander the Great. Its strategic position as a gateway to colonial expansion into Central Asia brought Afghanistan into conflict with both the British and the Russian Empires in the 19th century. However, many of Afghanistan's current problems stem from the the 1979-1989 Soviet-Afghan war, when the Soviet Union intervened to prop up a Communist government after a series of coups. The Soviet's long, brutal occupation of Afghanistan destroyed what little modern infrastructure the country had, as well as several generations of Afghan men who chose to fight against the occupation.

The United States, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan financed a secret effort to arm the **mujahadeen**, or holy warriors, a loosely grouped collection of tribal Afghans, led by Ahmed Shah Massoud, dedicated to resisting the Soviet occupation. For several years, U.S. and Pakistani intelligence agencies led a joint effort to arm and train the mujahadeen, as well as many foreign volunteers from around the Muslim world, including the masterminds behind the attack on September 11, 2001, Khalid Sheikh Mohammad and Osama bin Laden. The U.S. provided the mujahadeen with various forms of weaponry, including the advanced Stinger surface-to-air missile to balance the battle against the advanced Soviet military.

The Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989 and the war is largely credited with bankrupting the Soviets, strongly influencing the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Without a



A US soldier walks through opium poppy fields in southern Afghanistan

Source: Getty Images

centralized government or a dominant faction of mujahadeen, the country fell into civil war between the communist leadership and other mujahadeen factions until Massoud ousted the state's leadership in 1992. However, the mujahadeen leadership fractured, leaving Massoud and Uzbek leader Abdul Rashid Dostum allied against the Taliban. The Taliban was led by Mullah Omar, a group that preached a radically conservative form of Islamic law and was financed largely by Saudi Arabia, but also received support from Pakistan as they saw them as the only hope for stability in Afghanistan. Massoud and Dostum formed a group called the **Northern Alliance** after being routed from the capital, Kabul, which came to rule only 10% of the country by the end of major hostilities.

The Taliban were able to bring relative stability to the country by 1998, but their harsh interpretation of Islamic law led to serious human rights violations perpetrated against women and the minority Shia population in Afghanistan, as well as a backlash of nearly all forms of entertainment considered Western, like music, dancing, and pictures of living things. During this time the Taliban opened itself up as a safe haven for a variety of extremist groups planning attacks against Western targets, most notably Al-Qaeda or "the base", led by Saudi Osama bin Laden after his eviction from Sudan.

Massoud was killed September 9, 2001 by Al-Qaeda operatives posing as journalists, which left some to fear that the Taliban was only weeks away from complete domination of the country. On September 11, 2001, Al-Qaeda launched nearly simultaneous attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Within days, Special Forces from the **Coalition of the Willing**, a U.S. led military alliance aimed at fighting what U.S. President George Bush coined the "**War on Terror**", entered Afghanistan to assist North Alliance forces and prepare for an invasion to depose the Taliban and hunt down key figures in Al-Qaeda, namely Osama bin Laden. On October 7, 2001, the Coalition of the Willing launched Operation Enduring Freedom which decisively ousted the Taliban, forcing many of its more dedicated fighters, namely Mullah Omar and Baitullah Mehsud, into hiding into NWFP and FATA. The country experienced relative calm until 2006, as reconstruction efforts greatly improved living standards in Afghanistan. However, a revitalized Taliban stands to eliminate those gains.



Al-Qaeda attacked the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001

Source: Reuters

CURRENT SITUATION

Al-Qaeda Safe Haven

Al-Qaeda has consistently articulated its intent to strike at the United States and its allies. However, its definition of "allies" is used widely to describe most governments throughout the world, including NGOs and international organizations. While the core of Al-Qaeda leadership has been killed, captured, or pushed into hiding, there is still a growing presence in Afghanistan. Afghanistan has once again become a site for the travel of mujahadeen to fight international forces. Many of these individuals come from Muslim communities globally from all walks of life and little is done to curb their illicit migration to conflict zones to make **jihād**. The major sources of funding for Al-



Qaeda are still largely debated; however, more needs to be done to prevent funds from flowing into Al-Qaeda leadership's hands to prevent them from conducting attacks outside of the region. Additionally, Afghan security forces remain weak and underdeveloped and are probably unable to confront Al-Qaeda fighters on their own.

Eradicating Narcotics and Promoting Alternative Crop Development

Narcotics flows out of Afghanistan are a major source of global instability, fueling violent narcotics traffickers, creating a variety of social problems, and funding the Taliban's insurgency against ISAF and the Afghan government. Poppy is grown in Afghanistan, mostly in the south of the country, because of the high market value relative to staple crops. Previous attempts by ISAF forces to wipe out poppy farms have largely led to the radicalization of farmers and resulted in a huge recruitment boon for the Taliban. The Taliban now provides protection to farmers who are at risk of having their poppy fields destroyed by ISAF forces in exchange for a large share of the profits. ISAF, the UN, and NGOs have since been trying to promote the growth of other staple and cash crops, but have thus far made little inroads into reducing incentives for farmers to comply with the Taliban's fundraising efforts.



An Afghan points a Stinger missile at a Soviet helicopter.

Corruption and Democracy

Source: Robert Nickelsberg/Liaison/Getty Images

A major debate in the future of Afghanistan is the struggle between local rule and weak influence from Kabul or a strong, almost autocratic central government. Direct democracy is a new development in Afghanistan, since its history has been characterized by tribal law and various states of anarchy. The government in Kabul still exists on an uneasy base of support from local warlords and tribal leaders who refused to give up power throughout consecutive Afghan rulers. However, Afghan's political system has been fraught with trouble since the war with the Soviets. Local warlords have been integrated into the mainstream by being appointed to or running for local offices, but still remain their own feudal power over some regions. Corruption, by Western standards, is prolific with bribery, extortion, and political intimidation being relatively commonplace. The recent 2009 Afghan presidential election brought international light to the undemocratic nature of the current Afghan regime, who attempted to prevent a runoff election from taking place. Election oversight and building a political culture which shuns corruption remains one of ISAF and the **United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA)**'s priorities.

Afghanistan and Insurgency in Pakistan

The situation in Afghanistan is intrinsically connected to the recent instability in Pakistan. The Taliban has taken root in the Pashtun tribal areas of Western Pakistan after being partially ejected from Afghanistan. Pakistan is a nuclear weapons state plagued by chronic instability. Pakistan has



been reluctant to counter the Taliban threat, which it originally helped to train and finance. Only recently has Pakistan launched a counteroffensive in the Swat Valley, located in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).

Human Security in Afghanistan

The human security situation in Afghanistan is at a critical level, with poverty and insecurity the two main problems. Afghanistan is one of the most desperately poor countries in the world. Over two-thirds of the population lives under two dollars a day. Years of isolation, conflict, and religious fundamentalism have destroyed much of the country's infrastructure. Infectious diseases eradicated in the rest of the world are still prevalent in Afghanistan due to years of Taliban resistance to vaccination programs and a large youth population. Women's rights are still at threat. Unemployment is at forty percent. Afghanistan has the highest child mortality rate in the world. Additionally, Afghans must avoid being caught in the crossfire between ISAF and the Taliban, as well as being the victims of terrorist attacks sponsored by Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Aid outside of major cities is a risky enterprise due to chronic warlordism and Taliban attacks.



The 2009 Presidential Election Between Hamid Karzai and Abdullah Abdullah was the target of a number of corruption and fraud allegations.

Source: Associated Press

There is an ongoing debate over what international goals in Afghanistan should even be, with some arguing that given Afghanistan's derelict economy of tribal structure that **nation-building** or the creation of a functioning, legitimate Afghan state is nearly impossible. ISAF's assistance to enhance the human security of average Afghans is limited to development as a counterinsurgency tool or a "**hearts and minds**" strategy, which contrasts with the brutal **attrition** model of counterinsurgency which focuses on destroying the Afghani will to fight. ISAF has been largely concerned with training Afghan security forces to a level where they can, at the very least, protect the Afghan state and project some of Kabul's power into the countryside.

INTERNATIONAL ACTION

United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) Programs

UNAMA has made limited gains throughout the country and typically operates in conjunction with ISAF and other UN agencies to rebuild the country. UNAMA has created a system of community reconciliation programs aimed at limiting local violence and undermining Taliban recruitment efforts. Also, anti-corruption programs focus on promoting civic responsibility and educating officials on what constitutes corruption. UNAMA coordinates the dispersal of UN aid in Afghanistan, though attacks on UN supply depots in Pakistan has diminished its flow. Finally,



UNAMA plays a major role in election monitoring, which has become a key issue since the contentious 2009 presidential election in Afghanistan.

International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)

ISAF, which consists of NATO forces and a variety of other U.S. allies, is the primary security force in Afghanistan and is largely responsible for internal security. ISAF is actively training Afghan military and police forces to provide local security for Afghans by Afghans, rather than outside forces. However, these efforts have been complicated due to many Afghan soldiers moonlighting as Taliban fighters. ISAF also sponsors **Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs)** who focus on providing security and reconstruction efforts in the various provinces of Afghanistan. Additionally, the PRTs have focused on building good governance systems to build legitimacy for the Afghan government.



ISAF member contributions are varied.

Source: BBC World News

ISAF has been in the process of conducted a series of military operations to root out Taliban forces in the south and east of the country, so humanitarian aid can once again reach those sections. ISAF is expected to rapidly expand in the next few years, given the renewed U.S. commitment to stability and security in Afghanistan.

Regional Players

Pakistan, Iran, and the Arab Gulf States mostly have ambiguous positions on Afghanistan. While states such as Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates have military forces committed to ISAF, the Saudi government endorsed and heavily financed the Taliban regime due to the similarity between the two countries' legal systems. It is unknown whether this relationship quietly continues. Pakistan sees the situation in Afghanistan as a growing threat to its stability, but still focuses on India as the primary challenge to the state while the Taliban gains a greater foothold in the country. Pakistan's intelligence service, Inter-Service Intelligence, has a long history of funding operations contrary to the greater policy goals of the Pakistani government and has had a long working relationship with the Taliban since the Soviet-Afghan War. Afghanistan is one of the few areas where the U.S. and Iran have cooperated. Iran was initially firmly opposed to the Taliban, given their status as a Shia state, but most Afghan poppy now leaves through Iran, which calls into question Iranian motives.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FORMULATING A RESOLUTION

Delegates should focus on working to expand UN activities in Afghanistan and enhance cooperation with ISAF forces. Additionally, delegates should work toward expanding regional cooperation to deny Al-Qaeda's safe haven and degrade their ability to conduct further attacks. They should also grapple with issues such as reconciliation with the Taliban, protecting UN personnel, and what the UN should do concerning the narcotics trade in Afghanistan. While the UN Security Council is not



a development committee, delegates should touch upon developing Afghanistan in any resolution, as it has a direct consequence on international security and the severity of poverty in Afghanistan.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Can the UN consider the Taliban a legitimate actors in Afghanistan's political system? Should it work with or against Taliban involvement?
2. How far should the international community go to secure women's and minority rights in Afghanistan?
3. Should Afghanistan have a strong central government?
4. How does your country contribute to ISAF or UN operations in Afghanistan? Does it have relations with the Taliban?
5. How involved should the UN be in Afghanistan? What should be the UN's objectives?
6. Does your country provide Afghanistan with aid?
7. Should the UN allow poppy production in Afghanistan?
8. What can be done to cut down on corruption in Afghanistan?

TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Taliban: a Pashto word meaning “students”; a Sunni Islamist political movement that governed Afghanistan from 1996 until they were overthrown in late 2001 during Operation Enduring Freedom. It has regrouped since 2004 and revived as a strong insurgency movement governing at the local level and fighting a guerrilla war against the governments of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

International Security Assistance Force (ISAF): a NATO-led security and development mission in Afghanistan established by the United Nations Security Council on December 20, 2001.

Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP): one of four provinces in Pakistan.

Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA): in Pakistan, areas bordering Afghanistan outside of the four provinces.

Al-Qaeda: an Islamist group that operates as a network comprising both a multinational, stateless arm and a fundamentalist Sunni movement calling for global jihad.

Poppy: key ingredient in heroin used to finance Taliban operations.

Mujahadeen: “holy warriors”, first used to describe anti-Soviet fighters. The Taliban claims to be the new mujahadeen.

Northern Alliance: a military-political umbrella organization that united various Afghan groups fighting against each other to fight the Taliban instead.



TERMS AND CONCEPTS CON'T

Coalition of the Willing: U.S.-led alliance conducting the War on Terror

War on Terror: in reference to operations by the United States, the United Kingdom and its allies since the September 11, 2001 attacks

Jihad: a holy war waged on behalf of Islam as a religious duty.

United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA): The UN Mission in Afghanistan that is responsible for strengthening cooperation with the ISAF, help strengthen the Afghan government, and assist in humanitarian efforts in the country.

Nation-building: The process of forming a cohesive state from relative chaos.

“Hearts and minds”: A counterinsurgency strategy focused winning the approval and respect of the occupied populace.

Attrition: A counterinsurgency strategy focused on eroding the occupied populace’s will to fight.

Provincial Reconstruction Teams: ISAF security and development teams in Afghanistan.

RESEARCH AID

For information on ISAF’s Efforts in Afghanistan:

<http://www.isaf.nato.int/>

For information on UN programs in Afghanistan:

<http://unama.unmissions.org/default.aspx?/>

For background on the Afghan Jihad and the Emergence of the Taliban:

Steve Coll, Ghost Wars, Penguin Press (2004)

For a Recent Overview of the ongoing issues in Afghanistan:

Ahmed Rashid, Descent into Chaos, Viking Adult (2008)

For an approachable overview of U.S. operations in Afghanistan during the Afghan-Soviet War:

George Crile, Charlie Wilson’s War, Grove Press (2004)

For an Excellent Background on the Taliban Resurgence from 2005-Present:

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/taliban/view/>

A fascinating three-part documentary on BBC about the British’s efforts in Afghanistan:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/leimsieder01#p/c/583CBF8C2DCEB53B/1/U90MY6zkBlk>



For a Comprehensive list of International Contributions to ISAF:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Security_Assistance_Force

For a Comprehensive Guide to Media Sources in and about Afghanistan to Keep up on current events in Afghanistan:
<http://www.abyznewslinks.com/afgha.htm>

For a Collection of articles and resolution texts on UN involvement in Afghanistan:
<http://www.globalpolicy.org/security-council/index-of-countries-on-the-security-council-agenda/afghanistan.html>

A daily reading of any national newspaper (New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, USA Today) is also recommended.

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Background and History:

Steve Coll, Ghost Wars, (Penguin Press:New York, 2004)

Ahmed Rashid, Taliban, (Yale University Press: New Haven, 2001)

Current Situation:

Christopher Blanchard, Afghanistan: Narcotics and U.S. Policy, Congressional Research Service, 2009

Council on Foreign Relations, “Al-Qaeda Factsheet.” <<http://www.cfr.org/publication/9126/>>

“Afghanistan Election 2009,” Al-Jazeera English,
<<http://english.aljazeera.net/focus/afghanistanelections2009/>>

