

Forum: Security Council (SC)

Issue: The Situation in Afghanistan

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Introduction

The issues plaguing Afghanistan are countless, and to adequately resolve them one must look back to history. In 1979, the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan began and resulted in the formation of several religious insurgent groups. The War, fought between the Soviets and the United States, resulted in the formation of mujahideen groups, religious rebel groups. Militants from these groups, in short, later branched off and formed religious extremist organizations such as the Taliban. In 2001, after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the United States invaded Afghanistan. This marked the beginning of the ongoing war in Afghanistan.

The violence stemming from these wars have resulted in political instability and human rights violations. The major topics to be discussed are the prospect of peace in Afghanistan, the installment of a stable government, women's rights, discriminatory practices and torture, and the freedom of press and expression.

Definition of Key Terms

Sunni Islam

Islam is a monotheistic religion that teaches belief in Allah. Islam is an Abrahamic religion, placing Muhammad as the messenger of Allah. Islam is split into two major denominations: Sunni and Shia. Sunni Muslims, in short, believe in religious practice primarily based on the words of Muhammad, while Shia Muslims also follow Ali, the cousin of Muhammad. The majority of Muslims are Sunni Muslims, with about 85% of all Muslims being Sunni. Afghanistan is a Muslim Sunni-majority nation.

The Taliban

The Taliban is an Islamic fundamentalist group that was formed by an Afghan faction of the mujahideen in the early 1990s. The Taliban fought during the Soviet-Afghan War and assumed control over a majority of Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001. After the US-led invasion of Afghanistan, the group

lost its influence over the region, however, in 2005 the fundamentalist organization reemerged in Afghanistan. The Taliban have been condemned by the United Nations for human rights violations against women and for the killings of civilians in Afghanistan. Recently, the Taliban, the United States, and the Afghan government have conducted peace talks and expressed their desire for reduced violence in Afghanistan.

Sharia

In Arabic, sharia is defined as divine law. Sharia is religious law stemming from the fundamental principles of Islam. Most Muslim-majority nations have been implemented legal systems influenced by sharia; however, these laws have been largely replaced by statutes shaped by western models. Over the past 30 years, Islamic Movements have arisen calling for the complete implementation of sharia. Aspects of sharia, such as its restrictions upon women and harsh punishments have been criticized by international organizations.

Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs)

Improvised explosive devices are makeshift bombs often deployed in areas of conflict. IEDs have been estimated to have caused over half of all conflict-related civilian deaths in Afghanistan. Detecting these weapons is difficult due to their unconventional construction. Since IEDs can be built without the use of metal, they are impervious to metal detectors. IEDs are most commonly used in roadside and suicide bombings targetted at the civilian populations of Afghanistan.

Mujahideen

In Arabic, mujahideen are defined as those participating in jihad. In the late 18th century the term 'mujahideen' became synonymous with religious or holy warriors. The term, like jihadists, is now loosely used to describe Muslim combatant groups. In Afghanistan, the mujahideen refers to the various guerrilla rebel groups who fought during the Soviet invasion. These groups formed the Islamic Unity of Afghanistan Mujahideen and fought alongside the United States. Later, veterans of these groups fought against the Taliban.

Jihadist

In Arabic, jihad refers to a religious struggle against both the physical and spiritual enemies of Islam. In recent years the term has come to mean Islam's religious war. Those who engage in jihad are referred to as jihadists and often use violence to reach their goals. In the late 20th century, with the Islamic revival, religious fundamentalist groups were labeled as jihadist groups. The Muslim community, however, do not view extremists as jihadists, but rather as "deviants" who use Islam to falsely justify violence.

The Islamic Revival

The Islamic Revival refers to the worldwide emergence of Islam beginning from the 1970s.

Background Information

War and conflict

Afghanistan, for the past several decades, has been replete with wars and conflict, resulting in a deterioration of their growth overall as a nation.

Soviet Invasion of 1979

In 1973, Mohammed Daoud Khan, an ex-prime minister, took control of a coup, overthrew the at-the-time current king and became a pro-Soviet president with the help of the USSR. After his fall, the communist party dichotomized into two Marxist-Leninist political groups, the People's (Khalq) Party and the Banner (Parcham) Party. With the People's party drastically surging in popularity came severe opposition and backlash in the form of Mujahideen groups (a group of Islamic fighters) supported by the United States of America. To counter this revolt, in 1979, the Soviet Union entered Afghanistan and backed up the pro-Soviet regime in Kabul. Soon after, the Soviet Union began to take over other major cities, highways and harshly punished rebels. However, the Mujahideen groups still proved to be a potent adversary to the USSR, with them garnering funding from the US, Pakistan, China, Iran, and Saudi Arabia.

Eventually, in 1978, the USSR withdrew from Afghanistan for two reasons: the Geneva Accords of 1988, and the fact that this war took a significant toll on the already weak economic status of the USSR. This period of conflict resulted in the death of 1 million civilians, 90,000 Mujahideen soldiers, 18,000 Afghan troops, and 14,500 Soviet Soldiers. With the chaos and destruction that had just occurred, Afghanistan became very vulnerable to attack and control. This forged the perfect opportunity for the Taliban to rise.

The creation, fall, and resurgence of the Taliban

In 1996, the Mujahideen recruited Pashtuns— a prominent ethnic group in Southern Afghanistan. With their rising popularity, the idea of a secure and stable government in the postwar era of Afghanistan was appealing to many citizens. The Taliban pursued an ultra-conservative and literal take on Islamic texts— forcing many citizens to completely shift their lifestyle in order to satisfy the demands of the Taliban. Their escalation in popularity resulted in them having the ability to hold approximately 90% of the country until their fall in 2001. Their short-lived demise happened because of 9/11, and their ties with Al-Qaeda. Moreover, in 2001, the United States of America, with the support of the Northern Alliance the UK, Canada,

Australia, and Germany commissioned an attack against the Taliban, resulting in their temporary fall. Afterward, a constitution for Afghanistan was formed— America's attempt to institute a political framework for Afghanistan and let them be independent.

However, soon in 2005, the Taliban resurged. This happened for several reasons that led to the spreading of a negative stigma around Americans and the current government in Afghanistan. This was due to prisoner abuse, certain bombings from NATO and the US causing an uproar from Afghan citizens, and government corruption. The resurgence of the Taliban brought along with it new strategies that they had adopted from insurgents in Iraq. For instance, suicide bombings. These occurred frequently and resulted in 64 deaths from 2005-2006. This problem only intensified with improvements and innovation of bomb technology.

In an attempt to counter this, under the Obama administration, there was a significant spike of American troops sent to Afghanistan. This was set to be temporary, and in 2010, NATO set up a timeline for how long the American troops would stay. The goal of this increase in troops was not only to shield civilians from the Taliban, but to train the Afghan military to prepare for Taliban attacks, and to slowly reintegrate Afghan insurgents. Unfortunately, this strategy proved unsuccessful, with Taliban and insurgent attacks remaining incredibly high. The US, to focus its military power in other areas, withdrew in 2014 many of their troops, which officially ended their combat mission . Throughout this time, the Taliban is still at large and has left Afghanistan shattered into a state with poor economic, social, and political circumstances.

The economic, social and political situation of Afghanistan

As a consequence of all the conflict in Afghanistan, the nation's economic, social, and political situations are lackluster. In concern with the economic situation in Afghanistan, the population is rapidly growing in a nation that lacks the economic capacity to properly hold these citizens. The economic growth, according to the World Bank, has slowed to 1.8% for several reasons. Firstly, natural disasters like droughts slow down one of the bigger industries in Afghanistan, agriculture, by 0.8%. These droughts substantially lower the income of many rural households, of which supposedly 82% are negatively affected. This increases the poverty rate and places approximately 298,000 individuals affected by drought. Secondly, there is an abounding quantity of displaced citizens— approximately 1.7 million undocumented and documented Afghan refugees. Thirdly, the confidence in investments has drastically reduced due to the experimental nature of the (at the time) upcoming presidential elections, and peace talks. On the topic of confidence in Afghanistan, one of the worse consequences of these wars is that the citizens themselves have lost faith, leading to emigration or panic. Moreover, approximately 30%-48% of the population suspected that the primary reason Afghanistan couldn't progress is due to the economy. A potential reason for the confidence levels being seemingly low is the low

portion of the population that is financially secure. In 2018, 25% of the labor force was unemployed, and 80% of those who were employed had unstable or insecure jobs. Economically speaking, Afghanistan is in terrible condition, and this does not help its poor social or political status.

The most predominant social issue in Afghanistan is its discrimination against women. The Taliban's ultra-conservative policies have led to a plethora of unjust restrictions against women. These restrictions include a ban on work outside of their homes, a ban on activity outside of their homes unless accompanied by a male, requirements on what clothing they can and cannot wear and a ban on receiving education in school. Disobedience to these policies usually leads to violence. This is proven by statistics that show approximately 90% of all women in 2014 in Afghanistan had at one point in their lives, experienced domestic abuse. The literacy rate in 2015 for women was only 24%, and a staggering 80% of all suicides in Afghanistan were of women.

Along with discriminatory social issues in Afghanistan, there is also the previously mentioned refugee problem and overpopulation. The U.S. Census Bureau predicts that the population from 2019, by 2030, will rise by 45.7 million. These children will cause a high demand for jobs— to an extent that Afghanistan cannot meet. Overall, Afghanistan's social situation is weak— with intense discrimination against women, a refugee problem, and overpopulation. To reverse the state that these factors are in requires a strong political framework and government, which is another area Afghanistan is still developing in.

The government of Afghanistan's largest issue is its over-dependency. Currently, Afghanistan is very reliant on foreign aid, which prevents it from flourishing independently. The reason it's so difficult for Afghanistan's government to truly become independent is due to its diverse ethnic, sectarian, tribal populations, and distinct political ideology. Not to mention the fact that reportedly the government of Afghanistan is corrupt through all levels, and 17% of the government district has been taken over by the Taliban. It has a weak foundation in regards to law enforcement due to its high malleability to political influence. All of these factors lead to an ineffective, unfair, and unstable system of governing.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Afghanistan

Afghanistan faces a variety of social, economic, and political problems that lead to it struggling to grow. The chaos and damage that erupts with recent conflicts in combination with Afghanistan's

underdeveloped state lead to a country that needs solutions. Although organizations and other nations are attempting to alleviate the situation, the issue of the Taliban remains relentless which has intensified the violence to a point where the United Nations has called it the most deadly conflict on Earth as of November 2019. In recent news, President Ashraf Ghani has been deemed the winner of the September elections, demonstrating the quick pace at which this situation is evolving at.

The Soviet Union

In the past, the Soviet Union had an important impact on Afghanistan. During the invasion, the Union of Soviet Republics (USSR) took control over major cities and highways of Afghanistan and temporarily popularized marxism. This war resulted in the deaths of over 2 million Afghan citizens and a refugee crisis. The Soviet invasion of 1979 also influenced the formation of the Mujahideen, and therefore the Taliban. This was due to the aftermath of the war, leaving room for fluctuation in power and malleability. On top of this, the war provoked relations between Afghanistan and major nations like the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and China.

Russian Federation

In 1991, the Soviet Union dissolved, leaving behind the Russian Federation. When the US invaded Afghanistan, Russia provided great support for the Afghan Northern Alliance to overthrow the Taliban in Afghanistan. Russia, now, provides military and economic support to Afghanistan, arming the Afghan army with weapons and investing in Afghanistan. Russia took part in talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban, making them an integral part of reaching peace in the region.

Taliban

As a result of their ultra-conservative interpretation of Islamic policies and violent tendencies, the Taliban have made themselves an enemy of several nations. Their rise initially came about in 1996, soon after the Soviet invasion of 1979 had concluded. Their reign of terror lasted until 2001 when America revolted against them for their ties with Al-Qaeda, so therefore 9/11. Shortly after, the Taliban resurged in 2006 and has remained a prominent factor in Afghanistan's conflicts. They have used suicide bomb tactics and have caused massacres. No effective peace talks have been initiated or constructed with them, which makes them Afghanistan's greatest and most current threat. Recently, the United States and the Taliban agreed to a ceasefire starting on the 22nd of February. Following the development of this situation will be key to proposing solutions to the issue at hand.

Pakistan

Pakistan, due to its geographical location being next to Afghanistan, is quite involved with the situation. Allegedly, Pakistan is suspected to have an unofficial allegiance with the Taliban. Pakistan's Inter-Service-Intelligence agency claims to have aided the Mujahideen. Additionally, there have been

claims that the director of ISI ordered them to attack Jalabad to overthrow the government of Afghanistan in order to take control of the nations. Due to this, the United Nations has filed an arms embargo on Pakistan.

United States of America (USA)

The United States of America has been extremely involved in the situation of Afghanistan since the tail end of the Soviet invasion of 1978. They helped in defeating the Soviet Union by providing troops and funds. Later on, the United States of America most famously initiated the Afghan-war due to 9/11, however the reason for their presence in the region no is unclear. This war happened in three phases: phase one was neutralizing and overthrowing the Taliban, phase two was when the United States of America rebuilt core institutions of Afghanistan from 2002-2008, and phase three was when the US increased the raw number of troops greatly for a short period of time during Obama's presidency to protect citizens from the Taliban. This lasted temporarily as the US was planning to train the military of Afghanistan to make them independent. The combat mission finished in 2014 December. Subsequently, the U.S, among with NATO initiates operation freedom sentinel: a transition from a military focus to counter-terrorism and the Resolute Support Mission (RS). In brief, the objective of the RS is to train and advise the Afghan military.

United Kingdom (UK)

The United Kingdom, after the conclusion of the Anglo-Afghan Wars (1839 - 1919), released Afghanistan from British control through the Treaty of Rawalpindi. The UK was in opposition to the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. In 2001, alongside NATO, the British stationed troops in Afghanistan to combat the Taliban. The UK's involvement resulted in increased tension between the Afghan government and the Taliban. While the British were present in Afghanistan, the nation conducted several missions to suppress the Taliban and provide humanitarian aid to Afghan citizens. In 2014, the British and French withdrew their troops from Afghanistan, recognizing that a solution must come from within the nation. British troops still assist in the training of Afghan troops; however, British involvement in the region is primarily diplomatic.

China (PRC)

During the Cold War, the Chinese government officially denounced the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, severely damaging relations with the Afghan government, which at the time was controlled by Afghanistan's communist party. As the conflict continued, China provided military assistance to the Afghan guerrilla fighters, the mujahideen. When the US-led Afghan war broke out, Chinese-Afghan relations were low-key, however, after the defeat of the Taliban Chinese-Afghan relations were greatly strengthened. China has maintained economic, military, and political ties with Afghanistan. The Chinese government is Afghanistan's largest investor. China has developed Afghan infrastructure and is looking

to incorporate the nation into its Belt and Road Initiative. Additionally, China has met with Taliban representatives and shown the desire to bring peace to the region.

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)

The UN Security Council, through resolution 1401, formed the UNAMA to lay “the foundations for peace and development”, according to the UN. The mission was advocated for by the Afghan government as it stresses the importance of Afghan political independence. The UNSC has extended the organization’s mission several times, and most recently it has been renewed until September of 2020. The UNAMA headquarters is located in Kabul, and it focuses on human rights and promoting regional cooperation.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
August 1919	Afghanistan, under Emir Amanullah Khan, signs the Treaty of Rawalpindi and declares independence from British rule.
1973	Mohammad Daud takes control over a coup, overthrows the previous king, and becomes president with the help of the USSR.
1978	People’s democratic party increases in power and popularity but finds itself with severe opposition in the form of Mujahideen groups backed up by the US.
1979	USSR enters Afghanistan and backs up the pro-soviet regime.
1980	Fighting intensifies, with mujahideen groups garnering assistance and funding from the US, Pakistan, China, Iran, and Saudi Arabia.
1988	Afghanistan, USSR, the US and Pakistan signed peace accords leading to the USSR backing off.
1996	Taliban gain control over Kabul and enforce their harsh policies.
1999	UN merge groups Taliban and Al-Qaeda, imposing air sanctions and begin targeting the leader of Al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden. The Taliban begin helping Al-Qaeda.
September 2001	9/11 attacks in the US.
October 2001	The US, along with the UK, with the promised eventual help of France, Canada, Australia, and Germany send bombs against the Taliban.

December 2001	After attacks on the Taliban, Osama bin Laden manages to escape.
December 9, 2001	The Taliban regime falls.
July 2006	Taliban resurges.
2009	The US attempts to train the Afghan military.
November 2010	NATO forms a timetable for how much more military help Afghanistan will receive.
2011	30,000 American troops withdraw from Afghanistan.
2019	The Taliban and the US make progress with peace talks.
September 2019	US President Trump calls off peace talks.

Relevant UN Resolutions and Treaties

- Renewal of UNAMA, 17 September 2019 (**S/RES/2489**)
- UNSC Resolution 2405, 8 March 2018 (**S/RES/2405**)
- UNSC Resolution 2255, 21 December 2019 (**S/RES/2255**)
- Resolution on the post-2014 Resolute Support Mission, 12 December 2014 (**S/RES/2189**)
- Established a separate Taliban/Afghanistan sanctions regime, 17 June 2011 (**S/RES/1988**)
- Created UNAMA, 28 March 2002 (**S/RES/1401**)
- UN HRC Resolution 37/45, 21 February 2018 (**A/HRC/37/45**)
- UN HRC Resolution 28/48, 8 January 2015 (**A/HRC/28/48**)
- Press statement on the 28 September presidential elections, 2 October 2019 (**SC/13969**)

Possible Solutions

Peace talks between the Taliban, the Afghan government, and NATO member nations could ease tension and reduce the violence in Afghanistan. While there have been numerous attempts at reaching peace agreements in the region, the prospect of reaching peace has only recently begun to rise. Since 2018, when violence in Afghanistan began to increase, President Ashraf Ghani called for peace and a ceasefire was held later that year. The US and the Taliban held negotiations throughout 2019; however, the attacks in September prior to the election increased tension. The Taliban are open to peace, and this should be considered a very possible solution, especially at such a pivotal time in this conflict.

Combating the spread of religious extremism. Religious extremism has undoubtedly played a major role in Afghanistan, thus hindering its spread has the potential to reduce violence in the region. A helpful document on the countering of terrorism is Secretary-General Ban-Ki Moon's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. Additionally, reducing the amount of Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) from Europe and neighboring countries could help Afghanistan and the region as a whole.

Delegates may also want to address the opium crisis and provide alternatives for local farmers. The illegal opium trade serves to finance terrorist organizations; however, it also accounts for the jobs of hundreds of thousands of local farmers. To counter the opium crisis the UN and the US Agency for International Development have looked to replace the poppy production, which is used to make opium, with pistachios. Their efforts, however, have been hampered by the Taliban and weather, but a similar solution can be implemented to solve this issue.

The international community could strengthen the role of the Afghan Government to avoid complete reliance on foreign support. Political instability and corruption is a major reason for the seemingly unsuccessful attempts of outside organizations and foreign support. Delegations can call upon the international community to help encourage Afghan independence and establish a legitimate government. Although the UN Security Council Resolution 2189 shows support for the Resolute Support Mission, a NATO-led support mission in Afghanistan, delegates may look to enable Afghanistan to maintain order regional security with regional partnerships that could be considered a long term solution.

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