

SIMUN VII
UNSC Study Guide

Introduction to the Committee

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is the primary organ of the United Nations responsible for ensuring global peace and security. Under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, it has the authority to impose sanctions, authorize humanitarian access, coordinate counter-terrorism operations, and facilitate diplomatic dialogue. The Council consists of fifteen members, including five permanent members (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) and ten non-permanent members elected for two-year terms.

In the context of the Afghan crisis, the UNSC's mandate is to address urgent humanitarian needs while maintaining stability, prevent Afghanistan from becoming a sanctuary for terrorist organizations, balance national sovereignty with the protection of human rights, and engage with the de facto Taliban authorities in compliance with international law. It also oversees the implementation of previous resolutions and monitors the activities of UN agencies and NGOs operating in Afghanistan.

Agenda: The Situation in Afghanistan Post-Taliban Takeover: Security, Governance, and Humanitarian Crisis Management

Introduction to the Topic

The Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021 represented a major geopolitical shift and the collapse of two decades of international nation-building efforts. On 15 August, the Taliban entered Kabul following a rapid series of offensives across the country, which led to the flight of President Ashraf Ghani. By 30 August, U.S. forces completed their withdrawal, officially ending America's longest war. The withdrawal process, announced in May 2021, quickly resulted in the fall of key provincial capitals throughout July and August.

The international reaction was mixed: the United States froze Afghan assets worth billions of dollars, the European Union suspended most development aid but maintained humanitarian assistance, and regional countries like Pakistan, China, and Iran adopted conditional and cautious engagement strategies. The United Nations continued to enforce sanctions but simultaneously opened humanitarian corridors to prevent mass suffering.

The sudden change of power sparked widespread concerns about the rollback of women's rights, increased terrorism threats, economic collapse, and large-scale refugee movements to neighboring states.

Historical Context

Afghanistan's modern history is marked by cycles of foreign intervention, internal conflict, and fragile governance. The Soviet invasion (1979–1989) was a defining moment that triggered one of the longest and most destructive wars of the 20th century. Afghan resistance forces, known as the Mujahideen, fought against Soviet troops with significant support from the United States, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. Though the Soviets eventually withdrew in 1989, the country was left politically fragmented and heavily militarized, laying the foundation for future instability.

The civil war period (1989–2001) saw various Mujahideen factions vying for control, leading to lawlessness and the destruction of Kabul. Out of this chaos emerged the Taliban movement in 1994, which promised order through strict enforcement of Islamic law. By 1996, the Taliban had captured most of Afghanistan, including Kabul, and established the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Their regime, however, became internationally isolated due to human rights abuses and their harboring of Al-Qaeda, the group responsible for the September 11, 2001 attacks.

Following 9/11, the U.S.-led invasion (2001) overthrew the Taliban government under Operation Enduring Freedom, marking the beginning of a 20-year international presence. The U.S. and NATO (ISAF) sought to rebuild Afghanistan through counterinsurgency operations, democratic elections, and institutional reforms. Despite progress in education, women's rights, and infrastructure, insurgency persisted, fueled by corruption, weak governance, and regional interference.

Throughout these decades, the UN Security Council (UNSC) maintained involvement through sanctions, peacebuilding missions, and humanitarian coordination. Key initiatives included the Bonn Agreement (2001), which set the framework for Afghanistan's transitional government, and subsequent mandates supporting reconstruction and counter-terrorism. However, as international forces gradually withdrew, the Taliban regained momentum, culminating in their rapid return to power in August 2021. This historical trajectory underscores the deep-rooted challenges of rebuilding a nation repeatedly caught between foreign influence and internal division.

Current Situation

Afghanistan today faces overlapping crises in security, governance, and humanitarian relief. The Taliban now exercises de facto control over about 90% of the country, yet armed resistance and terrorism persist. The Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISIS-K) and Al-Qaeda remain active, with ISIS-K conducting more than 100 attacks in 2022 alone. The availability of abandoned NATO weapons has fueled instability and empowered extremist groups.

On the governance front, the Taliban has imposed strict rules, particularly on women and girls, who are banned from attending secondary schools and universities, visiting public parks, or working in many NGOs. The government lacks formal international recognition, leaving Afghanistan diplomatically isolated and economically restricted.

Economically, the nation faces a collapse: 28.3 million people require humanitarian assistance, six million face emergency-level hunger, and over a million children suffer from severe malnutrition. GDP has fallen by around 30% since 2022, and unemployment has risen above 40%. Around \$9.5 billion in Afghan assets remain frozen abroad, crippling the country's financial system. In addition, over 2.6 million Afghans are refugees in neighboring countries, while 3.2 million are displaced within Afghanistan's borders. The combination of poverty, sanctions, and political isolation has created one of the world's most severe humanitarian crises.

Impacts

The Taliban's return to power has had far-reaching impacts on Afghanistan's population and regional stability. Human rights violations have escalated, with women facing severe social and economic restrictions that amount to systemic discrimination or "gender apartheid." Ethnic minorities such as the Hazara, Tajik, and Uzbek communities have reported persecution and exclusion from governance. Religious minorities face restrictions on worship and representation.

Regionally, instability has emboldened militant groups like the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), contributing to cross-border violence and strained relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Iran has been burdened by a surge in refugees and increased drug trafficking from Afghanistan. Internationally, Afghanistan continues to produce about 80% of the world's opium, fueling global narcotics networks.

The worsening situation has also increased migration pressures toward Europe and other regions, posing a growing humanitarian and political challenge for the international community.

Key Stakeholders / Actors

Affected Communities (Civilians, Refugees, IDPs, Ex-Combatants)

The Afghan population remains at the center of the crisis. Millions have been displaced internally or forced to seek refuge in neighboring states due to ongoing conflict, persecution, and poverty. Refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) urgently need food, shelter, education, and medical aid, while former combatants require reintegration support to prevent recurring violence. According to UNHCR, over 3.2 million Afghans are internally displaced and more than 2.6 million live as refugees abroad. Their inclusion in peacebuilding and recovery efforts is essential to ensure sustainable stability and social cohesion.

UN Agencies (UNHCR, UNICEF, WHO, UNDP, OCHA, etc.)

UN agencies are central to Afghanistan's humanitarian and development response. UNHCR manages refugee protection and repatriation efforts, UNICEF focuses on child welfare and education, WHO provides health and vaccination programs, UNDP supports governance and recovery projects, and OCHA coordinates humanitarian access across all provinces. These agencies collaborate to maintain life-saving assistance in a context where humanitarian needs have reached unprecedented levels. Together, they bridge immediate relief with long-term development strategies, despite operational restrictions under Taliban rule.

National Governments and Neighboring States

Neighboring countries such as Pakistan, Iran, and Central Asian states play crucial roles in managing refugee flows, border security, and counter-terrorism efforts. Pakistan hosts millions of Afghan refugees and faces ongoing challenges related to cross-border militancy and trade. Iran has absorbed large refugee populations while voicing concerns about minority protection and water sharing. These governments, along with others in the region, are key to stabilizing Afghanistan through diplomatic engagement, humanitarian coordination, and economic partnerships.

International Justice and Oversight Mechanisms

International courts and investigative bodies promote accountability for human rights violations, gender-based violence, and terrorism. Although Afghanistan's justice system remains weak, international actors like the International Criminal Court (ICC) have opened investigations into alleged war crimes committed by all parties since 2003. Such mechanisms set legal precedents and signal that impunity will not be tolerated, even in complex conflict zones. They also reinforce the global framework for transitional justice and victim protection.

International and Local NGOs (MSF, ICRC, IRC, NRC, etc.)

Non-governmental organizations deliver frontline humanitarian assistance across Afghanistan. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) provide emergency healthcare and medical aid in conflict-affected regions. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) work on shelter, food security, and women's empowerment programs. These NGOs often operate under severe restrictions yet remain essential for reaching remote communities where government and UN presence is limited. Their efforts help maintain basic human dignity and survival amid political and economic collapse.

Previous UNSC Resolutions

The UNSC has adopted several important resolutions concerning Afghanistan's peace and security.

Resolution 2593 (2021) emphasized that Afghan territory must not be used for terrorism and called for the protection of human rights and unimpeded humanitarian access

Resolution 1267 (1999) introduced sanctions on the Taliban and Al-Qaeda

Resolution 1988 (2011) established a separate sanctions regime specifically targeting Taliban leaders

Resolution 2513 (2020) endorsed the U.S.-Taliban Doha Agreement, which laid the foundation for the eventual withdrawal of international troops

These resolutions collectively demonstrate the UNSC's evolving approach, balancing counter-terrorism objectives with the need for political dialogue and humanitarian protection. The Council continues to review compliance and coordinate international responses through special briefings and reports by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

Questions a Resolution Must Answer (QARMA)

1. How can aid reach civilians without legitimizing Taliban rule?
2. Should frozen assets be released, and under what monitoring?
3. What measures protect women's rights under Taliban restrictions?
4. How can the UNSC prevent Afghanistan from becoming a terror hub again?
5. What role should neighbors (Pakistan, Iran, Central Asia) play in refugee management?
6. Should the Taliban be isolated, conditionally engaged, or recognized?
7. How can NGOs operate under current restrictions?
8. What mechanisms can ensure accountability for human rights violations under Taliban rule?
9. How can the international community support Afghan civil society and independent media?
10. What strategies can promote long-term economic recovery and reduce dependency on foreign aid?