



## Security Council

### Description of Committee

The goal of the United Nations Security Council is to maintain international peace and justice. Countries bring complaints to the Security Council, which has the ability to take a variety of actions. First and foremost the Council recommends the parties involved resolve their disagreement or conflict using peaceful methods. The Council uses mediation, negotiation, conducts investigations or appoints special representatives to observe a situation. When a conflict becomes violent the Council can order a cease-fire, send a peace-keeping force, or in the most serious situations decide on military action, enact trade embargos, or institute economic sanctions against violating countries. Those countries that the Council must take action against may lose various rights and privileges it has as an U.N. member state. If a conflict or disagreement between two or more countries is being discussed by the U.N. Security Council or General Assembly then those countries, whether they are a member state or not, are invited to take part in the discussion but are not allowed to cast a vote. <sup>1</sup>

The Security Council is composed of 15 members. Five of these are permanent members - the United States, Great Britain, France, Russia, and China - with **veto power** and who helped found the United Nations as the major powers after World War II. The 10 rotating members are elected by the general assembly every two years by region. The rotating members for the year of 2012 are Azerbaijan, Colombia, Germany, Guatemala, India, Morocco, Pakistan, Portugal, South Africa, and Togo. <sup>2</sup>

### Topic: Poverty and Conflict in Afghanistan

Poverty and conflict act together in a vicious cycle, helping to exacerbate and worsen each other. One cannot be addressed and helped without taking action against the other. The difficulty is that poverty can be a cause of conflict, conflict can be a cause of poverty, or they both can contribute to each other. Any situation that involves both high levels of conflict and poverty is particularly difficult to resolve or address. The group that poverty and conflict affects the most is obviously the poor.



The poor often do not have the means to escape conflict and are the most likely victims of it, however taking part in conflicts as soldiers, etc. is often a viable option to make a living, which only perpetuates the conflict.<sup>3</sup> Conflict often leads to the destruction of property and other assets, as well as human life, which is detrimental to not only the economy as a whole but to individual households and families.<sup>4</sup>

Other effects of conflict that also contribute to poverty are less effective government leading to the breakdown of services like health care, welfare etc. Disease can spread and limit people's ability to provide for themselves and their families. Also, when a population's poverty is worsened, their ability to educate their youth also suffers, resulting in children not attending school, only attending a few years, or only some children in the family (usually boys) attending school, with girls often forced to stay at home altogether.<sup>5</sup> Afghanistan is a real-world example of this vicious cycle of poverty and conflict and is the main issue facing the Security Council.

## **Recent History and Background**

Afghanistan has a complicated history of invasions, occupations, and civil wars. The most relevant history is over the past 40 years and starts with the overthrowing of the Afghani monarchy. Afghanistan's king, Zahir Shah, was deposed by his cousin Mohammad Daoud in 1973, who with the help of leftist/socialist/communist factions declared Afghanistan a republic and himself president.<sup>6</sup> Daoud ruled for 5 years during which he started to crack down on communist influences in Afghanistan. This led to him and his family being killed in 1978 during the communist uprising called the Spring Rebellion.<sup>7</sup> The communist government that rose only lasted one year before being overthrown by the Prime Minister, Hafizullah Amin. He was very independent and nationalistic, viewed as a threat by the Soviet government and assassinated in 1979 while the Soviets invaded and occupied Afghanistan.<sup>8</sup> Over the next decade the Soviets killed over a million people trying to control Afghanistan while fighting **mujahideen** resistance groups.<sup>9</sup> The Soviet Army withdrew in 1989 and the resistance fighters overthrew the government and took the capital in 1992, after which the United Nations intervened to facilitate a peaceful transition of power.<sup>10</sup> After the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan was established in 1992, it was immediately fractured by infighting amongst the different mujahideen groups who were struggling for power. A virtual civil war that killed tens of thousands of civilians and further plunged the country into chaos.<sup>11</sup> It was amidst this chaos that the Taliban emerged and put Afghanistan on the course that it is on today.

The Taliban first arose in northern Afghanistan after the withdrawal of the Soviet Army but rose to prominence in southern Afghanistan in the Pashtun areas bordering Pakistan in 1994.<sup>12</sup> They gained traction and popularity by promising peace, stability, security, and justice via a strict radical version of **sharia** (Islamic) law. They became popular with citizens as trade and business improved under the peaceful conditions.<sup>13</sup> Over the next four years the Taliban slowly spread its influence over Afghanistan, taking control of the capital, Kabul in 1996 and by 1998 controlled





the vast majority of the country.<sup>14</sup> The Taliban ruled Afghanistan from then until the U.S. invasion in 2001. During that time they were often criticized for human rights violations, particularly their treatment of women. After the U.S. invasion the Taliban was deposed and forced to flee, but in the last few years has grown strong again and fierce fighting has occurred in the south and west of Afghanistan where the Taliban was the strongest as they try to regain their lost territory. The Taliban has always been strongest in the Pashtun tribal areas in the south and west of

Afghanistan on the border with Pakistan. Some speculate that the Taliban is a product of the Pakistani government. While this has been repeatedly denied, many of the Taliban's initial recruits were in fact Pakistani.<sup>15</sup> While the Taliban was in power, Pakistan was one of the few countries to recognize it diplomatically as the legitimate government of Afghanistan and was one of the Taliban's closest allies.<sup>16</sup> When the Taliban was overthrown they fled into the mountainous regions on the border between the two countries and into Pakistan, taking refuge in tribal areas there where the government has little to no control.<sup>17</sup> It is from this area that the Taliban has resurged, conducting attacks not only in Afghanistan but in also in Pakistan which has led the Pakistani government to sour towards them.<sup>18</sup> As the U.S. has begun its drawdown process in Afghanistan and is turning over power to the Afghan government, talks have begun between the Afghan government and the Taliban to work towards peace in order to stop the constant fighting.

## Current Situation

When the Taliban rose to power they were welcomed with open arms by the civilian population as they brought security and peace to the regions they controlled, allowing the population to flourish for the first time in years. However, over time this changed as the country stagnated, the initial economic success stalled, and the corruption that the Taliban initially stamped out returned. This resulted in increasing poverty and **poppy** farming in the country over the time of the Taliban's reign. However, once the U.S. invaded in 2001 opium farming started to increase dramatically, reaching an all-time high in 2007. Afghanistan today produces more than 90% of the world's opium.<sup>19</sup>

Afghanistan is a primarily rural population that relies upon **subsistence farming** to provide for themselves and their families. However, this is very difficult because only 12% of Afghanistan



is arable land and very few farmers own enough land to provide for their families, let alone turn a profit.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the only crop profitable enough to support their families is opium. The Taliban supported and encouraged farmers growing poppy plants during its bid for power in the 1990s as the profits helped fund their war and their regime afterwards.<sup>21</sup> Since the overthrow of their last king in the 1970s, Afghans have not had the chance or ability to move back from opium farming to subsistence farming or to develop more stable and effective farming techniques. The constant war and insecurity resulted in poor governance and corruption for almost thirty years during which Afghans have had little to no help from their government to improve the nation's infrastructure and production.

In the wake of the U.S. invasion and deposing of the Taliban, poppy farming rose because of the destabilization of the entire country. There was little to no governance during the transfer of power because due to tribal disagreements and this meant that rural farmers had no help. On top of this,



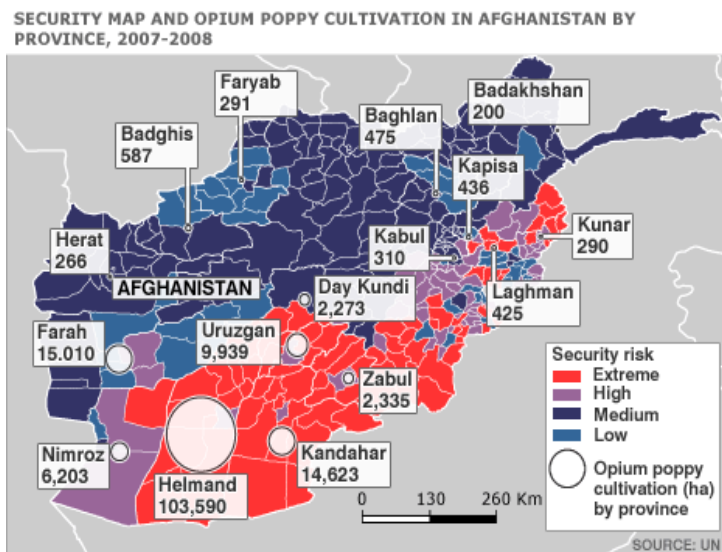
during the war significant amounts of **infrastructure** was lost further hampering the Afghani people's ability to provide for themselves. Services like irrigation and access to water are essential in such a poor farming area. Opium production continued to rise as U.S. and NATO forces fought a literal turf war against the retreating Taliban and other militant groups, each fighting for a hill or a valley at a time. Farmers' fields and land became battlefields to be taken or lost. When the U.S. took control of a village or areas with farms they encouraged farmers to stop growing poppy and often tried to provide them with tools to grow food or other cash crops to survive. However, when the Taliban would retake that area they would pay or help farmers to revert back to poppy farming as a way to help fund their own campaign.

Not all Afghani farmers are poppy farmers nor is all of Afghanistan's land being used to growing poppy. Only a small percentage of Afghani farmers and their land actually grow poppy, but the profits from this help fund the militant groups and keeps the war going, which only further exacerbates the problems of honest farmers trying to stay out of poverty.<sup>22</sup> (a little repetitive of above info)





In the initial phase of the war in Afghanistan the U.S., NATO, and **Northern Alliance** forces were able to push the Taliban almost entirely out of Afghanistan after a few years of vicious fighting. However, the Taliban was able to regain its strength on the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan and in the mid-2000s began a renewed offensive to regain Afghanistan. The war reached a fever pitch in the late 2000s and the Taliban was able to regain vast tracts of land and spread its influence in even more, which was the primary reason for the troop surge there at the end of the decade. Poppy growing saw a positive relationship with the level of conflict in the country with the height of poppy growth coinciding with the fiercest fighting while the Taliban was making its major push back into Afghanistan.<sup>23</sup> Since the surge and the U.S. once again taking control of a vast majority of Afghanistan with only small pockets of stubborn resistance, the U.S. and international forces and agencies have done their best to give farmers the tools to make a living without resorting to poppy growing and poppy production has decreased significantly. However, it is still a problem.



The high level of corruption in Afghanistan is another problem that only makes the poverty and conflict even worse. When the Taliban first came to power they rooted out corruption in the government as they promised the people.<sup>24</sup> However, the corruption soon began to creep back in and towards the end of the 1990s-until right before the U.S. invasion-corruption was at an all-time high in the Taliban government and was the number one problem identified by the people.<sup>25</sup> The new Afghani

government under (full name/title)Karzai in Kabul has also been identified as very corrupt, which has strained U.S. and international relations with Afghanistan at times. This corruption is the primary obstacle facing progress in Afghanistan towards starting to lift their population out of poverty and subsistence farming. The citizens are unhappy about it which only gives the Taliban further traction. However, with the current peace talks with the Taliban and the imminent U.S. withdrawal in 2014, Afghanistan should finally be at peace for the first time in decades it will have the chance to begin to develop.

## International Action in Afghanistan

The Security Council in 2001 authorized the U.S. and its allies to overthrow the Taliban government and take action against al-Qaeda.<sup>26</sup> They also mandated the creation of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to assist in supporting the transitional Afghani



government and securing the area around the capital of Kabul.<sup>27</sup> The intention was to provide an international security force whose sole mission was to help support the Afghani government while the U.S. and NATO forces worked to remove the Taliban and al-Qaeda from the country.<sup>28</sup> In 2003 the Security Council handed command of the ISAF in Afghanistan over to NATO and expanded their mandate to not just the area around Kabul but to the entirety of Afghanistan.<sup>29</sup>

The Security Council also established the United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA), an organization to control and handle all forms of aid and reconstruction efforts.<sup>30</sup> The main criticism of Security Council actions in Afghanistan has been the focus upon the USAF and military actions at the expense of development and reconstruction efforts, which have shown little progress.<sup>31</sup>

Afghanistan is a part of the World Bank Group, which has a Bank in Afghanistan and has provided aid to Afghanistan since 2002.<sup>32</sup> The **World Bank** manages the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund which has collected over \$5 billion in donations, the largest fund the World Bank manages for any country in the world.<sup>33</sup> The World Bank has been one of the most involved players in helping to stabilize and reconstruct Afghanistan.

These are just the primary UN efforts in Afghanistan; there are numerous other UN agencies that are present and working in Afghanistan that are not addressed here. For information on additional agencies involved, go to: <http://www.undp.org.af/Partners/unagencies.htm>.

### IDEAS TO CONSIDER

- Poverty and conflict go hand-in-hand so a solution must address both problems. Solving one does not automatically solve the other.
- Poverty is not just about money. Education, health, culture, society, and numerous other factors can contribute and affect it.
- The situation in Afghanistan is not black and white, but numerous shades of grey. Farmers do not want to grow poppy, but when faced with poverty will do whatever it takes to take care of their family.
- Afghanistan is still a dominantly tribal country and even during the most peaceful times has not had a powerful central government. The tribes hold the real power in Afghanistan and any solutions must be acceptable to a wide variety of tribal nations who often do not get along with each other.
- Corruption is a serious problem in Afghanistan even among the U.S.-backed Afghani government. This must be addressed for real development to occur.
- With the draw-down of U.S. and NATO troops in Afghanistan, resulting in pull-out in 2014, any decision will feature the Afghan government and security forces in the lead role and as such the Security Council must act in concert with them.



## GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- What kind of economy does Afghanistan have, how do most of them make a living, and what can be done to help them develop so that they don't have to grow poppy?
- What role does the Taliban have in the opium trade and how do they interact with the Afghan people?
- What is/are the Afghan government's greatest challenges? What must they do to gain the Afghan people's support and trust?
- How can the Afghan government attain peace in Afghanistan in order to stop the never-ending conflict while including as many parties (tribes, militant groups, etc) in the peace process?
- Should any additional military action be taken towards the militant groups along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, or against the remnants of the Taliban?
- How can the Security Council act in concert with other UN agencies?

## TERMS AND CONCEPTS (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

**Veto Power:** When voting on any important matters, the Security Council must have Great Power Unanimity, meaning all five of the permanent members must vote for the resolution. Simplified, all it takes is one of the five permanent members to disagree and "veto" the resolution and it will fail.

–U.N. Security Council: Members

**Mujahideen:** Muslim guerrilla fighters, especially in Afghanistan and Iran.

**Sharia Law:** The code of law derived from the Koran and from the teachings and example of Mohammed. Under Islam there is no separation between religion and law and some countries use it as their official judicial authority.

**Poppy:** A plant from which the opium (a narcotic) is extracted from.

**Subsistence Farming:** Farming whose products are intended to provide for the basic needs of the farmer, with little surplus for marketing

**Infrastructure:** The fundamental facilities and systems serving a country, city, or area, such as transportation and communication systems, power plants, and schools; the basic, underlying framework or features of a system or organization.

**Northern Alliance:** A multi-ethnic alliance in Afghanistan who practice a moderate form of Islam and are united in their opposition to the Taliban.

**World Bank:** An international bank established in 1944 to help member nations reconstruct and develop, especially by guaranteeing loans: a specialized agency of the UN.



## Additional Resources

**U.N. Security Council: Background** and **U.N. Security Council: Members:** Different sections from the U.N. Security Council website. A great source for all kinds of information on the Security Council and its resolutions/workings.

**MICROCON Research Paper:** Examines poverty and conflict on a theoretical micro-level. Focuses mainly on their effects economically but does have some valuable insight in its introduction and first couple pages.

**Afghanistan's Turbulent History:** A BBC article on the modern history of Afghanistan from the end of its monarchy in the 1970s to the present day. Would recommend all BBC articles and productions.

**Who Are The Taliban:** Another BBC article detailing the history of the Taliban, very useful in talking about the Taliban in plain terms in a way that makes sense.

**Afghanistan Drug Market:** A small article detailing the drug market in Afghanistan, how it works, production, etc.

**Narco-Terrorism in Afghanistan:** A great and simple overview of the history of opium and the drug's role in Afghanistan.

**Finding an Alternative to Illicit Opium Production in Afghanistan and Elsewhere:** Talks about the drug problem in Afghanistan, its role in the many conflicts in Afghanistan's history, and possible solutions/issues that need to be addressed.

**U.N. Involvement in Afghanistan:** Gives a brief overview of U.N. involvement in Afghanistan, focusing primarily on the Security Council and ISAF.

**About ISAF:** Gives a more specific history of the ISAF in Afghanistan and its purpose/mission.

**Afghanistan Country Overview- 2012:** The World Bank's website gives an overview of its actions and projects country by country, including Afghanistan. A great resource for not only World Bank information but it also has details about other U.N. agencies involved.

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### **Images:**

- Image 1: Map of Afghanistan. Google Images. <http://www.afghana.com/Map/Maps.htm>
- Image 2: Poppy Field in Afghanistan. Google Images.  
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