



General Assembly First Committee Topic Background Guide
Topic 3: The Situation in Afghanistan¹

21 October 2011

Afghanistan poses a major challenge to the General Assembly First Committee (GA-1), for two reasons. First, the situation in Afghanistan is very insecure – politically, militarily, and economically. Second, the Security Council has already passed a number of resolutions concerning Afghanistan's security. As explained in the committee history, this means that GA-1 cannot pass any resolutions that would cover the same issues as the Security Council resolutions or infringe upon what the Security Council has decided. Nevertheless, this leaves the GA-1 with a great deal of leeway to address vital security issues, especially how the UN can help the Afghan government and people when US and other UN member states involved in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) begin to leave the country in late 2011.

History and Current Events

To understand and address the security situation in Afghanistan, it is vital to understand the history of Afghanistan and the current situation in the country.

A Short History of Afghanistan

Since becoming independent from the British in 1919 and joining the UN in 1946, Afghanistan has experienced a number of tumultuous events, including King Zahir Shah's "experiment with democracy" from 1964-1973; a military coup in 1973 that resulted in the creation of a parliamentary democracy; and Marxist coups in 1978 and 1979 followed by an insurgency and Soviet intervention. At first, the USSR provided support to the new government. Later, when the government refused to take Soviet advice, the USSR toppled the government, installed a different leader, and invaded the country.² In 1980, the Security Council met to discuss (but due to the Soviet veto never passed) a draft resolution condemning Soviet actions.³

From 1980 to 1984, although the USSR had as many as 120,000 troops in Afghanistan, it was able to subdue only 20% of the country. According to the US Department of State:

An overwhelming majority of Afghans opposed the communist regime, either actively or passively. Afghan freedom fighters (mujahidin) made it almost impossible for the regime to maintain a system of local government outside major urban centers. Poorly armed at first, in 1984 the mujahidin began receiving substantial assistance in the form of weapons and training from the U.S. and other outside

¹ This document was written by Karen Ruth Adams, faculty advisor, with contributions from Jeffrey Frediani (2008), David Knobel (2008), and Jessica McCutcheon (2011). Copyright 2011 by Karen Ruth Adams.

² US Department of State, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, "Background Note: Afghanistan," October 2008, available at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5380.htm>

³ UN News Centre, "Afghanistan & the United Nations," available at <http://www.un.org/News/dh/latest/afghan/un-afghan-history.shtml>.

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powers. ... By the mid-1980s, the tenacious Afghan resistance movement--aided by the United States, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and others--was exacting a high price from the Soviets, both militarily within Afghanistan and by souring the U.S.S.R.'s relations with much of the Western and Islamic world.⁴

In August 1984, the UN again tried to intervene, sponsoring talks among the US, Soviet, Afghan and Pakistani governments at the UN Secretariat in Geneva. But an end to the war was not negotiated until 1988, when "the Governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan, with the United States and Soviet Union serving as guarantors, signed an agreement settling the major differences between them." This agreement, known as the Geneva Accords, "called for U.S. and Soviet noninterference in the internal affairs of Pakistan and Afghanistan, the right of refugees to return to Afghanistan without fear of persecution or harassment, and ... full Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan by February 15, 1989."⁵

The ten-year war devastated Afghanistan. According to the US Department of State, from 1979-1989, "an estimated one million Afghan lives were lost."⁶ In addition, approximately 4.5 million refugees fled the country. Of those, about three million went to Pakistan, and 1.5 million went to Iran. Afghanistan's economy was at a standstill. The war destroyed schools, businesses, and industrial areas, as well as irrigation projects that moved water to arid regions throughout the country.

After 1989, the war continued despite Soviet withdrawal. According to the State Department, "the mujahidin were party neither to the negotiations nor to the 1988 agreement and, consequently, refused to accept the terms of the accords." Thus there was "a new round of internecine fighting ... between the various militias, which had coexisted only uneasily during the Soviet occupation. With the demise of their common enemy, the militias' ethnic, clan, religious, and personality differences surfaced, and the civil war continued."⁷

From 1989-1994, "the country sank even further into anarchy." Different parts of the territory were held by different mujahidin groups and warlords. On March 19, 1992, then Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, called for an end to the "human tragedy" that had been occurring in Afghanistan for more than a decade, while at the same time noting that the country had been "subjected to total devastation."⁸

The civil war continued until 1999, when the Taliban -- which had captured southern city of Kandahar from a local warlord in 1994 and slowly expanded its influence over the country -- controlled about 90% of Afghanistan. Members of the Taliban are largely from the southern Pashtun ethnic group, which ruled Afghanistan for hundreds of years and today accounts for about 40% of Afghanistan's population. According to Ahmed Rashid, a noted Pakistani journalist,

a handful of Taliban had fought the Soviet Red Army in the 1980s, more had fought the regime of President Najibullah who had hung on to power for four years after Soviet troops withdrew from Pakistan in 1989, but the vast majority had never fought the communists and were young Koranic students, drawn

⁴ US Department of State, "Background Note: Afghanistan."

⁵ US Department of State, "Background Note: Afghanistan." Geriant Hughes "The Soviet-Afghan War, 1978-1989: An Overview" *Defence Studies*, Vol 8, No 3, (September 2008), pp. 326-350.

⁶ US Department of State, "Background Note: Afghanistan."

⁷ US Department of State, "Background Note: Afghanistan."

⁸ United Nations "Call for an end to Afghanistan's 'human tragedy'" *United Nations Chronicle*, Vol 29, No 2, (June 1992), p. 36.

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from hundreds of *madrassas* (Islamic theology schools) that had been set up in Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan.⁹

The Taliban rose to power in reaction to the devastation and anarchy of the civil war. In addition to establishing order, however, the Taliban “implemented an extreme interpretation of Islam--based upon the rural Pashtun tribal code--on the entire country and committed massive human rights violations,” especially against women, girls, and Afghan minority populations.¹⁰ According to Rashid,

the Taliban had also implemented an extreme interpretation of the Sharia or Islamic law that appalled many Afghans and the Muslim world. The Taliban had closed down all girls’ schools and women were rarely permitted to venture out of their homes, even for shopping. The Taliban had banned every conceivable kind of entertainment including music, TV, videos, cards, kite-flying, and most sports and games. The Taliban’s brand of Islamic fundamentalism was so extreme that it appeared to denigrate Islam’s message of peace and tolerance and its capacity to live with other religious and ethnic groups. They were to inspire an new extremist form of fundamentalism across Pakistan and Central Asia, which refused to compromise with traditional Islamic values, social structures, or existing state systems.¹¹

Criminals and opponents of the regime were presumed guilty, expected to defend themselves without legal assistance, and were frequently executed in public. Women were stoned to death, and thieves had their limbs amputated.¹²

Al Qaeda, 9/11 and the 2001 War in Afghanistan

Despite international condemnation of the Taliban’s many human rights violations, international military forces did not enter Afghanistan until after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Center, which killed 2,974 people, mostly American civilians. The September 11 attacks were carried out by the Al Qaeda organization of Osama bin Laden, a citizen of Saudi Arabia who participated in the mujahidin fight against the Soviets in the 1980s and who operated terrorist training camps in southern Afghanistan beginning in the 1990s. After the Al Qaeda bombings in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, the Security Council imposed sanctions on the Taliban to encourage it to expel bin Laden and his group, but the Taliban refused. After the September 11 attacks, the Taliban again refused to expel Al Qaeda, so the US and its “coalition of the willing,” which included a number of Afghan warlords wishing to retake their territory, attacked the capital city of Kabul, forcing the Taliban to flee.¹³ This military operation was not explicitly authorized by the Security Council but is generally considered to have been in accordance with the UN Charter, which authorizes the use of force in self-defense.¹⁴

⁹ Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (New Haven, NY: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 1-2.

¹⁰ US Department of State, “Background Note: Afghanistan.”

¹¹ Rashid, *Taliban*, p. 2.

¹² Rashid, *Taliban*, pp. 2-5.

¹³ US Department of State, “Background Note: Afghanistan.” See also Michael R. Gordon, “A Month in a Difficult Battlefield: Assessing U.S. War Strategy,” *New York Times*, November 8, 2001. David Rohde with Terence Neilan, “Northern Alliance Moves into Kabul,” *New York Times*, November 13, 2001. Seymour M. Hersh, “The Getaway: Questions surround a secret Pakistani airlift,” *New Yorker*, January 28, 2002, available at <http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2002/01/28/020128fa> FACT

¹⁴ “Charter of the United Nations,” Article 51, available at <http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/>

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According to the *Los Angeles Times*, which reviewed thousands of reports of civilian casualties from international newspapers and wire services, approximately 1,200 civilians died during the bombing campaign of October 2001-February 2002.¹⁵ According to the *Guardian* newspaper from London, 10,000-20,000 civilians died due to indirect effects of the bombing such as displacement and shortages.¹⁶

At the end of the war, Human Rights Watch assessed the situation as follows: “The demise of the Taliban brought with it the immediate prospect of greater personal freedoms and opportunities for women. It also portended a return to the political fragmentation that marked the country before the Taliban's rise, and the reemergence of many of the same warlords whose fighting and disregard for international humanitarian law devastated Kabul between 1992 and 1996.”¹⁷

The Karzai Government, ISAF, and UNAMA

In 2001, after the US- led coalition ousted the Taliban government from control in Kabul, the UN sponsored a conference in Bonn, Germany, where Afghan factions opposed to the Taliban created an interim government, the Afghan Transitional Authority (ATA) with Hamid Karzai as chairman. The Bonn Conference also established the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to protect Karzai and the ATA in Kabul.

In 2002, Security Council Resolution 1401 established the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to support the Bonn Agreement and coordinate the UN's peace and stability operations in the country. The mandate of UNAMA is renewed annually.¹⁸

In June 2002, a nationwide "Loya Jirga" (Grand Council) named Karzai president of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan (TISA), which drafted a constitution that was ratified by a Constitutional Loya Jirga on January 4, 2004. Democratic presidential elections were held in October 2004. According to the US State Department, “more than 8 million Afghans voted, 41% of whom were women.” Karzai was the winner.¹⁹

In November 2009, Karzai was announced the winner of another presidential election so is now in the midst of another five-year term. However, according to the UN, that election was marked by widespread fraud, as was a parliamentary election in 2010. As a result, the government has more or less ground to a halt, with offices such as judgeships and heads of ministries (departments) left open.²⁰

¹⁵ David Zucchino, “The Americans . . . They Just Drop Their Bombs and Leave,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 2 2002, <http://web.archive.org/web/20020604082553/http://www.latimes.com/templates/misc/printstory.jsp?slug=la-060202bombs>.

¹⁶ Jonathan Steele, “Forgotten victims,” *Guardian*, May 20 2002, available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2002/may/20/afghanistan.comment>

¹⁷ Human Rights Watch, “World Report 2002: Afghanistan,” available at <http://hrw.org/wr2k2/asia1.html>

¹⁸ United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA), “About UNAMA,” available at <http://www.unama-afg.org/about/overview.htm>. Richard J. Ponzio, “Transforming political authority: UN democratic peacebuilding in Afghanistan,” *Global Governance* 13:2 (April-June 2007), 255-276, available at http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_7055/is_2/ai_n28434591.

¹⁹ US Department of State, “Background Note: Afghanistan.”

²⁰ “Afghanistan,” *New York Times*. See also “Peter W. Galbraith,” *New York Times*, http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/people/g/peter_galbraith/index.html?scp=1-spot&sq=peter%20galbraith&st=cse

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Expansion and Planned Departure of the ISAF Forces

Initially ISAF was just a small peacekeeping force whose job was to provide security to the Karzai government in the capital city of Kabul. Over time, ISAF's job has expanded. In 2003, at the US's request, NATO took over ISAF command from the UN and began to operate in the provinces. By October 2006, ISAF commanded international military forces that were fighting local warlords and Taliban insurgents throughout Afghanistan.²¹

As of October 2011, the ISAF force in Afghanistan numbered 130,638 troops from 49 NATO and other countries. Of those, the largest number of troops came from the US (90,000), the UK (9,500), Germany (5,000), Italy (3,952) France (3,932), and Poland (2,580).²² The commander of ISAF is US Army General John R. Allen, who reports to US Marine General James N. Mattis, the commander of US Central Command.

According to the US Department of Defense, as of September 2011, the US had an additional 8,000 troops stationed in Afghanistan and operating under direct US command in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), the counter-terrorism operation begun in 2001.²³ Originally, most of the US forces in Afghanistan operated under OEF.²⁴ But after ISAF came under US command, most US troops began to operate under ISAF.

From 2009 to 2010, the number of US troops in Afghanistan increased by approximately 30,000. President Obama authorized this increase to respond to the large and rising number of severe attacks by the Taliban and local warlords on the people and government of Afghanistan, as well as on international forces, between 2002 and 2009.²⁵ Initially Obama's plan was to begin withdrawing troops in the summer of 2011. But due to the security situation, the draw-down will not start until the end of 2011, and it will not end until 2014. By 2012, about the same number of ISAF forces will be in the country as were there before the 2009 surge.²⁶ This is why it is important for the GA-1 to consider how the UN can help to stabilize and secure the situation in the country.

The Main Security Threats: Afghan Government Weakness and Taliban Strength

There are two main reasons that the US draw-down has been delayed. First, the US and NATO members who contribute forces to ISAF do not want to remove their forces from the country until Afghan army is strong enough to keep the Taliban from retaking control of the government and territory. Thus, for almost a decade, ISAF and NATO have been working with the Afghan government to build and train domestic security forces. Specifically, ISAF has established 12 specialty schools to train Afghan service members, provided equipment assistance to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), and built a network of Afghan trainers to prepare Afghan citizens to serve in the ANSF. As a result of these efforts, ANSF forces now stand at 307,000 members. However, there are many

²¹ ISAF, "History," *International Security Assistance Force*, available at <http://www.isaf.nato.int/history.html>

²² North Atlantic Treaty Alliance, "International Security Assistance Force: Troop Contributing Nations," October 2011, available at <http://www.isaf.nato.int/troop-numbers-and-contributions/index.php> (click on "placemat").

²³ Ian S. Livingston and Michael O'Hanlon, "Afghanistan Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction and Security in Post 9/11 Afghanistan," Brookings Institution, 29 September 2011, p. 4, available at <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/Programs/FP/afghanistan%20index/index.pdf>

²⁴ Congressional Research Service, "US Forces in Afghanistan," *CRS Report for Congress*, July 15, 2008, available at <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RS22633.pdf>

²⁵ In October 2008, the British ambassador to Afghanistan predicted in a leaked diplomatic cable that US and NATO efforts to stabilize the country would fail. Mark Mazzetti and Eric Schmitt, "U.S. Study Is Said to Warn of Crisis in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, October 8, 2008, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/09/world/asia/09afghan.html>

²⁶ "Afghanistan," *New York Times*.

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concerns about the discipline and training of these forces, as well as the extent to which they have been infiltrated by the Taliban.²⁷

The second reason that US and ISAF withdrawals have been delayed is that, despite the ISAF buildup, the Taliban has continued to be able to carry out attacks on Afghan citizens, government officials, the Afghan military and police, and ISAF forces. According to many military experts, the Taliban's ability to continue operating in Afghanistan is predictable because, in general, the more foreign forces are in a country, the more opposition there is to those forces unless they are very careful to protect the lives and the livelihoods of the local population. When foreign forces are not careful or cause unintended harm – and when they are not expected to stay long -- it is easier for insurgents to obtain assistance from the local population.²⁸

As ISAF forces have cleared Taliban forces from Afghan cities, they have caused civilian casualties that have angered the Afghan government and population. President Karzai, who is widely disliked, is never more popular among his citizens than when he is criticizing ISAF forces for killing innocent civilians. Photos and videos of these casualties receive widespread press and are often accompanied by ISAF denials of the events.²⁹

According to UNAMA, 2011 has been the worst year for civilian casualties since 2009, with 1,462 Afghan civilians killed in the first six months (about 20 people per day). According to UNAMA, 80% of civilian casualties are caused by insurgents, and 20% are caused by Afghan and ISAF forces fighting the insurgents.³⁰ UNAMA describes recent civilian casualties as follows:

Almost half of civilian deaths are due to Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and suicide attacks alone, which have become more deadly and more ruthless in the way they are carried out. IEDs and suicide bombs were used against hospitals, against funerary processions or sites (as with Thursday's attack against the funeral of President Karzai's brother), and at least once, against a mosque. In one incident described in the report, insurgents gave an 8-year-old girl a package to carry toward a police vehicle, and then blew her up when she got near. Such tactics are abhorrent not only under international humanitarian law but also under Islamic law.³¹

UNAMA's 2011 report also notes the large number of civilians assassinated in recent months.³² Assassination is a common tactic in insurgencies. By killing prominent community members such as government officials, teachers, and clerics who oppose their cause, insurgents threaten other people with a similar fate if they do not assist the insurgency.³³

²⁷ "Afghanistan," *New York Times*. See also Livingston and O'Hanlon, "Afghanistan Index," p. 6.

²⁸ Nathaniel C. Fick and John A. Nagl, "Counterinsurgency Field Manual: Afghanistan Edition," *Foreign Policy*, 5 January 2009. See also Seymour M. Hersh, "The Other War: Why Bush's Afghanistan problem won't go away," *New Yorker*, April 12, 2004, available at http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2004/04/12/040412fa_fact

²⁹ Erica Gaston, "The War over Afghan civilian casualties," *Foreign Policy*, AfPak channel, 8 March 2011, available at http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/03/08/the_war_over_afghan_civilian_casualties

³⁰ Erica Gaston, "Afghanistan's civilians in the crosshairs," *Foreign Policy*, AfPak channel, 14 July 2011, available at http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/07/14/afghanistans_civilians_in_the_crosshairs

³¹ Gaston, "Afghanistan's civilians in the crosshairs."

³² Gaston, "Afghanistan's civilians in the crosshairs."

³³ Fick and Nagl, "Counterinsurgency Field Manual."

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Despite increased ISAF troop levels, as well as the recent killing of Osama bin Laden and other al Qaeda operatives by US and ISAF forces, the number of attacks in Afghanistan this year has grown. The week of June 9, 2011, saw the largest number of attacks in a single week since the surge began.³⁴ Moreover, insurgents have become active in normally quiet provinces.³⁵

Thus this year has not only seen a surge in civilian deaths. The number of Afghan and ISAF forces that have been hurt and killed has also increased. In the 10 years since the beginning of the US-led war against the Taliban in October 2001 the end of September 2011, 2,231 US and ISAF forces have died in hostilities, and 14,239 US forces have been wounded. Data are not available for Afghan forces for the same period of time, but it has been estimated that 961 Afghan troops were killed in 2010 alone.³⁶

One of the most important things to know about insurgencies is that insurgents do not have to win any military battles in order to win the war. Instead, they simply have to wear down their opponent's will to continue fighting. This is why ISAF forces are determined to keep some forces in Afghanistan for a few more years. But will three more years be enough time for the Afghan government and army to get their act together and keep the Taliban at bay? Over the last several years, experts have become more pessimistic on this score. This is because the Taliban is able to operate in and from the North Waziristan region of Pakistan as well as in Afghanistan – and receives considerable and apparently increasing assistance from Pakistan's Internal Security Services (ISI) for its attacks on the Afghan government and ISAF forces.³⁷

Among the most powerful branches of the Taliban is the Haqqani network, which was originally allied with the CIA against the Soviets but which, since the fall of the Taliban during the US-led war in 2001, has carried out attacks on the Afghans and ISAF forces. It is likely the Haqqani network was responsible for a high-profile attack on the US embassy and NATO headquarters in Kabul in September 2011.³⁸

Because Taliban forces are able to hide, regroup, and obtain supplies in Pakistan, there is a good chance that the Taliban is just fighting hard enough now to demoralize ISAF so that foreign forces will depart. Then, when they do so, the Taliban is likely to try to retake control of the Afghan government. This kind of waiting strategy is common to insurgencies and has been used with success in many anti-colonial wars and revolutions, including Mao's 1949 communist revolution in China.³⁹

This is why the US military sees the gains achieved against the Taliban insurgency as "fragile" and "reversible." In addition, it is why the US government and its ISAF allies have begun to try a new approach:

³⁴ Livingston and O'Hanlon, "Afghanistan Index," p. 10.

³⁵ Kenneth Katzman, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy," Congressional Research Service, September 22, 2011, p. 26 Available at <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf>

³⁶ Livingston and O'Hanlon, "Afghanistan Index," pp. 11, 13-14.

³⁷ On the situation in Pakistan, see Karen Ruth Adams, "The Situation in Pakistan," Security Council Topic Guide, Montana Model UN, October 2010, available at <http://www.cas.umt.edu/munold/2010/hstopicg.html>

³⁸ "Haqqani Network," *New York Times*, updated 13 October 2011, available at http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/h/haqqani_network/index.html?scp=9&sq=pakistan%20isi%20haqqani&st=cse

³⁹ Fick and Nagl, "Counterinsurgency Field Manual."

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negotiating with the Taliban, Pakistan, and the Haqqani network. They have taken this approach for two reasons. First, the only way for the war to end without a full-scale Taliban takeover of the Afghan government is for there to be a negotiated settlement between the Afghan government and the Taliban. Second, the only easy way for US and ISAF forces to depart Afghanistan is through Pakistan. Without a negotiated settlement, US and ISAF forces could come under attack while they are departing. Thus the US and its NATO and regional allies have begun to try a new approach emphasizing negotiated settlement and the reintegration and reconciliation of insurgents.⁴⁰

Thus far, efforts in this direction have been disappointing. The Afghan High Peace Council was established on September 5, 2010 to aid in the reintegration, reconciliation, and negotiations with insurgent groups. However, a major setback in the reconciliation process occurred on September 20, 2011 with the assassination of leader of the council, Burhanuddin Rabbani. Before this, there was hope that 2011 talks between Taliban representatives and the Afghan government would result in greater stability.⁴¹ However, with increased insurgent activity and the assassination of Rabbani there is growing concern that the Taliban will attempt to reexert its influence as the US and ISAF begin to withdraw. This concern has been heightened by the fact that Iran has begun to cultivate greater and more extensive relations with Taliban leaders. According to the U.S. State Department, "Iran's Qods Force provided training to the Taliban in Afghanistan on small unit tactics, small arms, explosives, and indirect fire weapons, such as mortars, artillery, and rockets."⁴² In addition, Iran recently held a meeting with the Taliban. Thus the stability of Afghanistan and the security of Afghan citizens as US and ISAF withdraw is questionable.

Government Corruption and Human Rights Abuses

According to the *New York Times*, "Transparency International, an advocacy organization that tracks government corruption around the globe, ranks Afghanistan as the world's third most corrupt country, behind Somalia and Myanmar."⁴³ Corruption can take many forms but is usually associated with bribes and other "side payments" for official favors. According to the US and other ISAF member states, the Afghan government engages in many forms of corruption, including diverting foreign aid to personal bank accounts.⁴⁴ As noted, the 2009 presidential election and the 2010 parliamentary elections prompted widespread accusations of election fraud.⁴⁵

Allegations of human rights violations by the police, military, and government officials have also plagued the Afghan government. In 2010, the US State Department accused the Afghan government of a number of human rights deficiencies, "including extra-judiciary killings, torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, restriction on freedom of the press, limits on freedom of assembly, official corruption, violence against women, sexual abuse of children, child labor, and abuse of workers' rights."⁴⁶

Together, government corruption and human rights abuses have weakened the support of the Afghan people for the Karzai government. As a result, many observers wonder if the government will be able to maintain

⁴⁰ Katzman, "Afghanistan," p. 42.

⁴¹ Katzman, "Afghanistan," p. 42.

⁴² U.S. Department of State, "Chapter 3: State Sponsors of Terrorism," *Country Reports of Terrorism 2010*, August 18, 2011 available at <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2010/170260.htm>.

⁴³ "Afghanistan," *New York Times*.

⁴⁴ Katzman, "Afghanistan," p. 11.

⁴⁵ "Afghanistan," *New York Times*.

⁴⁶ Katzman, "Afghanistan," p. 12.

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legitimacy, security, and order when international forces withdraw. According to Middle East specialist Kenneth Katzman, some US officials “say that Afghan governance is lagging to the point where the Afghans will not be able to hold U.S./NATO gains on their own and insurgents will be able to regroup as soon as international forces thin out.”⁴⁷

Opium Production and Trade

The explosion of opium poppy production is another major security concern. Under the Taliban, poppy production was illegal. Since 2001, however, warlords have encouraged the planting of opium instead of food and other crops. Since 2005, Afghanistan has accounted for 67-83% of the world’s annual opium production.⁴⁸

In 2005, according to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, due to counter-narcotics efforts by the Afghan government, ISAF, and UN Office on Drugs and Crime -- as well as cold weather and drought -- there had been a significant decline in the extent of poppy production:

more than half of the country’s 34 provinces are now poppy-free. Thus, poppy production is no longer an Afghanistan-wide phenomenon but, rather, concentrated in areas where insurgent and organized crime groups are particularly active. At present, 98 per cent of the country’s opium is grown in seven southern and south-western provinces.⁴⁹

But because yields increased in the areas that were still under cultivation, opium production increased in 2006 and 2007. Since then, it has fallen back to about 2005 levels.⁵⁰

This is a security concern for several reasons. First, when people are addicted to opium they may be easier to distract and bribe. This is a common problem in the Afghan military forces. Second, opium production is the means by which warlords finance their mini-states within Afghanistan. Third, the illegal international trade in opium and its derivatives morphine and heroin is a major source of revenue for the Taliban and Al Qaeda and a destabilizing factor in many countries.⁵¹ Opium smuggling has stretched to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) from Jordan, Syria, and Turkey. Iran, too, has felt the effects of Afghan opium production, seizing 180 tons of opium in the first half of 2007 alone.⁵²

Fourth, emphasis on poppy production has reduced the ability of Afghan farmers to feed themselves and the nation. Fifth, efforts to curtail poppy production are extremely dangerous. In 2007, Canadian troops destroying crops came under attack by disgruntled farmers. As a result, the Canadian government has been reluctant to participate in further eradication efforts and has come under public pressure to end its participation in the NATO

⁴⁷ Katzman, “Afghanistan,” p. 27.

⁴⁸ Livingston and O’Hanlon, “Afghanistan Index,” pp. 24-25.

⁴⁹ Ban, “The situation in Afghanistan,” p. 9.

⁵⁰ Livingston and O’Hanlon, “Afghanistan Index,” pp. 24-25.

⁵¹ Gretchen Peters, “How Opium Profits the Taliban,” US Institute of Peace, August 2009, available at www.usip.org/files/resources/taliban_opium_1.pdf

⁵² Thomas Land “Drugs trade takes its toll in Middle East region” *The Middle East*, 390, (June 2008), pp. 20-23.

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operation.⁵³ Finally, trade in opiates finances international criminal organizations that are of concern to many UN member states, including many European countries, where there is high demand for the drugs.⁵⁴

Food Security

According to Oxfam, a British non-governmental organization, the war, a prolonged drought, and emphasis on poppy production have combined to create a food emergency that endangers almost three million Afghan people in 14 of the country's 34 provinces.⁵⁵ This raises the possibility of renewed civil unrest.

As a result of these many complex problems, the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR), a group of 100 nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) providing various types of assistance in Afghanistan, argues that the international community must "take a broad range of measures, beyond the military, to combat the escalating insurgency. 'The conflict will not be brought to an end through military means. ...A range of measures is required to achieve a sustainable peace, including strong and effective support for rural development.'" ⁵⁶ ACBAR members include a number of Afghan non-profits, as well as international NGOs such as Oxfam, Save the Children, and Catholic Relief Services.⁵⁷

Previous Committee Work on Afghanistan

Since 2001, the Security Council and General Assembly have passed a number of resolutions related to Afghanistan's political and military security. As mentioned, in 2001, the Security Council passed Resolution 1386, which established the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan to help the new government establish military control of the country.⁵⁸ Each year since then, the Council has passed a resolution extending ISAF's mandate. In addition, in 2002, the Security Council passed a resolution authorizing UNAMA, whose mandate is to "support the Government in its efforts to improve critical areas, including security, governance and economic development, and regional cooperation."⁵⁹ UNAMA, too, has been reauthorized by the Security Council each year.

According to UN Secretary Ban-Ki Moon, in recent years there has been a "worrying trend" of "a significant increase in the number of attacks against aid workers, convoys and facilities. More than 120 attacks

⁵³ Nicholas Kohler "War of the Poppies" *Maclean's*, Vol 20, No 7, (February 26, 2007), 25.

⁵⁴ For more information on the connection between drugs and crime, as well as explanations about why Afghan farmers grow opium, see Karen Adams, Kedra Hildebrand, and Nathan Bilyeu, "Development as a Drug Control Strategy," General Assembly Third Committee, Montana Model UN, October 2010, available at <http://www.cas.umt.edu/munold/2010/hstopicg.html>

⁵⁵ "Oxfam warns of looming food crisis in Afghanistan," 30 September 2011, available at <http://www.oxfam.org/en/pressroom/pressrelease/2011-09-20/oxfam-warns-looming-food-crisis-afghanistan>

⁵⁶ Carlotta Gall, "War and Drought Threaten Afghan Food Supply," *New York Times*, September 18, 2008, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/19/world/asia/19afghan.html>

⁵⁷ Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR), "ACBAR Member List," available at http://www.acbar.org/display.php?page_id=35

⁵⁸ "Security Council Authorizes International Security Force for Afghanistan," Security Council press release SC/7248, December 20, 2001, available at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2001/sc7248.doc.htm>

⁵⁹ United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA), "About UNAMA: Mandate," available at <http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=1742>

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[were] targeted at humanitarian and development programmes in 2008, as a result of which 30 humanitarian aid workers ...died and 92 [were] abducted.”⁶⁰ These attacks imperil the ability of UNAMA personnel to work in the country and also inhibit the work of non-governmental organizations that bring food and other supplies to Afghan citizens in the midst of the 10-year war.

The General Assembly has been concerned with the situation in Afghanistan from the beginning of the Soviet intervention in 1979 to the present. In an emergency session in 1980, the GA called for the immediate removal of all foreign armies from Afghanistan, called on the world community to provide any humanitarian aid possible, and requested the Secretary-General provide regular updates on the situation.⁶¹ In November 2007, the GA passed a resolution that addressed many of the major issues facing Afghanistan since 2001, including terrorism and the drug trade.⁶² The most recent GA resolution on the situation in Afghanistan was passed in 2010.⁶³

Conclusion

Despite US and ISAF military operations in Afghanistan, the security situation has failed to stabilize and appears to be worsening, especially in terms of insurgent attacks by Taliban forces. In addition, although there have been some reductions in opium production, the humanitarian situation looks increasingly grave. As you research your country's position on this issue, consider the following questions:

- How has your country been affected by the war in Afghanistan? Consider terrorism, refugee movements, drug trafficking and consumption, etc.
- To what extent is your country involved in the war? Has it contributed troops to the ISAF operation? Has it contributed humanitarian aid? How has it voted on past UN resolutions? What more could it do?
- What can the GA do to supplement the Security Council's, UNAMA's, and ISAF's efforts to bring peace and security to Afghanistan? In particular, How can the Afghan government be strengthened? How can civilians be better protected from the fighting between Afghan, US, ISAF, and insurgent forces?
- How should the UN and UN member states prepare for the effects of the upcoming withdrawal of US and ISAF forces? What are those effects likely to be? What role should negotiation with the Taliban play in stabilizing Afghanistan and protecting US and ISAF forces during their departure? Should UNAMA personnel remain behind? If so, how should they be protected?

⁶⁰ Ban Ki-Moon, “The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security: Report of the Secretary-General,” A/63/372–S/2008/617, September 23, 2008, 5-6, available at http://www.unama-afg.org/docs/_UN-Docs/_repots-SG/2008/08sep23-SG-report-SC-situation-in-afghanistan.pdf

⁶¹ UN News Centre, “Afghanistan & the United Nations.”

⁶² United Nations General Assembly, “General Assembly calls for continued effort to address Afghanistan's challenges,” GA/10654, November 5, 2007 [press release], available at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2007/ga10654.doc.htm>.

⁶³ UN General Assembly, “Resolutions,” 65th Session, available at <http://www.un.org/en/ga/65/resolutions.shtml> Search on the word “Afghanistan.” Here you will find links to both the resolution and a record of the comments of member states before passing the resolution.

Recommended Reading

Ban, Ki-Moon. "The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security: Report of the Secretary-General." A/66/369-S/2011/590. September 21, 2011. Available at <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N11/498/72/PDF/N1149872.pdf?OpenElement>

This recent report from the UN Secretary General gives a comprehensive update on all aspects of the security situation in Afghanistan.

Global Policy Forum. "UN Involvement in Afghanistan." Available at <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/afgindx.htm> accessed 10 October 2011.

This website discusses major UN involvements in Afghanistan with links to key documents and articles.

Human Rights Watch. "Asia: Afghanistan." Available at <http://www.hrw.org/asia/afghanistan>

Human Rights Watch is a non-governmental organization that tracks human rights in various countries. This page provides access to reports on various topics, including the civilian effects of US and NATO operations, the treatment of Afghan refugees, and the Karzai government's policies on civil rights.

International Security Assistance Force, "Afghanistan." available at <http://www.isaf.nato.int/>

The ISAF website provides links to the history of the ISAF mission in Afghanistan. See the link in footnote 23 to find out if your country contributes forces to ISAF.

Katzman, Kenneth, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy," *Congressional Research Service*, September 22, 2011. Available at <http://www.fas.org/srg/crs/row/RL30588.pdf>

This recent report by a Middle East expert who works for the US Congress provides a comprehensive history of US military operations in Afghanistan, as well as a good summary of the political history of Afghanistan. This source also addresses many of the current security concerns facing Afghanistan and does so on the basis of interviews with US policy makers and military officials.

Livingston, Ian S. and Michael O'Hanlon. "Afghanistan Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction and Security in Post 9/11 Afghanistan." Brookings Institution. 29 September 2011. Available at <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/Programs/FP/afghanistan%20index/index.pdf>

This report from the Brookings Institution, a foreign policy think tank, uses a variety of data to evaluate the progress Afghanistan has made since 2001 in various aspects of security. It is a terrific way to get a sense of historical trends and current challenges. It addresses everything from civilian living standards to the readiness of the Afghan military and recent casualties.

United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA). Website. Available at <http://www.unama-afg.org/>.

This is the website for the UN organization that coordinates all UN activities in Afghanistan. It has a wealth of historical and current information, as well as links to all Security Council and GA resolutions. See also the source in footnote 65 to read the most recent GA resolution and debate on Afghanistan.

World Food Programme. "Where we work: Afghanistan." Available at http://www.wfp.org/country_brief/indexcountry.asp?country=004

This site provides information on the Afghan food crisis and WFP relief operations in the country.