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- Security Council -

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| <b>Committee</b>    | United Nations Security Council  |
| <b>Issue</b>        | 102 The Situation in Afghanistan |
| <b>Expert Chair</b> | Cyrus Chuang (TCFSH)             |

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## Introduction

Located between the Middle East and South Asia, Afghanistan has been haunted by “the War of Afghanistan” —the war between the Afghan government and terrorist groups—ever since the United States’ invasion in 2001. The Taliban, among all militant groups, is held most accountable for the country’s instability.

The rise of the Taliban can date back to the Cold War when, already then, Afghanistan was in a state of chaos. The political wrestle between the First World (US-led alliance) and Second World (Soviet-led bloc), with one government after another being overthrown, left behind problems such as separatist warlord regimes and ethnic division, making Afghanistan a breeding ground for terrorist groups.

Gaining power during the post-communist regime civil war, the Taliban strictly enforced Sharia Law on its people, severely violating much of women’s human rights, and was held responsible for the country’s damage during its regime from 1996 to 2001. Though a severe problem, the terrorist group was regarded as more of a domestic and humanitarian problem; hence, it had been dealt with relatively passively, with only the UN imposing economic sanctions, as was until September 11th, 2001.

In 2001, in response to the terrorist attacks carried out by Al Qaeda, which, at the time, was under the protection of the then Afghan government—the Taliban, the US invaded Afghanistan and drove the Taliban from power. Afghanistan, nonetheless, was not relieved of its nightmare. The Taliban and Islamic State-Khorasan have continued to threaten the country in joint armed-offenses, which, though have all failed so far, has caused ongoing instability. Foreign aid, mainly from the US and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), plays an integral role in rebuilding Afghanistan. The change of US strategies and the amount of funds

and troop forces it has provided over the years have thus had a tremendous impact on the country's stability. The latest strategy proposed by the United States, however, is to "kill the terrorists." The Afghan President lately chose a comparatively peaceful path, hoping to solve the problem with a different approach. Past solutions, which mainly focused on combating, appear to have either failed or only seen minor success while terrorists continue to flourish day by day and create countless refugees. It is high time for all delegates to reassess the effectiveness of the current approach and come up with a more thorough and creative solution to address the issue.

## Definition of Key Terms

### **The Mujahideen**

The Mujahideen, the fighters of Allah, is referred to as the jihad fighters defending their religion and fighting against foreign oppressors. The Mujahideen in Afghanistan refers to the Afghan people who fought against Soviet intervention in the 1980s. Comprising regional warlords in Afghanistan, the Mujahideen failed to establish a centralized government, resulting in the 6-year Afghan Civil War, giving rise to the Taliban.

### **Warlords**

With different ethnicities and tribes scattering around the country, Afghanistan has been a decentralized country. Tribal leaders, who are regional warlords that provide security for tribes, hold power and are highly influential in the country. Gaining power during the war against the USSR and the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) government, some warlords remain influential in modern Afghan politics even after the dismissal of the Mujahideen.

## **North Alliance**

The North alliance, mainly consisting of ethnic Uzbeks and Tajiks, was established in 1992 in an attempt to topple the DRA government. During the Taliban's regime, western countries allied with the North Alliance to dethrone the Taliban government, which was run by ethnic Pashtuns.

## **NATO International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)**

Per UN resolution from 2001 to 2014, the ISAF's main objective was to provide Afghanistan with effective security across the country and develop new Afghan security forces for sustainable country development. In 2015, a new, smaller non-combat mission—Resolute Support—was launched to provide further training, counsel, and assistance to the Afghan security forces and institutions.

## **Al Qaeda**

Al Qaeda, also spelled Al Qaida, is a Sunni Islamic militant organization formed by Osama Bin Laden in the 1980s for the purpose of opposing the Soviet influence in Afghanistan. It later continued to counter foreign intervention in Islamic territories and Islamic States it considered illegitimate. In the late 1990s, Al Qaeda operated from Afghanistan, under the protection of the Taliban. On September 11th, 2001, its affiliated militants carried out a series of attacks on the US, which later became known as the 9/11 attacks. It was this move that instigated the invasion of Afghanistan by the US in 2001.

## **United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)**

UNAMA is a UN mission established since 2002 to aid the Afghan government in stabilizing the country in terms of peace and development.

## Background of the Topic

### **Soviet Union Invasion and Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) (1979-1991)**

In 1979, the Soviet Union (USSR/"Soviets") invaded Afghanistan, establishing the puppet communist regime—the DRA. In light of the expansion of the Second World, the US, along with its Middle East allies, funded the training and arming of the resistance force, the Mujahideen, which was composed of oppressed Afghan people and foreign muslim fighters. With the financial and military aid from the west and the foreign fighters' support, the war turned to Mujahideen's favor in 1988, resulting in the USSR's withdrawal in May.

### **Post-DRA Warlord Dictatorship (1991-1996)**

As the Soviets left Afghanistan, the US' attention drifted away, leaving the country with a political vacuum followed by the civil war. Groups of warlords that fought by the Mujahideen's side during the Soviet intervention stepped in and gained power. The warlords divided the country into several parts, creating a decentralized country, and committed numerous mass-killings and land-seizings. Even after the Taliban came to power and overthrew them, the warlords still retain some powerful and influential political or military positions in Afghanistan, for they are the leaders of the countless different tribes and ethnicities in Afghanistan. As a result, the power distribution and ethnic conflicts between Afghan tribes still pose a threat to the country's peace and stability.

### **Taliban Regime (1996-2001)**

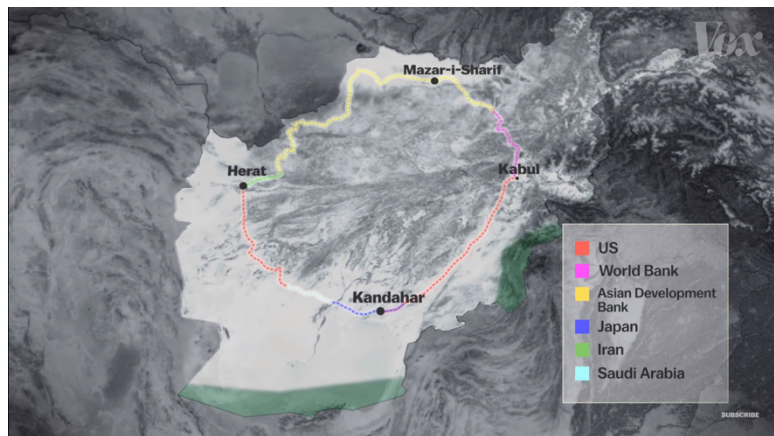
The Taliban, though its origins uncertain, is widely proposed by experts to have indirectly benefited from the US-Saudi-Pakistan-supported funding during the uprising against the Soviets and the DRA. After the withdrawal of the Soviets, the country soon fell into a state of chaos with the warlords dividing the country. The Taliban came to Kabul in 1996, promising the people two things: security; and an

end to the conflict between rival Mujahideen groups. The latter was temporarily accomplished but the former failed.

The Taliban is infamous for its strict enforcement of Sharia Law and the oppression of human rights that comes along with it. During its regime, mass killing was committed and international aid was rejected.

## US Invasion in Afghanistan (2001-present)

In 2001, in response to the terrorist attacks carried out by Al Qaeda, which was then under the protection of the Taliban government, the US invaded Afghanistan, driving the Taliban from power. However, the Taliban



and Islamic States continued to threaten the country in all forms of and all levels of attack. Foreign aid, mainly from the US and NATO, plays an integral role in rebuilding Afghanistan. The change of US strategies and the sway of the amount of the fund and troop forces over the years, thus, have had a tremendous impact on the country's stabilities.

Soon after the invasion, US strategies shifted from armed-conflicting to rebuilding and stabilizing the country. Under this strategy, the Ring Road began to be constructed to connect the four cities—Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, and Mazar-i-Sharif—of the country for military and economic purposes. After the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, the US' major attention shifted from Afghanistan to Iraq, despite the Ring Road being far from complete. This withdrawal gave rise to the Taliban as it started to sabotage the construction of Ring Road and regain control of more of the country.

In 2007, on noting the situation, the American government increased troop forces, in a movement called "the Surge." However, months afterwards, US President Obama announced that "the troops will continue coming home at a steady

pace,” as the reclaiming of the territory proved to be tremendously costly. In 2014, NATO withdrew most of its troops, allowing the Taliban to thrive. In 2017, US President Trump stated that they would not be doing country-rebuilding anymore; instead, they would be killing terrorists, launching more air raids to destroy the Taliban. While Afghan security forces say the effect has been significant, concerns have been made as the Taliban has been proven to be able to adjust to such campaigns.

In 2018, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani proposed that the Taliban could be recognized as a legitimate political party, creating a new path for the seemingly endless war.

## Recent Events

### Peace Offer

Following several terrorist actions by the Taliban earlier in 2018, Afghan president Ashraf Ghani proposed to recognize the Taliban as a political group without any preconditions. This offer is backed by Afghanistan’s allies (Uzbekistan has proposed to hold the bilateral talk) and UNAMA, but it hasn’t seen much response from the Taliban, who have said that they are willing to talk only under the circumstance that the US withdraws its troops from Afghanistan.

### Kunduz Attack

On April 2nd, the Afghan government launched an air raid on Madrassa, a religious school in Kunduz controlled by the Taliban, in the hopes of prompting the militant group to the negotiating table. While the Afghan government claimed that the targets were Taliban soldiers, witnesses interviewed by Al Jazeera claimed that it was mostly kids in the school at the time, with only few soldiers and a commander. In comparison, the Taliban stated that there were no fighters in the school then, expressing that at least 100 innocent, faithful children were killed. A UNAMA investigation on the attack is underway. An Al Jazeera analyst asserted that the

civilian casualties taken toll by the government's recent attacks are sabotaging the government's legitimacy.

## **Pakistan-Afghanistan Talk**

Accused of supporting the Taliban, Pakistan has been under more pressure ever since American President Donald Trump took office—suffering a loss of 1.1 billion USD in financial aid from the US. On April 6th, Pakistan Prime Minister traveled to Kabul for the first time to ease tensions with its neighbor and discuss joint counter-terrorism action. The bilateral talk finalized the Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan for peace and solidarity, and discussed border security and refugee problems.

## **Key Issues**

### **Terrorism**

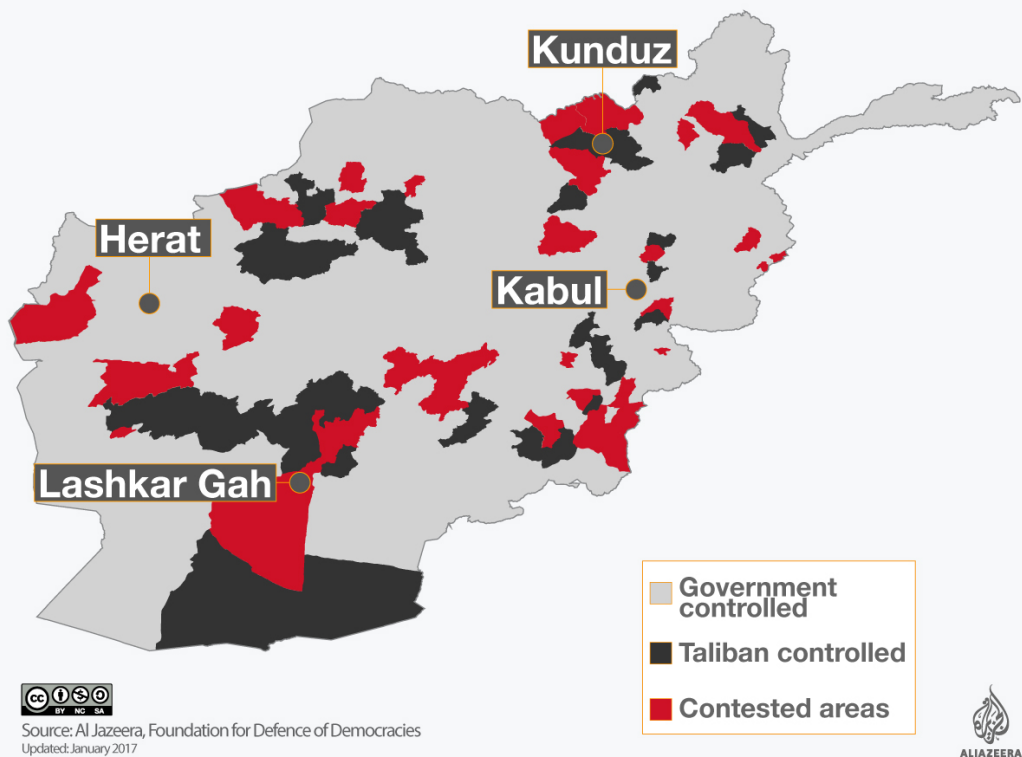
#### **The Taliban**

Once the government-in-power from 1996-2001, the Taliban (or Afghan Taliban as opposed to Pakistani Taliban) is now a militant group scattering across Afghanistan, taking over several cities and areas, and is responsible for countless terrorist attacks, including suicide bombings and shooting sprees. As an Islamic fundamentalist group, the Taliban strictly enforces a form of Sharia Law with an eye to opposing to the now “pro-western” Afghanistan government. Over the years, the Taliban has shown resistance to US-NATO-led attacks, remaining active in sabotaging the infrastructure of the country.

The Taliban mostly comprises Pashtuns, the biggest ethnic group in Afghanistan and the second-largest in Pakistan. The Afghan policy inspired by the former US President Cheney relied on the support of the Northern Alliance and the suppression of Pashtun elements during the early stage of the country-building process, which helped the Taliban in winning the sympathies of Afghanistan's majority of population, further deepening ethnic gaps.



## Afghanistan: Who controls what



### Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)

Acting in several eastern Afghan provinces near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, the TTP operates and establishes sanctuaries primarily along the northeastern section of the border. A force united by several Taliban groups in Pakistan, the TTP is a loose umbrella organization with various militant leaders holding different opinions regarding their targets despite once unanimously pledging allegiance to the leadership of Baitullah Mehsud. Though related to the Afghan Taliban, the two terrorists bear a striking difference in terms of their enemies. One of the main aims of TTP is to overthrow the incumbent Pakistani government, which is against the Afghan Taliban's interest. As such, the complex trilateral relations play an essential role in the three parties' strategies and, subsequently, the war in Afghanistan.

## Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan (ISIL-K)

ISIL-K, sharing a similar goal to the Islamic State (IS), wishes to establish an Sunni Islamic caliphate in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. Over the last ten years, ISIL-K has committed numerous terrorist attacks against Shia Muslims, the Afghan government, and unexpectedly, the Taliban. Despite sharing the same goal as the Taliban to overthrow the Afghan government, unlike Taliban, who is more a nationalist, ISIL-K hopes to create a one and only “Sunni” Islamic State.

## Ethnic Division

Several tribes, for years, have resided in Afghanistan, creating a country of great diversity and conflict. Some Afghan tribes—Pashtun (42% of population), Tajik (27%), Uzbek (9%), and Hazara (9%)—have been in one conflict or another throughout the years. Despite the confrontations and inequality imposed on certain groups of people, the country is never faced with the problem similar to that of the Balkans, Middle East, and Africa—lack of Nationalism. Afghan people categorize themselves into groups for the more practical reasons—trade and security; thus, though people within a certain ethnic group are more likely to share the same religion, tribe formation is based mainly on geography and genealogy. Anthropologists asserts that there will not be any ethnic groups demanding independence in that the status quo—staying as a country—is rather beneficial to all tribes in terms of diplomacy.

That being said, ethnic problems still exist in the country, for back in 1988, following the withdrawal of the Soviet Union, the Afghan Civil War broke out between the Pashtuns and the smaller Tajik, Hazara, and Uzbek populations, taking tolls of over 100,000 civilians. In 2001, to drive the Taliban (mainly made up of ethnic Pashtuns) from power, the US allied with the North Alliance, which consisted mostly of minority groups—Tajiks and Uzbeks. After the war was won, the North Alliance dissolved. Despite this, the power gained during the war made the minority groups impactful during the Hazari reign, leading to the imbalance of power between the Pashtun majority and the minorities. In 2014, General Abdul Wahid Taqat, a former intelligence official, stated that “Afghanistan means ‘where Pashtuns live’,” provoking

anger among the general public. Despite the country's efforts to create a racially equal society, such as designating ethnic hatred as a criminal act, inequality still haunts the government with 75 percent of officials appointed in the President's Office of Administrative Affairs (OAA) being Pashtuns, while only 14 percent being Tajiks in 2015. Moreover, the Taliban, which comprises mostly Pashtuns, spared no effort in sabotaging and dividing the country, and Pakistan, which is accused of supporting it, indirectly deteriorated the situation. Ethnic issues appear to loom largest with older people who have witnessed the civil war while younger generations' attitudes are more flexible and their identities more complex, especially in large cities like Kabul.

## **Corruption**

For years, corruption in the Afghan government has severely crippled the country's development—wasting billions in aid according to former UN officials. Afghanistan was ranked 169 out of 176 countries on Transparency International's corruption perception index in 2016. Political elites have long been accused of taking bribes in all sorts of development projects and even drug trafficking. The Kabul Scandal serves as an evident illustration. In 2011, nearly one billion USD disappeared from Kabul Bank, the biggest bank in Afghanistan, in mysterious insider loans, leading to the bank's collapse. Moreover, the bank's shareholders were mostly the country's political elites, including cabinet ministers, members of parliament (MPs), and warlords.

## **Infrastructure**

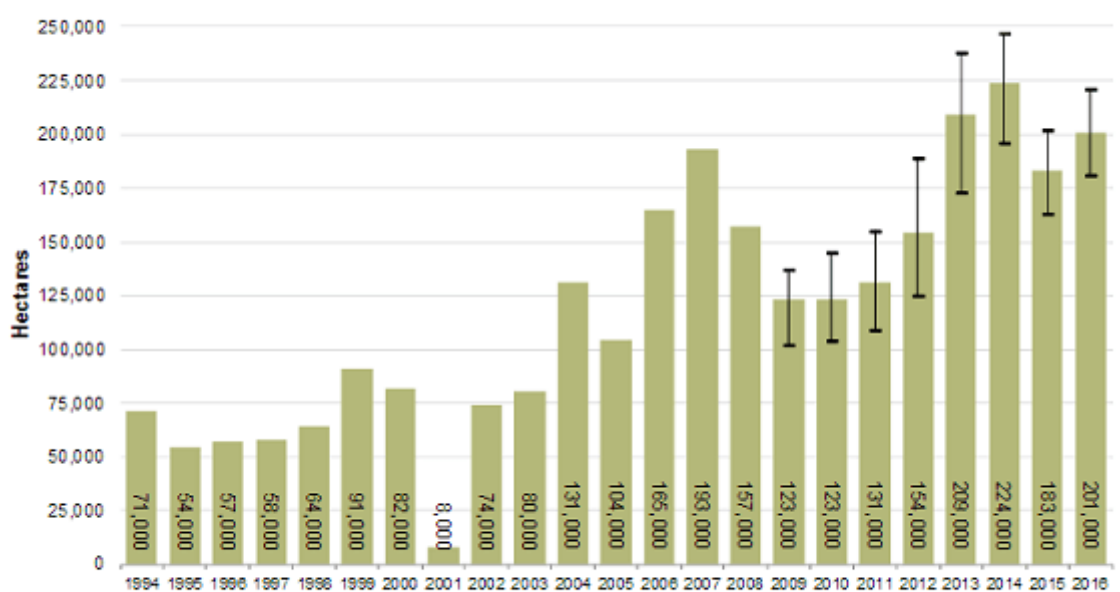
The US war in Afghanistan has raged on for 16 years, beginning since the US invasion after 9/11 attacks in 2001. At the onset, a centerpiece of US strategy was to rebuild Afghanistan's crumbling infrastructure. This move expedited military logistics and maneuvers while simultaneously reignited travel between Afghanistan's major cities. But when the US started its war in Iraq, that diverted resources and manpower from the battlefield of Afghanistan. The Taliban didn't miss this chance to interfere with Afghanistan's projects. To date, the most ambitious road-building project, known

as the Ring Road, has seen over \$3 billion spent on its renewal, and it was never completed.

## Drug cultivation/ trafficking

According to the 2005 statistics from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the cultivation of opium in Afghanistan significantly increased in recent decades, accounting for 87 percent of the world production despite the Afghan Government's National Drug Control Strategy. With the Taliban insurgency encouraging narcotic production as its major fund, financial resource and the lucrative nature of the Afghan opium trade linking cultivators, traffickers, and consumers, the ever-increasing poppy-cultivation still poses a threat to the country's development and stability.

**Figure 1: Opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan, 1994-2016 (hectares)**



*Sources: UNODC/MCN opium surveys 1994-2016. The vertical lines represent the upper and lower bounds of the 95% confidence interval.*

## Major Parties Involved and Their Positions

### Russia

As past “western” solutions appear to have failed, Russia is adding Afghanistan to its “hotspot list”—after Syria, Libya, and Ukraine—making headway in its geopolitical competition with NATO alliance. Though accused of funding the Taliban, which Russian officials claim to be a strategic alliance to counter their joint enemy—the Islamic State, the Kremlin gets an upper hand in regional conflicts for its diplomatic contact with the Taliban.

### Iran

Bordered by Afghanistan, Iran and Afghanistan shared the same language—Dari, and a long history. Similar to Russia, Iran’s major ally, Iran is accused of supporting the Taliban—even providing military aid and sanctuary with an eye to driving American influence out of the region.

### Saudi Arabia

A major US ally in the region, Saudi Arabia has been supporting Afghanistan in stabilizing the region since the Soviet intervention. Though once closely connected to the Taliban on account of Wahhabism, Saudi Arabia severed its ties with the Taliban after 9/11. Afterwards, the country served as the broker of the Afghan-Taliban talk in 2008, demonstrating Saudi Arabia’s determination in joining the game and its fear of Iran’s expansion in the region in the war of Afghanistan.

## Timeline of Events and Relevant Documents

| Date | Description of Event         |
|------|------------------------------|
| 1979 | USSR invasion in Afghanistan |

|      |                                                                                |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1988 | USSR withdraw troops                                                           |
| 1992 | End of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan                                  |
| 1996 | Taliban takes over Kabul                                                       |
| 1999 | Establishment of the Al-Qaida and Taliban Committee and its sanctions mandate. |
| 2001 | US invasion in Afghanistan Establishment of Afghan Interim Administration      |
| 2003 | Commencement of the Ring Road construction                                     |
| 2004 | Adoption of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan            |
| 2009 | “Surge” in US troop force in Afghanistan                                       |
| 2014 | Withdrawal of NATO ISAF                                                        |
| 2017 | US President Donald Trump’s announcement of “killing terrorist” strategy       |
| 2018 | Afghan President Ashraf Ghani’s offer of Taliban recognition                   |

## Analysis of Previous Attempted Solutions

### Sanctions/ Embargoes

As of March 2018, 10 resolutions have been passed with regard to imposing, implementing, and amending the sanctions. Despite this, the UN sanctions have been ineffective so far due to the Taliban’s movements in the country under Pakistan’s support. The sanctions have, however, imposed some negative influences on the Afghan people, resulting in poverty and radicalizing the ruling militia.

## **Military Force**

In 2003, after the invasion, the US strategies shifted from combating to rebuilding, defending and stabilizing the country. However, before the rebuilding work was accomplished, the Iraq War broke out, followed by the partial withdrawal of US forces. After the withdrawal, the situation in Afghanistan worsened, bringing back US attention in 2009 with the noticeable “surge” in military aid. In 2017, the US new president elect shifted the country’s strategy back to “terrorist-killing”; nonetheless, experts pointed out there would not be military victory in this 16-year long conflict. The former senior advisor to Chief Executive of Afghanistan and former Afghan ambassador in Canada and France stated that over the past 16 years, “we have tried everything on the book,” and that the situation can only be solved with a steadier and more comprehensive solution that addresses the problem not only militarily, but politically, economically.

## **The Afghanistan Compact**

The Compact, a political agreement and an inoperable treaty, is the result of the London Conference on Afghanistan aiming at establishing an international framework for collaboration on the development of Afghanistan from three prospects– (1) Security; (2) Governance, Rule of Law and Human Rights; and (3) Economic and Social Development. The Compact includes the benchmark and timeline specifying what to achieve and when to achieve.

As corruption as well as terrorists are closely related to drug trafficking and smuggling, narcotics remain a tremendous problem in the country. With severe corruption plaguing the government, the National and Border Police, and the demining work, the efficiency and effectiveness of the country’s efforts remain limited, leaving much work to be done.

## Possible Solutions

1. Cooperation with the UNODC and INTERPOL to combat drug trafficking
2. Overseeing the implementation of The Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF) and Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework (SMAF) for the country's reform and corruption problem
3. Further examination on Pakistan's relations with Taliban and the imposition of punishment if necessary
4. Peace talks between the Afghan government and Taliban
5. Utilizing The trilateral relations between Pakisatani Taliban, Afghan Taliban, and Pakistan
6. Examination on the effectiveness of the imposed sanctions



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