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MODEL UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE**

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CRISIS

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## UNSC Members

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### Permanent Member States

Brazil  
China  
France  
India  
Russia  
United Kingdom  
United States

### Rotating Member States

Australia  
Egypt  
Iran  
Norway  
Pakistan  
South Africa  
Uzbekistan  
Venezuela

## Afghan Conflict Resolution: 2025

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### Context & Origins of Conflict

Afghanistan has long been a complicated member of the international community. At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this reality manifested itself in the episode of foreign intervention and engagement that followed the 2001 attacks on American targets. The invasion by a large, sophisticated foreign force was, by no means, an occurrence without precedent in Afghan history. Still, it marked a critical departure from the more than thirty-year period of internal conflict and international neglect that Afghanistan had been locked in since 1979.

The 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, conducted under the auspices of a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) coalition, was initially successful in dismantling the existing Taliban regime. Shortly thereafter, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was created by the Bonn Agreement. Though it was NATO-led, the ISAF also included non-NATO member-states and is thus the most appropriate and inclusive banner under which all foreign

troop contributors at the time can be identified. Following the expulsion from government of the Taliban; the group widely accused of having harbored and supported the al-Qaeda organization that conducted the attacks on the US in September 2011, the ISAF was responsible for providing security in Afghanistan so that the tenets of the Bonn Agreement might be realized.



a) Rare image of Mullah Mohammed Omar, founder and leader of the Taliban movement, c. 2000

The collusion between the Taliban and al-Qaeda was rooted both in common purpose during their years spent fighting the Soviets and similarly radical interpretations of Islam. The later point would serve as the

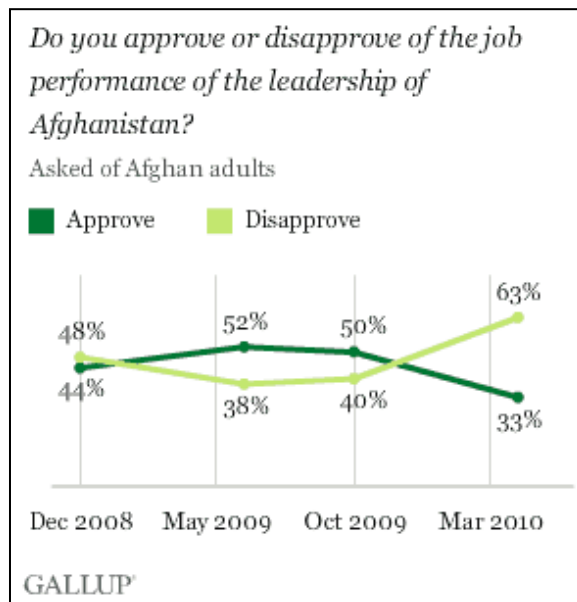
basis for many of the Taliban's human rights transgressions, and many have argued there is no sound theological foundation for the policies they implemented.

Although the ISAF action was successful in ousting the Taliban regime, strategic lapses in the ISAF military mission to Afghanistan, coupled with policy- and aid-coordination shortcomings created an environment which allowed for the Taliban's regrouping and reemergence. Precise indicators of the Taliban's status as a political organization have always been notoriously difficult to discern, but it became clear as officials and policy-makers charted Afghanistan's future that the movement could not be ignored.

The US announcement that it would effectively cease and recall its military mission to Afghanistan by 2014 was met with an escalation of violence perpetrated by the Taliban's militant affiliates. The internationally recognized and backed Afghan central government, led by President Hamid Karzai, struggled to exercise control over much of the country.

2011 was marked by particular violence in Afghanistan. That year, two separate attacks both crippled Kabul's heavily-guarded diplomatic sector and assassinated former President, Burhanuddin Rabbani. Both served as notable examples of the country's deteriorating security resulting from the announcement of American plans to withdraw. The Taliban was posturing itself in preparation for a power vacuum.

Terrible enough in terms of bloodshed, the attacks further revealed to the international community a truth that was already abundantly clear within Afghanistan; the central government was poorly positioned to assume greater responsibility for Afghanistan's internal affairs.



**b) The Kabul-based Afghan government has struggled to secure popular support**

While major urban centers like Kabul and Herat enjoyed general improvements in terms of economic activity, government services, and quality and security of life, the Karzai administration had little presence in or effect on Afghanistan's vast rural expanses. Here, patronage networks and nepotism always usurped fair and intelligent distribution of limited resources.

As public discontent rose in response to the central government's inability to provide basic security, let alone services vital for development such as health and

education, utilities, judicial facilities, transportation, etc., it became increasingly clear that Pakistan was only complicating matters. The previously mentioned 2011 attacks in Kabul represent only a small sampling of violence executed in Afghanistan with some degree of Pakistani complicity. In the aftermath of the attacks, it became clear that they were conducted by the Pakistan-based Haqqani network, an affiliate of the Taliban movement.



c) American military patrol operating in Afghanistan during the 13 year occupation between 2001-2014

The inability, and to some degree, unwillingness, of Pakistan to address militant Talibs, who sheltered themselves in the loosely-governed frontier provinces across the border from Afghanistan, only emboldened the movement and ensured their longevity.

### **The Taliban: a Brief History of Afghan Militancy**

Though the Taliban regime assumed *de facto* control of Afghanistan in 1996, the movement's roots are traceable back to the Cold War. After the near-collapse of the Communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) in 1979 and the subsequent Soviet invasion, Afghanistan

became a locus in terms of foreign interest. The various factions, known collectively as the mujahedeen and soon became the agents of external actors opposed to the Soviet Union (USSR).

As the USSR's premier rival, the US was, naturally, heavily involved in undermining the Soviet occupation. Together with their allies (Saudi Arabia was similarly as vigorous as the US in terms of providing financial and material support while Pakistan was largely entrusted to disseminate the foreign contributions), somewhere between \$3-\$20 billion in US funds were transferred to Afghan resistance groups. All told, even the upper stratum of the aforementioned range represents an understatement; it does not include undocumented, classified, unquantifiable, and other such contributions.

The surge of external resources that would otherwise be absent vastly changed the internal dynamic in Afghanistan. Most significantly, the country was now awash with weapons, yet there was no truly united trans-factional opposition to the Soviet presence. Further upsetting any pre-war status quo were the distributive practices exercised by the Pakistani Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). American aid contributions intended for the widest number of Mujahedeen groups (to inflict the greatest number of Soviet casualties) was first skimmed by Pakistani officials, then funneled to favorable Pashtun warlords. Without realizing, the Pakistanis were nurturing a new menace to Afghanistan, under the guise of expelling a foreign occupier.

In assuming a perpetually violent, unstable, and anarchic state, Afghanistan (and the outside benefactors claiming to be acting in the interest of the Afghan people) was ultimately successful in expelling Soviet troops. Unfortunately, Afghanistan retained the aforementioned characteristics even in the aftermath of the Soviet withdrawal. Shortly thereafter, the USSR collapsed and the foreign actors so interested in Afghanistan at the height of the Cold War completely disengaged themselves from involvement with the country, with the notable exception of Pakistan.

The Taliban, in its early manifestation, was one of several militant factions competing for power in the civil war that unfolded as Afghanistan lost international attention. Their assumption of power in Afghanistan came less as a result of political maneuvering and agreements—though they were, on occasion, successful at these methods—but instead was a result of their aggressive military expansion. The Taliban’s aggressive and highly mobile tactics secured a number of critical early victories for the movement, including the capture of key roads and arms depots.

Compounding their early successes, the Taliban steadily gained control of Afghanistan’s provinces, disarming the population as they advanced. On September 27, 1996, the Taliban seized control of Kabul after months of ruinous fighting over the city. The remaining factions in Afghanistan retreated to the northern provinces and united under the banner of the Northern Alliance.

## Post-Occupation Afghanistan: Descent into the Crisis

Popular opposition to continuing involvement in Afghanistan in those states supporting the coalition occupation, as well as a scarcity of financial resources after more than a decade of global recession led to the cessation of the ISAF occupation by the end of 2014. American politicians led a global wave of budgetary and strategic reassessments that sought to look past “Wars of Choice” like the occupation of Afghanistan, and instead address shifting security concerns. Once again, Afghanistan faded from international interest.

To compare the fallout after the ISAF occupation to that experienced after the war with the Soviets would be drastic and sensational. International donors and benefactors were, at least vaguely, cognizant of the dangers of neglecting Afghanistan again. They were, however, more pressed by domestic issues; austerity measures were a particular political nuisance for many of the nations that might otherwise enthusiastically allocate funds for the purpose of security and development aid grants.



d) Numerous international conferences—like the one pictured above from a 2011 session in Istanbul—have

sought to engage relevant parties, regional and global, in stabilizing the state of Afghan affairs.

In 2011, the World Bank estimated that Afghanistan would require \$7 billion of foreign assistance aid over the course of the next decade. The same year this estimate was released, Afghanistan received \$15.7 billion of foreign assistance aid; a figure that represented 92% of the Afghan government's public spending that year. Retrospect reveals that the \$70 billion estimate made by the World Bank was a paltry sum in comparison with Afghanistan's eventual needs. The Afghan state was crippled by its inability to effectively collect revenue or stimulate economic development, and the international community grew tired of seeing their contributions beget ever-larger demands for assistance.

### **Situation in 2025**

By the winter of 2024, the challenges mounting against the nascent Afghan central government had reached a critical mass. After more than a decade of failed strategy and policies, the Kabul government now stands on the brink of collapse. The Taliban stands poised to replicate its meteoric 1996 rise to power. The onset of winter has temporarily immobilized the situation, as neither side is adequately equipped or supplied to conduct operations under the present weather conditions.

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has seized the opportunity provided by this seasonal respite to defuse the

impending crisis before the resumption of more moderate weather.

For UNSC member-states involved in the 2001 – 2014 occupation, the Taliban's threatening resurgence is an affront to the immense investment of "blood and treasure" they made a decade earlier; all efforts will have been expended in vain if the Taliban resumes control of the country. These states will not tolerate a radical Taliban government, as they identify it as a security threat, but are weary of committing to another military operation in Afghanistan.



e) Improvements in security and infrastructure are essential for stabilizing Afghanistan and facilitating economic growth

A number of other states with interests in Afghanistan are also members of the UNSC's current term, either by virtue of rotating membership or the UNSC's recently expanded permanent membership which, in accordance with the 2022 reforms, now includes Brazil and India.

Further information on the interests varied interests of the UNSC's member-states can be found in the following section on bloc positions. Needless to say, as spring approaches, there is great urgency to

untangle the fray of competing interests and lay the groundwork for a durable peace-process in Afghanistan.

#### *Further Reading & Helpful Links*

1. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_Nations\\_Security\\_Council](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Security_Council)
2. <http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/>
3. <http://afghanistan.usaid.gov/en/home>
4. [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/afghanistan-to-need-billions-in-aid-for-years-world-bank-says/2011/11/22/gIQA14zOIN\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/afghanistan-to-need-billions-in-aid-for-years-world-bank-says/2011/11/22/gIQA14zOIN_story.html)
5. <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/09/12/world/asia/20100912-afghan-indicators.html>
6. <http://www.economist.com/topics/afghan-politics>

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#### **Bloc Positions**

The immense investment of “blood and treasure” made by ISAF member states, as well as the often corrosive interests of Afghanistan’s neighbors and other regional powers ensures a vexingly complex dynamic of competing interests within Afghanistan.

#### **PAKISTAN**



Neither Pakistan nor Afghanistan fully accepts the boundary that presently divides them (see: Durand Line). Thus, if the division between Pakistan and Afghanistan

is not fully recognized in either state, it is quite likely that no other nation is more directly involved in Afghanistan’s internal affairs than Pakistan. Pakistan is the Taliban’s most prominent and active supporter, as the Pakistani’s feel that the Talibs represent the best vehicle through which to advance their own interests in Afghanistan. Yet, the complexity of Pakistan’s relationship with the wider international community is impossible to express simply. Pakistan’s affinity with the Taliban stems from the solidarity between the two predominantly Pashtun groups (tribal/ethnic identity is hugely significant in Afghanistan and Pakistan), yet Pakistan cannot afford the ire of the United States and other major international powers. Thus raises the dilemma whereby Pakistan cannot fully achieve domestic or regional stability; supporting the United States stirs opposition from the Taliban, but supporting the Taliban prompts American intervention. Either way, the end result is violence.

#### **IRAN**



The other two principal regional powers concerned with developments in Afghanistan are Iran and India, although each for very different reasons. While some Iranian elements discreetly supplied the Afghan insurgency with limited quantities of arms throughout the early years of the ISAF occupation, cooperation with the Taliban has been largely non-existent. Historically, the

Taliban has persecuted Afghanistan's Shia Hazara minority and, on one occasion, a Taliban commander executed Iran's diplomatic staff in Herat. Consequently, Iran is interested in countering the resurgence of the Taliban, although it should be noted that their open possession of nuclear arms has rendered them something of an international pariah and their domestic instability limits their image and influence in inter-state negotiations. Ultimately, Iran has perhaps the greatest degree of flexibility in the crisis, and they are best positioned to ensure that whatever outcome is reached, Iranian interests will prevail.

## INDIA



India's interests in Afghanistan are directly related to those of Pakistan. Although India shares no common border with Afghanistan, the latter has historically served as a training ground for Pakistani sponsored militants who persistently bedevil Indian efforts to pacify and administer their Kashmiri territory. The longstanding rivalry between Pakistan and India ensures that the two nuclear-armed states treat the crisis as a zero-sum game with marginal potential for cooperation and critically high tensions. To further complicate matters, the United States has largely abandoned Pakistan as its regional partner in addressing Afghanistan, and has more closely allied itself with the Indians, although it does not support Indian efforts to undermine the Pakistanis.

Additionally, India's recent ascension to permanent UNSC membership gives them an edge in a relationship with that Pakistanis that has otherwise been largely equal, in absolute security terms, due to both countries' possession of nuclear arms.

## BRAZIL



As one of the leading agriculture producers in the world, Brazil has a vested interest in Afghanistan's future. Afghanistan has been slow to develop its own infrastructure, and Brazil has repeatedly expressed its interest in advancing the welfare of the Afghan people. A notable example of this can be found in Brazil's recent pledge to improve Afghanistan's education system and its serious commitment to allocate the resources to do so. However, one must not forget the domestic issues that the Brazilian government contends with; in the past 10 years the emergence of radical terrorist cells—some linked to the Taliban—have sprung up. Further complicating Brazil's roles are reports surfacing which suggest collusion between the Taliban and the Brazilian government, the former having infiltrated the latter to an uncertain extent. Brazil has become a focal point for Taliban propaganda and financial operations. Consequently, revenues that the Taliban raises through its illicit poppy cultivation has a pronounced influence on Brazilian officials and politicians, as does the latent threat of violence posed by terrorist groups



now active within Brazil. Due to this, Brazilian nationals (including public officials) are believed to have a host of secret deals and agreements with the Taliban within Afghanistan, most notably an agreement to develop natural gas and oil pipelines throughout the region in an attempt to help the corrupt government and provide financial stability for a developing puppet government. In effect, Brazil is interested in further cementing itself as a global power and is interested in insuring any investment they make in Afghanistan's natural resources with Taliban-provided security.

## CHINA



Although China shares a common border with Afghanistan, relations between the two nations have not been particularly close. The world's leading economic power, China is a regular antagonist to the United States and its occidental bloc, both ideologically and on matters of foreign policy. However, though Chinese economic power recently surpassed that of its western rival, the United States, the potency of the Chinese military remains limited. The Chinese military is not prepared for or capable of sustaining any serious military action in Afghanistan, and realizes that should the United States and its allies deem a second intervention necessary, Chinese economic prowess will not be able to compete with hard power. While China does not support the Taliban's aspirations to a reestablished regime, they have yet to

internationally voice this opposition. The Chinese are keenly aware of the potential returns to be gleaned from investment in Afghanistan, and thus do not want to alienate the Taliban regime before it can be fully discredited for fear that it may jeopardize the economic connection that China has with Afghanistan. China was home to the first foreign company to be allowed to explore Afghanistan's oil and gas reserves in the Amu Darya Basin, and on top of that China has consistently been the largest foreign investor into metals and minerals within the region.

## FRANCE



Although Afghanistan is beyond France's traditional sphere of influence, French-based NGOs have played a large role in supporting Afghanistan's development. Being a member of NATO, France was involved in the occupation of Afghanistan between 2002-2013 and was largely responsible for security in the northeastern provinces. As such, the French experience in Afghanistan was largely different from that of other coalition members such as the United States and the United Kingdom in that the provinces in which France provided security were relatively pacified and the Taliban's influence was fairly weak. Of the occidental powers capable of influencing events in Afghanistan, France is perhaps most receptive to the prospect of a reformed Taliban government, though the emphasis

here is on reformed. It should not be assumed that the French will readily align with the United States and other NATO members on the issue of Afghanistan, particularly if they should call for military intervention. Deep austerity measures and public opposition all but guarantee that France will not participate in a new invasion of Afghanistan unless there is a direct and credible threat to their security. France will, however, continue to seek the creation of an environment that is most conducive with the application of humanitarian aid, and some French MNCs are, at least vaguely, interested in the prospect of extracting Afghanistan's natural resource wealth, though they recognize the potentially prohibitive cost of doing so.

## **RUSSIA**



Russia's role in the UNSC is usually that of the dedicated dissenter, but the Taliban in Afghanistan is one issue over which they share some common ground with their fellow members. Outside of the NATO bloc, the Russians (under the Soviet system) is the only nation with significant military experience in Afghanistan. It was a costly and unrewarding endeavor for them, and ultimately laid the foundation for the emergence of the Taliban movement. As a result, there are latent hostilities in the Russian Federation against the Taliban. However, Russia is much more concerned about the link between the Taliban and

Chechen separatists which have been responsible for numerous terrorist attacks in Russia's more-developed regions. Russia has demonstrated that it has no reservations about using heavy-handed military force to counter terrorist threats and is skeptical that the ailing Afghan government can be incorporated into a political settlement in the country. The specter of their defeated withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 is not an effective deterrent against the possibility of further Russian intervention in Afghanistan—the Russian Federation retains significant influence in Central Eurasia and has outsized faith in their military institutions to serve as the best facilitator of Russian interests. In this case, Afghanistan promises an untapped new market for resource and capital rich Russian investors.

## **UNITED KINGDOM**



The United Kingdom was heavily engaged in Afghanistan between 2001-2014, in the spirit of their traditionally close partnership with the United States, and they maintained sizeable diplomatic and military missions to Afghanistan throughout the aforementioned period. Following their withdrawal from Afghanistan, the United Kingdom continued to play an active role in supporting Afghanistan's development, through a host of aid grants and other acts of benevolence. One such noteworthy program was an initiative set forth by the Department for Education which effectively opened Britain's university system to some of

Afghanistan's most promising and deserving students. This, coupled with special training programs (also under the direction of the Department for Education) intended to foster a vital and viable intellectual community within Afghanistan has been tremendously important in revitalizing its academic culture. The United Kingdom has passionately supported education initiatives in Afghanistan, as it recognizes that improved education is an essential component of successful nation-building and counter-terrorism. Yet the United Kingdom also recognizes that advancing the health of Afghanistan's educational institutions is entirely dependent on the state of security within the country, and the post-imperial nation is neither fit nor particularly willing to commit any extensive military force to the cause of stability in Afghanistan.

## UNITED STATES



This crisis has put all eyes on the United States as the international community waits to see how the powerful nation will respond. Initial American policy dictated that the Taliban was to be completely isolated and its numbers steadily reduced, whether through targeted killings, re-assimilation programs, or other initiatives. Essentially, the Taliban was neglected for several years by the ISAF, and upon their reemergence, it became apparent that the American policy no longer fit the reality which they faced. Absolute opposition to and intolerance of

the Taliban would only beget and sustain fighting in Afghanistan. There was much optimism as the Taliban appeared to be repurposing itself as a political organization, but this proved to be a stroke of opportunism, and the movement maintained most of its paramilitary elements and capabilities. It is now widely recognized in the United States that Afghanistan cannot be allowed to relapse into its former state; isolated and under Taliban control. At the same time, there is little confidence that the American military can effectively combat a new Taliban insurgency, despite possessing what is arguably the world's most potent military force. The 2001-2014 occupation of Afghanistan was very much *America's war*, and the issue of credibility looms large in the minds of American policy makers wary of an increasing number of challengers on the global stage, they will not be content to leave Afghanistan an open-ended question.

## AUSTRALIA



The Australian government has a considerable amount of interest in a stable Afghanistan and, as a major power in the South Asian region, is well positioned to influence events there. Australian troops were present, in relatively limited numbers, throughout much of the 2001-2014 occupation, though they were mostly specialized personnel not subject to the rigors of counter-insurgency. Even this modest presence was the subject of considerable disapproval in Australia's domestic politics,

as many critics called for the redeployment of Australian soldiers to combat more pressing threats of terrorism and to help secure Australia against illegal immigration (a significant portion of which was emanating from Afghanistan itself). Though the Australian mission to Afghanistan performed remarkably well in terms of achieving its objectives and mitigating casualties, it is unlikely that any sizable force would be redeployed in the current context. However, it should also be noted that several influential Australian mineral resources conglomerates are eagerly interested in opening operations to tap into Afghanistan's promising endowment of natural resources. It remains to be seen whether or not Australian mining companies will lobby for acceptance of the Taliban so that they may ensure security, or the deployment of an Australian force to stabilize and protect mineral extraction.

## EGYPT



Egypt's traditional foreign policy interests have been primarily focused on Israel, and this became all the more applicable following the 2011 Revolutions in the country which paved the way for an Islamist government. However, despite deteriorating relations with Israel throughout the remainder of that decade, Egypt also moved to expand the scope of their foreign policy engagements. For Egypt, Afghanistan represented something of a new frontier of

foreign policy, and as a coalition of predominantly Christian states implemented development programs, Egypt's Islamist government sought to retain Afghanistan's Muslim character. The Egyptian government has publicly assumed a moderate stance on Afghanistan, but covert ties between Egypt and the Taliban are known to exist. Furthermore, Egypt is the source of a large quantity of grants and donations directed for Afghan, and a smaller number of Pakistani *madrassahs*, some of which are linked to Taliban recruitment efforts and which profess radical interpretations of Islam. A non-secular Islamic state on the UNSC always constitutes a minority, but Egypt possesses a disproportionate quantity of influence in this crisis. Partly, this is due to the close Egyptian-Pakistani partnership. More importantly, however, is the fact that Egypt, in its present manifestation, represents an independently successful transition from *de facto* autocracy to *de facto* democracy. The circumstances Egypt once found itself facing are not entirely unlike those Afghanistan now faces.

## NORWAY



During the ISAF occupation of Afghanistan, Norway's troop contingent was deployed in the comparatively stable northwest region of the country, north of Herat. The Taliban's presence in the region was feeble and sustained almost exclusively by covert support from Iranian benefactors across the

nearby border, which ultimately allowed Norway to fulfill its responsibilities with the deployment of only a very small force. Indeed, Norway has traditionally seen itself better-suited to the role of brokering peace, rather than actively engaging in combat. Thus, the Norwegian government is adamant in urging that inclusive and comprehensive negotiations take place on the subject of Afghanistan's future before any international military force is deployed, or any other similarly dramatic action taken. Of the current UNSC members, Norway is perhaps most sensitive to the diversity of interests concerning Afghanistan, and the Norwegian government is adamant that for stability to be attained and negotiations to be successful, the widest array of voices must be recognized and respected. Norway is willing to accept the Taliban, and all other like-groups, as active participants in Afghanistan's government, but not without stringent assurances that they will make serious concessions concerning their policies and practices which Norway feels are inexcusable human rights violations. Finally, it is worth noting that Norway hosts a significant Afghan refugee and expatriate community which retains strong ties to Afghanistan, though its interests there vary and are not united.

## **SOUTH AFRICA**



As the only African state from the sub-Saharan region on the UNSC, South Africa

has a unique role to play in international deliberations over Afghanistan's future. It is widely speculated that the governments of a number of sub-Saharan states (including the following: Nigeria, Somalia, Kenya, Ghana, Togo, Angola, South Sudan, Uganda) have been quietly engaged in negotiations with and have made concessions to the South African government in an effort to ensure that their interests are at least moderately well considered in the UNSC. At the root of these governments', and certainly South Africa's, concerns over Afghanistan is the issue of terrorism. Arguably, no other continent suffers as extensively from violence perpetrated by international terrorist organizations more than Africa. Several major terrorist networks are now heavily rooted and active in Africa, as domestic governments there are often ill-equipped to inhibit their presence. Many of these groups have strong links, whether financial, material, or in terms of recruitment and training, to Afghanistan. Thus, combating the proliferation of terrorist organizations is a primary interest of the South African delegation. Furthermore, while the South African military has never been involved in Afghanistan, South African security contractors have benefitted tremendously from the demand for mercenaries that instability in Afghanistan has created. It remains to be seen how aggressively the industry will lobby the South African government, but South Africa will certainly be hugely interested in the issues pertaining to security as the UNSC seeks to solve the current crisis in Afghanistan.

## UZBEKISTAN



Despite being a former member-state of the Soviet Union and a current member of the Commonwealth of Independent States—a supranational organization of which the Russian Federation is a dominant member, though it wields little actual power—Uzbekistan has aligned itself with the United States and cooperated extensively with American efforts to secure the region. Uzbekistan receives a large military aid grant from the United States, and has historically made significant concessions for the conduct of American logistical operations on Uzbek territory. Roughly 10% of Afghanistan’s population is ethnically Uzbek, though they predominantly reside in the northern border regions where security is significantly better than in Afghanistan’s southern and central provinces. Nonetheless, Uzbekistan is committed to regional stability and combating the expansion of terrorist networks. Furthermore, by virtue of its geographic location, any international undertaking in Afghanistan will benefit extensively from cooperative agreements with the Uzbek government which, itself, is interested in promoting low- to medium-intensity cross-border trading. However, Uzbekistan will seek to keep any such trade tightly regulated, as it is increasingly concerned by the issue of narcotics consumption, which almost exclusively emanates from Afghanistan’s unrestricted poppy cultivation.

## VENEZUELA



Following the death of Venezuela’s internationally ostracized president, Hugo Chávez, in 2016, the nation’s stability and the government’s control have steadily deteriorated. Chávez’s United Socialist Party of Venezuela has retained nominal control of the nation’s politics, but in reality the situation is much more contested. Domestic uncertainty effectively guarantees that Venezuela will not commit military to any action in Afghanistan, but the government of Venezuela retains two main interests in Afghanistan. The first, more symbolic than anything, is the desire of the Venezuelan government, in the spirit of Chávez, to posture itself as a defender against the United States’ foreign policies and actions abroad (Venezuela and Iran perceive themselves as partners in antagonizing the Occident). More concretely, Venezuela’s state-controlled oil industry has expressed interest in supplying Central Asia, thus challenging Russia’s long-established monopoly in the region. Venezuela has already publicized agreements with Iran which will develop oil pipelines through Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. The cooperative agreement between Iran and Venezuela represents the most potent threat to Russia’s oil monopoly in the region and, if successful, could play an important role in Afghanistan’s development as it would lower fuel costs.