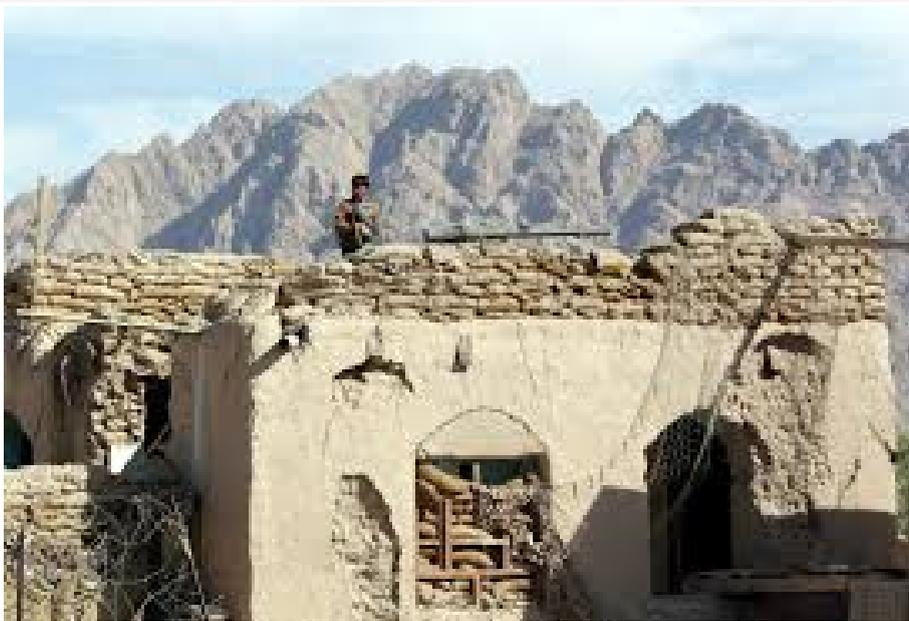


Ruben Delissen, Deputy Chair and Pranshu Panchal, Chair  
*Haganum Model United Nations XVI*  
February 2026

# The Stabilization of Afghanistan

*Historical Security Council*



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## Introduction

Afghanistan's instability in 2002 is rooted in decades of conflict that severely weakened state institutions and social cohesion. Following the 1979 Soviet invasion, Afghanistan experienced prolonged warfare, culminating in a civil war during the 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet-backed government. Competing factions fought for control, leading to widespread destruction, fragmentation of authority, and a collapse of public services. By the mid-1990s, the Taliban emerged as a dominant force, establishing control over much of the country while enforcing strict governance and limiting political inclusivity.

During Taliban rule, Afghanistan remained largely isolated from the international community and suffered from deep economic decline. Armed opposition continued, and governance structures remained highly centralized yet fragile. Ongoing conflict, human rights concerns, and limited access to education and healthcare contributed to widespread humanitarian suffering. By 2001, Afghanistan faced severe food shortages, large-scale displacement, and minimal institutional capacity to manage national affairs.

Following the events of September 2001, international military intervention led to the collapse of the Taliban government and the establishment of an interim Afghan administration. This marked the beginning of a new phase focused on stabilisation, reconstruction, and political transition. However, the legacy of decades of conflict posed significant challenges. Armed groups retained influence, security conditions remained volatile, and governance outside major urban centres was limited.

By 31 October 2002, the stabilisation of Afghanistan had become a central international concern. Efforts were underway to rebuild government institutions, establish national security forces, and deliver humanitarian assistance. Despite these initiatives, instability continued to affect daily life, and progress depended heavily on sustained international involvement and domestic political cooperation. Stabilising Afghanistan was therefore understood as a long-term process aimed at overcoming historical divisions, restoring security, and creating conditions for lasting peace, rather than a short-term post-conflict intervention.

## Definition of key terms

### **Armed Group**

An organized group that uses weapons to achieve political, ideological, or territorial objectives. Such groups may operate independently of formal state control.

### **Humanitarian Assistance**

Aid provided to protect human life and dignity during emergencies. This includes food, medical care, shelter, and basic services.

### **International Intervention**

The involvement of foreign states or international organizations in the affairs of another state. This may include military, political, or humanitarian actions.

### **Peacebuilding**

Activities aimed at preventing the recurrence of conflict by addressing underlying causes of instability. This often involves institutional reform, reconciliation, and social recovery.

### **Security Sector Reform (SSR)**

The process of restructuring a state's security institutions to improve effectiveness and accountability. This includes military, police, and justice systems.

### **State-Building**

The development or strengthening of governmental institutions and administrative capacity. Its purpose is to enable a state to exercise authority and deliver public services.

### **Stabilisation**

Measures taken to restore order and reduce violence in post-conflict or fragile environments. These measures often combine security, political, and economic actions.

## General Overview

The stabilisation of Afghanistan is a long-term process shaped by decades of conflict, weak governance, and foreign intervention. Following the Soviet invasion in 1979 and the subsequent civil war of the 1990s, Afghanistan experienced a collapse of central authority and widespread destruction of infrastructure. The Taliban's rise to power in the mid-1990s brought a degree of territorial control but did not resolve underlying political fragmentation or economic decline. Instead, ongoing conflict and international isolation further weakened state institutions and limited access to basic services.

After the removal of the Taliban government in late 2001, Afghanistan entered a transitional phase focused on rebuilding political structures and restoring security. An interim administration was established, supported by international actors seeking to prevent a return to large-scale conflict. However, stabilisation efforts faced immediate challenges. Armed groups retained control in many regions, security remained uneven outside major cities, and reliance on local power brokers complicated governance. The absence of a unified national security apparatus limited the government's ability to enforce authority across the country.

Security concerns were closely linked to broader social and economic conditions. Years of warfare had left Afghanistan with high levels of poverty, displacement, and food insecurity. Infrastructure such as roads, schools, and healthcare facilities had been severely damaged or destroyed. These conditions slowed reconstruction and limited public trust in emerging institutions. Efforts to improve security therefore needed to be combined with humanitarian assistance, economic recovery, and institutional development.

International involvement played a central role in stabilisation efforts. Peacekeeping forces, development agencies, and donors contributed to security provision, governance support, and reconstruction programs. While this assistance enabled early progress, it also created challenges related to coordination, dependence on external support, and differing priorities among international actors. Balancing domestic ownership with international oversight remained a persistent issue.

By October 31st, 2002, stabilisation in Afghanistan was understood as a complex and ongoing process rather than a completed objective. Progress depended on improving security, building effective institutions, and fostering political inclusion while managing the legacy of prolonged conflict. The situation highlighted the difficulties of post-conflict stabilisation in a deeply fragmented state and raised broader questions about the role, limits, and sustainability of international engagement.

## Major parties involved

### **Afghan Interim Authority**

The Afghan Interim Authority was established in late 2001 to fill the power vacuum following the collapse of the Taliban government. It was tasked with restoring basic governance, coordinating reconstruction efforts, and preparing the country for a political transition. However, its authority remained limited, particularly outside Kabul, where regional power holders and armed groups continued to exert control. The Interim Authority depended heavily on international support for security and financing, which shaped both its priorities and constraints. Its main interest lay in consolidating political legitimacy, extending administrative control, and preventing a return to widespread conflict.

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

The International Security Assistance Force was deployed to assist Afghan authorities in maintaining security, initially focusing on Kabul and surrounding areas. Its role was to create a safe environment for political and humanitarian activities rather than conduct nationwide counterinsurgency operations. Over time, debates emerged regarding the expansion of its mandate beyond the capital. ISAF's interest centered on preventing renewed instability while operating within the limits set by contributing states and international mandates.

### **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)**

NATO became increasingly involved in Afghanistan as part of broader international stabilisation efforts. While not initially in direct operational command, NATO provided strategic coordination, logistical support, and later assumed leadership roles within international security operations. Its involvement reflected concerns about regional security and transnational threats. NATO's interest lay in maintaining stability, supporting allied commitments, and adapting collective defense structures to post-Cold War security challenges.

### **Taliban Movement**

The Taliban remained a significant actor despite losing formal control of the government in 2001. Elements of the movement regrouped in rural areas and across borders, continuing to challenge stabilisation efforts. The Taliban opposed the presence of foreign forces and rejected the emerging political framework. Its continued activity influenced security conditions and shaped international and domestic strategies, making it a key factor in the broader stabilisation landscape.

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

UNAMA was established to coordinate international civilian efforts in support of Afghanistan's political transition and reconstruction. Its responsibilities included facilitating humanitarian aid, supporting political dialogue, and promoting human rights. As a neutral actor, UNAMA aimed to align the efforts of international donors and agencies with Afghan priorities. Its interest focused on ensuring coherence among international initiatives and supporting a sustainable political process.

## Timeline of events

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description of event</b>
1979 December 24th	The Soviet Union invades Afghanistan, triggering prolonged conflict and weakening state institutions.
1989 February 15th	Soviet forces withdraw, leaving a fragile government and ongoing internal power struggles.
1992 April 28th	The collapse of the central government leads to civil war between competing factions.
1996 September 27th	The Taliban seize control of Kabul and establish authority over most of Afghanistan.
2001 October 7th	International military intervention begins following the September 2001 attacks, leading to the collapse of Taliban rule.
2001 December 5th	The Bonn Agreement is signed, creating a framework for political transition and interim governance.
2001 December 20th	The United Nations authorizes the deployment of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).
2002 June 13th	The Emergency Loya Jirga establishes the Afghan Transitional Authority.

## Relevant UN treaties and events

**S/RES/1386 (2001); International Security Assistance Force (ISAF):** Authorizes the establishment of ISAF to assist Afghan authorities in maintaining security in Kabul and surrounding areas, 20 December 2001.

**A/RES/56/220; Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan:** Addresses human rights concerns following decades of conflict and calls for international support to rebuild institutions, 19 December 2001.

**Bonn Agreement (A/56/875–S/2001/1154):** Establishes a framework for political transition, including the creation of an interim authority and steps toward democratic governance, 5 December 2001.

**S/RES/1267 (1999); Sanctions Against the Taliban:** Establishes sanctions targeting the Taliban, including asset freezes and travel restrictions, in response to security concerns, 15 October 1999.

**S/RES/1333 (2000); Expanded Sanctions Regime:** Strengthens sanctions against the Taliban and associated individuals by expanding arms embargoes and financial restrictions, 19 December 2000.

**S/RES/1401 (2002); United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA):** Establishes UNAMA to coordinate international civilian assistance and support the political transition process, 28 March 2002.

**S/RES/1444 (2002); Extension of ISAF Mandate:** Extends the mandate of ISAF to continue providing security assistance during the transitional period, 27 November 2002.

**A/RES/55/119; Emergency International Assistance for Afghanistan:** Calls for increased humanitarian assistance to address severe economic and social conditions, 4 December 2000.

**A/RES/57/113; The Situation in Afghanistan:** Reaffirms support for Afghanistan's political transition and urges continued international engagement in reconstruction efforts, 11 December 2002.

## Previous attempts to solve the issue

United Nations; Bonn Process (2001–2002): Establishes a political roadmap for Afghanistan's transition, leading to the formation of an interim administration and later a transitional authority through the Emergency Loya Jirga.

International Community; Deployment of ISAF (2001): Provides security assistance in Kabul and surrounding areas to enable political reconstruction and humanitarian operations.

United Nations; Expansion of Humanitarian Coordination (2001–2002): Strengthens coordination among UN agencies to improve delivery of humanitarian aid and basic services during the transitional period.

United States and Allies; Security Sector Reform Programs (2002): Initiate the training and restructuring of Afghan national security forces to gradually transfer responsibility for internal security to domestic institutions.

Donor States; Tokyo Conference on Reconstruction (2002): Pledge financial support for Afghanistan's reconstruction, focusing on infrastructure, governance, and humanitarian relief.

Afghan Authorities; Emergency Loya Jirga (2002): Brings together representatives from across the country to establish a transitional government and increase political legitimacy.

International Financial Institutions; Emergency Economic Support Programs (2002): Introduce early recovery funding and technical assistance to stabilize Afghanistan's economy and rebuild essential administrative capacity.

## Possible solutions

**Gradual Expansion of National Security Capacity:** Support the long-term development of Afghan-led security institutions through training, mentoring, and equipment provision. Rather than rapid withdrawal or indefinite foreign presence, this approach emphasizes a phased transfer of responsibility, allowing debate on the pace of transition, funding responsibilities, and the role of foreign forces.

**Inclusive Political Dialogue and Power-Sharing:** Promote political inclusion by encouraging dialogue between central authorities, regional leaders, and excluded groups. This solution allows delegates to debate the extent to which negotiation should be pursued versus enforcement, and how legitimacy and reconciliation can be achieved in a fragmented political landscape.

**Integrated Humanitarian and Development Strategy:** Coordinate humanitarian assistance with long-term development programs to address immediate needs while strengthening infrastructure, education, and healthcare systems. Delegates may debate donor conditionality, sustainability, and whether development should follow or accompany security improvements.

**Strengthening Institutional Governance and Rule of Law:** Focus on rebuilding judicial systems, civil administration, and anti-corruption mechanisms to improve public trust in state institutions. This raises discussion on enforcement capacity, external oversight, and respect for local governance traditions.

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