PEACE OPERATIONS AND STATEBUILDING IN POST-CONFLICT SITUATIONS

Diego Luís Bortoli¹
João Vitor Corrêa Nogueira²

ABSTRACT

This study guide intends to provide an analysis of the role of United Nations (UN) peace operations in stabilizing war-torn states. Firstly, a Historical Background shall describe the developments in the notions of power and sovereignty, as well as the initiatives from the international community that culminated in the creation of the UN system. Following, the Statement of the Issue will provide an evolutionary record of UN peace operations — demonstrating the expansion of their scope from mere monitoring to peace enforcing and state-like functions — and present their main aspects and current pleas for reform. It will also explain the concepts of peacebuilding and statebuilding, exposing the qualities and problems of the strategies being adopted. The Previous International Action section shall list documents produced in the UN framework to address multiple issues regarding peace operations. The Bloc Positions will introduce the member states’ perspectives and expectations of UN-led peace processes. Finally, six Questions to Ponder are raised in order to guide the debate.

¹ Diego is a 2nd year student of International Relations at UFRGS.
² João Vitor is a 2nd year student of International Relations at UFRGS.
1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1.1. THE WESTPHALIAN AND VIENNA SYSTEMS AND THE CONCEPT OF SOVEREIGNTY

Sovereignty can be understood as the most fundamental institution of international relations. It is a Western concept adopted after the Thirty Years War in order to ensure religious freedom among nations and non-interference in domestic matters. Between 1618 and 1648, Europe lost one quarter of its population in the conflict, and there was no great power capable of imposing its will at the peace negotiations. The several conferences that took place after the Thirty Years War brought as a result an organized European system based in sovereignty. It would be propagated to the rest of the world as part of the continent’s exportation of values and beliefs during colonialism and imperialism. In Westphalia, diplomats were not looking for a universal concept applicable to every nation. Rather, they were trying to ensure peace through practical means (Kissinger 2014).

The Peace of Westphalia revolutionized international politics, putting aside religion and assuming the existence of independent and sovereign states in an anarchical world. Seeking for balance becomes the main premise for international politics with the absence of a hegemon capable of imposing its will. The sovereign state is not subject to any higher political authority. In this view, international law was not higher above states. Instead, it was an arrangement built to regulate their mutual relations. The legitimacy of interests conducted diplomacy as the main channel to facilitate the relations set among sovereign states. As consequence, the concept of balance of power became the primary guideline for states in order to ensure the stability and peacefulness in the international system (Jackson 2007).

Although sovereignty appeared as a way to ensure religious freedom to states — but not necessarily to people—, it continued to emanate from religious symbols. The king was rightful by blood to rule and there was not a national identity in the modern sense. It was only through the 18th and 19th centuries that nationalism appeared as understood nowadays. The French Revolution introduced the concept of popular sovereignty, according to which the will of people legitimate the state as a national entity. The Westphalian System was based in a dynastic order, and when Napoleon took advantage from the weak states of Central Europe, he not only chal-
lenged the balance of power but also the foundation of the European international system. As a result of the destruction of balance of power, the Congress of Vienna was organized seeking to restore the previous status quo (Jackson 2007).

The Congress of Vienna was the overture of the era of great powers’ assemblies. Its reactionary will restored the Bourbons in France and determined one more time the balance of powers as the way to ensure peace and stability. Although conservative, with monarchies trying to cease the revolutionary spirit, the Congress of Vienna innovated with the implementation of the Holy Alliance to preserve domestic order; of the Quadruple Alliance to preserve territorial integrity; and of the so-called “European concert”, which brought statesmen from the alliances to negotiation in order to define common goals and to respond to diplomatic crisis. Henry Kissinger understands the Congress as a precursor to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), as

its conferences were involved with a number of crises, trying to set a common course: the revolutions in Naples in 1820 and in Spain in 1820–23 (respectively suffocated by the Holy Alliance and France), and the Greek revolution and the independence war in that country of 1821–32 (which ended up receiving the support of Britain, France and Russia). The Powers Concert did not provide for unanimity in perspective; but in each case a potentially explosive crisis was resolved without the outbreak of a war between the great powers (Kissinger 2014, 52).

1.2. THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

The First World War caused more casualties than all wars since the French Revolution combined. The numbers range, but it is possible to say that approximately eight million soldiers and nine million civilians were killed in the conflict, regardless of the Spanish flu’s six million victims (Vissentini 2014). It affected the entire world economically and politically. Its consequences were felt to a greater or lesser extent by all countries. Although ground military operations did not occur intensively beyond European borders —with the exception of the Middle East—, naval battles included the Falkland Islands and the Pacific as a whole (Hobsbawm 2015). The war ended with German troops retreating to Berlin and surrendering to the allies. A sense of betrayal took place, as the Allied nations gathered at the
Paris Peace Conference in 1919 to decide the future of Germany and its allies with no capitulation. The country was excluded from the system and was not considered equally sovereign to other European states.

The League of Nations was, then, founded. It was based on the ideas presented by the President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, and on pacifist concepts that prevailed on both sides of the Atlantic, given the bloodshed of war and its destruction. The League was the first international organization with the specific objective of maintaining peace through legal mechanisms. Anglo-Saxon and French proposals for the League’s formulation were opposed and represented different perceptions of peace. The French military conception of the organization was result of the fear of another Germany’s aggression, and was translated into support of the new rising states in Eastern Europe as a way to destabilize the country. The British, in turn, defended an organization based on the principle of good faith and good will of member states, as a military approach was not beneficial to the country—the colonial and economic disputes prevented the United Kingdom to engage in continental Europe issues (Seitenfus 2008). Different understandings on the role of the international organization represent a debate that goes beyond the League time, as the United Nations currently debates how it should engage in its objectives.

The League innovated with new mechanisms, having a Security Council, a General Assembly and a Secretariat as the main bodies, a structure that would inspire the United Nations years later. Although the League advocated peaceful solution of controversies and arbitration as its main ways to act, article 15 of its Charter established the right to take action to maintain law and justice when members considered necessary and in occasions it could not have unanimity in a dispute settlement (Seitenfus 2008). Not only the domestic dispute in the United States prevented its participation in the League, but also the principles set by Woodrow Wilson were distorted, creating a much different body than imagined.

The League was, after all, established to maintain world peace, and spectacularly failed to do so. Although the League Council mediated some minor territorial disputes in the early 1920s and succeeded in bringing Germany into the organization in 1926, when it was confronted with great-power expansionism in Manchuria and Ethiopia, its time-consuming and wordy deliberations drove the aggressor states out of the League, but not out of the invaded
One of the most controversial bodies of the League was the Mandates System, which was created to provide administration to territories incapable of self-governing. This mechanism was implemented by the United Kingdom and France to acquire the German and Ottoman possessions in Africa, the Middle East and the Pacific. The Mandates System was in reality a way to perpetuate colonialism, as the administration of those territories meant colonial ruling. There were promises to hold popular consultations in mandated territories and to preserve the self-determination at least in the long term, but, as the American Senate rejected the Peace Treaty and the League, there was nothing left to ensure the application of such ideas. The Mandates System provided an afterlife to imperialism, recognizing its necessity to a certain level. It also was supposed to render imperial rule more humane and legitimate. The populations subject to it took the new mechanism as a betrayal from those who promised self-determination. For liberal internationalists, it was a mechanism to spread common norms and the “open door” policy. Furthermore, for victorious imperial powers, it was a way to legitimate the territorial settlement agreed upon in 1919 (Pedersen 2015).

1.3. THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

1.3.1. WORLD WAR II OUTCOMES AND THE FOUNDATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

The Second World War represented the rematch from the countries defeated in World War I, whose degrading economic and social situations paved the way for the rise of extremism. Studies range, but most show that 50 to 80 million people died in the years of war. The conflict involved more fighters and caused more destruction than the previous one, as well as led to a very different and more articulate peace process. The United Nations concept would be made official at the United Nations Declaration of 1 January 1942, exhibiting the concern of the United States and allies to ensure peace in the aftermath of conflict (UN 2016a). The idea was to bring unity to the coalition that was fighting the Axis forces.

Founded in 1945 at the San Francisco Conference, even before the end of war in Asia, the United Nations (UN) aimed to prevent a new war and to establish a system that would benefit the winning countries (UN 2016b).
The General Assembly and the Security Council (UNSC) were then created, having different meanings and objectives. The first would represent all member states in a representative forum, while the second would reflect the uneven way in which power was distributed around the world (Seitenfus 2008). Chapters VI and VII of the UN Charter refer to international security issues, and article 42 ensures the Security Council’s right to take action through air, sea and land forces to maintain or restore international peace and security. Although such a UN army does not exist, the UNSC permanent members can control UN operations through the Military Staff Committee —which is specified in articles 45, 46 and 47 (MacQueen 2006).

1.3.2. THE TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL

The Trusteeship Council was created as one of the main bodies of the United Nations, having the five permanent members of the Council as its members. It suspended its operations in 1994, when the last trust territory, Palau, gained independence. In the same year, a resolution was adopted dropping its responsibility to meet annually (UN 2016c). The Trusteeship Council adapted the Mandates System to seek independence and self-governance, inheriting almost the same territories from the League’s administration. The Trusteeship Council did not represent a main issue inside the UN when compared to the role of mandate in the League. Notwithstanding, the mechanism of policing by multinational forces, which first took place in Schleswig, inspired the concept of peacekeeping after the Second World War (MacQueen 2006).

The idea of trusteeship replaced that of mandates, indicating that the UN was more committed than the League of Nations to addressing the issue of colonization. Unlike the League, the United Nations had potential to fight colonialism, as both the Soviet Union and the United States rejected it whenever it did not regard strategic locations. The trusteeship, however, could not last forever, and the General Assembly, by bringing voice to non-colonial powers, had an important role in advocating against any form of colonization (Mazower 2008).

2. STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE

2.1. THE EVOLUTION OF UN PEACE OPERATIONS

During the Cold War, rivalry between the two most prominent mem-
bers of the UNSC, the United States and the Soviet Union, prevented the organ from operating the complex collective security system that was idealized as the major mechanism for maintaining peace in the UN framework. Facing such an adversity, and in response to the emerging conflicts, a series of missions was conceived with the intent to mediate these strives, through the deployment of multinational forces composed of civilians and/or militarises in the conflict terrain. Such missions, approved in an ad hoc basis without the necessity of commitment and support of all member states, were named “peacekeeping operations” and their agents, “peacekeepers” or “blue helmets” (Bigatão 2014).

2.1.1 THE COLD WAR ERA

The UNSC was marginalized and its activities were mitigated by the Cold War. With two blocs heavily divided and backed up by the veto power—one whose frequent use resulted from the superpower confrontation—, key challenges to international peace and security were managed entirely or largely beyond the UN (Malone 2007).

The Council was, however, able to perform functions in monitoring and peacekeeping. The traditional peace operations were inaugurated in the 1950s, designed to respond to interstate crisis by stationing unarmed or lightly armed UN forces between hostile parties to monitor a truce, troop withdrawal or buffer zone while political negotiations went forward (Doyle and Sambanis 2007). The first UN Emergency Force (UNEF I), deployed in Egypt in October 1956 to maintain a truce between the Egyptian Army and Israel, UK and France during the Suez Canal Crisis, initiated this era (Malone 2007). In the occasion of the creation of UNEF I, Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld articulated the key principles of peacekeeping: consent of the conflicting parties, impartiality and minimum use of force, restricted to the self-defense of peacekeepers³. He also suggested to ground peacekeeping operations in an imaginary “Chapter VI and a half” of the UN Charter. This chapter would advocate the conjunction of Chapter VI’s peace settlement of disputes (negotiation, mediation, conciliation, and arbitration) and Chapter VII’s peace enforcement (which foresees provisional measures to prevent the escalation of a threat to international peace and

³The “holy trinity” of traditional peacekeeping, as it became known, generally relies on the principles complementing each other: impartiality implied that the UN would not take sides in the dispute and was a precondition for acquiring the consent of all the parties. Enjoying the consent of all factions in turn rendered it easier for peacekeepers not to use force except in self-defense (Liu 1992).
security) (Bigatão 2014).

Until 1987, the UN authorized 14 peace operations, most of them with mandates that followed the principles established by Dag Hammarskjöld. The prevalence of such principles, nevertheless, assumes the compliance of three conditions: (a) the belligerents must be states, or, at least, organizations, making it possible to identify the actors in order to guarantee the truce; (b) the combatant units are hierarchically organized (i.e. professional armies); and (c) the belligerents are willing to negotiate a peace accord. Otherwise, it may be difficult to respect the principles of minimal use of force and impartiality (Bigatão 2014, 16).

The dawn of the 1990s came to impose substantial changes in the nature of the conflicts addressed by the UN. The so-called “new wars” were predominantly forged inside a single state and characterized by the introduction of new actors —rebel groups and other non-state actors—, the absence of defined battlefields, and the unclear difference between combatants and non-combatants —the latter becoming targets of generalized violence (Kaldor 2001, Bigatão 2014). These shifts led to major consequences to the way the UN managed conflicts, partially eroding the principles of traditional peacekeeping.

2.1.2 THE POST-COLD WAR ERA

The end of the Cold War, and the subsequent sharp drop in the use of veto, led to the UNSC disposition to tackle more numerous and diverse conflicts than it had been able to (Malone 2007). It had to confront hostilities of a much more complex nature than the interstate disputes with which it had greater experience. The rash of wars within newly independent states, particularly in the African continent, often had a religious or ethnic character and involved unusual violence and cruelty, leading to serious humanitarian crises (UN 1995). International efforts to appease and resolve these conflicts required complex mandates, more ambitious than the ones the modalities of traditional peacekeeping were designed to meet (Weiss, et al. 2007).

2.1.2.1 THE RISE OF MULTIDIMENSIONAL PEACEKEEPING

The mitigation of the East-West confrontations, the changes in the nature of conflict, and the diffusion of the universal values of democracy and respect for human rights strengthened the UN’s involvement in conflict resolution and peace processes in the period (Fontoura 2005). Between 1987
and 1994, the Council quadrupled the number of resolutions approved, tripled the peace operations authorized, and multiplied by seven the number of economic sanctions it imposed per year (UN 1995).

Facing a scenario of change and renewed expectation, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali outlined in the 1992 document An Agenda for Peace five interconnected roles that he hoped the UN would play. The Agenda combines instruments of war-like enforcement and peace-like negotiation that had been evolving separately, and fills in a conceptual gap that had been marking peace operations so far (UN 1992, Doyle and Sambanis 2007).

• Preventive diplomacy, undertaken in order “to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur.” Involving confidence-building measures, fact-finding, early warning and possibly “preventive deployment” of UN authorized forces, preventive diplomacy seeks to reduce the danger of violence and increase the prospects of peaceful settlement.

• Peace enforcement, authorized to act with or without the consent of the parties in order to ensure compliance with a cease-fire mandated by the Security Council acting under the authority of Chapter VII of the UN Charter, these military forces are composed of heavily armed national forces operating under the direction of the Secretary-General.

• Peacemaking, designed “to bring hostile parties to agreement” through peaceful means such as those found in Chapter VI of the UN Charter. Drawing upon judicial settlement, mediation, and other forms of negotiation, UN peacemaking initiatives would seek to persuade parties to arrive at a peaceful settlement of their differences.

• Peacekeeping, established to deploy a “United Nations presence in the field, hitherto with the consent of all the parties concerned,” as a confidence-building measure to monitor a truce between the parties while diplomats strive to negotiate a comprehensive peace or officials to implement an agreed peace.

• Post-conflict reconstruction, organized to foster economic and social cooperation with the purpose of building confidence among previously warring parties, developing the social, political, and economic infrastructure to prevent future violence, and laying the
foundations for a durable peace
(Doyle and Sambanis 2006, 10–11).

In the light of Boutros-Ghali’s Agenda, important structural departmental reforms took place in 1992 and remain in place today. The most pertinent initiative may be considered the creation of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Department of Political Affairs (DPA). The DPKO was intended to focus on the planning, deployment and implementation of peacekeeping operations. The DPA, in turn, was granted authority to supervise the plethora of peace activities that the UN began to perform in the early 1990s (Al-Qaq 2009). Such activities would include: the validation and organization of electoral processes, the negotiations and diplomacy of UN Special Representatives with contracting parties and the international community, the pursuit of human rights provisions, and all other features of peace operations directly related to domestic governance (Al-Qaq 2009, 57).

Over the 1990s, the Council authorized 35 new peace operations in 26 different territories. The mandates, despite preserving the holy trinity of principles, were increasingly complex and detailed, acquiring political, military and humanitarian tasks —a much more intrusive role than traditional peacekeeping, which encompassed peacebuilding and statebuilding elements (Paris 2007). In some of these “multidimensional” peace operations, as diverse as those in Namibia (UNTAG), El Salvador (ONUSAL), Cambodia (UNTAC), Mozambique (ONUMOZ), and Eastern Slavonia (UNTAES), the UN had a commendable record of success in helping settle conflicts. Its role was four-fold: it served as a peacemaker facilitating a peace treaty between the parties; as a peacekeeper monitoring the demobilization of military forces, resettling refugees, and supervising transitional civilian authorities; as a peacebuilder supporting the interim administration of some countries, monitoring and in some cases organizing the implementation of human rights, democratic elections, and economic rehabilitation; and in a quite limited way as peace enforcer when the agreements came unstuck (Doyle and Sambanis 2006, 327). For this reason, the UN gradually abandoned the restrictions of staying out of the domestic politics of their host states (Paris 2007).

By virtue of the deployment of multidimensional peace operations in areas where militias, gangs and spoilers were active and where there was neither peace to keep nor willing from the parties to negotiate peace,
the UN started to adopt more robust positions regarding the use of force (Faganello 2013). The UNSC frequently updated the mandates of a single mission seeking to adequate in a reactive way to the conditions of the conflicts (Pugh 2007). By authorizing peacekeepers to use all necessary means in order to deter attempts to undermine the political processes, to protect civilians from imminent threats, and to assist local authorities in the maintenance of law and order, it transformed a considerable number of non-coercive multidimensional operations into peace-enforcing ones, backed by Chapter VII of the Charter and sometimes —as in the case of Somalia— by the involvement of national forces of great powers experienced with the application of coercive measures (UN 2008, Bigatão 2014). The interpretation orientating most Chapter VII-backed UN actions, namely in Somalia, in Bosnia, and in Rwanda, was that “(...) even though the use of force is authorized under Chapter VII of the Charter, the United Nations remains neutral and impartial between the warring parties, without a mandate to stop the aggressor (if one can be identified) or impose a cessation of hostilities” (UN 1995, 5).

Indeed, peace enforcement actions were restricted to three situations: (a) guaranteeing humanitarian aid provision; (b) protecting UN personnel; and (c) deterring intrusions against the protected areas under UN responsibility, created specifically in Yugoslavia for the protection of civilians. Such limitations to the use of force, however, brought discredit on the UN’s activities. In the most tragic scenarios, peacekeepers watched the massacre of millions of people, holding neither an adequate mandate nor instruments to take proper action5 (Bigatão 2014, 29). These events exhibited the UN’s inability to deal with the so-called new civil wars. The peace operations deployed to address conflicts as in Rwanda (1993) and Bosnia (1995) were dismissed by many observers in the late 1990s as far too risky once, in addition to other complications, peacekeepers were being attacked and killed (Pugh 2007).

2.1.2.2 THE SHIFTS OF UN PEACEKEEPING IN THE 21ST CENTURY

4 “Spoilers” are “groups (including signatories) who renege on their commitments or otherwise seek to undermine a peace accord by violence” (UN 2000, 4).
5 The neutral multinational UN-led forces sent to Rwanda in October 1993, with a restricted mandate regarding the use of force, could not prevent the genocidal acts that murdered some 800,000 Tutsi and politically moderate Hutu between April and June 1994 (Power 2001). In Bosnia, Dutch peacekeepers witnessed the attacks to a key humanitarian corridor in Srebrenica that led to more than 7,500 casualties in June 1995 (MacQueen 2006).
The perceived failure of peace enforcement operations in Somalia and Bosnia in 1993–1994 and the tragedies in Rwanda had a paralyzing effect on all UN operations over the middle of the decade—although even in this relatively slow period three new missions were launched in Bosnia (1995), Eastern Slavonia (1995) and Guatemala (1995). By the late 1990s, demand for new operations increased again, with missions deployed in East Timor, Kosovo, Sierra Leone and the DR Congo in 1999 (Paris 2007). The crises in Kosovo and East Timor were a turning point, for the Council mandated UN civilian officials to administer the two territories, although no significant expansion of UN military operations took place. In Kosovo, NATO was responsible for deploying ground forces, while in East Timor an Australian-led force undertook the initial stabilization operation (although it eventually transferred responsibilities to UN troops). In Africa, instead, new peacekeeping missions deployed from 2000 onwards were responsible for re-establishing the UN’s role as a credible military actor (Gowan 2013).

The first of these African missions was in Sierra Leone, where a small number of troops witnessed the offensive of rebel groups which ultimately prompted a British intervention to restore order in 2000. The episode led UN officials and diplomats to rethink the military dimension of peace operations. The Council then moved boldly its attitude towards the intensification of force for a range of purposes beyond self-defense, such as protection of civilians and maintenance of public security, in mandates that involved the extension of state authority (Johnstone 2011). The missions launched in Liberia (2003), Côte d’Ivoire (2004), and Burundi (2005) all had mandates that reflected such extension. Notwithstanding, the UN Mission in the DR Congo (MONUC) is considered the primary test of the UN’s capability to provide military support to a weak state. Established in 1999 and initially a small monitoring mission, MONUC shifted to a more assertive military posture, granting its troops a peace-enforcing character as violence escalated in eastern Congo in early 2003 (Boshoff 2004). The UN also regained military capabilities outside the African continent: in Haiti, Brazilian forces under UN mandate countered gang actions in slums; in southern Lebanon, after the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah, the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was authorized to take the necessary deployment of its forces in order to help the government exercise its authority over the territory (Gowan 2013).

The resurgence of UN military operations offered the background for improving and coordinating post-conflict peacebuilding initiatives, especially towards institution-building in the security and justice sectors.
(Gowan 2013). One of the main concerns of the newly established peace operations was the management of electoral processes, which included presidential elections in Sierra Leone (2002), Liberia (2005), Burundi (2005), Haiti (2006), and the DR Congo (2006) (UN 2012). Although such processes had been run in relative success, they generally came to impose new political challenges to the UN, such as the action of rebel groups opposing the results of the polls or the deterioration of the relations between UN missions and local authorities. The UN then assumed that successful post-conflict elections were not per se capable of guaranteeing lasting peace and stability (Gowan 2013). The major outset in this regard was that of the DR Congo. In 2006, newly elected President Joseph Kabila became an increasingly difficult partner for the UN. He decisively launched brutal offensives against civilians in the east of the country, as part of a major plan to counter anti-government militias. In a morally complex enterprise, the UN provided logistical support to the poorly equipped Congolese Army. Conversely, the UNSC approved a “conditionality policy” for MONUC in 2009, according to which the mission should withdraw its support from units led by commanders that perpetrated human rights abuses (Reynaert 2011). In the UN Operation in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI), civil unrest after elections at the end of 2010 led the Council to authorize both UNOCI and French troops to use force to protect civilians, standing up to elected President Gbagbo. Some governments, nevertheless —Burundi (2006), Eritrea (2008), and Chad (2010)—, eventually demanded that UN forces leave their territories (Gowan 2013).

Along with political flaws, the Council also had to face military challenges in this new flow of operations. The UN’s response to crises in weak states through the expansion of military operations soon brought the risk of operational overstretch. The continuing rise of UN troops rendered it difficult to persuade contributing countries to provide military assets to guarantee that peace operations run smoothly. In 2005, for instance, the newly deployed operation in South Sudan faced lack of engineering support to build facilities and protection units (Gowan 2008). By 2008, MONUC was unable to keep a sufficient presence to deter militias. In Darfur, a joint AU-UN force (UNAMID), deployed in early 2008 to respond to the complexity of the conflict, soon had to face military defects and political problems—including initiatives of the Sudanese government to hamper UN efforts in the field (CIC 2012).

By the early 2010s, the UN again faced discredit. For this reason, there was an increasing appeal for UN civilian political missions as ligh-
...ter alternatives to peacekeeping —UN Assistance Missions in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and in Iraq (UNAMI) are prominent examples (CIC 2011). Many experts came to believe that the era of large-scale peace operations with statebuilding elements —such as MONUC, renamed MONUSCO in 2010— was coming to an end (Labuda 2015). This development, however, did not last long.

In a contradictory way, the reasons for discredit served to engender developments in the UN peacekeeping architecture. The introduction of targeted combat operations and the shift from defensive to offensive peacekeeping have been one of the most striking features of peace operations in recent years (Peter 2015). By 2013, the deteriorating situation in the DR Congo led the Council to expand the mandate of MONUSCO, by including a “Force Intervention Brigade” (FIB) in the mission structure, that would be “the first-ever ‘offensive’ combat force” in UN peacekeeping. The FIB was conceived in order to neutralize and disarm, in coalition with the Congolese Army, the Tutsi March 23 (M23) and other militias, such as the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), which take action in the eastern DR Congo (UN 2013). In the same year, the UNSC also established the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). Its mandate authorizes French troops conducting Operation Serval to use all necessary means to intervene, with the support of MINUSMA when under imminent threat and by request of the Secretary-General (UNSC 2013). According to Peter (2015, 355), “by associating MINUSMA with Operation Serval, the Security Council in essence authorized an intervention brigade, just not under the UN command”. The UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UN-SOM), also established in 2013, has been an example of UN’s support to regional organizations and states involved in counterterrorism. Its mandate foresees the association with the activities performed by the government and the African Union (AMISOM), designed to tackle the terrorist group Al-Shabaab (Peter 2015).

---

6 According to Ramos-Horta (2015, online), “peacekeeping and Special Political Missions are artificially separated, managed by two Departments [DPKO and DPA, respectively], leading to bureaucratic rivalry and infighting”. In 2015, the High-Level Panel on UN Peace Operations proposed the fusion of these two core UN peace and security functions into a single “peace operations” concept under a new Deputy Secretary-General charged with the Department of Peace Operations (UN 2015).

7 Operation Serval was established in 2012 by request of the Malian interim government, aiming to oust Islamic militants in northern Mali (Peter 2015).
It is clear that the Council has been adopting a more intrusive attitude towards peace operations lately, although this may not correspond to its practice of enshrining in the missions’ mandate the necessity of preserving the holy trinity of principles (Labuda 2015). Peacekeepers have been deployed to increasingly risk-prone areas, not only to monitor ceasefires and protect civilians, but also to protect states through statebuilding initiatives even before a peace agreement has been reached (Peter 2015). The next sections will focus on the current aspects of UN peace operations that have been under reform.

2.2 MAIN ASPECTS OF PEACE OPERATIONS AND PROSPECTS FOR REFORM

In 2015, the High-Level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations (HIPPO) laid down recommendations for undertaking a reform of peace operations. It sets a range of core functions exercised by UN peacekeeping to date. It also calls for substantial changes in the Council’s mandating, monitoring and support of missions, in an ambitious attempt to match UN responses to the actual challenges imposed to international peace and security (Security Council Report 2016).

2.2.1 CONFLICT PREVENTION

In the last two decades, UN peace operations have significantly contributed to the resolution and reduction of disputes worldwide. Notwithstanding, changes in conflict, related to violent extremism and the growing popular aspirations for change, have outpaced the ability of operations to respond (UN 2015a). In the light of such challenges, then, priority should be given to the prevention and mediation of armed conflict, addressing its root causes (Benkler and Pietz 2016). There must also be an early Council’s engagement in crises, once it “may investigate any dispute, or any situation which might lead to international friction or give rise to a dispute” (UN 2016b). One of the most realistic alternatives to foster prevention is a proper regular budget to the UN’s mediation, preventive diplomacy and good offices capacities, having as forward platform the establishment of regional political offices (UN 2015a).

2.2.2 PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

Civilians are the ones who most suffer from intrastate wars, as they often become direct targets of governments and rebel groups. In Resolu-
tion 1296 (2000), the Council noted that the targeting of civilians and the committing of widespread violations of international human rights and humanitarian law may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security, triggering UNSC action\(^8\) (Security Council Report 2016). In this regard, UN peace operations have expanded their aims in order to include the protection of civilians, by deterring potential violence against them, committing leaders to observing the agreed rules, or even providing information through the frequent interaction of civilians (Bove and Ruggeri 2015). Yet, UN troops have been reluctant in using force to protect civilians from threats and, when doing so, only a small fraction of this population has been protected (von Einsiedel and Chandran 2015). The HIPPO, then, advocates the beneficial contribution of unarmed civilian protection and the interaction between the UN and the local community and NGOs in order to build a protective environment. Moreover, for missions with mandates intended to protect civilians, the Panel reiterates the necessity that the Council commits to closely monitoring and possibly adjusting such missions in order to deliver the expected protection (UN 2015a).

### 2.2.3. USE OF FORCE

According to the Panel, the UN is not entrusted to war-making, given its well-known capability limits and the risk of compromising the impartiality of its operations. Peace enforcement, rather, primarily lies on coalitions of willing states duly authorized by the Council. In this view, enforcing initiatives such as the Force Intervention Brigade in the Congo are temporary exceptions, and shall be applied with extreme caution (von Einsiedel and Chandran 2015). Indeed, the more robust the mission—as in the case of MONUSCO and MINUSMA—, the more are the challenges that rise from the alignment with one of the conflicting parties. Nonetheless, as part of the trinity of basic principles of peacekeeping, the non-use of force shall be interpreted flexibly, and should never be an excuse for failure to protect civilians and the mission mandate. In addition, the HIPPO suggests that the

---

\(^8\) Resolution 1296 contributed significantly to developing the concept of Responsibility to Protect (the so-called “R2P”). According to the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, such concept implies that “[e]ach individual state has the responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. This responsibility entails the prevention of such crimes, including their incitement, through appropriate and necessary means. […] The international community should, as appropriate, encourage and help states to exercise this responsibility and support the United Nations in establishing an early warning capability” (UN 2005, 138).
UN should not be engaged in any counterterrorist tasks ongoing forward, and that these should remain delegated to regional or ad hoc coalitions (Labuda 2015, Security Council Report 2016).

2.2.4. REGIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

The potential role of regional arrangements in maintaining international peace and security is foreseen in Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. This role has been increasingly advocated, as the UN has been arguably considered incapable of single-handedly addressing the peace and security threats of the twenty-first century (IPI 2015). The HIPPO recalls the importance of strengthening global-regional partnerships (UN 2015a). It also states that this is a growing reality in the African continent, as African regional economic communities (such as ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) have developed their own approach towards regional peace and security (Security Council Report 2016). AU operations have, however, been largely dependent on bilateral and European Union support, rendering the AU’s sustenance of its own operations a hard task. This ultimately led to premature transitions to the UN missions in Mali and the Central African Republic (IPI 2015). The Panel, then, suggests principles of cooperation in order to underpin and strengthen a strategic partnership between the UN and the AU: “consultative decision-making and common strategy; the division of labor based on respective comparative advantage; joint analysis, planning, monitoring and evaluation; integrated response to the conflict cycle, including prevention; and transparency, accountability and respect for international standards” (UN 2015a, 243).

2.2.5. HUMAN RIGHTS

Since the majority of post-Cold War conflicts are forged in a background of severe and systematic human rights violations, the UN must support the efforts to rectify past violations, as well as prevent further violations in the meantime (O’Neill 2016). The presence of human rights officers to monitor, investigate and report on the human rights situation has proved indispensable to every ongoing peace process (UN 2015a). The 2015 Panel reiterates, in particular, that the growing and alarming allegations of UN personnel committing sexual exploitation and abuse require a better accountability. For such, it reminds that the immunity to which UN staff is entitled is limitedly functional, and not intended to private acts. In addition, it calls for effective and adequately resourced programs for assisting victims
of gender-related violations (UN 2015a).

2.3. SUSTAINABLE PEACE: PEACEBUILDING AND STATEBUILDING

The surge of the new century witnessed the intensification of the UN’s current principal security activity: helping war-torn states to make the transition from civil violence to lasting peace, or post-conflict peacebuilding and statebuilding (Paris 2007). As a response to such commitment, the mandates of the UNSC were increasingly designed to appease and ultimately resolve intrastate conflicts that tend to destabilize neighboring countries, produce humanitarian crises and mass refugee flows, and attract international criminal factions and terrorist groups, ultimately posing menaces to global peace and security (Collier, et al. 2003).

2.3.1. POST-CONFLICT PEACEBUILDING

Boutros-Ghali, in his 1992 An Agenda for Peace, differentiates between four mission types (which constitute, along with the idea of preventive diplomacy, the instruments of peace) the category of post-conflict peacebuilding. It comprised peace operations aiming “to strengthen and solidify peace” in the aftermath of “civil strife” (UN 1992, 16), and included such functions as:

[...] disarming the previously warring parties and the restoration of order, the custody and possible destruction of weapons, repatriating refugees, advisory and training support for security personnel, monitoring elections, advancing efforts to protect human rights, reforming or strengthening governmental institutions and promoting formal and informal processes of political participation (UN 1992, 16).

According to Boutros-Ghali, the essential goal of peacebuilding is the institutionalization of peace, or what his successor, Kofi Annan, has called the “consolidation of peace” (UN 1995, UN 2001). In Annan’s words, “we are no longer just to ‘keep the peace’ by helping maintain a ceasefire”. Modern peacebuilding means tackling “root causes” of violence in order to “build a lasting peace” (UN 2001).

Different notions of post-conflict peacebuilding have emerged over time, according to the experiences in peace operations and its reflections in
scholarship. From 1999 onwards, the unprecedented transitional administration that the UN assumed in Kosovo and East Timor gave way to state-centered approaches to peacebuilding both in theory and practice (Call 2015). Moreover, the US-led interventions in Afghanistan (2001) and in Iraq (2003-04) prompted the possibility that the UN, regional organizations and Western coalitions could directly administer an increasing number of foreign territories in the future (Caplan 2005). Some scholars called for a heavier international intervention in post-conflict peace operations. Krasner (2004) invoked a “shared sovereignty”, according to which external actors would engage in some of the domestic authority functions of the host state for an indefinite time. Ghani and Lockhart (2008), in turn, criticized the international actors’ trend towards bypassing the state, and advocated that they strengthen national institutions and state-led services as a means for sustaining peace and state legitimacy. In practice, the Security Council enhanced the military capabilities and expanded state authority of its peacekeeping operations. But it also began to authorize an increasing array of field-based special political missions without a military component — thus expanding the agenda of the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) (Call 2015).

This “peacebuilding as statebuilding” approach, nonetheless, began to be questioned with the failures of US intervention in Iraq (Call 2015). In 2004, UN’s High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change recognized that “neither the United Nations nor the broader international community [...] are well organized to assist countries attempting to build peace” (UN 2004, 225). It also called for:

“[...] a single intergovernmental organ dedicated to peacebuilding, empowered to monitor and pay close attention to countries at risk, ensure concerted action by donors, agencies, programmes and financial institutions, and mobilize financial resources for sustainable peace” (UN 2004, 225).

As a result, in the following year, the 2005 World Summit established the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) along with its whole peacebuilding architecture, which involves the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) inside the Secretariat, and a new Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). The UN’s peacebuilding architecture was basically designed to fill in a set of four gaps that had been marking peacebuilding activities so far: (i) the “clout gap”
(the need for post peacekeeping diplomatic attention), by pulling together all the relevant actors for post-conflict peacebuilding; (ii) the “coherence gap” (the need for coordination), by promoting integrated strategies; (iii) the “funding gap” (the need for more and quicker resources), by envisioning the PBC and the PBF as avenues for member states to mobilize additional funding for post-peacekeeping; and (iv) the “analysis gap” (the need for early warning and lessons learned), by establishing working units that systematically analyze potential conflicts, as well as the lessons learned and best practices in peacebuilding (Call 2015).

From 2008 onwards, alternative notions of peacebuilding have been developed. The essential argument was that the international peacebuilding practice continued to lack national ownership, i.e. a strategy focusing on strengthening local capacities. The main critique was that the model being pursued had a strong liberal political and economic content that benefited Western interests rather than the host state’s people. In fact, regional powers like Brazil, India and South Africa have continuously opposed expansionist approaches to peacebuilding —including the “peacebuilding as statebuilding” (Richmond and Tellidis 2013). The formation of the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding in 2008 may be considered a plea for the promotion of greater national participation in peacebuilding programming and prioritization (Call 2015, 8). In the same year, Secretary-General’s report “Peacebuilding in the Immediate Aftermath of Conflict” gave a central role to national ownership in peacebuilding. As a result, in more recent years, peacebuilding actors have concentrated on adjusting their efforts to subnational contexts, by holding consultations with civil society when formulating their plans with the local authorities (Call 2015).

2.3.2. FAILED STATES AND STATEBUILDING

State failure may be understood as the failure of state institutions to provide their citizens with positive political goods to such an extent that undermines the legitimacy and the existence of the state itself. Such political goods range from a legal system, the provision of security, as well as of economic and communication infrastructures, the supply of some form of welfare policies, and opportunities for the participation of civilians in the political process (von Bogdandy, et al. 2005, 580). In addition, failed states can be contrasted with the ideal of Westphalian states, which exercise full sovereignty over a territory and population, have a functioning government...
which monopolizes legitimate violence and is capable of making and keeping international obligations (Yoo 2011).

Robert Rotberg (2004) stresses the need for re-establishing governance in those states before they become threats to international peace and security. Indeed, Fukuyama (2004) considers that the 9/11 events revealed that the risks imposed by failed states were not limited to regional arrangements, but rather represented a serious menace to the United States and its allies. Thereby, when the UNSC identifies such states as threats to international peace and security, the permanent members may authorize the launching of troops in order to restore authoritative structures (Matijascic 2014).

The efforts to (re)construct effective and autonomous structures of governance in a state or territory where none of the aforementioned capacities exist have amounted to the contemporary notion of “statebuilding” (Call and Cousens 2007). The renowned Algerian UN diplomat Lakhdar Brahimi associates statebuilding to “building effective systems and institutions of government” in post-conflict countries (Brahimi 2007, 5). Simon Chesterman highlights that:

[…]\ the term state-building refers to extended international involvement (primarily, though not exclusively, through the United Nations) that goes beyond traditional peacekeeping and peacebuilding mandates, and is directed at constructing or reconstructing institutions of governance capable of providing citizens with physical and economic security. This includes quasi-governmental activities such as electoral assistance, human rights and rule of law technical assistance, security sector reform, and certain forms of development assistance (Chesterman 2004, 5).

Statebuilding is, therefore, an initiative designed to strengthen and to (re)build the legitimate and autonomous structures of governance. It aims to enhance the state capacities of performing its functions — to implement security, welfare and the rule of law. It shall not be understood as a synonym to peacebuilding, but rather a subcomponent to this instrument of peace. Post-conflict peacebuilding envisages creating conditions to prevent violence from recurrence, but the concept does not encompass all the necessary tasks to reconstitute a viable and functioning state (Brahimi 2007, Paris and Sisk 2009). The statebuilding effort, in turn, concentrates in
“strengthening or constructing effective and legitimate governmental institutions” (Paris and Sisk 2009, 14), but does not intend to supplant the bulk of peacebuilding activities. Call and Cousens (2007) suggest, indeed, that one may eventually come to undermine the other, once:

[a] sustained international military presence which may be deemed essential to peacebuilding can lessen the urgency of building national capacity to control or counter violence. Alternatively, efforts to establish national coercive capacity—whether in the form of armies, police, or other forces—can empower some segments of the population at the expense of others in a way that militates against political moderation and reconciliation (Call and Cousens 2007, 10).

In post-conflict environments, the United Nations has played the major role of coordinating statebuilding activities (Chesterman 2004, Paris and Sisk 2009). The powers exercised by the UN have been classified according to the degree of intrusion of the world organization in the host state, ranging from mere supervision to direct administration (Caplan 2005). Notwithstanding, Chesterman (2004) opts for classifying the various UN missions in five categories according to the local political contexts:

1) the final act of decolonization leading to independence, as occurred in Namibia (1989–1990) and East Timor (1999–2002);

2) temporary administration of territory pending peaceful transfer of control to an existing government, as in Western Sahara (from 1991 onwards) and Eastern Slavonia (1996–1998);

3) temporary administration of a state pending the holding of elections, as occurred in Cambodia (1992–1993);

4) interim administration as part of an ongoing peace process without an end state, as in Bosnia (from 1995 onwards) and Kosovo (from 1999 onwards);

5) de facto administration or responsibility for basic law and order in the absence of governing authority, as in the Congo (1960–1964), Somalia

9 Jarat Chopra (1998) adopts four categories of “transitional authority” operations: governorship, where the United Nations assumes direct governmental authority; control, involving deployment of UN personnel throughout existing state institutions to exercise direct control; partnership, where the UN mission acts as an equal partner in administering still coherent institutions; and assistance, where a state administration continues to function.

2.3.3. STRATEGIES AND CHALLENGES OF STATEBUILDING

The statebuilding machinery is intended to transform postwar states—often perceived by local populations as a source of repressive governments—into inclusive states which bear equitable economic, political and social orders (Brahimi 2007). In this context, Lakhdar Brahimi (2007) sustains that statebuilding is the central objective of peace operations. He, then, sets out four activities that need to be undertaken in order to pursue such goal: constitution-making, electoral processes, reintegration and national reconciliation, and the rule of law.

Constitution-making is supposed to forge the legal framework and the principles under which the new state will function (Brahimi 2007). It offers the background to establish a more democratic state, as well as lays the foundations of a culture of obedience to law (von Bogdandy, et al. 2005). Since 1989, the UNSC has mandated many peace operations to assist states either in writing new constitutions, such as in the DR Congo, South Sudan, Afghanistan, and Kosovo, or in reforming already existing ones, such as in Sierra Leone and Liberia (Sripati 2012). UN constitutional assistance has sought to promote universally applicable values such as peace, democracy, security, human rights, and the eliminations of all menaces to state development—in constitutionalizing anti-terror provisions in Afghanistan, Iraq and Bhutan, for instance. However, such an approach allegedly exalts a neoliberal brand of democracy, and may mask coercive external influence through a standard-setting that supposedly rejects self-determination (Sripati 2013).

Electoral processes are fundamental to peace processes, but they shall take place at the right time, respecting the sequence of tasks that govern both peacebuilding and statebuilding. Indeed, the sooner elections take place after the end of conflict, the greater are the chances of reinforcing existing political divisions and undermining mutual cooperation, what may ultimately lead to conflict recurrence (Brahimi 2007). It is argued that elections in post-conflict countries need in advance an extended period of disarmament and security sector reform. However, Timothy Sisk (2013a) reiterates that electoral processes do not follow a unique sequence of success in acquiring the legitimacy of post-war elites to build a state after civil strife\textsuperscript{10}. The choice of the electoral system, rather, seems to be a decisive element to conduct successful statebuilding, as it exercises a leading role
in guaranteeing that minority groups have their voice, in strengthening local autonomy and in carrying out a smooth process (von Gienanth 2009). Besides the initial engagement in the electoral process, it is important that the international community remain engaged in a way that helps the state create its autonomous capacities, especially through the maintenance of the electoral management body’s independence to hold future free elections (Sisk 2013a).

**Reintegration and national reconciliation** of former combatants are deeply related to a comprehensive security sector reform\(^\text{11}\) (SSR) which, in turn, relies upon disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) initiatives. DDR is ideally put into practice through peace agreements wherein conflicting parties decide on how ex-combatants will be demobilized and disarmed in order to return to civil life or eventually reformed national security forces\(^\text{12}\). The implementation of such agreements, however, remains a problematic issue, as their parties rarely have confidence in each other as to immediately surrender. Moreover, some peace agreements do not even hold DDR provisions—the Bonn Agreement in Afghanistan is an example (Chappuis and Hänggi 2013). Regarding the integration to civil society, Brahimi (2007) recalls the necessity of ex-combatants becoming integrated to the social and economic relationships which engender citizenship. Such process encompasses providing young men and women—who usually drive armed conflict—with job opportunities so that youth groups are given development stakes in the future. Finally, the idea of national reconciliation implies the sense of national unity and equality under law. It is fostered through political and institutional processes such as truth commissions, transitional justice, mechanisms of compensation or reparation of victims, and, above all, through inclusive peace agreements\(^\text{13}\) (IDEA 2003).

**Rule of law** is a fundamental component for reaching sustainable peace—

---

\(^{10}\) In Libya, for instance, elections turned out to be an earlier necessity towards postwar recovery—the process was successful, despite the current fragility of the Libyan state. In the DR Congo, by contrast, election-related violence in 2005 and 2011 proved that elections had to contribute neither for regime legitimacy nor for building a new state (Sisk 2013a).

\(^{11}\) Applied in the statebuilding agenda, the security sector reform (SSR) “consists of a number of activities that are designed to restore to the state a legitimate monopoly on the use of force, and enable the government to provide security to the state and its people in an effective and efficient way, subject to both the rule of law and respect for human rights” (Chappuis and Hänggi 2013, 171).

\(^{12}\) In practice, some contexts testified the establishment of entirely new security forces (as the military in Liberia and Iraq); others had ex-combatants folded into the reformed security sector (as occurred in the DR Congo, Sierra Leone, and Burundi) (Chappuis and Hänggi 2013).
ce and state development. It is “the legal and political framework under which all persons and institutions, including the state itself, are accountable” (UN 2016c). It relies upon the capacity-building of judicial organs and the police, and, thus, raises public trust (Brahimi 2007). Post-conflict countries generally face the challenge of promoting transitional justice, particularly in prosecuting war-time crimes. The access to justice is another issue that deserves attention. UNDP’s approach sustains that a justice sector reform must strengthen the independence and integrity of the justice system, rendering it more responsive and effective to attend the demands for justice of all — especially women that suffer from gender-based violence and poor and marginalized persons (UNDP 2004, 4). The promotion of a human rights culture, in turn, relies on the creation institutions designed to monitor the compliance of human rights norms. The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, for instance, has produced regular reports on the matter (Sisk 2013b). Finally, it is of utmost importance to tackle systematic corruption in fragile states. Call (2012) identifies that corruptive elite settlements that marginalize important constituencies are a major trend that leads to the recurrence of violence.

Michael Barnett et al. (2007) identify three dimensions that orient the stages of building peace in war-torn states. The first dimension is about reinforcing stability and discouraging the combatants from returning to war. In this regard, peacekeeping has a leading role in attempting to maintain and monitoring a ceasefire and stability. Yet, the efforts to consolidate peace and stability go beyond this feature of peacekeeping, once they should try to reduce the instruments and undermine the motivations for actors to resume conflict. The actions that facilitate such process are disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (the so-called DDR trinity) of the former parties to the conflict, as well as security sector reforms and arms control (Barnett, et al. 2007). Such initiatives, however, are not capable of preventing conflict recurrence when they are not equipped with ex-combatants’ reintegration, with a view towards providing them with socioeconomic benefits (Matijascic 2014).

The second dimension envisages to build and to restore the primary functions of public administration, deemed vital for a state to have legitimacy before its compatriots and the international community. Some pertinent

---

13 This was not the case, again, with the Bonn Agreement in Afghanistan, when the assembled delegates did not correspond to the country’s ethnic and political diversity: Taliban was kept out of the conference, and the Pashto, largest ethnic group, was poorly represented (Brahimi 2007, 13).
measures are the regeneration of the institutions that guarantee the rule of law, the (re)activation of the transport and communication networks and the (re)creation of educational and health infrastructures (Barnett, et al. 2007). (Re)establishing such functions may eventually depend on multilateral efforts and foreign investments, as most countries emerging from civil conflict are developing ones. It relies upon the coordination of actions by the Secretary-General (in partnership with the multiple agencies and organs within the UN system) so that development projects render state-building a viable process. They also count on the participation of financial institutions, such as the World Bank, the IMF, and other private agencies, of civilians who integrate peacekeeping operations, bureaucratic agencies of donor states, and NGOs that cope with the efforts of local and international authorities (Matijascic 2014).

Barnett et al. (2007) suggest, in addition, that state level is not the only one that matters. The efforts of the third dimension, in this regard, are concentrated on recovering societal capabilities and abilities to manage adversities in a peaceful way, as well as to develop the socioeconomic framework necessary to economic development, fostered by foreign investors. Indeed, fostering a culture of peace is indispensable to hamper the perpetuation of a culture of violence.

The emergence of many statebuilding strategies and initiatives demonstrates that they rely upon a roughly structured network of national governments and international governmental and non-governmental agencies. In fact, such a complex network amounts to a problem noted since the early days of post-Cold War: the difficulty of coordination between major international bodies, within the UN itself, and among the various departments of national governments—defense, development, and foreign ministries—involved in particular missions. There is a plethora of external actors pursuing a variety of agendas and goals which can often be at cross-purposes

Because international actors do not intend to play state-like functions long into the future, they must also provide some degree of technical and capacity-building assistance for state institutions—even as they support parallel NGO or private sector structures which may operate outside of or duplicate state functions (Barnett, et al. 2007). In this regard, Fukuyama

14 At the beginning of the 1990s, for instance, the UN was urging authorities in El Salvador, Mozambique, and Cambodia to increase spending on statebuilding-related programs, while the IMF was pushing in the opposite side, demanding fiscal restraint (Paris 2007).
(2004) argues that the international actors involved in statebuilding must not postpone the administration transfer to local authorities, once a long trusteeship may lead to a condition of dependency on foreign aid. Indeed, Paris (2007) points to the necessity of maximizing local ownership by involving populations as quickly and as extensively as possible in their own governance. The UN has moved away from providing “transitional authority” (such as in Cambodia, Kosovo, East Timor) to focusing on the promotion “nationally owned” processes (Ilitchev 2015). This may be, however, problematic to put into practice, once local ownership can come to mean ownership by conflicting parties—as occurred in the DR Congo, with President Kabila—, or by the most powerful sectors of the societies (CSDG 2003).

Yet an effective state is not enough. The state’s legitimacy is crucial. Statebuilding involves programs intended to create institutions that are democratic, transparent, accountable, and responsive to local needs—i.e. legitimate (Barnett, et al. 2007). Notwithstanding, such a view invokes one of the most common critiques of post-conflict reconstruction: international agencies are not sufficiently sensitive to the unique characteristics of each host state (Call and Cook 2003). External actors tend to categorize countries according to typologies—democratizing, failing, war-torn, etc. However, certain institutional solutions that have been applied with success in some countries are not necessarily appropriate to another conflict-affected country (Ball 2005). Particularly, the liberal model of peace, whose motto is promoting democracy, underestimates that democratic reforms can exacerbate social tensions and even, in some cases, lead to renewed fighting (Paris 2004).

Finally, postwar statebuilding requires a long-term commitment (Ludwig 2010). The international engagement, for this reason, should last to such an extent that permits an operation to accomplish the objectives set in its respective mandate. Humanitarian aid could be delivered in weeks, and elections held within months or a few years, but establishing the institutional foundations for peace—the rule of law, effective security forces, functioning legislatures and at least a rudimentary legal system—requires several years or longer, advocating the need for longer-term mandates for peace operations (Paris 2007). Nevertheless, there may be pressures against a continuing presence in the field, particularly from relevant sectors of society wary of colonial or imperialist interests on the part of the intervening missions (Ludwig 2010). This raises the question as to when and how should UN missions withdraw from the host territory.
3. PREVIOUS INTERNATIONAL ACTION

The international community’s response to the challenges imposed by the post-Cold War conflicts and their consequences to the stability of states and societies has had multiple characters, ranging from the elaboration of panels and reports with strong pleas for reform to comprehensive binding resolutions. This section will concentrate on the multilateral efforts, particularly from the United Nations, to establish either recommendable or enforcing measures in order to tackle such challenges.

3.1. UN REPORTS AND GUIDELINES

Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali’s *An Agenda for Peace* was the first UN document to provide a thoughtful analysis on the organization’s peace operations. The 1992 document was a turning point in regard to the use of force, once it advocated robust operations that corresponded to the realities of conflict (Findlay 2002). It was published during an optimistic flow of peace operations, during which the mandates were being performed in a relatively successful record. As aforementioned, it focuses on a conceptual approach to the so-called “instruments of peace” —namely preventive diplomacy, peace-enforcement, peacemaking, peacekeeping and post-conflict peacebuilding. *An Agenda for Peace* reiterates, in addition, that “rebuilding the institutions and infrastructures of nations torn by civil war and strife” (UN 1992, 15) is vital to the establishment of long-lasting peace.

Notwithstanding, the failures in Somalia, Rwanda, and Bosnia, for instance, led to a conservative withdrawal of the intrusive role provided for peace operations in *An Agenda for Peace*. Such conservativeness amounted to the elaboration of the *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace* in 1995, when Boutros-Ghali acknowledged that the UN was not politically, financially and structurally prepared to take on the tasks it had assumed in the previous years (Doyle and Sambanis 2007). The report attains itself to the holy trinity of peacekeeping, arguing that the use of force should be limited to self-defense (UN 1995).

As Kofi Annan became Secretary-General (1997–2006), the lessons of the 1990s were incorporated in the 2000 *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, or simply the *Brahimi Report*. While 1992 *An Agenda for Peace* discusses definitions and concepts, the *Brahimi Report* rather focuses on strategic and decision-making issues (Doyle and Sambanis 2007). It brought about renewed expectations to peace operations, granting
them a comprehensive role that had been undermined five years before in the *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace*. As a reaction to the perceived passivity in traditional peace operations in the face of armed challenges, it calls for “robust doctrines” and “realistic mandates”, combined with improved capacities for headquarters management and rapid deployment of UN operations (UN 2000). The Brahimi Report reiterates that consent, impartiality, and use of force restricted to self-defense remain the core principles of peace operations. However, it notices that, when addressing intrastate conflicts, such principles should be interpreted flexibly in order to reach the aims established in the mandate (UN 2000). Finally, the 2000 report highlights that peacekeeping operations’ effectiveness relies upon the partnership between peacekeepers and peacebuilders: “while the peacebuilders may not be able to function without the peacekeepers’ support, the peacekeepers have no exit without the peacebuilders’ work” (UN 2000, 28).

The *World Summit of the United Nations*, in 2005, reached great advances in outlining the UN’s role in peace and security. In the section dedicated to peacebuilding issues, the *2005 World Summit Outcome* document establishes the creation of the *Peacebuilding Commission* (PBC), conceived as an intergovernmental advisory body intended to coordinate the peacebuilding activities. The PBC would then “bring together all relevant actors to marshal resources” and “advise on and propose integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery” (UN 2005, 98). Its activities are two-fold, and comprehend (a) the monitoring of countries that receive the international resources applied in peacebuilding; and (b) actions of statebuilding and compilation of the lessons learned in the field (Mati jascic 2014).

The *2005 World Summit Outcome* also led to subsequent actions on the part of the UN Secretary-General. In the following year, Mr. Annan produced a complete terminological approach to peace operations named *Capstone Doctrine*, that would after be joined to 2008 DPKO’s *United Nations Peacekeeping Operations — Principles and Guidelines*. It concentrated the efforts to codify the most relevant lessons learned in the past sixty years of UN’s experience in peace operations and to better outline the most important principles and guidelines for UN peacekeepers in the field (Faganello 2013). The *Capstone Doctrine* has a commendable role regarding human rights issues, once it deems international human rights law a “core business” of the normative framework for UN peace operations (UN 2008, 14). The document foresees that human rights must orient the elaboration of mission mandates, as well as the acts of UN personnel —
whose responsibility lies on the implementation of these rights (UN 2008). It highlights, finally, the role of socio-economic recovery as an imperative towards lasting peace, once security sector reform and other statebuilding initiatives are highly dependent on effective economic management and local partnerships (UN 2008, 2930).

A view towards the future of UN peace operations was set in A new partnership agenda: charting a new horizon for UN peacekeeping, or simply the New Horizon, published in 2009. The New Horizon is a non-paper—an internal document to the UN for consultations. For these operations to accomplish the tasks they are in charge of, the document sets the following objectives: a) faster deployments; b) ability to manage volatile environments and to put in place the foundations for sustainable peace; and c) accurate and detailed security risk assessments in order to protect missions and personnel (UN 2009, v).

In late 2014, in the approach of the 15th anniversary of the Brahimi Report, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon established a High-Level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations (HIPPO) in order to provide a wide-ranging assessment of the situation of current UN operations, its evolving role in conflict management and the emerging needs of the future (UN 2015a). The HIPPO addressed multiple issues facing peace operations. As to the peacekeeping principles, it ruled that they should remain valid and advocated flexible application—calling for clarity on the use of force and arguing that military operations should be exceptional and time-limited (Labuda 2015). In what concerns human rights issues, the HIPPO invoked that addressing abuse by UN peacekeepers and enhancing accountability are crucial to the legitimacy of the peacekeeping endeavor (von Einsiedel and Chandran 2015). The panel had little to say about the growing relevance that peacebuilding and statebuilding elements of peace operations have assumed, though it deems that sustaining peace is a core function of peace operations, as they have a “key role to play in mobilizing political support for reforms and resources for critical gaps in state capacity” (UN 2015a, 12). Finally, it urged the UN to discard the term “peacekeeping” and to embrace “peace operations”, which indicates “a continuum of response and smoother transitions between different phases of missions” (UN 2015a, 10).

Since the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission, a series of documents has been produced on the review of the UN’s peacebuilding framework. In June 2015, the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture, appointed by the Secretary-General, published the comprehensive report The Challenges of Sustaining Peace.
Among its key recommendations, are: (i) the promotion of coherence in the intergovernmental level, in a way that fosters the role of the PBC as a bridge between the intergovernmental organs; (ii) the improvement of the peacebuilding capacity of the UN system; (iii) the need for closer partnerships with financial institutions and regional organizations in order to strengthen the conditions for sustaining peace; (iv) the predictability in financing; (v) the improvement of leadership and the broadening of inclusion in the process of nation-building, with stress to gender equality; and (vi) the redefinition of the concept of peacebuilding, an activity which is not limited to post-conflict scenarios, being rather an element that is present in the complete cycle of UN engagement (Pietz and Scholz 2016).

3.2. UNSC RESOLUTIONS

The actions of the UN Security Council generally reflected the issues addressed in the multiple reports and guidelines stated in the previous section. In 2000, Resolution 1327 praised the developments presented in the Brahimi Report. Responding to the report, the resolution was wide-ranging and provided peacekeeping operations with clear, credible and achievable mandates, considering the importance that such operations have as reliable deterrents. It also requested the Secretariat to provide the Council with regular briefings on key military factors of peace operations, as well as on the humanitarian situation of countries in which operations are ongoing. Additionally, the UNSC emphasized the necessity of promoting a system of consultations among troop-contributing countries in order to give a better understanding on the missions mandates (UNSC 2000a).

The role that peace operations exert on conflict prevention has been endorsed in many of the Council’s post-Brahimi resolutions. In Resolution 1366 (2001), the UNSC expressed the commitment to employ all appropriate means at its disposal to prevent armed conflict. This would include the deployment of missions to areas of potential conflict in order to support the building of national capacity in the field, especially through the inclusion of a DDR component in the mandates (UNSC 2001). In 2014, Resolution 2171 recalled such commitment and noted that peacekeeping operations, Special Political Missions, the Peacebuilding Commission and the regional and sub-regional arrangements play a vital role in the prevention of the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict (UNSC 2014a, 7).

In regard to the use of force, the UNSC has, as aforementioned, in-
creased its disposal to use military force in order to tackle the menaces and spoilers that imposed challenges to UN-led peace processes. The recent developments in the DR Congo (MONUSCO), South Sudan (UNMISS), Mali (MINUSMA) and Central African Republic (MINUSCA) confirm the intensification of UN intrusion as a response to the increasingly hostile environments (Labuda 2015). The heightened instability in the eastern DRC due to the activities of armed groups prompted Resolution 2098 (2013a), which authorizes MONUSCO to “carry out targeted offensive operations through the Intervention Brigade” in a “robust manner” in order “to prevent the expansion of all armed groups”, neutralize and disarm them (UNSC 2013a, 7).

In Mali, UN peacekeepers have been entangled in acts of terrorist groups. Resolution 2100 (2013b) then authorized MINUSMA “to stabilize the key population centers” and “to deter threats and take active steps to prevent the return of armed elements” (UNSC 2013b, 16).

The efforts to consolidate cohesive and effective peacebuilding architecture in the UN system amounted in 2005 to the adoption of Resolution 1645, which puts into force the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). Resolution 2086 (2013c), in its turn, reiterated the Council’s “willingness to make use of the advisory, advocacy and resource mobilization roles” of the PBC (UNSC 2013c, 19), as well as endorsed the need for a multidimensional approach to peacekeeping —which must focus on the host country’s security sector framework, on the promotion of rule of law institutions, on peace consolidation and inclusive political processes, and on the protection of civilians (UN 2013c). The issue of security sector reform (SSR) was given particular attention in 2014, in the first stand-alone document on the matter: Resolution 2151 recognizes the importance of SSR as a condition for stabilization of countries recovering from conflict. It stresses that an inclusive national vision on SSR must be taken into account, once such reform must be a reflection of national ownership (UNSC 2014b). Indeed, the record is of a growing UN’s support for state institutions and capabilities. Since the transitional administrations led by the organization in East Timor and Kosovo, its disposal to extend state authority has increased (Labuda 2015). In Mali, for instance, the above-mentioned Resolution 2100 granted MINUSMA a mandate “to extend and re-establish state administration throughout the country” (UNSC 2013b, 16). In the Central African Republic, in an environment deemed to be of widespread ethnic violence and collapsing government, Resolution 2217 (2015) authorized peacekeepers to take “urgent temporary measures” (UTMs) on an exceptional basis in “areas where national security forces or judicial authorities are not pre-
sent or operational” (UNSC 2015, 32).

In what concerns gender issues, the Council has been proactive in adopting resolutions that stress the importance of gender equality in peace processes. Resolution 1325 (2000b) was a hallmark as it outlined the necessity of women’s full engagement in all stages of peace consolidation, advocated attention to the protection of women from gender-based violence, and called for the end of impunity (UNSC 2000b). Subsequent resolutions (1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2122 and 2242) all reinforced such demands, with a view towards better integrating gendered perspectives in the Council’s work. In March 2016, through Resolution 2272, the UNSC expressed its concern over the allegations of sexual exploitation or abuse perpetrated by UN peacekeepers and called for the Secretary-General to replace all personnel from any contributing country that had failed to hold perpetrators accountable (UNSC 2016a).

As to regional arrangements, the Council recognized in Resolution 1631 (2005) the role of regional organizations in the maintenance of international peace and security, as well as addressed for the first time the need of cooperation between the UN and such organizations on the matter (Wu 2009, UNSC 2005). In 2008, Resolution 1809 advocated the need to render financing regional organizations more predictable, sustainable and flexible when they undertake UN-mandated peacekeeping (UNSC 2008). In specific regard to the African Union, in Resolution 2033 (2012) the Council called for a closer relationship with the African Union Peace and Security Council in the areas of conflict prevention and resolution and electoral assistance (UNSC 2012). The aforementioned Resolution 2171 (2014) ultimately fostered such relationship and praised the establishment of a joint AU-UN panel to consider options for better supporting the multiple stakeholders which take part in peace operations (UNSC 2014b).

Finally, it is of paramount importance to address the recently adopted Resolution 2282, from April 2016, in the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the PBC. Welcoming the 2015 Challenges to Sustainable Peace report, it provides a comprehensive view on UN post-conflict peacebuilding. The UNSC stressed that transitional justice and an accountable security sector are the foundations to prevent conflict from relapse and to prepare countries for development, and called for strengthening collaboration between the UN and the World Bank in the efforts in conflict-affected areas. Following the recommendations set in the 2015 report, the document suggests that peacebuilding should have its notion expanded, in a broader understanding of “sustaining peace”. In addition, it highlights the necessity of encompass-
sing women’s leadership and the participation of young people in the whole peacebuilding effort (UNSC 2016b).

4 BLOC POSITIONS

The United States of America understands multilateral peace operations as a way to share the risks and responsibilities of maintaining international peace and security. Although the US is the leading budgetary contributor to UN peacekeeping, the rise of its unilateral interventionism has decreased its troop contribution. With the end of Obama’s administration, however, it calls for a more active role in multilateral processes. Security rationales largely justify the American support for UN-led operations, as they are believed to help to protect the borders and policy the territory of conflict-affected states—in the country’s post-9/11 perception, the major threats to its national security and the security of its allies could emanate from underdeveloped and remote areas (Smith 2014). In this context, the US recognizes that the UN is failing to protect civilians and to project force in the territories where it is present, and advocates a more intrusive attitude. It also identifies a clear link between peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts, considering peacekeepers as early peacebuilders. Such position was allegedly put into practice in recent multidimensional missions, such as those in Mali and the Central African Republic, mandated to strengthen security sector and rule of law (United States of America 2014). Finally, the country calls for transparency from post-conflict governments in fund-spending, so that all resources mobilized for peacebuilding are directed towards national peace and statebuilding priorities. In this regard, the democratic institutional framework is the most adequate to tackle corruption and to drive resources to education and infrastructure (Holshek 2015).

The United Kingdom has recently committed to more than doubling its military contribution to UN peace operations, particularly in the current missions in Somalia (UNSOS) and South Sudan (UNMISS) (Curran and Williams 2016). In the British view, the importance of such operations lies in containing violence, stabilizing fragile post-conflict situations, reducing the likelihood of conflict recurrence, and avoiding the need for direct and unilateral military interventions. The UK is keen to ensure that UN missions support political processes which will deliver long-term stability, and that they stay no longer than necessary (United Kingdom 2011). The November 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review reinforces the country’s commitment to strengthen the rules-based international order
and its institutions, calling for a more joined-up approach to peacebuilding and statebuilding in the UN system. It also advocates that the British military shall better prepare to conduct UN-led operations to restore peace and stability, and that the UK shall deploy more law-enforcing measures and civilian experts, as well as continue training foreign peacekeepers (United Kingdom 2015).

France considers that bolstering fragile states is one of the priorities of its foreign policy in the post-2015 agenda (France 2013a) and commits to strengthening UN efforts in peacebuilding (France 2016). The country has played a major role in peace operations in the African continent, notably in Mali, Central African Republic and Côte d’Ivoire, as it understands that insecurity in Africa can potentially impact on French security (Lafont-Rapnouil 2013). In the French view, the implementation of mandates entails comprehensive action: political management and prevention of crises, support for the restoration of state's authority and, when necessary, the use of force. France reiterates the necessity of adapting peace operations to the protection of civilians (France 2015). It calls for a better articulation in the transition between peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities, counting on the PBC to provide consistency for the international community in the exit strategy (France 2013b).

The People’s Republic of China is currently the eighth largest troop contributor to UN peace operations, most of those located in the African continent (Duchâtel, Gowan and Rapnouil 2016). For China, the presence in UN missions is as a way to be globally present, guaranteeing its national interests, namely stable government in the African continent and military presence abroad (Campbell-Mohn 2016). Concerning post-conflict reconstruction, China does not relativize sovereignty and deems international agencies as partners to local governments, but recalls that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to peacebuilding and statebuilding. It stresses the necessity of supporting cooperation between regional actors and organizations and the international community, reiterating the need for economic and social development in order to address the deep-rooted causes of conflict (China 2014). The peaceful co-existence and the mutual noninterference on internal affairs, two guiding principles of the Chinese foreign policy, demonstrates how important is for China to ensure multilateral answers to international problems. Respecting peaceful co-existence, peace operations may not be considered illegal interventions (Duchâtel, Gowan and Rapnouil 2016).

Since the end of the Cold War, the Russian Federation has been
substantially present in peacekeeping activities in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), arguing that such presence constitutes a significant component of its national security and stability (Sokolov 1997). In the UN system, Russia has repeatedly participated in prevention or elimination of internecine and inter-ethnic conflicts in other far-abroad countries. The country believes that the compliance of the basic principles governing peacekeeping —i.e. consent, impartiality, and nonuse of force— is vital for effective operations. Yet, according to Russian authorities, this has not been the case in recent times, as some countries have considered such principles as hindrances to carrying out the missions’ mandates and, arguably, interventionary endeavors. In special regard to the protection of civilians, Russia outlines that counterterrorist operations must be performed with caution and dealt with only by specially trained and equipped national security forces (Russian Federation 2016a). It also recalls that post-conflict peacebuilding and statebuilding should be nationally-owned processes, which only national stakeholders can undertake. The UN and other international organizations are supporters and facilitators. Their assistance should be provided to states upon request and concentrated on capacity-building, bearing the national sovereignty and independence of states (Russian Federation 2016b).

As a post-conflict country, Angola understands that building long-term peace and stability may require, as the Angolan state did, extending national authority throughout the territory, building institutions, fostering the respect for human rights and the rule of law, and ensuring social inclusion (UN 2015b). The country especially reiterates the vital role of institution-building, as the existence of effective institutions is the key differentiating factor between capable and fragile states. The Angolan authorities praise the efforts that amounted to Resolution 2282 on post-conflict peacebuilding, as well as recognize the work of the PBC in the consolidation of peace in several African countries, such as Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone (Angola 2016).

Sharing the Non-Aligned Movement common position, Egypt understands that peace operations should be implemented through political, social and developmental tools, within a framework of full respect for the host country’s sovereignty. Egyptian authorities recall the importance of achieving deterrence without unjustified expansion in the capacity to use force, preventing peacekeeping from turning to peace enforcement or becoming a party to the conflict (Egypt 2011). The protection of civilians, in this context, is a primary responsibility of the states, and it should not be
used by the UN as a pretext for military intervention. With the establish-
ment of the Egyptian Agency of Partnership for Development in 2014,
Egypt assists African countries meet the development goals and build na-
tional capacities, becoming a leader in consolidating peace and anchoring
stability in the continent (Egypt 2016). With such intent, the country ad-
vocates that UN intensify its financial and logistical support for the African
Union’s operations (Egypt 2013).

In the pursuit of a permanent seat on a reformed Security Council,
Japan sees its contributions to UN peace operations as a powerful means
of enhancing its international prestige (Ishizuka 2013). The Japanese state
has reiterated that political, economic, and social inclusiveness play a cru-
cial role in rebuilding post-war countries. Furthermore, it advocates more
robust action, rendering such operations a system-wide priority that con-
ciliates short-term interventions with long-term strategies for peacebuil-
ding (Japan 2010). Japan identifies the leading role of institution-building
in achieving sustainable peace, calling for the strengthening of electoral
institutions and civic freedoms of press and expression, security sector and
public administration system, rule of law institutions, and economic and
financial structures (UNSC 2016c).

Malaysia is strongly committed to the shared responsibility towards
peaceful resolution of conflict and international security. It views UN mis-
sions as essential when formulating collective answers to international pro-
blems. The country highlights the necessity of cooperation with regional
arrangements in order to promote stable post-conflict statebuilding. Malay-
sia also understands that efforts to support post-conflict countries must be
based on the principle of national ownership and must reflect the needs of
local stakeholders (Malaysia 2016).

New Zealand’s contribution to UN peace operations achieved a peak
during the mission to East Timor in 2001. Since then, little personnel has
been deployed under UN flag. The country sees itself as a “good internatio-
nal citizen”. Therefore, contributing to peacekeeping missions is essential.
Advocating the respect for human rights, New Zealand supports initiatives
aiming to punish sexual violence and to mitigate gender disparity in
missions. It also defends the need for the Security Council to play a more
deliberate and active role in peacebuilding, facilitating reconstruction and
providing security and stability (Greener 2015).

Promoting peace and stability is the first pillar of Senegal’s foreign
policy. Therefore, the country acts proactively in peacekeeping, not only in
Africa but worldwide. The country’s role in those missions is understood as
a way to ensure regional and international recognition. Senegal is concerned about the participation of women in all levels, welcoming initiatives to prevent sexual violence. It finally notes the necessity of providing missions with clearer mandates, and supports the role of regional actors in tackling regional crises (Senegal 2016).

Spain perceives UN multilateralism as a way to ensure peace and security, from prevention to post-conflict reconstruction, and supports the increasing cooperation between regional organizations and the UN. The country reiterates that UN peace operations are the best tool to implement the responsibility of protect, and values their multidimensional character as a formula to reach sustainable peace (Spain 2014). In the Spanish view, addressing the socio-economic and political root causes of conflict must become a priority for the UN system. This includes the promotion of human rights and the prominent role of women in all stages of peace consolidation (Spain 2016). Finally, post-conflict reconstruction must be a nationally-owned process that strengthens local institutions and capacities (Spain 2014).

Understanding the necessity of enhancing the UN role in promoting peace and security, Ukraine regards strengthening peace operations as a main objective for its two-year membership in the UNSC. The country rejects the unilateral actions performed by Russia annexing Crimea and denounces the irregularity of Russian peacekeeping in ex-Soviet republics. In regard to statebuilding, Ukraine calls for multilateral approaches and perceives the action of regional actors as a main way to provide long-term solutions (Ukraine 2016).

Latin America’s leading supplier of blue helmets, Uruguay believes that UN activities to consolidate peace must engender coordination and integration with the host country’s government, promoting representative and inclusive peace processes and dialogues. It sustains that peacekeeping and peacebuilding may constitute simultaneous phases, as the former may play a significant role in the latter, through the strengthening of the rule of law, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, security sector reform, and even extension of state authority. Uruguayan authorities also understand that strong institutions build confidence and give space for the entire population—especially women, young and children—to feel the benefits of peace. In addition, they urge a better integration between the UN and regional organizations—with particular regard to the African Union—, once they are capable of better understanding local circumstances (Uruguay 2016).
In order to reach long-lasting peace in war-torn scenarios, Venezuela points to the necessity of overcoming root causes of conflict, which include poverty, exclusion, inequality, gender-based violence, foreign interference and illegal exploitation of natural resources (UN 2015b). The Venezuelan state calls for the critical task of assessing UN peace efforts, observing that the trend towards the pursuit of military solutions of conflict is alarming and is transforming the Security Council into a factor of intervention for nations in conflict (Venezuela 2016). Emphasis should be placed on the prevention of conflict, dialogue and political reconciliation, and inclusive and sustainable development, besides the military component (Venezuela 2015). Moreover, the country stresses the importance of strengthening the work between the UNSC and the African Union, deeming essential that the latter is given a more active role on issues concerning the region (Venezuela 2016).

5 QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. Have UN peace operations been significant in promoting the organization’s utmost purpose: maintaining international peace and security?
2. Under which conditions is the UN entitled to use force? Should blue helmets adopt more robust measures in hostile environments?
3. How can the protection of civilians and the implementation of human rights apply to UN peace operations?
4. What is the importance of regional arrangements and how can their efforts be combined with UN peace operations?
5. Is sovereignty a flexible concept in the context of UN-led peace processes? To which extent may state authority be extended?
6. Is there a one-size-fits-all strategy of statebuilding? How can the UN foster host countries’ national ownership? Which criteria should be prioritized in planning for exit strategies?

REFERENCES

www.un.int/angola/statements_speeches/sc-open-debate-peacebuilding-africa-0.


UFRGS Model United Nations | VOL. 4 | 2016


Development; Foreign and Commonwealth Office; Ministry of Defense.


THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

Bruno Palombini Gastal¹
Patrícia Graeff Machry²
Sérgio Minuzzi Tessuto³

ABSTRACT

The present article assesses both historical and current aspects of the conflict in Afghanistan. The country has a great geopolitical importance, historically being a trade and energy hub in Central Asia and a crossroad for different cultures and people — thus, it has been a subject of dispute among great powers, such as Russia and Great Britain, in the 19th century, and the USSR and the United States, in the late 20th century. The year of 2001, nonetheless, marked a new moment in the Afghan history: as a response to the 9/11 attacks — claimed by Osama bin Laden’s group Al-Qaeda —, an important measure of the War on Terror foreign policy of George W. Bush was implemented. Having reasons to believe the Taliban government in Afghanistan protected the Al-Qaeda leader, the United States and NATO allies invaded the country in order to dismantle its regime—in which it had succeeded. More than a decade later, still, the country is far from stable. After NATO’s withdrawal more than a year ago, Afghanistan lives some of the most violent times in last years, with the resurgence of an increasingly violent Taliban and the worrying rise of the Islamic State in the country.

¹ Bruno is a 3rd year student of International Relations at UFRGS.
² Patrícia is a final year student of International Relations at UFRGS.
³ Sérgio is a 4th year student of International Relations at UFRGS.
1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This section summarizes Afghanistan history, comprehending the period between the early human settlements in the Afghan territory and 2008. It focuses on the most relevant aspects for the discussion on the current situation, such as the country geopolitical importance, its ethnic composition, and the Soviet and NATO invasions in the country, in 1979 and 2001, respectively.

1.1 THE AFGHAN STATE

The Afghan territory is located on an important crossroad between Europe, Asia and the Middle East. Thereby, it had the possibility to contact a great variety of cultures throughout its history, whereas it allowed its neighbors to grow and develop as important trade emperors that ruled commerce routes among continents (Maley 2009). Partly, the formation of the Afghan state can be explained by this particular territorial condition. Nomads who tamed the great variety of fruits within the slopes of the mountains were the first settlers. However, the subsequent invasion by several ancient empires built the social structure of Afghan people in a very particular way. Besides Persians (550 b.C.), Macedonians (300 b.C.) and Mongols (350 AD), the most important outsider to meddle into Afghanistan society were Muslims (Wahab and Youngerman 2010).

A result of the long campaigns performed by Arab armies in the region, Islamism was introduced in the 8th century, becoming an important element to the conflicts in Afghanistan among external powers and local tribes — since the Islamic culture turned into the great common factor among the different tribes in the region. The most important Islamic group that occupied the region, by then, and which had achieved to build in there an incipient political organization, were Muslim Persian dynasties — stability, however, was undermined by nomads that came from the north. At that point, it is possible to observe the rise of the Pashtuns — a group (that are themselves divided into several tribes) original from the region around the current Afghan-Pakistani border through the slopes of Hindu Kush —, which was possible thanks to the association of both modern and tribal aspects of everyday life (Wahab and Youngerman 2010). Their support will be shown very important to promote any political organization among the different tribes settled in the region.

In 1747, the appearance of Ahmad Shah “Durr-i-Durran” as a leader
among a great number of tribes (especially Pashtuns) is considered the first attempt to centralize power in the region. Despite finding certain resistance among the mountain tribes, the endeavor of creating a modern state succeeded thanks to the weakening of the surrounding empires, as the commercial routes explored by them lost importance to sea trade\(^5\) (Tanner 2002).

Map 1: Simplified ethnic division of Afghanistan

\[^4\] Besides the Pashtuns, which represent nearly 50% of the population, the main groups in Afghanistan are: (i) the Tajiks, descendants of Persians, which settled in Afghanistan after the expansion of the Soviet Army towards Central Asia and that now represent nearly 30% of the Afghan population; (ii) the Hazaras, descendants of Mongols from central Afghanistan, which represent nearly 10% of the population and that traditionally were adepts of the Sharia Law; (iii) the Uzbeks, who represent a bit less than the Hazara population, are a Turkic people who migrated and settled originally in northern Afghanistan, most of them Sunni muslims. Besides, there are less populous groups such as Aimaiks (4%), Turkmen (3%), Baloch (2%), and others (Wahab and Youngerman 2010, The Asia Foundation 2012, 181–182).

\[^5\] Several empires were raised in Central Asia due to land trade routes that were heavily used by Europeans to bring products from Asia to the West. Whenever the land trade routes were left aside over sea routes, the empires collapsed (Tanner 2002).
gains for the just-founded state of Shah Durran, once there was no serious menace of invasion. However, it had likewise allowed European powers to approach Afghan borders. Great Britain, at that point, consolidated its influence over the Indian region and headed West towards where today is Pakistan. Meanwhile, the Russian Empire found no difficulties to conquer and append huge amounts of land from impoverished empires in Central Asia, reaching the northern limit of today’s Afghanistan as the Tsar headed south. The confrontation between the two great powers seemed imminent — nonetheless, it was avoided by Afghan mountainous geography, which kept England and Russia apart as each of them remained on one side of the Hindu Kush mountains (Jones 2010). This friction between the two countries would be called “The Great Game”.

1.2 THE DURAND LINE AND THE WAKHAN CORRIDOR

Willing to conquer Afghan territory and decrease Russian influence in the region, the British invaded Afghanistan in 1839 — starting what is known as The First Anglo-Afghan War, which was finished in 1842 with the Europeans suffering a humiliating defeat. The strategic interest in controlling Afghanistan, to avoid a further expansion of the Russian Empire towards British India, was confirmed by a second assault from the British to the Shah land in 1878. However, this time, after two years of warfare, the Europeans were victorious counting on more than 30,000 soldiers fighting on three fronts (Jones 2010).

Defeated, Afghan Emir Abdur Rahman could not do much more than negotiate the war assets that, in this case, would be the border lines of Afghanistan. Hence, the two European powers agreed in late 1880’s to create a joint commission to define the frontiers in a diplomatic way. In the north, the Russian Empire acquired no substantial gains (Wahab and Youngerman 2010). However, when the British defined its colony’s northern and eastern borders with Afghanistan, the latter lost considerable parts of its southern and eastern territories — which was accepted by the Emir in change of the payment of annuities by the United Kingdom (Tanner 2002). The treaty was signed by Sir Henry Mortimer Durand in 1893, creating the Durand Line, which would serve as a frontier between Afghanistan and the British India (Jones 2010).
Afghanistan then became a buffer state that prevented the Russian Empire of crossing the Hindu Kush, allowing Great Britain to undisturbedly rule India. However, its borders did not take into consideration geographic and ethnic basis. In the north, for instance, the frontier cut off important seasonal routes of nomad Afghan groups such as Uzbeks and Tajik tribes; and in the east, likewise, the Durand Line prevented the Pashtun to be united in Afghan territory. In the next decade, Afghanistan would still accept one more treaty with Russia and Great Britain, regarding a final agreement on frontiers. In order to avoid the potential instability of an Anglo-Russian frontier, the Wakhan Corridor was created in 1907, extending the northeastern border of Afghanistan alongside with the southern border of where is Tajikistan today to China (Wahab and Youngerman 2010).
The First World War, nonetheless, changed the geopolitics in the region. Russian Empire and Great Britain, together with France, were now allies against Ottoman, German and Austrian empires. Although Afghanistan started the war in a neutral position, it enjoyed the conjuncture of war to essay its independence, declaring war to the United Kingdom in 1919. The Third Anglo-Afghan war ended with the independence of Afghanistan within the borders defined in 1907, namely the reassurance of the Durand Line and the Wakhan Corridor (Tanner 2002).

The autonomy of Afghanistan’s foreign policy would be proved especially after the Second World War. Having chosen to remain neutral under the reign of Zahir Shah, the post-conflict urged to negotiate cooperation agreements with the winner powers (Tanner 2002). However, the background now was different, as British India was dissolved into different countries: India, with a mostly Hindu population, and Pakistan, which shared the Durand Line as its frontier with Afghanistan and had a mostly Muslim population (Jones 2010). The attrition in England’s capabilities caused by the Second World War followed by Independence Wars in the colonies precluded the possibilities of British cooperation. The Americans, on the other hand, had the resources but considered the investment in Pakistan much more important strategically. Consequently, Kabul and Moscow gradually deepened their relations (Tanner 2002).
1.3 THE SOVIET INVASION OF AFGHANISTAN

During the first thirty years of Muhammed Zahir Shah reign, which lasted from 1933 and 1973, Afghanistan experienced the longest period of stability in recent times. Although power was not truly exercised by him, since the political structure left him shadowed by his relatives who ran the government, Zahir Shah implemented important democratic and modernizing reforms — to which, however, there was severe internal resistance that prevented the deepening of the reforms. Prince Muhammed Daoud, Zahir's prime minister (and cousin) between 1953 and 1963, sought to largely invest in education and military defense. The minister believed an organized and well-equipped national army was necessary to implement an actual modernization plan, in order to control the opposition.

Daoud succeeded to create an inclusive educational system — which would promote women empowerment and modern ideals — and a new constitution, which guaranteed legal equality for every group within Afghanistan borders, freedom of religion (including to non-Muslim citizens), assurance of private property, and freedom of creating political parties was then granted. Moreover, under his leadership, Afghanistan improved relations with the United States, China, Pakistan and, mainly, the USSR. Huge amounts of money and arms that came from the Soviet Union — as loans that would later be paid with Afghan natural gas—evidenced this country’s strategic support to Daoud (Marsden 2009). At this point, People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA, a communist party) and Jamiat-i-Islami (or Islamic Society) emerged as polarized political groups (Tanner 2002).

If in one hand it was possible to observe an actual modernizing plan implemented, in the other, a great dissatisfaction arose among conservative communities, especially due to women’s emancipation. Besides, the country had become completely dependent of international aid — mainly the USSR —, and the population could not enjoy a truly autonomous economy that offered qualified jobs and welfare. In 1973, Prince Daoud deposed his cousin from the throne and proclaimed the Republic with important support of a

---

6 Jamiat-I-Islami was founded in 1968 basing its political aims in the Sharia, or the Islamic Law. The group has become particularly popular during the Soviet Invasion, since the most powerful mujahideen groups were vinculated to it (Vizentini 2002).
7 It is important to stress that only an urban minority experienced political life, as most mountain tribes still lived as nomads (Vizentini 2002).
front led by a Marxist faction of the PDPA named Parcham — to which followed a decade of instabilities. Still in need of external support, and willing to diminish the dependence on the USSR, Daud approached Iran, China, United States, and Pakistan. In the meantime, the Prince tried to oust left-wing elements from the government. In 1978, however, a radical left-wing faction of the PDPA named Khalq undertook a coup d’état, ousting Parcham of the party and deposed Prince Daud from the government. Nur Muhammed Taraki, their leader, implemented important socialist reforms that sparked several riots among the conservative citizens who were supported, in special, by Pakistan (Vizentini 2002).

Taraki traveled, then, to Moscow in order to guarantee military assistance and stability to his government, offering in exchange a more moderate stance, since the Soviet were not pleased with the often too radical actions of Khalq. However, returning to Afghanistan, Hafizullah Amin, a deputy of Taraki, executed him and took power. Hence, as instability gripped the country, the Soviet Union decided to intervene (Maley 2009). Meanwhile, large amounts of money and weapons were sent to anti-Soviet fundamentalist guerrillas of the Afghan mountains by China, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and, mainly, Pakistan and the United States (Moniz Bandeira 2014). Although the USSR had deposed Amin and had given power back to Brabak Karmal, a moderate left-wing Parcham representative, political control could no longer be established (Vizentini 2002). The guerrillas were either entrenched in the mountains or settled over the Durand Line in Pakistani territory. Year after year, the warfare remained more violent and less defined. After ten years, in 1989, the Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan leaving behind an incipient civil war, nearly 15,000 soldiers dead and 35,000 wounded, besides 1,000,000 Afghan fatalities and 5,000,000 refugees. The failed campaign costed a high price for the public opinion in the Soviet Union (Jones 2010, Runion 2007).

1.4 THE RISE AND FALL OF THE TALIBAN REGIME

As previously stated, the United States sent a huge supply to the Mujahideen’s resistance, developing a very complex structure of money transference that deeply involved also Saudi Arabia and Pakistan (Moniz Bandeira 2014). Many Islamic anti-communist militias fled to Pakistan through the porous Durand Line, where they had found a safe place to settle and organize their military actions. The Pakistani government, then, distributed arms and supplies through the main Afghan Islamic parties, that is:
Hisb-e-Islami, composed by Pashtuns; Jamiat-e-Islamic, composed by Tajiks and led by an important character of the Afghan resistance to the Soviets, Ahmad Massoud; and Hazara-e-Islami, the Hazara party formed by the country’s Shi’a minority. Based on the Pakistani side of the Durand Line were also the training fields of Islamic militias, among which several Saudi Wahhabist volunteers that were trained in the Pakistani region of Peshawar to fight the Soviets during their occupation. The most famous of these armed groups was led by Osama Bin Laden and was named Al-Qaeda (Marsden 2009).

However, as the USSR withdrew and the United States thus succeeded in expanding its influence in the oil-rich Persian Gulf countries, Washington stopped the millionaire weaponry aid. Warlords were already loaded up with heavy weapons, including anti-aircraft systems, though, and a wave of violence emerged again in Afghanistan territory, beginning the Civil War (Runion 2007).

This background aspect of the conflict is particularly important to understand the subsequent events. Despite the Soviet withdrawal in February of 1989, their planes kept flying in Afghan territory in order to help the stabilization of the new president Mohammed Najibullah (Maley 2009). Moscow spent nearly 3 billion dollars in humanitarian aid and strategic support a year, but as it started opening the regime, the supply became scarcely. In 1992, when the renewed Russian Federation refused to sell oil products to Najibullah, thus leaving Afghanistan with scarce fuel and food during the winter, his government collapsed (Runion 2007).

---

8 Mujahideen is the plural of Mujahid, which refers to the ones engaged in Jihad. The term is mainly related to the islamic warlords who fought USSR in Afghanistan (Jones 2010).
9 Even before the Soviet invasion, the Saudis received about 20 million dollars annually (more than 600 million in 1987) from the CIA to distribute to Mujahedeen leaders close to the high policy makers of Riyadh (Moniz Bandeira 2014).
At that point, millions of refugees returned to Afghanistan after the war and the Mujahideen tested their forces by creating a chaotic climate of violence and corruption, especially in the region near the Durand Line, covered by huge masses of poverty (Tanner 2002). In this scenario, in 1992, a group of puritanical Sunni Pashtun students from Helmand and Kandahar came up calling themselves the “Taliban”, or the “seekers of knowledge”. Willing to establish a strict obedience to the Islamic law, the group received training and funding from the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) — with the support of Western oil companies — and took control of Kabul in 1996. Four years later, Taliban ruled nearly 95% of Afghan territory (Runion 2007).

Taliban invaded city after city, deposing and killing the mujahideen and the civilians. Their violent practices against the people considered as pagans served as an example of what would happen to the ones who did not obey the Sharia (Maley 2009). The population suffered from the violation of human rights, especially women, who were excluded from society and obligated to cover themselves in public. During the decade, the regime had
very few diplomatic recognition and oodles of complaints (Runion 2007), yet their relation with Pakistan remained tight, since mattered to Islamabad to maintain in Afghanistan a government that guaranteed its interests, that is, control the oil ducts and trade routes (Mardens 2009). Taliban raised their funds with drug production. The group developed the business seized by the mujahideen years before and extended it by taxing farmers, manufacturers and transporters. Taliban legitimated their action by assuring that no Afghan enjoyed these drugs, something that only “unfaithful Western people” would do (Rashid 2009a).

Osama bin Laden first contacted Taliban in 1996, when Kabul was seized. Having the ISI as intermediate, the leader of Al-Qaeda offered the incipient group formal partnership in order to guarantee his free action recruiting and training terrorists. Al-Qaeda’s special brigade was introduced to Taliban, and the group was significantly strengthened. bin Laden was considered the leader of many terrorist attacks all over the world (Maley 2009). After several bombings, the United States court considered him criminal and demanded his extradition. However, disregarding the advice of Islamabad, the Taliban refused to adhere to American orders, claiming that Osama was missing for a long time (Runion 2007).

The collapse of the Taliban regime in 2001 had two important reasons. The first one was internal. The Northern Alliance10 and its leader, Ahmad Shah Massoud (or, as he was respectfully known, “The Lion of Panjshir”), were one of the main reasons why the Taliban had not completely dominated Afghanistan yet. Massoud was an excellent strategist and very esteemed among his fighters as he refused high posts in the Taliban government, clearly seeing that their regime could not stand much longer (Rashid 2009a). His rising popularity, also in the West, threatened the ruling order. Thus, on September 9, two supposedly supporters of Al-Qaeda — presenting themselves as European interviewers — exploded bombs tied to their bodies and killed Massoud. Facing the death of a very cherished leader, the Afghan population started to see Taliban as a group of terrorists, compliant to any Al-Qaeda operation in order to preserve their support to the regime (Runion 2007).

The second reason was external and took place in New York two days later.

10 The Northern Alliance was an armed group led by former members of Islamic Party of Afghanistan created in 1996 during Taliban regime. Firstly, Tajiks started the defensive combats, later other groups such as Uzbeks, Hazara and a minority of Pashtun joined the battle against Taliban supporters (Maley 2009).
1.5 THE 9/11 AND THE NATO OCCUPATION

On September 11, 2001, the world watched live and repeatedly the news about the well-orchestrated terrorist plan claimed later by Al-Qaeda’s leader Osama bin Laden. Two commercial aircraft were hijacked and crashed against the World Trade Center, in the heart of Manhattan. Thousands of lives were lost and other thousands were injured, and an immediate retaliation was urged (Maley 2009). Therefore, president George W. Bush declared that the United States of America was starting a “War on Terror”.

Bush assembled a neoconservative team of policymakers from the Republican Party. Among other guidelines, this group aimed to increase expenditure on defense, strengthen democratic bonds and challenge hostile regimes to arrange the system in order to defend the United States’ security. Thereby, 9/11 was a convincing excuse to implement Bush’s militarized foreign policy. In fact, invading Afghanistan would be very valuable for Washington’s interests in Central Asia since it was Bush’s intent to guarantee the safety of oil ducts in the region (Moniz Bandeira 2014). United States recalled, then, article 5 of the NATO charter, which considers an armed attack against one member an issue to every signatory, and called for the support of several members of the organization (Maley 2009).

In 24 hours, the CIA had already found the responsible for the attacks and their relation to bin Laden’s Al-Qaeda. The US immediately demanded his extradition from Afghanistan. The Taliban government, however, refused to accept the American request without negotiation, despite being advised to do the contrary by Pakistani representatives (Tanner 2002). Washington did not wait and implemented its response with Operation Enduring Freedom, aiming to eliminate both Al-Qaeda and Taliban forces within Afghan borders. Bush associated with the Northern Alliance and, in November of the same year, Taliban was already reduced to a guerrilla group of Kandahar suburbs, while its leaders alongside with Al-Qaeda’s (including number ones mollah Omar and bin Laden, respectively) entrenched themselves into Hindu Kush caves (Runion 2007).

In December 2001, the United Nations Security Council approved Resolution 1386, which allowed the establishment of a NATO-led six-month coalition force in order to maintain a minimum stability to the transitory government. A few months later, the UNSC also installed the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), with Resolution 1401 (UNAMA 2015). The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), as it
was named the coalition, was firstly set to act in the surroundings of Kabul. However, after having trespassed its legal mandate, in 2003 the forces received from the UN authorization to freely operate in the whole country (Vizentini 2012).

The next months were used to debate the subsequent events: an interim government, the constitution and democratic elections. Hamid Karzai, a Pashtun leader from the tribe Popalzai, was chosen to be the interim president (Runion 2007). The figure of the former governor Zahir Shah was important to legitimate the institutionalization process of elections, as he was appointed Chairman of the Interim Administration. Overall, the restructuring plan of political institutions in Afghanistan worked: within a few months, a Constitution was written and elections took place on October 9, 2004. With 55.4% of the votes, Karzai was declared the winner and remained in office (Maley 2009).

Corruption, dissatisfaction of former warlords that lost power, and complex disagreements in political debates made Afghanistan particularly insecure. This weather of chaos recreated the perfect context for the reappearance of Taliban, which now fought to expel external powers from their country, criticizing especially US airstrikes that constantly harmed civilians (Maley 2009). By late 2005, a vast rural area that no longer supported the government gradually deceived by Taliban dominance. Karzai had no ability to extend its influence outside Kabul, and neither the Afghan police nor its army managed to stabilize the country, especially in Taliban and warlords mainstays. At that point, NATO occupied the north and moved to the west of the country (Jones 2010).

By 2006, locals were progressively distrustful on their government and on the NATO coalition and suffered from menaces by Taliban if they cooperated with the outsiders. NATO, in turn, could no longer guarantee the security of their missions (Jones 2010). Yet, Operation Medusa was launched aiming to clear the Kandahar region. First seen as an important victory, killing hundreds of Taliban soldiers and arresting other dozens, Operation Medusa confirmed two issues: first, it showed the world the abuses that NATO soldiers were committing by killing innocent Afghani and second, that Taliban had fled Afghan borders to get into Pakistani territory (Ottawa Citizen 2007).

In 2007, NATO had completed four stages of occupation and was then divided into five geographic commands: Regional Command Central, North, West, South and East. However, the international community started to debate on how effective the coalition was when official claims suggested
that Al-Qaeda had found safety within Pakistani borders and that the next year would be particularly violent. In April, president Hamid Karzai escaped from an attempted murder. In June, the US “friendly fired” the country and ended up killing nearly a dozen Pakistani soldiers. In the next month, the Indian Embassy in Kabul was bombed, causing approximately 50 fatalities. In August, the US was once again charged to kill civilians in airstrikes (Jones 2010). At that point, there was one extremely important question to be answered: how could the US presidential elections of 2008 deal with the conflict in order to make it less chaotic?

2 STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE

The current section exposes the situation in Afghanistan since 2009. As in this year Barack Obama assumed the presidency of the United States — with important consequences to the NATO intervention and thus to Afghanistan itself — the section will firstly assess the new government’s objectives for Afghanistan and ISAF’s acting since then. In 2015, with the end of ISAF and the beginning of the so-called Afghan Civil War, the focus will shift to the Central Asian country’s internal developments, with a final analysis of the current situation of the most important actors in the conflict — including insurgents and the Afghan government.

2.1 THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION AND THE “SURGE” IN AFGHANISTAN

A year before the elections that made him president, Barack Obama wrote an article that expressed some of the most important points that would guide his government’s foreign policy through the following years. For him, the war in “Iraq was a diversion from the fight against the terrorists” while Afghanistan and Pakistan were “the central front in [the] war against Al Qaeda” (Obama 2007, online). In his presidential campaign, Obama committed to ending the war in Iraq as soon as mid-2010, keeping only a residual force in order to guarantee the safety of the transition and fight remaining terrorists. This would enable more resources to be spent in the Afghan war — a war which, in Obama’s words, the United States “[had] to win” (Obama 2008, online).

The year of 2008 was the deadliest for the North-American army in Afghanistan since the beginning of the war, surpassing even the death toll of Iraq. The situation was deteriorating since 2006 and it did not seem to improve even with Bush doubling the number of active troops in the war,
which reached almost 40,000 in 2008 (Washington Post 2008). Thus, when the new president took office in 2009, he announced a new strategy for Afghanistan, which comprised: the deployment of over 20,000 more troops\(^\text{11}\); enhanced cooperation among the US, Pakistan and Afghanistan; a huge increase in civilian assistance to both Afghanistan and Pakistan; fostering talks between Afghan official forces and Taliban “moderate” sectors; and the goal to capacitate an Afghan army of 134,000 along with a police force of 82,000 by 2011 (Miller 2016, Obama 2009). NATO endorsed this “surge” strategy in April of the same year, mainly supported by Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom (Larsen 2013).

Obama’s first year as commander-in-chief, however, was even worse than the past years. Insurgents bombed a NATO and a CIA headquarters, the death toll of American soldiers was more than the double of the previous years, and the relationship between the intervening powers and the Afghan government deteriorated (Miller 2016). As preparations for the Afghan 2009 presidential elections drew a significant part of ISAF’s efforts, Taliban was able to act more freely, intensifying the violent acts. On the voting day, the Taliban perpetrated hundreds of attacks around the country, which made attendance to polls very low. The two main candidates were President Hamid Karzai, going for reelection, and Abdullah Abdullah, former Karzai’s foreign minister. Amid massive accusations of vote-rigging, the President was pointed winner of the votings and, despite having his legitimacy widely questioned, was recognized by the intervening countries — even though they had not support his candidacy (Rashid 2009b).

The fraud allegations in the Afghan elections alongside with the rising violence influenced negatively on the international and popular support for the intervention in Afghanistan, undermining Obama’s political will to fully commit to the war as he had planned. However, General Stanley McCrystal, who assumed in June the role of top US and NATO commander in Afghanistan, assessed the worsening situation and claimed that at least 40,000 more troops, as well as huge resources, were necessary to drive an efficient “population-centric” counterinsurgency strategy, focusing on stopping the Taliban and enhancing Afghan governance (Katzman 2016, Larsen 2016). Obama, nevertheless, announced a much less bold approach: despite announcing the deployment of a new surge of 31,000 troops, he outlined a strategy that was limited to a counter-terrorism effort—in other words, more

\(^{11}\) The US government ended sending more than 30,000 soldiers, as it will be explained below in the text.
focused on intelligence gathering and in the elimination of Al-Qaeda than in fostering a viable political environment and governance in Afghanistan (Miller 2016).

In this same speech, delivered at West Point, Obama also announced that the transition from Western to Afghan authority would start in July 2011. The Afghan government would gradually assume the lead of the country’s political and military stabilization, followed by a reduction in US and NATO personnel. However, due to critics made by Afghan authorities, which accused the planned retreat of foreign forces of being too abrupt, another strategy was drawn during NATO’s Lisbon summit in November 2010, with the presence and compliance of President Karzai (Katzman 2016). The transition was still to start in early 2011 and was to be concluded until the end of 2014 — a process which would be “conditions-based, not calendar-driven”, as Afghan forces would gradually assume the control of the districts according to their stabilization (NATO 2010).

Months before the NATO summit, Netherlands had announced its retreat from Afghanistan by the end of 2010, being the first allied country to do that. This action was mainly explained by domestic political reasons, and produced significant negative effects on ISAF, as the Dutch 2,000 troops had a high prestige among Afghans and were responsible for the security and rebuilding of the central Uruzgan province — which was one of most important locus of ISAF operations by 2010 (Fox 2010). Besides this political and strategic setback, nonetheless, ISAF had important gains on Afghan terrain in this year.
The surge in the Afghan war culminated in mid-2010, when ISAF launched the Hamkari (“cooperation”, in Dari and Pashto) campaign, a broad military and political action that focused on securing the strategic southeastern province of Kandahar (see Map 3)—Hamid Karzai and Taliban’s homeland and the latter’s *de facto* capital (Forsberg 2010). This effort was mainly conceived by General McChrystal, who defended a reorientation in ISAF’s focus towards Kandahar and the neighbor province Helmand, regions where Taliban had deep economic and political linkages with local authorities. Until Hamkari, ISAF’s approach in these provinces was restricted to disruption operations of Taliban connections, refraining from a direct combat to their strongholds (Coll 2010).

Meanwhile, the Taliban launched an unprecedented series of attacks aimed both at the civilian population and at ISAF, in order to stop the advance of Hamkari. The group’s strategy had basically two main aspects: an intense use of small arms and improvised explosive devices (IED) against official troops, in order to divert them from Taliban safe havens and lines of communication; and a massive assassination campaign against the civi-
lian population in rural and urban areas, seeking psychological control and intimidation (Forsberg 2010). On the other hand, it was during this period that the United States started the widespread use of drone attacks not only in Afghanistan but also in neighbor Pakistan. Only in 2010, the number of drone strikes reached 118, almost three times bigger than during the period between 2004 and 2008. It can be attributed as a side-effect of this drone campaign a generalized sense of resentment among Pakistanis, which diminished their government’s credibility, as it was formally a supporter of the Western intervention (Tardelli 2011).

The military actions of the Hamkari process focused mostly on Kandahar City and surrounding areas. This urban center is the second-largest Afghan city, with half a million inhabitants, and is the core of the Pashtun south of Afghanistan. Moreover, it has access to the country’s main transport hub: Highway One, connecting this city with Kabul. By the second half of 2010, the operations managed to eliminate important Taliban leaderships and facilities, undermining its support and infrastructure in the region—the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), thus, which had its greatest involvement in military actions so far, won a favorable momentum and took the initiative from the insurgents (Forsberg 2010).

According to RAND analyst Seth Jones, the 2009–2011 surge allowed ISAF to take over important regions of southern Afghanistan and undermine popular support for Taliban. Besides the increase in conventional military efforts, one of the reasons appointed by the author was Karzai’s Afghan Local Police program, which enhanced security forces at the community level and allowed tribes from Helmand, Kandahar, and Uruzgan provinces to stand for themselves (Jones 2011; Miller 2016). Nonetheless, the ground lost by Taliban in the south was in part compensated by an increased presence in non-Pashtun areas in the North. Moreover, the intense violence produced by both sides during 2010 increased civilian casualties by 15% when compared to the previous year (Tardelli 2011).

Corroborating the claim that Taliban was weakened by the 2010 military efforts, the rate of insurgent attacks dropped in May 2011, a trend maintained in the following year (Miller 2016). Furthermore, the killing of Osama bin Laden in this same month, in Pakistan’s rural area, spre-

---

12 Consists in the Afghan National Army (ANA), the Afghan National Police (ANP) and the Afghan Air Force (AAA). Although it is also called Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) since 2015, in this work we will use the former acronym ANSF, as it is still widely known.
ad optimism regarding the possibility of advance in talks with Taliban, as Mullah Omar’s personal relationship with the Al-Qaeda leader was one of the main reasons for proximity between these two groups (Rogin 2011). These expectations, however, were widely frustrated by the assassination of the government’s High Peace Council representative Burhanuddin Rabbani, the prominent ethnic-Tajik who had been president of Afghanistan and was leading the negotiations with Taliban (ISW 2011).

On November 26, there was another major setback for the stabilization of Afghanistan when NATO helicopters allegedly crossed the blurry Afghan–Pakistani border and killed 28 Pakistani soldiers (Boone 2011, Tribune 2011). Bilateral relations between the United States and Pakistan were already much strained as bin Laden’s death caused a negative effect on the latter’s public opinion, and the incident motivated the Pakistani government to suspend its logistic assistance to ISAF and to boycott the Bonn Conference scheduled for December (Ali 2012). Expected to produce a main framework for post-2014 Afghanistan, the high-level meeting did not achieve significant advances besides general commitments from NATO to keep supporting the country after the withdrawal, mainly due to the absences of the Afghan Taliban and Pakistan—seen as the only country capable of influencing the region’s insurgent groups (Mir 2011).

2.2 THE TRANSITION PERIOD

After 2011, for several reasons, such as the lack of political support and the death of bin Laden, international engagement in Afghanistan started to effectively decrease. American civilian support, for example, significantly decreased from this year on, suggesting that the US had given up the nation/statebuilding effort to focus solely on a rough stabilization that would permit its withdrawal (Miller 2016). In June, Canada has ended its combat involvement in Afghanistan, a move mirrored by France by the end of 2012 (CTV News 2012, Libération 2012). Both countries left only some military trainers and civilian personnel.

In May 2012, amid a thorny moment in bilateral relations, the United States and Afghanistan managed to sign a Strategic Partnership Agreement, in which, among others, the US committed in broad terms to keep assisting Afghanistan for ten years after its withdrawal from the country, scheduled to 2014 (Graham-Harrison 2012, Time 2012). These commitments were confirmed two months later when the Western country granted Afghanistan the status of “major non-NATO ally”, giving it privileged
access to US financial and military aid (New York Times 2012). Still in May, the NATO Summit held in Chicago advanced in outlining the exit from Afghanistan, affirming that all command roles would already be in Afghan hands by mid-2013 (NATO 2012). Additionally, Afghanistan became an observer member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and agreed on a strategic and cooperative partnership with China, deepening economic and political ties (Xinhua 2012).

During the first months of 2012, there was an incipient attempt by the United States to hold talks with the Taliban. In March, however, the group suspended all contact with the Americans when they failed to release five militants detained in Guantanamo, who were to be traded for a captive US soldier. Meanwhile, relations between the Taliban and Pakistan also deteriorated, motivating the former to decrease its assistance to the latter. This compelled the group to be more open to dialogue with foreign parties, which was helped by the UNSC’s decision to alleviate some travel restrictions on its leaders. Pakistan, for its part, showed an improved will in negotiating with Afghanistan, which is explained by its huge domestic difficulties in dealing with an increasingly violent Taliban and a serious socioeconomic crisis — which forced the Pakistani government to cooperate with the United States in exchange for financial support (Rashid 2012).

On June 18, 2013, the Afghan government and NATO announced the former had assumed all lead positions in the country’s security forces, as planned in the Chicago summit (Dale 2014). At this time, the number of US troops on ground had already been reduced to 65,000, and the plans for 2014 included a further withdrawal of at least 30,000 (Miller 2016). Meanwhile, there was a renewed effort in talks among the United States, Afghanistan, and Taliban. However, this was frustrated as the latter had opened a representation office in Qatar and, seizing the opportunity to acquire international recognition, insisted in raising the old flag of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan — which angered Karzai and undermined the negotiations (BBC News 2013). Consequently, the Afghan government suspended its negotiations with the US regarding the Bilateral Security Agreement, which would settle the last details regarding mutual post-withdrawal relationship (Majidyiar 2014).

---

13 The Taliban Movement in Pakistan (Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan) was created in 2007 and is not affiliated to its Afghan counterpart, although both share as a common objective the fight against NATO troops.

---

UFRGS Model United Nations | VOL. 4 | 2016
As the transition followed and negotiations stalled, violence again started to rise. There was an increase of 15% in civilian casualties from 2012 to 2013, and the first months of 2014 saw a significant escalation. The transition also was producing deep economic difficulties, as thousands of jobs were expected to be lost with the withdrawal, depreciating the afghani (Afghanistan’s currency) and devaluing properties (International Crisis Group 2014). The country was locked in a sort of stalemate, as it waited for the result of the presidential elections of 2014 and for NATO to advance in its retreat.

Despite Taliban’s efforts to disrupt the elections by attacking voters, the process went relatively well, notwithstanding several low-level attacks around the country. After the first round of voting in April, the two front-runners, Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah (who lost in 2009 to Karzai), faced a runoff on June 14. Even though the latter had a comfortable lead in the first round, Ghani was declared winner in July, with 56.44% of votes (Reuters 2014a). Ghani is an ethnic-Pashtun seen as reformist who lived a great part of his life abroad, teaching at American universities and working as an economist for the World Bank. This technocrat profile, nonetheless, made him look like an outsider for the Afghan population—which forced him to align with regional leaders such as Abdul Rashid Dostum, a prominent Uzbek warlord who became Ghani’s vice-president (VICE News 2014).

As Abdullah initially claimed a fraud in the votings and refused to accept its outcome, there was widespread fear that the country would face tough instabilities. Nonetheless, the UN, after carrying out an audition of the votings, pointed frauds on both sides but with little effect on the result. Hence, in order to curtail instability, Ghani and Abdullah signed a power-sharing agreement through the appointment of the latter to the newly-created role of chief executive officer, which would assume some of the president’s functions (similar to a prime-minister) (The Economist 2014).

In the end of September, right after assuming the presidency, Ghani signed with the United States the much-expected Bilateral Security and Status of Forces Agreements, in which the latter committed to largely assist the former even after the intervention (CFR 2014, Hodge and Stancati 2014). Post-2014 relations between Afghanistan and ISAF countries would be based on NATO’s Resolute Support Mission, approved in June. This effort, meant to be ISAF’s successor and to start on January 1st, 2015, was focused on military training and counter-terrorism, for which NATO would
keep around 13,000 troops in Afghanistan. The US, particularly, renamed Operation Enduring Freedom to “Operation Freedom’s Sentinel” and committed to maintain 9,800 troops on Afghan soil, 6,000 of which involved in Resolute Support Mission (Katzman 2016).

The transition was, thus, well underway. The Taliban, however, seized this opportunity to take action against the ANSF. Violence heightened, and 2014 held an all-time high in civilian casualties in Afghanistan (Miller 2016). Moreover, Kabul, once one of the less-violent parts of the country, had now become a spot of intense attacks by the Taliban. The insurgents were determined to show their force in the last days of ISAF. Thus, when on December 28 NATO announced the formal ending of its combat operations, the Taliban declared “the US and its allies had been defeated”, and was prepared to keep fiercely fighting the Afghan official government (Reuters 2014b, The Washington Post 2014).

2.3 THE POST-2014 PERIOD

From 2011 to 2014, despite some severe difficulties related, especially, to the escalation of violence in the country, the transition of the security responsibility from ISAF to ANSF was going well in many areas. Even though it still had several debilities in its equipment and warfighting capability, ANSF was building its long-term sustainability to achieve a lasting peace, with significant improvement within the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior. As the US forces stepped back and the insurgents continued carrying out attacks against the coalition’s remaining forces, ANSF kept being advised to improve different capacities—especially intelligence, aviation, and logistics—and to better integrate the three main security pillars: army, police and intelligence services. By the end of 2014, the Afghan security forces had full responsibility for internal security issues and were already planning and executing almost all combat operations in the country (Cordesman 2014, United States Department of Defense 2014).

When addressing the terrorist and insurgent threats, the “Report on Progress towards Security and Stability in Afghanistan”, produced in October by the US Department of State, affirmed the counterterrorism operations had successfully restricted al Qaeda’s presence, and classified the Haqqani Network as the “most virulent” element of insurgency in the country. The Taliban, in turn, despite its effective propaganda, controlled no major urban centers in the country and failed in holding significant terrain and in
having strategic gains throughout the year (United States Department of Defense 2014). In a press release of October 4, General John Campbell, the last ISAF commander, declared his confidence in the Afghan forces. The general stated that there was no place that the Afghan military could not take back from any insurgent takeover, and that “there’s nowhere that we have Afghan security forces that the Taliban can get the terrain and hold the terrain” for longer than only temporarily (Campbell 2014).

After 2014, however, there was still no evidence that the “surge” had succeeded in eliminating the insurgent threat and defeating Taliban. In fact, without NATO’s ISAF on the ground, the group increased its attacks against government forces, and 2015 was marked by a significant deterioration in the Afghan security situation (Cordesman 2015a, United States Department of Defense 2015). There were also worries regarding Afghanistan’s national institutions and their capabilities to guarantee political unity as well as stable and responsive governance, since corruption was still an enduring challenge to the government. Provincial and District governments remained severely divided and weak, allowing the empowerment of local power brokers and warlords, as well as of insurgent groups. The gloomy fact that the Afghan president had effective control only in Kabul’s surrounding areas led analysts to ironically call him “Kabul’s major” or to address his area of domination as “Kabulstan” instead of Afghanistan. Even if we admit that the strong division of the nation dates back from the Soviet invasion, worsening during the civil war and the US intervention, it is evident that the withdrawal of the international coalition deepened the government’s difficulties in effectively protecting the territory and safeguarding stability and unity (Cordesman 2015b).

2.3.1 THE REVIVAL OF THE INSURGENT THREAT

Before 2015, Taliban’s main propaganda was directed to getting rid of foreign influence in the country. With ISAF’s withdrawal, the main lines had to change. On April 24, 2015, the group announced the beginning of a new season of fighting, which would now be focused on targeting Afghan government officials. In July, the rumor regarding the supposed death of Mullah Omar was confirmed with the announcement that he had died in 2013 and that the group was now led by Mullah Akhtar Mohammed Mansour. The group hid this information for two years in order to keep their militants motivated by their loyalty to the supreme leader (Cordesman 2015b, United States Department of Defense 2015). Internal disputes
regarding the appointment of Mullah Mansour as emir took place and the group suffered some dissidence, but that was not enough to effectively weaken Taliban’s activities.

The Taliban remained active in its traditional areas of influence, notably the Helmand province in the South and Logar and Wardak in the East. The reinforcement of Taliban’s presence in Helmand was strategically important, since it is an economically important region: it is the main producer of opium in the country, providing Taliban a great share of drug business to finance its activities (Unites States Department of Defense 2015, Osman 2015). Besides reaffirming its position in its strongholds, the group also engaged in conquering new territories. In 2015 alone, the Taliban expanded its presence in the country more than in any other year since the US intervention—it is estimated that the group officially controls one-third of the country, but virtually half of it. Even though it could not retain all the wrested checkpoints for long, the seizing of new districts demonstrated that the Taliban was stronger and eager to keep challenging the Afghan government. One of the main events of this new expansion effort by the Taliban was the battle for Kunduz, in the north, which produced a period of instability in the region and concerned authorities, since the Taliban had traditionally been stronger in the south than in the north of the country (Almukhtar and Yourish 2016, Azami 2015, Unites States Department of Defense 2015, Cordesman 2015b).

The Taliban fighters began attacking some areas of the Kunduz Province in August, and ended up seizing the capital, Kunduz, on September 28. The Afghan forces, supported by US forces’ airstrikes, counterattacked in order to retake the city. The Taliban, however, managed not only to hold the city but also to expand to other districts, as the district of Chardara, considered strategic due to a road that connects it to Mazar-i-Sharif, the largest city in the North. According to Vanda Felbab-Brown, it was the first time since 2001 that

(...) the Taliban managed to conquer an entire province and for several days hold its capital. The psychological effect in Afghanistan was tremendous. Kunduz is vital strategic province, with major access roads to various other parts of Afghanistan’s north. Moreover, those who control the roads—still the Taliban—also get major revenue from taxing travelers, which is significant along these opium-smuggling routes. (Felbab-Brown 2016, p.11)
On October 3rd, a Doctor Without Borders facility in Kunduz was stroked by a very controversial US airstrike against Taliban, in support to the Afghan government, killing 30 people and leaving 37 injured. The coalition assistance enabled the Afghan forces to take back control of Kunduz in two weeks, but that did not come without heavy humanitarian losses: 493 civilians died and 1,392 were wounded during the fighting (Almukhtar and Yourish 2015, Unites States Department of Defense 2015, Felbab-Brown 2016).

After the Kunduz battle, nonetheless, there was no more than a slight decrease in the intensity of the attacks and, in April 2016, Taliban announced that with the beginning of spring and the warmer weather they would be starting a new period of offensives. They publicized that this new offensive would be called “Operation Omari”, in reference to the deceased leader Mullah Omar. Also in April, the Haqqani Network conducted one of 2016’s deadliest attacks, with over 60 people dead and 300 wounded (McLeary and Rawsnley 2016, Felbab-Brown 2016). Several attacks followed and are still taking place in Afghanistan.

Map 6: Taliban-controlled and disputed areas

Source: http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-a-year-of-the-caliphate-4-maps-that-show-how-far-and-fast-the-group-has-spread-10342191.html
Taliban, however, was not the only threat to peace and security in Afghanistan since 2015. In January of that year, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) established a new branch in the Khorasan province in Afghanistan. Recruiting discontent young militants from Taliban and battling against it, ISIL created in consequence a third front in the Afghan conflict. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant Khorasan’s (IS-K), as it is designated, is still not as big and influential in the country as the Taliban or even as al-Qaeda—which, in turn, did not increase its presence in the country but it also was not weakened. Nonetheless, its presence is a new motivation for Taliban fighters to enhance fighting over control of larger areas (Unites States Department of Defense 2015, Simpson 2015, Unites States Department of State 2016). On July 23 2016, the Islamic State demonstrated the growth of their presence and power by claiming responsibility for an attack in Kabul against the Hazaras, a Shiite minority, where 80 people died and over 200 were wounded (Harooni 2016).

Map 7: ISIS presence in Afghanistan and Pakistan

Source: http://static.independent.co.uk/s3fspublic/styles/story_medium/public/thumbnails/image/2015/06/24/17/IsisPakistanAfghanistan.jpg
All of these elements together increased the security threat in many areas of the country, considered “severe” in nearly half of the districts. That was the reason why, on October 15, 2015, US president Barack Obama announced that US soldiers would remain in Afghanistan until the end of his term in 2017, in a clear revision on his administration’s original plans to cut the troops in the country by half in 2016 and also in response to a request from Kabul. This decision to delay the withdrawal of their remaining forces does not only represent an indefinite prolongation of US presence in the Afghan war, but it also concedes that ANSF is still not fully prepared to protect the country and tackle the current crisis on its own (Rosenberg and Shear 2015, IISS 2016b).

Since the beginning of 2016, the Afghan government made some advances in negotiating with Hezb-e-Islami in Afghanistan (HIA). The group was one of Afghanistan’s most influential Sunni parties during the 1980’s and 1990’s, and it currently has a more moderate approach if compared to Taliban. In May, the National Unity Government (NUG), represented by the President Ashraf Ghani, and HIA signed a preliminary agreement that was considered a positive development for Afghanistan’s security situation. Both parts affirmed the desire for reaching peace in the country, and one of HIA’s main demands for negotiating was the agreement on the withdrawal of foreign troops—which they have been attacking since 2001 (Amin Ahmadzai 2016, Putz 2016). Both the Afghan and the Pakistani governments stated their willingness to engage in peace talks with the Taliban as well.

However, on May 22, 2016, the Taliban leader Mullah Mansour was killed in a US strike in the Baluchistan province of Pakistan (Mashal 2016). Three days later, the group announced Mawlawi Hibatullah Akhundzada as Mullah Mansour’s successor. The new leader vowed that no peace talks with the Afghan government would be held under his command. He affirmed that the fighting will continue and that the peace talks are not the solution for the ending of the insurgent activity (Akbar 2016).

### 2.3.2 THE FAILURE IN CIVILIAN PROTECTION AND THE WORSENING SOCIOECONOMIC SITUATION

In February 2016, UNAMA reported that 2015 had hit a new high on civilian casualties since the US invasion, with a raise of 4% from 2014. Over 11,000 civilian casualties (3,545 dead and 7,457 wounded) were documented, caused mainly by the increase of fighting in high-populated
areas. According to the Mission, the gross majority of these cases were due to anti-government elements’ attacks, and around 10% of them were due to Afghan forces actions—the ones with international support included (UNAMA 2016).

Unfortunately, the problems do not exist only when it comes to civilian protection in the conflict. The worsening security situation is accompanied by worsening demographic, economic and political conditions. The current population growth (more than 40% of the population is 0–14 years old) generates an intense pressure in the economy, which is extremely debilitated by increasing poverty (nearly 40% of the population live below the poverty line) and weak job creation. The Afghan economy was recovering well from 2001 to 2014, but since 2014, this growth has noticeably slowed. ISAF’s withdrawal is probably one of the reasons to this reduced growth rate, since foreign troops were responsible for a significant part of the consumption. Therefore, Afghanistan remains highly dependent on international donations, but structural reforms within the economic institutions to improve revenue collection and resource allocation—highly harmed nowadays by massive corruption—are crucial to a long-term sustained development (CIA 2016).

The Afghan economy is also still extremely dependent on agriculture, with 75% of the population living in rural zones and 78% of the country’s labor force employed in agriculture. However, even with this characteristic, the country cannot meet its food needs and it is considered a food-insecure country. It is also important to stress that the narco-economy plays an increasing role in the country’s economy as well, and this area was highly benefited from the failure of the government’s counter-narcotics programs (Cordesman 2016). A great share of the population living in the rural zone is dependent on the opium production and sale, as well as on the commercialization of other illicit drugs. As aforementioned, the drug trafficking is also one of the main sources of revenues of insurgent groups as Taliban, and its growth may pose a serious threat if it keeps financing terrorist activities.

Finally, it is crucial to understand that ethnical divisions have always played a major role in the disputes in Afghanistan. The next session will focus on understanding the country’s ethnic composition as well as the interests of each group involved in the Afghan conflict, from the warlords to Taliban to the foreign powers.

2.4 ETHNIC DIVISIONS AND GROUP INTERESTS
According to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the main ethnic groups in Afghanistan are Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, and Uzbek, with small numbers of Baloch, Turkmen, Nuristani, Pamiri, Arab, Gujar, Brahui, Qizilbash, Aimaq, Pashai, and Kyrgyz—the latter not recognized by Afghanistan’s 2004 constitution (CIA 2016). The country has two official languages, Dari (or Afghan Persian) and Pashto, but there are also Turkic languages such as Uzbek and Turkmen, and nearly 30 other minor languages such as Balochi and Pashai (CIA 2016). These pieces of information demonstrate the complexity of Afghanistan’s ethnic and tribal formation, which are responsible for many of the territorial and power disputes among warlords, local powers, and insurgent groups that historically took place in the country, with each of the groups demanding a fair share of power and governance.

The current president Ashraf Ghani is a Pashtun, and his vice-president, Abdul Rashid Dostum, is an ethnic Uzbek. Dostum was a Northern Alliance warlord, which enabled him to get support from northern fighters in January 2015 to form an anti-Taliban force of 20,000 men. This was an important development considering that Afghan warlords, as well as jihadist commanders, traditionally criticized the government for excluding them from politics by not appointing them to important positions. Afghanistan’s Chief Executive Officer, Abdullah Abdullah, who is a mix of Pashtun and Tajik ethnicity but most commonly referred to as Tajik, was also a warlord from the Northern Alliance. However, his rivalry with president Ghani hardens an actual political unity in the country, which reflects in the lack of governance and in the poor capacity in controlling the majority of the territory (IISS 2016a).

The responsibility for providing security was transferred to ANSF since the ending of ISAF’s combat operations in December 2014. Afghan forces’ size and capabilities have considerably improved in the past years, but they still struggle to effectively hold the territory, since they do not have enough combat power and personnel to protect every district. ANSF have performed well in fighting against insurgents in 2015, especially in the north—the battle for Kunduz poses a good example—but they are constantly challenged with operational issues, such as high attrition, increasing casualty rates, logistics and maintenance matters. The Afghan Ministry of Defense (MoD) also has serious gaps in its ability to develop long-term capabilities (IHS 2016a, IHS 2016b).

The ethnic issues reflect very clearly on the MoD, with efforts being made to form a representative military staff. In the beginning, the National
Army was controlled by a majority of Tajiks, since they played an important part in the Northern Alliance, which was crucial in overthrowing the Taliban regime. During the Karzai government, the Pashtuns were favored and became the majority of the MoD, while current president Ghani is making an effort to establish a multiethnic national force (IHS 2016b).

Terrorism, insurgency, drug trafficking and the tensions with Pakistan are the main threats faced by the armed forces. To improve its capacities and to better deal with these threats, ANSF receives equipment and training from many countries, especially the US, the United Kingdom, India, China, and, despite attrition between the two countries, also from Pakistan. Even with gross international aid, the ANSF had heavy losses in 2015: over 7,200 soldiers were killed and many troops deserted, leading the government to resort to the use of militias, which damaged popular support (IHS 2016a, IHS 2016b, IISS 2016a).

Nowadays, the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission is the main representation of foreign direct presence in the country. The mission operates mainly from Kabul, but it has subordinate headquarters in the North (Mazar-e-Sharif), in the West (Herat), in the South (Kandahar) and in the East (Laghman). As of May 2016, troop numbers contributing to Resolute Support are 12,486, and around 3,000 from the United States alone are engaged in Operation Freedom Sentinel (IHS 2016b, NATO 2016, IISS 2016b).

The Taliban is the government’s major enemy. The group’s main objective is to restore the status quo that existed before the US intervention in 2001. This means that they desire to remove all foreign troops from the country and oust the central government in Kabul to restore the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. They claim to have no interest in conducting attacks against Western countries. Their insurgency is based mainly on the use of IEDs, small-arms ambushes and suicide attacks—the latter often in urban areas. Taliban’s traditional area of influence is the predominantly Pashtun regions in East and South Afghanistan, particularly the Kandahar province. In 2015, however, conquering the north of the country became the top priority in the group’s strategy, seizing strategically important districts. The group began to use non-Pashtun fighters in order to better adapt to local ethnic and political dynamics of the North, which probably aided significantly their advances. Holding bigger portions of the country has been a clear objective of the group in the last two years, in order to increase its influence in case any peace process is ever to succeed in the country. If it is true that they virtually control half of the Afghan territory, it will be im-
possible to ignore the demands of the group when the time for seeking political solutions finally comes. It is also important to add that, after the overthrow of the Taliban government in 2001, the group leaders reorganized from Pakistan, therefore the border region between the two countries still has a high presence of Taliban fighters (IHS 2016d, IISS 2016a).

The Taliban also maintain relations with other non-state actors. One of the most important of them is their autonomous eastern wing, the Haqqani Network, a Sunni Islamic revolutionary group formed by a majority of Pashtun fighters loyal to mujahedeen leader Jalaluddin Haqqani and his son, Sijaruddin. The network operates mainly in the region known as Loya Paktia or Greater Paktia, and is currently an ally of Taliban in the fight for the reestablishment of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan—in fact, the Taliban claims responsibility for many of the attacks conducted by the Network. Their primary base, however, is located in North Waziristan, in Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and in 2011, US officials accused ISI of assisting the group—speculations that were denied by Pakistani authorities (IHS 2016d, IHS 2014a).

Al-Qaeda is a further serious threat posed against Kabul. The group has a small core of militants operating in the frontier region between Afghanistan and Pakistan that is a strong ally of the Taliban since 1997, when Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden forged personal close links. In 2015, shortly after Taliban announced Mullah Mansour as their new leader, Al-Qaeda welcomed the decision and pledged allegiance to the new emir. Yet, even though the groups share similar views regarding religious issues, Al-Qaeda’s agenda is not limited to Afghan borders as the Taliban’s is (IHS 2016d).

Historically strained relations between the Taliban and Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) appeared to have improved since 2014, when commanders from both groups affirmed they have reached an agreement regarding joint operations in Afghanistan. The TTP, however, is still primarily focused on overthrowing the Pakistani regime and enforcing its own authority in Pakistan’s tribal areas, with the final objective of establishing a fundamentalist state in the territory (IHS 2016d).

The Taliban also maintains relations with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), a Sunni militant group created in Tajikistan that currently operates from South Waziristan in FATA, where established close ties with Pakistani Taliban militants; the Hizb-i-Islami-Gulbuddin (HIG) with which the group maintains only a pragmatic alliance due to historical strains; and very distant relations with the originally Uzbek Islamic Jihad.
Union (IJU), that is actually a very close ally to the Haqqani Network, but it has operated alongside Taliban in some operations throughout the decades in order to fight the then existing Northern Alliance. Nevertheless, these groups are extremely degraded and their presence do not pose real urgent risks to the country’s stability (IHS 2014c, IHS 2014b, IHS 2016d).

Finally, it is impossible to summarize the most important groups acting today in Afghanistan without recognizing the presence of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant in Khorasan Province. The creation of Wilayat Khorasan (a branch of ISIL supposed to cover Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia) was announced in January 2015, and shortly after the group rivaled against Taliban by conducting attacks against their militants. In mid-April, the two groups announced jihad against each other. ISIL in Khorasan benefited from the concealment of Mullah Omar’s death, as many Taliban fighters loyal to him felt disappointed and betrayed and consequently became more susceptible to adhering to the Islamic State (IISS 2016a, IHS 2016c). It is still not clear whether the Islamic State will have resources to expand in Afghan territory or not, but the fact that it is raising its flags to combat Taliban and Kabul’s administration at the same time creates a new source of instability that needs to be paid serious and careful attention.

3 PREVIOUS INTERNATIONAL ACTIONS

This section aims at presenting, with more details than the previous one, the most important international efforts towards Afghanistan since 2001. Firstly, the Bonn Conference and the constitution of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) will be addressed, in order to evaluate the main questions on debate right in the aftermath of Taliban’s defeat in 2001. The second part will bring up the main aspects and objectives of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), created in 2002, as it is the framework that guides most international assistance to the country. At last, the Resolute Support Mission (RSM)—which is ISAF’s successor as the NATO intervention in Afghanistan—will be assessed.

3.1 THE BONN CONFERENCE AND THE INTERNATIONAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE FORCE

\(^{14}\) Some militants of the Hezb-e-Islami did not join the insurgency and created the political party Hezb-e-Islami Afghanistan (HIA). This internal division did not exist before 2001.
As Taliban power faded away, the international community initiated efforts to restructure the government. In late November 2001, a meeting took place in Bonn, Germany, in order to define the future of Afghanistan, as UN initial efforts did not show significant outcomes (Jones 2010). The final result was presented on December 5th and was named “Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending and the Reestablishment of Permanent Government Institutions”, which was endorsed by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1383, submitted in the very next day (Maley 2009). The Taliban members were not invited to join the debates (Visentini 2013).

As stated by Maley (2009, 224–229), the conference aimed to find an “agreement on provisional arrangements in Afghanistan”; besides, “[the final document] was not a peace agreement, […] but rather a road map for the reestablishment of rudimentary state structures”. Thus, there would be created an interim administration (over an interim government) which would be led by a chairman and a circle of members. This interim administration would have the power delivered by the end of December and would be the formal representation to the United Nations. Thereafter, a Loya Jirga (an emergency basis commission formed by several Afghan political representatives) would be opened by former king Muhammed Zahir, by mid-2002. This council would be “entrusted with the day-to-day conduct of the affairs of state” and therefore, it would define the steps to guarantee democratic elections. After warm debates, Hamid Karzai, a moderate Pashtun, was chosen as the chairman. A Constitutional Loya Jirga would be created in order to submit an Afghan Constitution and a commission would redefine the judiciary system in the country. The participants also requested “the assistance of the international community in helping the new Afghan authorities in the establishment and training of new Afghan security and armed forces”.

The interim administration headed by Karzai took office, as scheduled, at a dignified ceremony on December 22th in Kabul. Two days before, however, the United Nations would respond to the participants of Bonn Conference claims by approving in the Security Council the Resolution 1386, which authorized the implementation of an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), under a “chapter VII” enforcement mandate of six months. ISAF was created aiming “to secure Kabul and assist the process of developing a unified national army”. Having United Kingdom Major-General John McColl as the first ISAF Force Commander, it was clear that the expenses as well as the forces would be essentially NATO’s: mainly
constituted by Americans, but with large European participation (Maley 2009). ISAF’s mandate was subsequently extended by UN Security Council, as well as the expansion of its geographical limits of operation, which made the Assistance Force deeply involved in Afghani security issues (Jones 2010).

3.2 THE UNITED NATIONS ASSISTANCE MISSION IN AFGHANISTAN (2002-PRESENT)

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is a political mission directed by the United Nations Department of Political Affairs (DPA). Its two main fields of activities regard political affairs and development and humanitarian issues (UNAMA 2016). The Mission was established by UNSC Resolution 1401, of March 28, 2002, following a request of the country’s interim government after the fall of the Taliban. The resolution defined an initial period of twelve months for the Mission, but its mandate was renewed every year since then (UNAMA 2016, United Nations 2002).

According to UNAMA’s official website (2016), the political mission:

“[…] provides good offices in Afghanistan; works with and supports the government; supports the process of peace and reconciliation; monitors and promotes human rights and the protection of civilians in armed conflict; promotes good governance; and encourages regional cooperation.” (UNAMA 2016, online)

In addition, according to Resolution 1401, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) should work closely with the United Nations while working in Afghanistan, and, consequently, work in cooperation with UNAMA (United Nations 2002).

The Assistance Mission currently has field offices in twelve provinces across the country: Bamyan, Faizabad, Farah, Gardez, Herat, Jalalabad, Kabul, Kandahar, Maimana, Mazar-e-Sharif, Pul-e-Khumri, and Kunduz. The main reason for the Mission to act in several provinces is to enhance regional cooperation, which the UN perceive as the most effective way to

---

15 Working with the provision of “good offices” involves mediation, which means “preventive diplomacy” or “conflict prevention”, in order to help the Afghan government to assume its full leadership regarding security, government and development (UNAMA 2016, online).
increase the country’s security, stability and socio-economic development. It maintains offices in the neighboring regions as well: one in Iran and one in Pakistan. This represents an attempt to engage regional partners to contribute to Afghanistan, since that could provide a more stable ground for the region as a whole. According to official data, in 2016, the Mission counted with 376 international staff members, 1,163 national and 79 UN Volunteers, and a budget of US$ 183 million (UNAMA 2016).

The observance of human rights is also a priority for the Mission. Dialoguing constantly with the government, the armed forces, the international and civil society, the human rights engagement focus in five main areas:

“Protection of civilians in the armed conflict; monitoring and reporting on grave child rights violations in the armed conflict; elimination of violence against women and promotion of gender equality; human rights aspects of peace and reconciliation; prevention of torture in detention and arbitrary detention”. (UNAMA 2016, online)

UNAMA also works at promoting coherent development support to Afghanistan by the international community, supporting development planning, resource mobilization, and coordination of international donors or organizations. Currently, there are more than twenty United Nations agencies, funds, and programs in Afghanistan (UNAMA 2016).

UNSC Resolution 2274 (2016), adopted on 15 March 2016, renewed the mandate of UNAMA in Afghanistan until March 17, 2017, and reinforced that the Mission shall continue “leading and coordinating international civilian efforts in assisting Afghanistan, guided by the principle of reinforcing Afghan sovereignty, leadership and ownership” (United Nations 2016, UNAMA 2016).

The Mission, however, faces several difficulties in fully exercising its mandate. Some of them include accusations of corruption within the organization of UNAMA, lack of coordination among agencies and NGOs and low efficiency regarding the allocation of aid. In addition, though the main discourse stresses the role of the Afghan government in the stabilization of the country, international involvement continues highly extensive when it comes to both development issues and the combat of insurgency. UNAMA has also a great role in the reconstruction efforts, but this area has been developing very slow, especially when it comes to further advancing into rural
zones (Margesson 2010). Tackling these difficulties is key, for UNAMA’s success is vital for the decrease of reconstruction activities that are currently held unilaterally by foreign actors such as the United States.

3.3 THE RESOLUTE SUPPORT MISSION (2015-PRESENT)

Between late 2014 and early 2015, with the formal ending of its operations, ISAF was substituted as the official international intervention in Afghanistan by NATO’s Resolute Support Mission (RSM). As security responsibilities for the country had already been transferred from NATO to the ANSF, both parts agreed on this new framework for the intervention. Both the US and NATO had already concluded bilateral security agreements with Afghanistan; thus, a deep Western involvement even after the end of ISAF was not a surprise.

The new mission, whose mandate was unanimously approved by the UNSC with Resolution 2189, was meant to be restricted to “non-combat, training, advisory and assistance” (United Nations 2014, online). According to NATO (2016, online), the mission’s key functions would be: a) “supporting planning, programming and budgeting”; b) “assuring transparency, accountability and oversight”; c) “supporting the adherence to the principles of rule of law and good governance” and; d) “supporting the establishment and sustainment of such processes as force generation, recruiting, training, managing and development of personnel”. The RSM operates divided into five zones, each one of which commanded by a NATO country, as follows: Kabul/Bagram (the mission’s central hub, led by Turkey), Mazar-e Sharif (Germany), Herat (Italy), Kandahar and Laghman (USA).

Currently, 39 countries contribute to the mission (whether with personnel or in different ways), and its total strength is of more than 12,000 soldiers, of which almost 7,000 are Americans. In May 2016, NATO and Afghanistan agreed to extend the RSM beyond the present year—without defining a deadline, though (NATO 2016). Recently, European countries—namely Italy and Germany—have been showing a greater involvement in the RSM, mainly aiming at controlling their inflow of refugees, as Afghanistan is second only to Syria as a source of refugees (Felbab-Brown 2016).

Parallel to the substitution of ISAF by RSM, the United States ended its Operation Enduring Freedom (launched in 2001) and started to refer to its operations in Afghanistan as “Operation Freedom’s Sentinel”. The new operation, besides working closely with RSM, focus on counter-terrorism (United States 2014). In June 2016, nonetheless, the 9,800 US troops still in
Afghanistan were entitled to a larger role in the fight against Taliban, receiving more authority regarding the use of airstrikes in cooperation with the ANSF—as the latter’s aerial capabilities are still very weak (Fox News 2016).

Under the new leadership of General John Nicholson, US forces now have the prerogative to engage in offensive actions against Taliban, as before they were only allowed to act alongside Afghan special operations forces—somewhat exceeding its original mandate and in part resembling ISAF (Copp 2016, Felbab-Brown 2016). Facing the recent advance of Taliban in northern and southern provinces, American and British air support is currently seen as essential by Afghan officials to avoid further territorial losses. Last June, the US government officially announced that would keep 8,400 troops in Afghanistan beyond 2016 instead of the 5,500 initially planned—just a modest decrease from the current 9,800 (Panda 2016).

4 BLOC POSITIONS

As the sponsor and leader of the international intervention in Afghanistan, the United States of America is the main extra-regional force discussing the issue. Even though Obama promised to end the war in Afghanistan before the end of his mandate, this is currently not in sight. Last June—as written in the previous section—the US forces in Afghanistan received a larger mandate, which widened the possibility for North-American participation in offensive actions against Taliban and for the usage of US airstrikes (Ryan and Gibbons-Neff 2016). The US delegation in the UNSC recently called for all the actors to support Afghanistan in every way, helping its government to achieve its reform agenda (United Nations 2016).

Even though it had never participated directly in ISAF (being a NATO partner country), Japan has been a very important international actor in Afghan nation-building. Japan is second only to the United States when it comes to financial and humanitarian aid to the country, having spent almost US$ 6 billion since 2001, as of April 2015 (Japan 2015). Tokyo also hosted eight international conferences to discuss solutions to the Afghan conflict and provided technical assistance in several areas, notably in infrastructure and in the security sector (NATO 2011). Japan supports the role played by UNAMA in Afghanistan and hopes for bilateral talks between Taliban and the Afghan government, which could improve the security situation (United Nations 2016).
New Zealand, also a NATO partner country, integrated the NATO coalition in Afghanistan since its beginning, first deploying troops in December 2001. Between 2003 and 2013, the country played an important role as responsible for the Provincial Reconstruction Team of Bamyan (The New Zealand Herald 2012). Currently, it has a small amount of personnel integrating RSM (New Zealand 2016). The country calls for neighboring countries to actively act to restrain the inflow of “arms, fighters and narcotics” and praised the sanction regime on Taliban as a means to bring the militants to dialogue (United Nations 2016).

Malaysia’s participation in ISAF came with a medical team, which worked alongside New Zealander troops in Bamyan (Malaysia 2016, NNN 2016). The country notes the especially fragile situation of women and children in the conflict, pointing to the latter’s recruitment by insurgent groups. In this sense, Malaysia calls for a decisive role played by the UN in Afghanistan transformation decade (2015–2025) (United Nations 2016).

An US major non-NATO ally and a Mediterranean Dialogue NATO partner, Egypt had only a limited participation in ISAF. The country operates a field hospital in the Bagram airfield, north of Kabul. Egyptian presence was praised for being one of the few Muslim countries engaged in the intervention—alongside with the UAE, Jordan and Azerbaijan—, which helped integration with the locals (Dickson 2010). The country recently stressed the importance of counter-terrorist actions in Afghanistan to also fight drug trafficking in the country—a problem that much undermines statebuilding efforts. Egypt, moreover, sharing worries with the rise of ISIS, offered specialized training in counter-terrorism for the ANSF—for which it would require the help of international donors, nonetheless (United Nations 2016).

In the 2016 UNSC session that expanded UNAMA’s mandate for another year, the delegation of France reiterated the country’s support for the Afghan government to continue the efforts initiated in 2014, with the beginning of the transition period. France stands a supportive and positive position regarding the 2016 initiatives that could lead to peace talks. However, it stresses the enormous challenges the Afghan government still has to face: the continuity of the conflict with high levels of violence and terrorist activities victimizing mainly civilians; the maintenance of the country’s unity under the government; the need for an electoral reform; the fight against corruption; the economic crisis and illicit economic activities; and the worrying situation of women and children. The French delegation claims that the participation of the United Nations is essential for safe-
guarding the political and security transition in Afghanistan (Lamek 2016). Even though France was one of the contributors for ISAF, it currently does not contribute with any troops in Resolute Support (NATO 2016).

The United Kingdom stresses that economic growth is key to bring stability for Afghanistan, and congratulates the country for recently accessing the World Trade Organization. For the United Kingdom, the international community must keep condemning Taliban’s attacks on civilians and the continuity of violence until the suffering of Afghan people stops (United Nations 2016). At present, the Deputy Commander of Resolute Support Mission in Kabul is from the United Kingdom, and the country contributes with 352 troops (NATO 2016).

Spain believes that the United Nations have an even bigger role in Afghanistan since the ISAF’s withdrawal in 2014. The Spanish delegation affirms the importance of the Afghan government continuing efforts towards international reconciliation and regional integration. According to the Spanish deputy the main threats in the country are posed by Taliban, but he expresses hope that upcoming elections may have a positive effect in enhancing local and regional stability (United Nations 2016). Spain contributes with only seven troops in Resolute Support Mission (NATO 2016).

The delegation of Ukraine is supportive of the Afghan government’s efforts to solve the problems not only related to the civil war itself, but also its consequences, as fiscal problems, poverty and unemployment. They also believe it is important to consider further military aid and donor assistance to the country, as well as to guarantee that all parties commit to condemn attacks against civilians and do all necessary to minimize the suffering of the Afghan people (United Nations 2016). Ukraine currently contributes with 10 troops in Resolute Support Mission (NATO 2016).

One of the main concerns expressed by Senegal is regarding the situation of children in Afghanistan. The Republic of Senegal believes that efforts to combat child recruitment by armed groups and reduce the loss of child lives are extremely important, especially considering the great amount of children that died during the Afghan conflict. The Senegalese delegation also defends the need for electoral reform and welcomes efforts that may lead to peace talks, noting that international cooperation is necessary to Afghan stability (United Nations 2016).

The Russian Federation expresses its concern regarding the raising of terrorist acts within Afghanistan borders. In relation to this issue, Moscow states the need to a more inclusive and deeper debate between the government and Taliban high representatives. An effective program that
might set Afghanistan free of terrorism and drug dealing, as declared by the Russian representative to the Security Council, must arrange the evolution of Afghan security forces capabilities of maintaining stability and peace, which NATO forces have not been able to guarantee. Thereto, Moscow asserts its essay on training and equipping Afghan troops (United Nations 2016). Besides, the rising of Islamic State jihadists in subsequent provinces disquiets President Putin, who fears these terrorist groups might reach Central Asia and Southern Russia. Therefore, Vladimir Putin considers the situation “close to critical” (Frolovskiy 2016).

The People’s Republic of China declared uneasiness regarding to the rising of violence that attains civil society. Beijing laments that the progress made in the past could have not maintained the stability in Afghanistan by their own forces. However, China understands that the international community must provide humanitarian and strategic support to the country. Hence, Beijing calls for the implementation of measures in order to consolidate basic Afghani institutions, supporting and congratulating UNAMA’s efforts (United Nations 2016). People’s Republic of China’s interests in Afghanistan, however, are more profound. Recently, Beijing set up an agreement to raise the Afghan military capabilities in order to avoid the contact of the Islamic fundamentalist with the chinese Uyghur, who wants to make Xinjiang an autonomous region (Tiezzi 2016).

Uruguay and Venezuela praised the efforts of the international community to assist Afghanistan reestablishment of political autonomy, thereunto both countries supported the extension of UNAMA’s mandate. Besides, Montevideo and Caracas understand the lack of security for thousands of civilians is mainly connected to drug traffic. Hence, both countries call for Taliban representatives to participate in cooperation talks to assure that every political group respects civilian protection (United Nations 2016).

Angola congratulated UNAMA’s efforts and exposed its understanding that the international community must be present on providing assistance to strengthen Afghanistan. However, Luanda expresses its profound concerns regarding opium seizure and the death of unprotected civilians, which is, as recently declared by the Security Council Angolan delegate, unacceptable (United Nations 2016).

5 QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. With the ongoing withdrawal of the international military inter-
vention from Afghanistan, what must be the role played by the UN in consolidating the Afghan institutions?

2. What has the international intervention accomplished and why has it failed in so many aspects, as it is shown by the growing instability in the country?

3. What are the main foreign interests in Afghanistan? What is the importance of this country for the infrastructure investments in the region, such as the "New Silk Road" project?

4. How to deal with Taliban? How to conciliate this group’s demands—as it has an enormous influence in the country—with the need to tackle its increasingly violent actions? In this sense, what must be the role played by other countries in the region, namely Pakistan, in the stabilization of Afghanistan?

5. How to make the ANSF capable of tackling the growing terrorist threat in Afghanistan?

REFERENCES


IHS. 2016c. Islamic State. Jane’s World Insurgency And Terrorism. IHS.

IHS. 2016d. Taliban. Jane’s World Insurgency And Terrorism. IHS.


IHS. 2014b. Islamic Jihad Union (IJU). Jane’s World Insurgency And Terrorism. IHS.

IHS. 2014b. Islamic Movement Of Uzbekistan (IMU). Jane’s World Insurgency And Terrorism. IHS.


