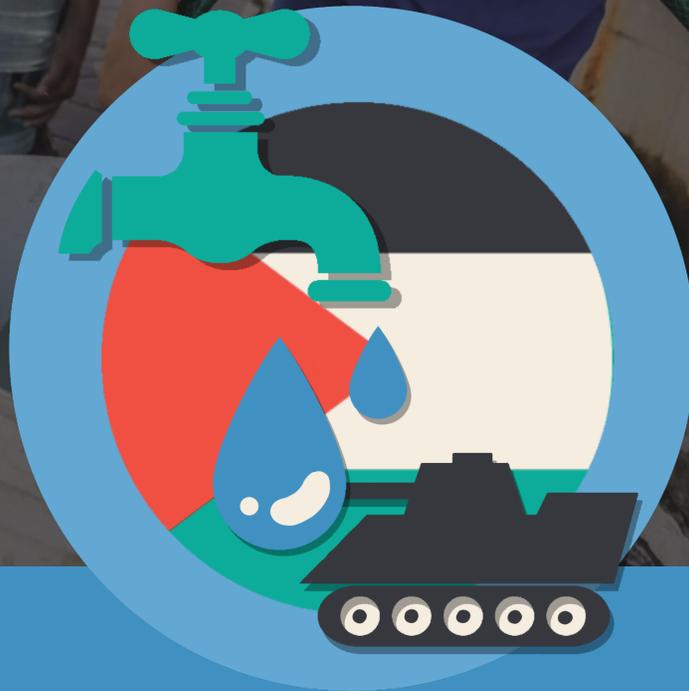




BMUN LXXII



# UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL (UNSC)



# LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the United Nations Security Council at BMUN 72! My name is Sameer Ameen (he/him), and I am honored to be your Head Chair. A little bit about me: I am a third-year studying Society & Environment with a concentration in Justice and Sustainability and a minor in Rhetoric. I have worked extensively on environmental policy at the local, state, and national levels! I spend most of my time outside, exploring as much of the natural environment around me as possible. At BMUN, I serve as the USG of Outreach & Education where I strive to uphold our educational mission as a non-profit organization. This past fall I led the planning of both our in-person and virtual delegate workshops and have seen many of you already at our outreach sessions! This is my third year in BMUN and I am incredibly excited to see all the amazing work you will do with us during your stay at Berkeley. Alongside me are my two wonderful Vice Chairs: Taylor Lang and Vernika Gupta!

Taylor Lang (she/her) is a second-year double majoring in Environmental Economics & Policy and Sociology and minoring in City Planning and is interested in all things relating to climate change mitigation, land use, and sustainable development! At BMUN, Taylor serves as the USG of Organizations and Philanthropy which means she maintains and facilitates our organization's partnerships, philanthropic efforts, and advocacy. This is her second year in BMUN and sixth year involved in Model UN in which she has found the Security Council to be the most compelling and beneficial to her education. Some of Taylor's favorite things include hiking, dancing, setting up her hammock on the glade, and exploring the Bay Area!

Vernika Gupta (she/her) is a first-year intending to double major in Economics and Political Science with a minor in Data Science. Therefore, she loves all things spreadsheets, political theory, and general world affairs. Vernika is also an avid NYT Games user and loves to crochet in her free time. This is her first year in BMUN and her seventh year participating in Model UN so she can not wait to see all that unfolds during committee. Vernika is wishing you all the best of luck and is so excited to see you guys in March!

Please don't hesitate to reach out to us via email ([unscbmun72@bmun.org](mailto:unscbmun72@bmun.org)) with any questions about the topic or committee session. We're excited to see you at BMUN 72!

Best,



Sameer Ameen

Head Chair of the United Nations Security Council

Email: [Sameer@bmun.org](mailto:Sameer@bmun.org)



## TOPIC A: WATER CRISIS IN GAZA

### TOPIC BACKGROUND

**Disclaimer:** Both Topic A & B were written over the summer, months before the events that took place in the month of October. Understanding that both topics are still ongoing, updates will be sent out closer to the conference in March!

#### Water Quality

Territorial disputes, religious and ethnic tensions, and warfare are what come to mind when most global citizens think of the Israel-Palestine conflict. However, the quickly deteriorating environment of the Gaza Strip, a contested territory in Palestine, has quickly left two million people with a plethora of environmental and health risks. The Gaza Strip, roughly 25 miles long, lacks equitable and free access to fresh drinking water, as less than five percent of the water in the Gaza Strip is safe for human consumption (UNICEF). The only source of water in Gaza is the

Coastal Aquifer, but even this source is compromised. The shortage of water has led to the over-extraction of the Coastal Aquifer, causing high salinity to Gaza's groundwater.

The overpumping of groundwater has created a split in the groundwater table, allowing naturally saline groundwater to flow into the aquifer, spoil the water, and contaminate the water with nitrates. Sixty-five percent of the water wells in Gaza are contaminated with nitrates and another 57% of the water wells are contaminated with chloride (Proquest). In most parts of the Gaza Strip, the concentration of chemicals is

significantly higher than what is acceptable by standards set by the World Health Organization (WHO). The lack of water not only affects the hydration of Gaza's citizens but also endangers their ability to maintain high levels of hygiene and sanitation. But how did the Gaza Strip's environmental degradation, a humanitarian crisis that has largely gone under the noses of international media, get to such a dangerous point? An amalgamation of political tension, war, and rapid industrialization are all clear contributors.

## **Political Tension**

The people of the Gaza Strip, an enclave of Palestine, have long been subject to ethnic and political discrimination from their neighbors. Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) face discriminatory policies from the Israeli government. For comparison, Palestinian water consumption barely reaches 70 liters a day per person whereas Israeli consumption is four times the WHO's recommended 100 liters per person (Amnesty). The inequality is extremely stark and presents itself visually to the people of both Israel and Palestine. Unlawful Israeli settlements are sprinkled throughout OPT, including Gaza, which violates international law. Well-maintained lawns and farms in Israeli settlements within the OPT contrast with Palestinian villages whose people struggle to find water for their needs.

Both OPT and Israel must comply with international human rights and humanitarian laws. Despite this, Israel has disputed their responsibility to the OPT at the international level. The UN human rights organizations persist in advising Israel about its obligations, emphasizing the importance of upholding the human rights of Palestinians, which encompass fundamental living conditions, access to water and food, as well as the rights to health and employment (Amnesty).

Under its obligations to the Palestinian population, Israel must also protect them from interference of their rights by external entities and take action to ensure these rights are fully actualized. Several military orders further affirm Israel's responsibilities. Military Orders 92 and 168 of June and November of 1967 and Military Orders 291 of December 1968 allowed the Israeli government to take control of Palestinian water resources and they still stand today (JSTOR).

On September 13th, 1993, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Negotiator Mahmoud Abbas signed a Declaration of Principles commonly known as the Oslo Accords in the United States. The PLO was seen as the representatives of the Palestinian people and the PLO recognized Israel's right to exist in peace. The legal status of the OPT did not change, and the "issue of ownership of water and sewage-related infrastructure in the West Bank" was said to be addressed in the "permanent status negotiations" (Whitehouse). These permanent negotiations were said to be scheduled for the late 1990s. Thirty years later, that meeting has yet to take place. Israel's reluctance to take care of the peoples under its jurisdiction combined with the discontent of the Palestinian people has led to a conflict that is beyond politics.

## **War**

In the fall of 2007, Israel declared the Gaza Strip under Hamas a "hostile entity" (BBC). Hamas is a militant Palestinian nationalist and Islamist movement, occupying both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and is dedicated to establishing an independent Islamic state. Founded in 1987, Hamas directly contrasted the secular approach of the PLO and rejected all attempts to give up parts of Palestine to Israel. After declaring Hamas hostile, the Israe-

li government approved a series of sanctions that placed a blockade on the Palestinian territories. Cuts in power, heavy restrictions on imports, and border closures are just some of the many limitations put on OPT (Britannica). The OPT residents' poor living conditions are evident in the high unemployment rate, regular power outages, persistent shortages of safe drinking water and basic healthcare, and infrastructural degradation that has an adverse effect on every facet of everyday life (OCHA). In January 2008, Israel increased its sanctions after being hit by rocket assaults in its southern settlements. In late January, after a completely sealed border and intensified blockade, Hamas' militia demolished portions of the barrier along the Gaza Strip and Egyptian border. This opened enough space for hundreds of thousands of Gazans to pass through to Egypt to purchase fuel, food and other goods that were unavailable under the blockade. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak understood the severity of the situation and permitted the breach to allow civilians to collect necessary supplies before the border was restored.

In the years after the Israeli blockade, a new organization called the Free Gaza Movement made several efforts to go through the blockade and provide relief to the civilians living in the OPT (FreeGaza Movement). The first mission consisted of a pair of vessels and 45 activists in August of 2008 and four other missions followed. The Israeli forces in 2010 struck down nine activists under one of these missions.

Under Mubarak, Egypt's cooperation on the border with Israel led millions of Egyptian citizens to organize, and in May of 2011, Mubarak stepped down as President. In the interim government, the Rafah border crossing was reopened, allowing Palestinians to pass between Gaza and Egypt. Roughly 1,200 people were allowed to cross the border every day until it

was closed by Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi in the summer of 2013.

In 2017, the Palestinian Authority (PA), the official government of Palestine, took control of the Rafah border (Haaretz). Egypt began allowing 200 people per day to cross the border beginning in May 2018. Both the PA and Hamas struggled over power. The PA lost control of the Gaza strip and once Hamas regained power they reopened Gaza two weeks later. The opening and closing of the border has significant implications on mobility and individual freedoms. To encourage a long-term cease-fire between Israel and Hamas in the middle of 2018, Israel started to loosen the limitations on its blockade after months of hostilities between the two sides. Israel started permitting thousands of Gazans to cross the border to work in Israel in 2019 and increased the movement of commodities into and out of the area. It also increased the permissible fishing zone for Gazans to its highest size in more than ten years.

At the end of 2018, Qatar started providing the Gaza Strip with humanitarian aid worth tens of millions of USD after Israel and Egypt agreed to allow it (Al-jazeera). It had given the territory about USD 400 million by 2021.

## **Infrastructure**

With the blockade, Israel's occupation of the OPT, and political tensions amongst Gaza's neighbors, the deteriorating infrastructure is becoming a daunting challenge for the Palestinian people to face. As reported by UNICEF, the aquifer was "expected to become unusable by the end of the year (2017), with damage becoming irreversible by 2020 if no action is taken" (Unicef). With little coverage of the current situation, it is estimated that the current conditions

are near irreversible without the support of the Israeli government and the release of the blockade. The restrictions placed on the entry of construction materials, tools, and parts have prevented the citizens of the Gaza Strip from rebuilding their deteriorating infrastructure. Twenty-three essential sanitation and water items such as cleaners, water pumps, and equipment used for drilling are on the 'dual use' list, meaning that their use in Gaza is selective and under the supervision of the Israeli government. Dual-use products, technologies, and services are those that have both civilian and military uses.

## **Obstacles & Implications**

While the situation is dire, some solutions could help mitigate the harm in Gaza. To ensure that a water-related health crisis in Gaza (which has the potential

to spread to both Egypt and Israel) does not happen, Gaza will need to increase its electricity supply, increase potable water supply, improve existing wastewater treatment, increase sanitation practices and reduce barriers in imports (NCBI).

Sadly this will be a largely uphill battle. These solutions to help Gaza's water, electricity, and public health problems are entirely contingent on negotiations between Hamas, the PA, Israel, and Egypt. The nations and political groups will need to reconcile political differences and navigate the complexities and history between them. Wars, political tension, and violation of basic human rights have all led to one of the largest environmental justice issues of the 21st century. The lack of media attention and international follow-through on current plans could pose a large threat to the entire region (NCBI).

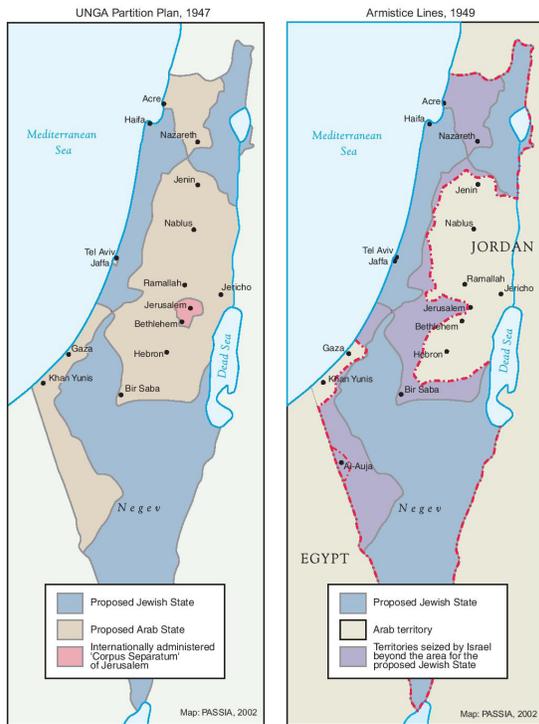
## **PAST UN ACTION/INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION RESPONSE**

### **Related United Nations Resolutions**

#### *A/RES/181(II)*

Less directly related to the water crisis in Gaza, but extremely fundamental to the United Nations's involvement in the region, is General Assembly resolution 181(II) passed in 1947. This resolution is commonly referred to as the 1947 Partition Plan, as it mapped out the territory who had ownership of the respective parts of the land. Most relevant to this

topic, the territory of Gaza and the West Bank was designated as an Arab state, with the remainder being left as a Jewish state and the city of Jerusalem acting as a corpus separatum, or a "separate entity" that was to be governed internationally. The Arab population largely rejected the resolution as it mirrored the similar colonial actions of Western nations in the Near East. The 1948 war that followed briefly after the Partition Plan led to Israeli territory extending past 77 percent of the Palestinian mandated territory, furthering their occupation in the Gaza Strip and West Bank.



### *S/RES/242*

Security Council Resolution 242 was the UN’s reaction to the 1967 Six Day War where Israeli forces further occupied the Gaza Strip, along with many other Arab territories. Once again, the United Nations called upon Israeli territories to remove themselves from the occupied territories in order to maintain peace and security in the region, however that was not met. *S/RES/242* serves as an additional reminder of the United Nation’s potential in establishing peace in the region, however because of the lack of enforcement and the controversy related to the established communities in the Occupied Territories, much of the conflict still remains. Additionally, it highlights the forceful occupation of the Gaza Strip and the Israeli’s ability to establish control over the infrastructure and resources in the region despite the

legal nature of the partition plans and the negative impact that the colonial nature of partition plans has on the path to Palestinian independence and ultimately peace in the region (US Department of State - History).

### *S/RES/465*

Adopted unanimously by the United Nations Security Council on March 1, 1980, resolution *S/RES/465* not only reemphasized the council’s criticism on the Israeli settlements after the 1967 war, but expressed its concerns with the depleting natural resources in the occupied territories. Specifically, operative 8 of the resolution “requests the [Security Council] commission [established in *S/RES/446*] to investigate the reported serious depletion of natural resources, particularly the water resources, with a view to ensuring the protection of those important natural resources of the territories under occupation.” The mentioned Security Council Commission then reported in November of 1980 that Israel’s treatment of water resources in Occupied Territories was violating the Fourth Geneva Convention in a way that violated human rights and created a significant obstacle to finding peace in this region of the Middle East. In paragraph 187 of this report, the Security Council Commission reiterates that in areas with high political conflict, such as the Occupied Territories, that “whoever controls the sources of the water supply... retains powerful means of determining the level of economic activity of the whole area” and further reflects in the subsequent paragraph that the Israeli occupation and politically strategic control of water resources in the Occupied Territories is hindering the progression towards a peaceful solution in the region.

## Relevant International Laws

### *Fourth Geneva Convention*

The term “Geneva Conventions” refers to the treaties and protocols set forth to establish international legal standards of wartime treatment, with the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 having a specific focus on the protection of civilians during wartime. The water deprivation in Gaza can be seen as an obstruction to the Fourth Geneva Convention, specifically in article 47 that calls against the deprivation of the Convention’s granted rights done by the contracting party, article 53 prohibiting the destruction of property during occupation, article 55 enforcing that food and medical supplies are fairly rationed, and lastly article 56 enforcing that the occupying power protects public health. Many legal experts argue that the Israeli occupation and exploitation of Arab territories breach article 53 of the Fourth Geneva Convention because of the destruction of water tables and risk of permanent salinization of underground aquifers. United Nations resolution 446 as mentioned previously calls the Israeli abuse of water in the occupied territories a “clear and gross violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention.” While the Geneva Conventions do not indicate any provisions for punishment if a party violates its principles, the treaty is used as a basis for sanctions and restrictions towards the offending party and it is expected to be maintained by all, considering its universal ratification.

*Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, Article 14 of Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, and article*

### *28 of Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*

Both Israel and Palestine are parties to all of the Conventions listed above and their respective articles which claim that the right to water and sanitation are “essential for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights.” This means that parties must maintain their highest effort in assuring the right to water and sanitation, which includes the prevention of abuse of the right and resources. The overuse and lack of protection of the underground aquifers in the Gaza Strip can be seen as a violation of all of the principles in the international treaties listed.

### *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is an additional multilateral treaty created by the General Assembly effective 1976, to which Israel and Palestine are amongst the 170 ratified parties. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which oversees the implementation of the Covenant, states what the right to water and sanitation entails as it designates the five minimum core obligations to be “(1) access to the minimum essential amount of water; (2) the right of access to water and water facilities and services on a non-discriminatory basis; (3) physical access to water facilities or services that provide sufficient, safe and regular water; (4) personal security is not threatened when having to physically access to water; and (5) equitable distribution of all available water facilities and services.”

## INTERNATIONAL ACTION AND RESPONSE

### Non-Governmental Organizations' Involvement

#### *United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)*

UNICEF is the leading NGO in the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) Cluster that works with the Palestinian Water Authority “to deliver safe water and sanitation services, while strengthening the national ability to respond to emergencies.” UNICEF built the EU funded seawater desalination plant and solar field to provide water to over 250,000 residents in the Gaza Strip. This plant was first completed in 2017 with the capacity of desalinating 6,000 cubic meters of water per day, which aids 75,000 people, with the second phase still in the works. When operational, the second phase will provide an additional 14,000 cubic meters of water a day and benefit an

additional 175,000 people. UNICEF is a key actor in spearheading WASH projects in the region by facilitating the construction and improvement of energy and water projects (UNICEF State of Palestine).

#### *United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)*

The UNRWA was established in reaction to the 1948 War as a commitment for protecting Palestinian refugees. When targeting the water crisis, the UNRWA has committed to allocating clean water to internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Gaza Strip by trucking in water to UNRWA shelters and schools. Additionally, the UNRWA has incorporated vocational training in the water, sanitation, and hygiene field in order to increase Palestinian employment and protection of water resources in Gaza (UNRWA).

## CASE STUDIES

### Case Study 1: Gaza's Water and Sanitation Crisis: The Implications for Public Health

In 2017, a five-year-old child drowned in the Gaza Strip after swimming in sewage-tainted saltwater. According to reports, numerous more people who were injured while swimming in Gaza's waters in July and August have received treatment. With widespread worldwide media coverage, this issue has come to light: Gaza's persistent water and sanitation issues

pose immediate, significant hazards to public health.

In addition, over 108,000 cubic meters of contaminated sewage flows daily into the Mediterranean Sea, creating extreme concerns over public health concerns in the areas of Gaza, Israel and Egypt. Ingestion of waterborne infections through water polluted with human or animal feces poses the greatest hazards in Gaza. Pathogenic bacteria and viruses can come from fecal contamination. Fecal pollution is more likely to occur in regions with inadequate wastewater collec-

tion systems, which allow sewage to leak into drinking water at various locations throughout the collecting system. At every stage of the water handling cycle, there is a greater risk of microbiological contamination of water drawn from the aquifer, especially by fecal coliforms and fecal streptococcus. Water is typically provided by private vendors through tanker cars at distribution centers in unhygienic settings. Significant diarrheal and other water-related illnesses are caused as a result, affecting not only Gaza's infants but also the broader populace.

### **Case Study 2: The Effect of Implementing the Integrated Management System in Desalination Plants in Conflict Zones - Case Study on the Gaza Strip**

Many of the water desalination plants in Gaza fail to meet the standards of outputting clean water and many are privatized. Desalination is a process that takes away mineral components from saline water. As a result, instituting an integrated management system (IMS) in all the plants would have a positive impact on the cleaning stations. These impacts would

range from financial, administrative, technical, environmental, and socio-economic performance. IMS would be able to successfully lower operational costs and improve the efficiency of resources, enhancing performance and the life of desalination plants in Gaza.

However, due to the heavy limitations placed by external factors discussed earlier in this synopsis, there are many barriers to implementing IMS in the Gaza Strip. There is an overall lack of commitment in management and experience in Gaza, preventing IMS from becoming easily implementable. The blockade on Gaza prevents the necessary materials needed to implement the program and electricity blackouts from the lack of said resources make it nearly impossible. The overall lack of funding and support from surrounding communities, as well as the continuous attacks from Israeli forces, have destroyed infrastructure, preventing the desalination plants from operating at the capacity necessary for IMS. Learning to navigate these barriers will be crucial to ensure these plans are capable of providing clean water for Gaza citizens.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. When navigating an issue that deals with war, the environment and politics, it's important to note the historical implications of solutions involved. How have past UN solutions ignored ethnic sovereignty and how do you plan to address that in the solutions you propose?
2. How has the environmental degradation of the Gaza strip and its water impacted its citizens and those who live in surrounding countries?
3. What factors and efforts have caused rapid industrialization in the Gaza Strip and surrounding territories to contribute to the water crisis?

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## TOPIC B: OPEN AGENDA

### OPEN AGENDA PROCEDURE BRIEF

In Open Agenda Procedure in Model UN delegates, the topic for Open Agenda will be discussed and set during the first committee session. During this period, each delegation will have the opportunity to share their view on which of the topics they would like to see further discussed in committee. In Open Agenda committees, the Chairs suggest and provide research for three current topics, this year being “the Taliban Rule of Afghanistan,” “Sudanese Power Struggle,” and “the Russian Invasion of Ukraine.” However, delegates are open to and encouraged to propose any other topics that they find vital for the Security Council to discuss at the time. This style of Model UN is intended to best model the work of the UN Security Council given their quick and vital response to security and war issues. Open Agenda is intended to be fluid to the current events of the time and create a stimulating and valuable educational experience. In BMUN history, delegates were able to propose and discuss the Russian invasion of Ukraine a week after the initial invasion. If you have any questions in regards to Open Agenda procedure, feel free to email us! Happy researching!

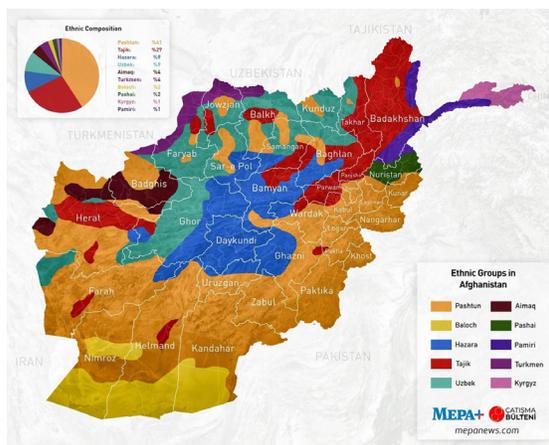


# TALIBAN RULE OF AFGHANISTAN

## TOPIC BACKGROUND

To understand the current Taliban rule of Afghanistan today, one must first understand the context in which the Taliban first rose to power in 1996. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union spread communist ideals around the world. In 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in the hopes of supporting the Afghan communist government which conflicted with anti-communist Muslim groups known collectively as the Mujahideen (Britannica). The geopolitical landscape of Afghanistan at the time was deeply divided by ethnic groups, and the majority of the nation's people lived in rural areas. As the Soviets went into rural communities to squash insurrections, the Mujahideen only grew stronger, and more people joined to push them out of Afghanistan. Many countries like the United States sent weapons during the Cold War in the hopes of squashing any existence of communism in Afghanistan (Office of the Historian).

The war between the Mujahideen and the Soviets lasted 10 years, with one million Afghan casualties and nearly six million displaced.



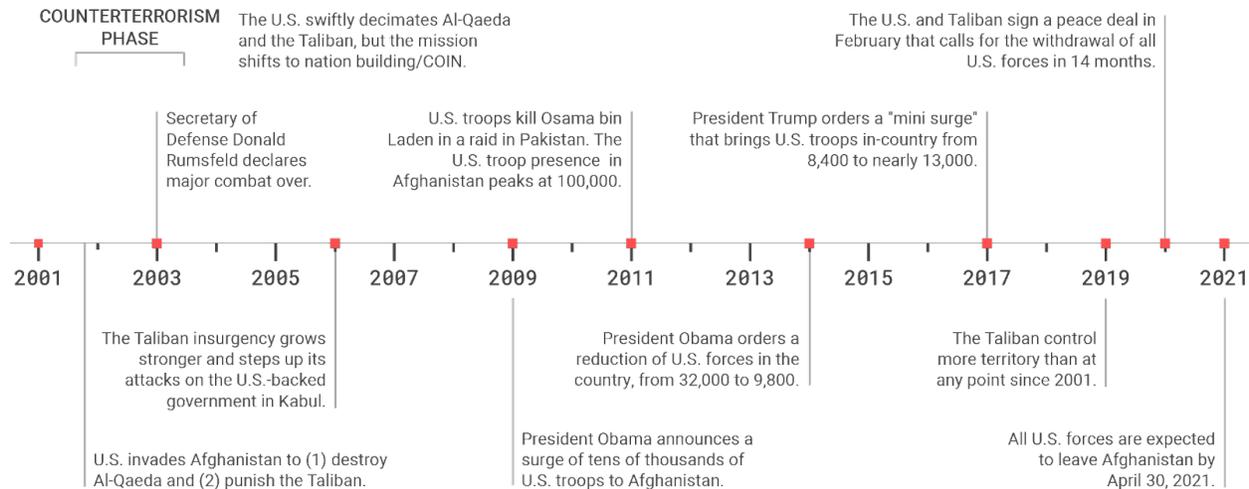
Source: MEPA <https://www.mepanews.com/afghanistan-situation-map-july-2020-37912h.htm>

When the Soviets finally left in 1989 towards the end of the Cold War, the Afghan communist government had little to stand on and fell shortly after (Wilson Center). Mujahideen leaders began to fight each other as tensions between tribal and ethnic groups rose during the vacuum of a toppled government. In 1994, in a small town called Singesar, a Mullah or teacher named Mohammed Omar was asked by the people of his town to stand up against the warlords who had been harassing them. Mullah Omar recruited his students and drove out the Mujahideen leaders in the city and soon, the entire district of Kandahar. This group under Mohammed Omar became known as the Taliban, the Pashto word for “students” (National Counterterrorism Center). Pashto is the language spoken by the Pashtun people, the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan.

The Taliban brought peace to the areas they occupied which were of majority Pashtun descent. The Taliban was made up of Pashtun people, which made it easy for them to move collectively. They quickly took over the south and moved up north where they took out more warlords and bribed their way to more power. As they gained more territory, they found different ways to fund their operations. They first took control of the highways, taxing them for profit. Using the

land under their control, the Taliban profited off of the opium trade (BBC). As they grew, Pakistan took note. Fearing that the remaining Mujahideen groups which were allied with Indians would surround Pakistan on both sides, leaders in Pakistan began funding the Taliban. With this newfound support and economic stream, the Taliban was able to take over the capital city, Kabul in 1996 and in turn, take over Afghanistan.

The new government was not representative of the people it ruled. The members of the new government solely consisted of Pashtun Taliban warlords, and these warlords had no experience in controlling or governing a nation. In addition, they governed their people based on a very niche understanding of the Quran, the central religious text of Islam. In Pashtun Madrasas, (Islamic religious schools), their unique interpretation of the text grew, and when the Taliban took over the government, they enforced this version of Islam on all peoples. They banned music, television, and even the flying of kites (BBC). Men needed to grow their beards. But, the most draconian practices were imposed on women. Women needed male escorts to go anywhere, and they were not allowed to get an education and could not work (The Guardian).



<https://www.defensepriorities.org/explainers/debunking-the-safe-haven-myth>

## INTERNATIONAL INVOLVEMENT

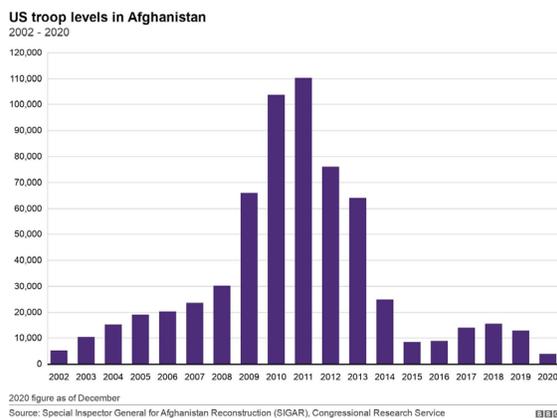
As the issue in Afghanistan continued to worsen, the United States decided to intervene. The U.S. intervention was a 20-year plan that ultimately put Afghanistan under a Taliban government once again. After the attack on the United States on September 11, 2001, a U.S.-led coalition invaded Afghanistan to find Osama Bin Laden and topple the Taliban government (Imperial War Museums). The United States partnered with the same leaders that the Taliban defeated to take control of Afghanistan. Fighting side by side with the Mujahideen leaders, the United States took Kabul in three months, and the Taliban regime surrendered. The U.S. gave them a choice between being imprisoned or continuing to fight. The Taliban leaders quickly fled to Pakistan, and many of the fighters fled to rural parts of Afghanistan.

The United States, in collaboration with the United Nations, decided to start rebuilding Afghanistan to keep its promise to the Afghan people. Quickly, a de-

mocracy was set up, and the United States invited the Mujahideen leaders to run local governments around the nation (Whitehouse). Soon, there were ministries and a legitimate Afghan army. Billions of dollars were poured into the Afghan government to build roads and create infrastructure to connect the cities and ethnic groups. However the Afghan government was deeply corrupt, and as such, much of this money was pocketed (The Diplomat). When the United States invaded Iraq in 2003, much of the money was diverted to its efforts there, and the money left in Afghanistan was only used in its four major cities. Rural Afghanistan became neglected, and people quickly became discontent with U.S. intervention. While the United States was claiming to rebuild Afghanistan, it was destroying its rural communities in an attempt to hunt down the Taliban and Al Qaeda members. The funding going to the Mujahideen leaders quickly backfired on the United States as the discontent grew. The Mujahideen began killing rural civilians and be

gan terrorizing their people for power in the attempts of pushing back against the United States occupation.

In 2004, the Taliban leaders who had fled to Pakistan began to recoup, and just like in the 1990s, they started recruiting Pashtun fighters in the Southeast. However, as discontent grew with American troops, Afghans from the West and North of different ethnic backgrounds (Turkmen, Uzbek, and Tajik) joined the Taliban (Brookings). They shared common grounds: they were all from rural Afghanistan and were fed up with the harassment from the U.S. military and different warlords. The resurrected Taliban was more dangerous and started using different methods to combat U.S. and NATO forces. Roadside bombs and suicide attacks became common at this time while Pakistan began to actively fund and arm the Taliban.



*The graph above shows the amount of U.S. troops in Afghanistan from 2002-2020.*

*Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-47391821>*

By 2008, the Taliban controlled huge swathes of Afghanistan. U.S. President Bush's attempts to reform the country were seemingly all reversed, and the

new Taliban was now more diverse in its makeup. In 2009, with the start of the Obama administration, 30,000 new troops were sent to Afghanistan (NPR). During his second election, Obama began to bring troops back home, and in 2020, President Trump met with the Taliban and decided to leave Afghanistan, a promise President Biden intended to keep. In 2021, the United States left Afghanistan, and by September of the same year, the Taliban took over, establishing a new interim government that looked similar to the 1990s-dominated Pashtun government but now with a base with significantly more diversity.

## Current Obstacles

While the new Taliban has reformed some aspects of its rules since the 1990s, the current government of Afghanistan is even more restrictive on women's rights and economically unstable than before the U.S. invasion. Afghan women have been denied the most basic of human rights, and some news outlets are describing this as gender apartheid (The Conversation). Women have huge barriers to health and education, freedom of movement, expression, and an earned income (HRW). Prices are spiraling for food staples, transportation, and school books, and the standard of living has become difficult without an earning wage. Women were the sole wage earners before 2021, and with the new policies under the Taliban, many families are left financially struggling. Women have essentially become trapped in their homes, becoming second-class citizens in their own countries. With such a volatile government, it is the responsibility of world leaders to pressure the Taliban to give women the most basic of human rights.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What can world leaders do to ensure that women in Afghanistan are granted the most basic of human rights without intervening directly with the Afghan government?
2. What caused the United States 20 year invasion of Afghanistan to fail and what aspects of U.S. intervention caused Afghanistan to fall to the control of the Taliban for a second time?
3. What role did external actors play in placing the Taliban in power? Investigate the support provided to Afghan factions by foreign powers and how this support influenced the conflict.

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# SUDAN POWER STRUGGLE

## TOPIC BACKGROUND

The situation in Sudan is fresh, with the landmark battle starting in April 2023 in the capital city of Khartoum. The tension is primarily between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the power struggle between their leaders to control the country and its plentiful resources. Sudan was once a joint protectorate of the United Kingdom until it gained its independence in January 1956; however, it led Sudan into a violent divide. Since its independence, Sudan has had two civil wars centered around the economic and ethnic divide. The northern region is occupied by wealthier Muslims and Arab residents contrasted with the impoverished animist and Christian south. As the outcome of the second civil war, in July 2011, the southern territory of Sudan formed a new nation known as South Sudan, which is not involved in this current conflict. From these two civil wars, Sudan has

spent the majority of its 67 years of independence in violent conflict and is vulnerable to power struggles (UN News).

Sudan was led by Omar al-Bashir, who seized power in a 1989 coup after serving as an officer for the SAF. Bashir's three decades of leadership could be marked as a dictatorship, overseeing the Darfur war that the International Criminal Court (ICC) views as genocide against the Zaghawa, Masalit, and Fur non-Arab populations (BBC News). His reign ended in April 2019, with a coup led by both the SAF and RSF, marking the muddy transition into a civilian-led government and leaving the country vulnerable to yet another power struggle. The coup was motivated by rising prices and food shortages that turned into an anti-governmental attack, ultimately leading to Bashir being overturned. Additionally, the military

coup announced that they dissolved the standing government in favor of a two-year long transitional

government then a civil election (Council on Foreign Relations).

**The Rapid Support Forces (RSF)** is a paramilitary, Arab-majority group that was funded by Bashir during the Darfur War period to suppress rebels in the South. The RSF is led by Mohamed Hamadan Dagalo, often referred to as “Hemedti” by Bashir which is a play on words to the Arabic word for “my protection.” This protector role comes from the fact that the RSF was funded by Bashir to protect him from coups, until they co-led a coup against Bashir. As the leader of RSF, Hemedti has been able to become one of the wealthiest men in the country by seizing gold mines during the Darfur War, giving him leverage in the country’s politics.

**The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF)** has a long history in Sudan, serving as the powerful military backing of the country since they gained independence. Additionally, Bashir had a long history with the SAF as he served as an officer prior to him seizing power and heavily used them in tackling rebellion in the south of the country. The SAF was also able to flourish under Bashir’s rule as they had control of weapons production and telecommunication in the country and reaped the benefits of having 60-70% of the country’s budget going to the “security and sovereignty.” During the time of the coup Abdel Fattah al-Burhan took primary power of the SAF and led the coalition against Bashir.

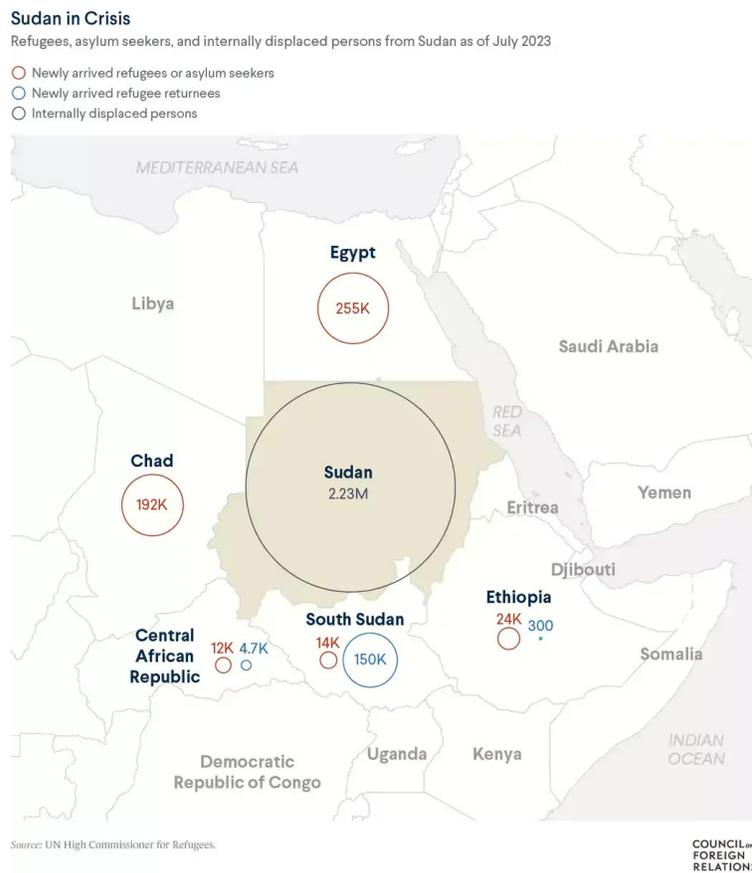
However, given the RSF and SAF history and association with violence in Darfur and in the south, the protestors became resistant to the two men who led the coup, given that they did not mirror the pro-democracy demands that the protestors desperately sought for the country. Protests led to the Transitional Sovereignty Council; this council led the country to a transition to civilian power, with the council made up of protest leaders and the military, and Burhan as chair and Hemedti as vice chair. In resistance to Burhan’s leadership, Hemedti installed Abdalla Hamdok as prime minister who briefly led from November 2021 until he resigned in January 2022, ultimately restoring Burhan as the de facto leader

of Sudan. As protests continued and international powers became concerned with the disarray of the country, Burhan, Hemedti, and designated protestors in December 2020 were pressured into signing an agreement promising to install a civilian lead, transitional government by April 2023. This agreement would also include a merger of the RSF and SAF under Burhan’s army to which Burhan gave it a 2 year period, whereas Hemedti sought out a 10 year period, given the fact that it would reduce his power and hand it over to Burhan. The conflict, as it stands today, is a power grab between these two men and their powerful armies over who will have control over the country, ultimately abandoning the protestors’

hopes for democracy and stability in the country.

As April 2023 came with no established civilian government, tensions in Sudan rose with SAF troops centered in Khartoum and RSF deploying troops throughout the country. Ultimately, on April 15th, shots were fired in Khartoum with both parties accusing the other of firing first. As of today, there are over 3 million internally displaced persons across Sudan, with 2.2 million of those coming from the

capital city and 880,000 additional refugees fleeing to neighboring countries. Around 42% of the country ( 20.3 million people) are facing food insecurity, a root cause of the anti-government protests that started in 2019. Military attacks on vital infrastructure like hospitals, residential areas, and prisons have made aid and stability hard to receive. Aid organizations continue to struggle to provide the necessary assistance to the Sudanese people.



*This map highlights the amount of refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced persons in each of the host countries as a result of the crisis in Sudan. (“What Is the Extent of Sudan’s Humanitarian Crisis?” Council on Foreign Relations, [www.cfr.org/in-brief/what-extent-sudans-humanitarian-crisis](http://www.cfr.org/in-brief/what-extent-sudans-humanitarian-crisis). Accessed 10 Aug. 2023.)*

## INTERNATIONAL INVOLVEMENT

The international community has played a vital role in pressuring the leading powers of Sudan to transition into the pro-democracy government that the protestors demanded.

With the increase in conflict coming after the RSF's killings in response to the April 2019 protests, the United States, African Union (AU), United Kingdom, UAE, and Saudi Arabia pressured Sudan into solidifying their transition into a civilian-led government. These countries were the ones that pressured the failed Transitional Sovereignty Council to transition into a more democratic government. In response to the lack of stability from the council and the continued violations of human rights, the African Union Peace and Security Council (PSC) suspended Sudan in AU activities in June 2019 (Mhaka). By suspending Sudan, the PSC would be able to take punitive measures against Sudanese military officials and those hindering the peacemaking process in the country. Beyond that, the African Union has been overshadowed in the peace-building process by the United States and Saudi Arabia and left absent or overlooked when brokering peace talks and a transition plan. For instance, the United States and Saudi Arabia were the leaders in the 24-hour ceasefire in June 2023 during which they claimed they were representing the Sudanese people and facilitating temporary peace to allow for humanitarian aid (Alkhalidi). However, the ceasefire failed to bring any sense of prolonged peace or pressure for democracy in Sudan.

The United Nations has been primarily responsible for bringing humanitarian aid into the country. The

United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission (UNITAMS) in Sudan was adopted by Security Council resolution 2524 on June 3, 2020 to assist in the political transition, peace building, civil protection, economic development, and humanitarian assistance (UNITAMS). UNITAMS operates for a 12-month period; however, it has been extended each year since its creation as a result of the failed transition to peace. Prior to UNITAMS, there was the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur that operated from 2003-2020 with the job of "protecting civilians, facilitating humanitarian aid, and helping the political process in Darfur" (Peacekeeping.un.org). This was the first collaborative mission between the AU and UN and aided in the mediation of conflict between the government and armed movements in Darfur. However, the violence in Sudan has made it difficult for aid to be delivered to Sudanese people, leading aid organizations to severely cut or halt operations within Sudan. The World Food Program reported that the operations lost about USD 14 million from looting. Additionally, they were forced to pause their operations for two weeks in reaction to three of their employees being killed. Moreover, there has been an overall struggle in aid organizations to fund aid in Sudan as the United Nations originally set a USD 2.6 billion appeal for aid in Sudan, but it has been only 22% funded.

### Current Obstacles

As of now, the fighting continues throughout Khartoum and other parts of the country. Foreign governments have been involved in generating peace, but

none have been sustained, and the agreements that are formed are never met. International aid organizations are struggling to provide help to civilians due to internal violence causing threats to their employees and destruction of vital infrastructure and lack of funding. Additionally, Burhan has been outspokenly

against support from the UN in creating peace and has been very difficult to cooperate with. This conflict is very recent, and the power struggle continues to bring violence and instability to one of Africa's most important countries.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Transitional councils have been enacted in Sudan in the past, yet never achieve the civilian led government they were intended to form. How can Sudan best establish a stable government that meets the demands of the protestors?
2. Sudan's political history is built on coups and aggressive transitions of power. If stability is maintained in the country, how can balances be put in place to prevent coups in the future?
3. Marking the start of a new century, the 2000s were filled with dialogue promoting "African Solutions to African Problems," yet in Sudan we see majoring of the peace building process being led and influenced by the United States and Saudi Arabia. Should this be considered neocolonialism and should African leaders be more involved in the peacebuilding process?

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# RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE

## TOPIC BACKGROUND

On February 24th, 2022, Russia's President Vladimir Putin launched an invasion in Ukraine, a former Soviet state, under what he called a "special military operation." The invasion was unforeseen, even considering Putin's increased aggression in regards to the annexation and treatment of Crimea and Ukraine's potential association with Western political blocs. Days before this announcement, Moscow recognized the Russia-loyal, Ukraine-separatist regions of Donetsk and Luhansk as independent from Ukraine; next, they targeted the initial invasion at the Donbas region of Eastern Ukraine to support this movement. Putin's statement in regards to this invasion was to that it was for the "de-militarization and de-Nazification of Ukraine" and that "[their] plans are not to occupy Ukraine," however, he did threaten "those who may be tempted to intervene" against the Russian regime (Hodge, Nathan).

Back in 2013, anti-government protests rose after the Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukoych rejected a plan that would have integrated Ukraine more into the European Union (EU), which ultimately ran Yanukovych out of the country. At the start of 2014, Russia invaded Crimea, an Ukrainian territory that they claimed to be theirs. Since then, Russia has annexed the territory of Crimea and has been able to grow the support of pro-Russian separatist in the region, while violating international law and causing humanitarian atrocities (Fisher). The Minsk agreements are the outcome of this conflict with provisions including ceasefires, prisoner exchanges, humanitarian aid, withdrawal of weaponry, and returning control over to Ukraine (Al Jazeera). These two agreements have been pointed to as blueprints for a path to peace in the modern conflict, despite the failures within them.

While Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky initially intended to respond peacefully, it was evident by the violence in Donbas and Antonov Airport battle near Kyiv that military involvement was necessary. Additionally on February 24th, Russia captured the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant which contains active nuclear reactors, and shelled the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant on March 4th. Both instances heighten tensions around nuclear danger because of the potential to purposely or accidentally create major nuclear incidents. The crisis escalated quickly, forcing an estimated 100,000 people to leave their homes within 24 hours of invasion, with women and children taking any mode of transportation as men were obligated to stay in Ukraine to serve the country militarily. Within the first week, the majority of refugees fled to neighboring countries with the most being Poland with 756,000 refugees, Hungary receiving 157,000 refugees, and Russia 149,000. With refugees fleeing primarily to border nations, security threats increase as the stability of other former Soviet Nations were threatened with the increase in population from refugees.

Conflict continued throughout the summer of 2022 in Ukraine, with many attacks on civilians and a continuous exodus of citizens from the country. On September 21st, 2022, Putin announced Russia's first mobilization since World War II, calling up 300,000 men for military service, leading to protests throughout Russia in response to the draft but also a significant increase to Russia's manpower.

On November 12, 2022, the only regional capital captured by Russia, Kherson, was liberated, which served as a symbol of Ukrainian strength and accomplishment against the Russian military. Despite this retreat, Putin has remained strong on his offensive lead, as in March 2023, he emphasized his plans to take all of Donbas—however, since then, he has made little progress.

In a more recent conflict, Russia has been supported by a pro-Russian separatist group, known as the Wagner Group, serving as a proxy of the Russian government who has been militaristically involved in conflicts in Crimea, the Middle East, Africa, and now more deeply in Ukraine (BBC News). However, contrary to prior involvement, in June 2023, the Wagner group rebelled against Moscow, which has proved to be the largest threat to Russia's internal security and Putin's success in Ukraine. Motivation for such rebellion comes from claims from the Wagner group that Russian forces were killing members of the group, despite them fighting on the same side. On June 24, 2023, the coup attempt ended but proved the possibility that Russia could unintentionally destroy itself from the inside from the losing of support from a vital military organization. At the time of writing, the war in Ukraine is ongoing with increased involvement and support from global powers along with an estimate of over three million refugees and the continuation of civilian casualties.

# How military control of Ukraine has changed

Feb 2022: Before the invasion



Mar 2022: Russia's rapid advance



Nov 2022: Ukraine regains ground



Jun 2023: Ukraine advances



- Russian military control
- Limited Russian military control
- Russian-backed separatist-held areas
- Held or regained by Ukraine
- Russia annexed Crimea in 2014

Note: Areas held or regained by Ukraine were reset by the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) on 12 May 2023

Source: Institute for the Study of War



*These maps show the changes in the regions that Russia had military control over since right before the start of the war till June 2023. The peak amount of land occupied was in March 2022.*

*(The Visual Journalism. "Ukraine in Maps: Tracking the War with Russia." BBC News, 28 July 2023, [www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60506682](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60506682).)*

## INTERNATIONAL INVOLVEMENT

One of the fundamental bodies in the war has been the pact between members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which was formed in 1949 to protect the 31 member states from Russian aggression. In NATO operations, everything is consensus-based and “an attack against one or several of its members is considered as an attack against all” (NATO). Ukraine is not a member of NATO, despite applying to integrate through the Membership Action Plan (MAP) in 2008 but stalled when the country had a more pro-Russian president. Talks about Ukraine becoming more aligned with NATO was one of the major tension points starting the war as it would lead to Ukraine being more aligned with Western nations than its past being under Soviet control. NATO leaders have been trying to expedite Ukraine’s membership to NATO by removing the MAP requirement, but it sparks tension in regards to Russia’s response and the increased military action that would have to be taken by NATO nations.

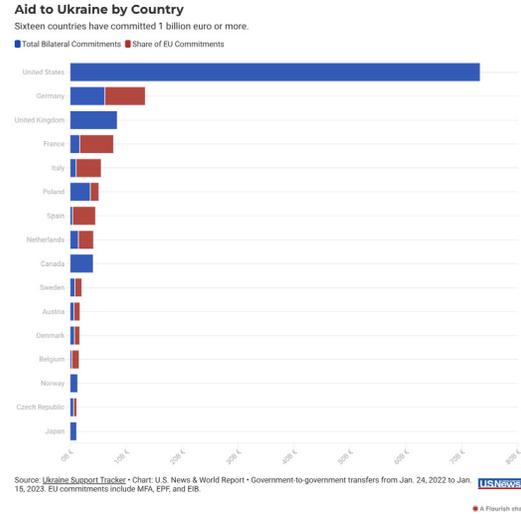
International actors have been involved in tension in Ukraine since the annexation of Crimea, as seen in the Minsk Accords brought forth by France and Germany alongside Russia and Ukraine in 2015. This agreement called for a ceasefire, elimination of heavy weaponry, and the return of Crimea to Ukrainian control, which ended up being not successful. Certainly something that influenced the invasion was the fact that NATO, since 2016, was increasing military support in Eastern Europe in attempts to deter Russian aggression. Prior to the invasion, when it was clear that troops were mobilizing along the border, powers including the United States, France, and Germany tried to negotiate with Russia to decrease their military presence on the border, threatening and

imposing sanctions but it was to no avail (Council on Foreign Relations). As a final effort, the United Nations Security Council convened to take preventive measures against a Russian invasion, however an hour into the meeting, President Putin announced his “special military operation” (United Nations).

The most immediate response to the invasion from the international community was to place sanctions against Russia to limit their resources and damage them economically. A sanction is a penalty that one country or a coalition of countries can impose on another to pressure them to stop breaking international law or taking aggressive action. Sanctions are the most impactful ways that countries can get involved without involving their military and they can be imposed quickly. The main point of sanctions against Russia is to limit their access to money which would then limit their capacity to finance the war. Economic sanctions enforced by western nations have been largely successful in cutting off Russia economically as the U.K. government in May 2023 estimated that the financial sanctions have cut off USD 350 billion of Russia’s USD 604 billion foreign currency reserves. Another common target of sanctions is against oil and gas as the EU banned importing Russian coal and refined oil and the United States and the United Kingdom banned oil and gas imports. The sanctions taken against oil and gas are risky even for the countries imposing them as they risk price increases in their home countries, yet it is done to limit interaction in war. Additionally, sanctions will target certain wealthy and powerful individuals in a country by freezing their assets. However, Russia has still been able to be stable economically as they continue to export 8.3 million barrels of oil a day to countries

like India and China. Overall, sanctions can be a powerful tool done during a time of war and is one of the powers granted to the UN Security Council, unlike some of the other bodies, and can be used to limit military involvement.

Countries have been involved in supporting Ukraine by sending humanitarian and militaristic aid. It is estimated that the United States has sent around USD 77 billion to Ukraine with USD 47 billion of that being from weapons and equipment (US News & World Report). The United States is, by far, the largest distributor of aid to the country as they sent nine times the amount that the United Kingdom, the next highest contributor, provides. However, relative to a country's gross domestic product (GDP), the countries neighboring Ukraine—such as Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Bulgaria—have been provided the most support. In terms of humanitarian aid, the Ukraine Humanitarian Response Plan has been the leading coalition in providing aid to Ukraine. Their main focus is receiving funding to help aid Ukrainian organizations in providing humanitarian aid. Additionally, the Refugee Response Plan (RRP) aids 10 refugee host countries most burdened by the crisis by supporting them monetarily and helping the 4.2 million Ukrainian refugees. Some barriers to aid include attacks on aid facilities, lack of health care workers, supply chain issues, and unstable power.



*This chart shows how much aid each respective country has given to Ukraine. It is evident that the United States is providing the most aid.*

*“These Countries Have Sent the Most Aid to Ukraine.”  
US News & World Report, 24 Feb. 2023, <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2023-02-24/these-countries-have-sent-the-most-aid-to-ukraine>.*

The United Nations Security Council has been active in responding to the crisis, however given the fact that Russia is one in five of the powers on the council that has veto power, little can be done in the form of resolutions. An example of this is in S/RES/2623 where the Council framed the “Uniting for Peace” resolution that called for a ceasefire, condemned Russia’s violations of international law, and to withdraw from the borders, however Russia exercised its veto power in the council, which automatically failed the resolution. Russia’s veto power in the council limits the power of one of the most important peace building forums in the world.

## **Current Obstacles**

Given the history of Russia and Ukraine, lasting peace is something that can not be guaranteed or even expected. This is reflected by the failure of the Minsk agreements in regards to the subjectively smaller conflict in Crimea. Bringing Ukraine into NATO is not a clearcut solution as it would make NATO nations more directly involved in the conflict militarily and can even encourage Russian aggression.

Ukraine still sits on a divide in conflict of whether they want to be connected to their Soviet past and alliance with Russia or want to expand their western connections and associate with NATO. Additionally, immediate responses to war via the United Nations Security Council have been disrupted by Russia's veto power. Lastly, aid has been difficult to deliver into Ukraine and many of the organizations and host countries helping displaced persons lack the necessary funding.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Sanctions are powerful tools to limit military action but sometimes threaten the country that is imposing them. In what ways can the current sanctions be modified or strengthened to create leverage for your country in the war?
2. Considering the obstructions to aid, what are the most impactful and sustaining ways countries can provide aid to the situation?
3. The structure of the United Nations Security Council benefits the countries known as the “Big 5” which include the United States, Russia, China, France, and the United Kingdom by granting them permanent membership on the council and veto power. How can the international community, with or without the Security Council take action in this conflict considering Russia’s veto power?

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