

Hofstra University

Model United Nations Conference 2024



United Nations Security Council

Nicholas Isaacs, Chair

Dear Delegates,

My name is Nicholas Isaacs, and I am a sophomore studying Political Science and Integrated Media here at Hofstra University. I come from Levittown, New York, and this will be my second ever year in Model UN and my first time getting to be a part of HUMUNC! Coming to Hofstra with an interest in politics and diplomacy, Model UN was very much on my radar in my freshman year, and I am glad to say that joining was one of the best decisions I have ever made. Getting to meet and engage in debate and cooperation with such a diverse group of people has given me both great challenges and lasting memories. Having the opportunity to compete against, as well as try to win over, fellow delegates at home and abroad has given me indispensable skills for the political field I hope to enter!

Beyond Model UN, I enjoy taking part in other Political Science events on and off campus, whether attending town halls for local or federal leaders, volunteering to help students on campus register to vote, or taking part in the annual Political Science Department trip to Washington D.C. to connect with Hofstra alumni working in various areas of government or public policy. Outside of my studies and the interests that I pursue at Hofstra, I am also a massive fan of professional wrestling and I have a fervent interest in history. Any spare time that I have will almost certainly be spent watching or researching these distinct subjects.

This will be my first time ever chairing a committee, and I am committed to guiding everyone through a fun and fulfilling experience that will give you a taste of what Model UN at the college level has to offer. I recognize that this type of Model UN committee may also be a first for some delegates, which is why my ultimate goal is to make this a smooth and cohesive experience that allows us to explore this important international body and the types of issues that it faces. I am looking forward to sharing this experience with all of you!

Sincerely,

Nicholas Isaacs
UNSC Chair
HUMUNC 2024

Introduction to the Committee

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is one of six main organs of the United Nations (UN). The primary goal of the UNSC is to maintain international peace and security, meeting to discuss and act upon threats to global peace. The Security Council is the only organ of the UN that has the power to make decisions that all member states must implement.¹

To facilitate a response to a threat to peace between two parties, the Security Council's powers include the abilities to "...set forth principles for such an agreement; undertake investigation and mediation, in some cases; dispatch a mission; appoint special envoys; or request the Secretary-General to use his good offices to achieve a pacific settlement of the dispute."² If the dispute becomes a conflict, the UNSC may "...issue ceasefire directives that can help prevent an escalation of the conflict; dispatch military observers or a peacekeeping force to help reduce tensions, separate opposing forces and establish a calm in which peaceful settlements may be sought."³ If the conflict is not resolved, the UNSC may take stronger actions, including "...economic sanctions, arms embargoes, financial penalties and restrictions, and travel bans; severance of diplomatic relations; blockade; or even collective military action."⁴

The UNSC is comprised of five permanent members with veto power, which are: China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America. It also includes ten non-permanent members, five of which are elected each year by the General Assembly for a two-year term. The current ten non-permanent members are: Albania, Brazil, Ecuador, Gabon, Ghana, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, Switzerland, and the United Arab Emirates.⁵ For the purposes of HUMUNC, we will be permitting the participation of additional members during the committee debate. While these states would not have voting rights in the real UN Security Council, they will be able to vote on all resolutions.

Topic 1: The 2021 Taliban Takeover of Afghanistan

On August 15, 2021, the world looked on in horror as the Taliban seized Afghanistan's capital city of Kabul and successfully overthrew President Ashraf Ghani and his government. Prior to the takeover, Afghanistan was already a poor country, with 49.4 percent of the population living below the national poverty line in 2020.⁶ The country was plunged deeper into poverty following the takeover, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, as a whopping 97 percent of Afghans were living in poverty by 2022.⁷

In addition to the economic devastation that occurred after the Taliban's return, Amnesty International reported that the civil and human rights, particularly for women, have been curtailed.

Restrictions on women's rights, freedom of the media and freedom of expression increased exponentially. Institutions designed to support human rights were severely limited or shut down completely. Peaceful protesters faced arbitrary arrests, torture and enforced disappearance. The Taliban conducted extrajudicial executions, arbitrary arrests, torture and unlawful detention of perceived opponents with impunity, creating an atmosphere of fear ... Public executions and floggings were used as punishment for crimes such as murder, theft, "illegitimate" relationships or violating social norms. Women's rights continued to be attacked, and women's participation in public life was severely limited. Afghanistan was the only country in the world where girls were banned from attending secondary school. Almost all institutions set up to address gender-based violence under the former government were shut down by the Taliban.⁸

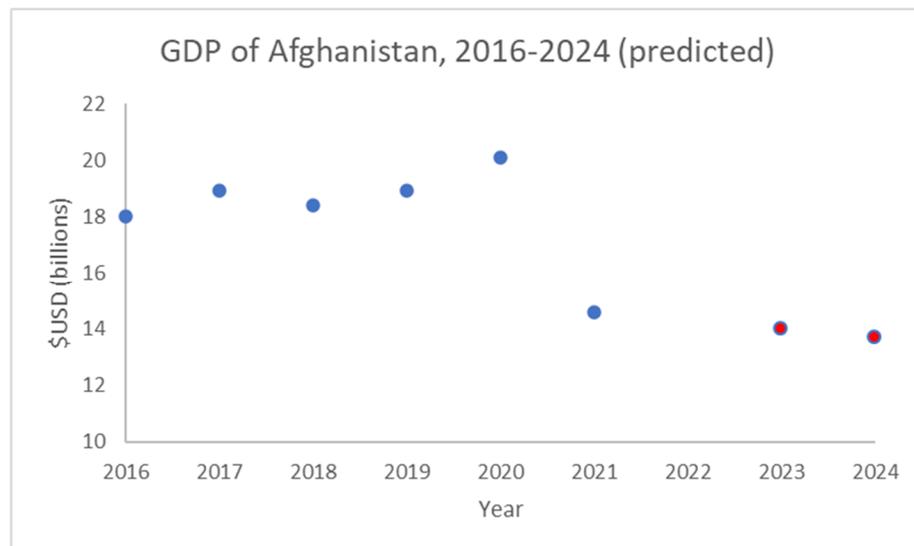
On that fateful August day and the days that followed, Afghan citizens flocked to Kabul Airport in enormous numbers to flee the country, seeking the help of remaining U.S. military personnel. Afghans packed tightly into aircraft and some even hung desperately onto the sides of departing planes. Distraught families were forced to weigh between sheltering in their homes or taking a chance at escaping the country at Kabul Airport.⁹

As severe human rights violations and devastating economic conditions continue to harm the livelihoods of Afghan citizens, the international community has been monitoring the situation and deciding the most appropriate course of action. The Security Council has been called upon to take steps to stop the Taliban allowing militants operating in its territory from destabilizing neighboring countries, and potentially aid refugees in escaping. While adjacent to the Security Council's mandate, it may worthwhile for delegates to consider ways to economically relieve Afghan citizens and document human rights abuses, as instability in Afghanistan may threaten overall global peace.

Afghan Economy Since the Taliban Takeover

Following the COVID-19 pandemic and the Taliban takeover in 2021, the economy of Afghanistan has floundered. Data from the World Bank shows the nation had a GDP of approximately \$20 billion in 2020, but this fell to \$14.6 billion in 2021. Figure 1, below, illustrates this trend, as well as macroeconomists' predictions for a continued decrease in GDP to \$14 billion at the end of 2023 and \$13.7 billion by 2024.¹⁰

Figure 1: Plot depicting the GDP of Afghanistan between 2016 and 2024.^{11 12}



The rapid inflation following the Taliban's takeover has slowed, and there has been a swing towards dangerously low deflation throughout 2023. In fact, inflation for basic household goods (including cooking oil, wheat, and salt) was -27.1 percent year-over-year between July 2022 and July 2023. Leading this decline was a -46.8 percent inflation rate for diesel fuel, but some items, like rice, remain under high inflationary pressure, as high-quality rice experienced a 5 percent decrease while low-quality rice increased by 19.7 percent.¹³

According to the United Nations and the International Labour Organization, over 500,000 individuals in Afghanistan became unemployed following the Taliban's return to power. These losses have occurred over a broad span of both skilled and unskilled labor. For example, teachers, construction workers, Afghan security force personnel, and healthcare workers have all faced job losses.¹⁴ Families across Afghanistan have been devastated by this economic crisis. As a result, "two-thirds of households in the country continue to struggle to meet basic food and non-food needs" according to a World Bank report from the end of 2022.¹⁵ The UN High Commissioner for Refugees recently estimated that "20 million people face acute hunger, with 6 million people in 'emergency' levels (one step away from famine)" as of mid-2023.¹⁶

The rise in the number of refugees from Afghanistan is also a contributing factor to the overall declining economy of Afghanistan. According to voanews, "[the] United States, Canada and several European countries have admitted more than 150,000 Afghan refugees and asylum-seekers since the Taliban seized power in August 2021." Many of these individuals had worked with American forces and thus feared retribution.¹⁷ As the number of refugees or dependents increase, other nations beginning accepting more refugees as well, leading to an outflow of "well-educated" individuals. These individuals have received a high degree of education and are therefore more likely to contribute financially to their nation's economy more so than someone

of the same nation with a lower purchasing power. Due to the substantial number of refugees moving out of Afghanistan, these “well-educated” individuals leave the country in a phenomenon known as “brain drain”. This situation is only compounded as many who remain fear engaging in their professions due to the threat of Taliban retribution.¹⁸

Even with the country under Taliban rule, maintaining a stable national economy will be essential for building the nation back to stability. Losing out on individuals who can bring economic power to the country is incredibly detrimental to the nation’s development. Additionally, the severe joblessness epidemic in Afghanistan will pull more families below the poverty line and take the purchasing power out of the hands of the public.

Refugee Crisis

Between the Taliban’s takeover in 2021 and July 2023, over 1.6 million individuals have fled Afghanistan as refugees. Over 8.2 million Afghans currently live as refugees in over one hundred countries, with Pakistan and Iran serving as destination for most Afghan refugees. An additional 3.2 million individuals in the nation live as internally displaced people, or IDPs. This means that they remain in Afghanistan, but were forced from their homes by conflict, famine, financial disruptions, or other factors.¹⁹

Though the largest portion of Afghan refugees have fled to Pakistan, this may no longer be feasible as Pakistan struggles to manage the considerable flood of refugees and the Taliban works to cut off emigration. Pakistan has increased guard posts along its border with Afghanistan to prevent border crossings, and the Pakistani government has also increased security vetting and documentation requirements for refugees.²⁰ Indeed, even refugees already accepted into Pakistan face hardships. The threat of arrest or deportation back to Afghanistan looms, and the incidence

of these events has sharply risen.²¹ Indeed, hundreds of thousands of refugees in Pakistan have been forced back to Afghanistan after the Pakistani government declared that all undocumented foreigners would be targeted and potentially arrested by police after November 1, 2023.²²

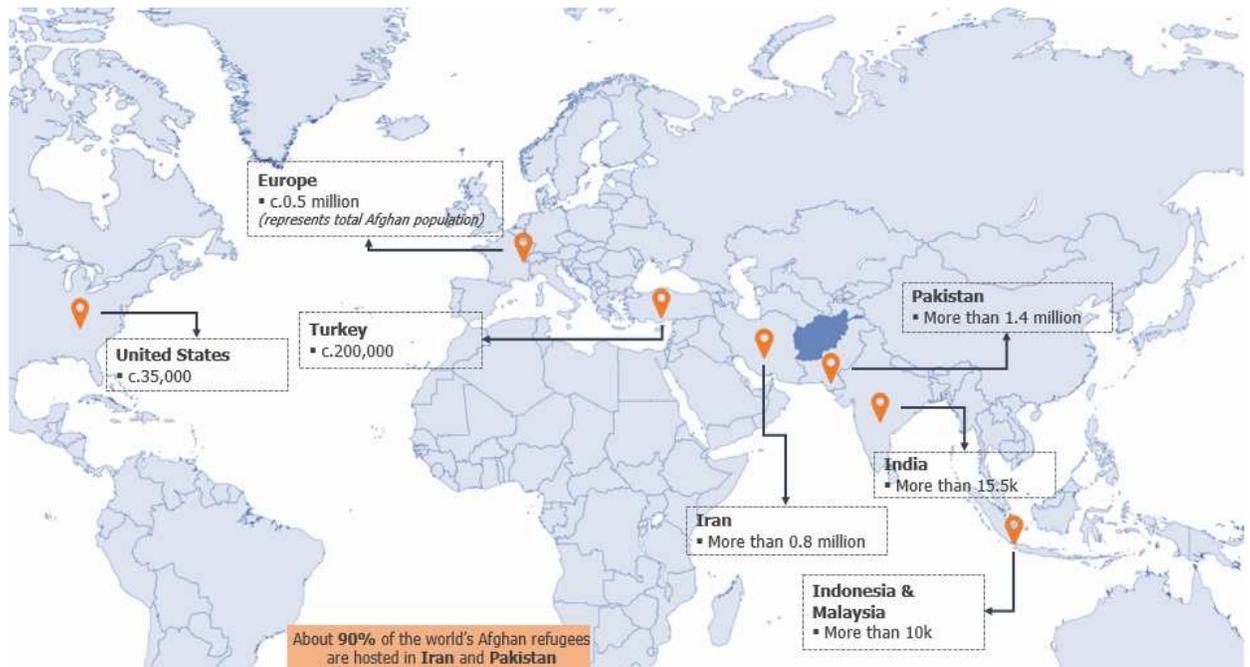
Afghan refugees have also struggled to find sympathy and acceptance in the European Union. Memories of the 2015 Syrian refugee crisis have led political leaders to fear a far-right, populist response to refugee acceptance. Germany, Greece, Austria, France, and other European Union nations have vowed to limit the acceptance of refugees, with some nations even erecting barbed wire fences to block access. The foreign policy chief of the EU even declared that the organization's goal is "to ensure no wide-scale migratory move toward Europe."²³ Other leaders have similarly advocated for cooperating with "transit countries" in which European states would pay to keep refugees outside of Europe, closer to Afghanistan.²⁴ U.S. efforts to accept Afghan refugees have mostly been focused on those who worked with the U.S. military prior to its withdrawal. Even still, their legal status as refugees has been contested and faces challenges from political figures who have tied their status to other immigration or security concerns.²⁵

The rising number of refugees also means that the Afghan labor force has significantly decreased. A number of medical professionals, blue-collar workers, and other similar jobs that are essential to the maintenance of a society are unfilled. After the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in 2021, ILO studies comparing the workforce shifts through the regime change stated that over 500,000 people have lost jobs. Furthermore, "In construction, the sector's 538,000 workers — of which 99 percent are men — have suffered too, as major infrastructure projects have stalled".²⁶ In addition to brain drain limiting future growth potential for

Afghanistan, the stagnation of national development projects is a visible reflection of the state of the nation.

Some issues to consider when discussing this topic are the following. What is your nation's policy on the acceptance of refugees? Did your country contribute forces to the international coalition that fought Al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan? If so, what policies does it have for granting asylum to Afghans who worked with your forces? Does your country try to limit Afghan refugees due to security concerns, and if so, what are those policies? How can you accommodate the refugees if you choose to accept them? How do you deal with the treatment of refugees in society and in refugee camps? What is the citizenship status of refugees, and how should you treat them? Use these questions as a starting point for your research in determining how to best support refugees while reducing security concerns in alignment with your nation's policy.

Figure 2: Map of documented Afghan refugee population by region.²⁷



The Effect on Women's Rights

According to a press release by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the regime change has significantly impacted the freedoms, rights, and treatment of women in Afghanistan as “girls in Afghanistan have been banned from secondary school and women from tertiary education... Since the takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban in August 2021, women have been excluded from public office and the judiciary”.²⁸ Without the opportunity for an equitable education, women are losing their ability for social mobility. Furthermore, higher education is a prerequisite for working a skilled job, meaning that the availability of skilled labor positions decreases for women regardless of whether they leave Afghanistan.

A major indicator of the status of women's rights are their presence and perspective in media outlets such as the news and in the political field. Reporters without Borders undertook a research study which found that “fewer than 100 out of 700 women journalists are still formally working in privately owned radio and TV stations in Kabul”.²⁹ The study goes on to state that thousands of female journalists are fleeing the country as many stations refuse to hire women. The political field also sees the same regression for women. The Ministry of Women's Affairs in Afghanistan was abolished by the new Taliban government, and the representation of women in parliament has declined. A Ministry for Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice has been added in its stead, and there are now no women in the government.³⁰

Earlier this year, Doctors without Borders published a report that detailed the various experiences and barriers that women face to receiving treatment in the healthcare field. According to the report, “maternal and infant mortality in [Afghanistan] remain among the highest in the world”.³¹ A major contributing factor to this is the weak health sector, as well as

the inability of Afghans to pay for healthcare when it is available. A study detailed in the report states “88% of the respondents either delayed, suspended or forewent seeking medical care and treatments due to the reported barriers [financial, lack of facilities, etc.]”³²

Beyond the issues of representation in political and media spaces as well as access to affordable healthcare, women and girls in Afghanistan face several social and cultural pressures regarding behavior, appearance, and decisions to be made regarding their own body. Human Rights Watch reports that many women have “changed their dress to avoid Taliban abuse,” fear traveling alone, and face random inspections while in public.³³ Subject to your nation’s policy (including the vote on Resolution 2681 described below), discussion regarding women’s rights issues will play an important role in drafting holistic resolutions as a committee.

Bloc Positions

On April 27, 2023, the UN Security Council unanimously approved Resolution 2681 to condemn the Taliban’s ban on Afghan women working for the UN in its territory.³⁴ While nations agree in principle on general issues such as this, policies begin to diverge as specific actions are considered on other topics of strategic concern. There are two main blocs on this topic; the U.S. and European-led coalition favors more aggressive actions to encourage the Taliban to conform to international law, while Russia and China favor respecting national sovereignty. Remaining countries swing between both blocs depending on the specific issues at hand.

As the members of this committee may include countries that are not currently members of the UNSC, there are further blocs to consider when discussing particular topics. The committee may agree that certain guidelines are necessary to ensure that Afghanistan stabilizes but may have different views about what those guidelines should be. The Gulf Cooperation

Council (GCC) — Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (currently on the Security Council), Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait — is an example of a bloc whose members would share the same perspective on maintaining a stable government as soon as possible but are not as concerned about refugee issues. Surrounding nations, including Iran and Pakistan, would likely have a similar interest in political stabilization, but only if it helps stem refugee emigration.

Guiding Questions

1. How can the Security Council members act in accordance with international law while protecting the principles of national sovereignty?
2. What steps can be taken to monitor the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan?
3. To what degree should the United Nations and the Security Council work with the Taliban government of Afghanistan?
4. Does the Security Council have a role in protecting Afghan refugees?
5. What incentives or concessions are nations prepared to make to protect Afghan citizens?

Topic 2: The 2021 Myanmar Coup d'état

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar has historically been plagued with issues regarding military rule, coups, and ethnic cleansing. After gaining independence from British colonial rule in 1948, Myanmar was a parliamentary democracy called the Union of Burma. However, in 1962, a military coup led by General Ne Win stifled the country's growth, particularly after political changes instituted in a 1974 constitution which resulted in an isolationist foreign policy and socialist economy. By 1988, "widespread corruption, rapid shifts in economic policy related to Myanmar's currency, and food shortages led to massive protests"³⁵ against worsening conditions in Burma.

The resulting military action to suppress the protests killed over 3,000 protestors and resulted in a new military regime, transforming the country into what is now known as the Union of Myanmar (although commonly known as simply Myanmar). Aung San Suu Kyi, the daughter of a general who led the independence movement, formed the National League of Democracy (NLD) and was jailed for being a leader of the protest movement. She was detained by the military government from 1989 until 2010, winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 as a symbol of the stifled democratic movement.³⁶

Myanmar had gradually been shifting to a democratic nation since. In 2007, the Saffron Revolution shook the military junta controlling Myanmar and fostered the development of a new constitution. The military maintained significant control over the nation's parliament, even after the junta was dissolved in 2011. Free elections in 2015 led to substantial victories for the NLD. Though Suu Kyi tried to pacify the military (also known as the Tatmadaw) and safely navigate the tense political climate, the military again seized total power on February 1, 2021.³⁷ It alleged that the NLD, had engaged in fraud during the 2020 election.

As a result of the coup, protests erupted in the streets across Myanmar, which, in turn, were met with a violent response by the military and the arrests of those supporting democracy. As of September 2022, over 15,000 citizens were arrested and subjected to torture in prison. In response, some citizens have formed armed anti-coup groups to protect themselves. The violence has displaced 1.2 million people, led to the collapse of public services, and strained Myanmar's economy.³⁸

In addition to the control that the military exerts on the general populace of Myanmar, ethnic minorities, such as the Rohingya who live in Rakhine State, are persecuted. The Rohingya descend from Arab traders, speak their own language, follow their own cultural traditions, and practice Islam in a country where Buddhism is the most-practiced religion.³⁹ Rohingya have also been denied rights to citizenship by virtue of Myanmar's 1982 Citizenship Law, despite having lived in the area for generations.⁴⁰ In August 2017, extremist Rohingya Arsa militants attacked thirty police posts. The violent response by government forces left 6,700 Rohingya civilians dead, including over 700 children. Government forces were also accused of abusing and raping women and girls as a part of their campaign of retribution.⁴¹

As a result of the violence caused by the Tatmadaw—actions that the International Course of Justice in the Hague is prosecuting as genocide—over 700,000 Rohingya crossed the border from Myanmar into Bangladesh.⁴² Mass detention camps were first reported to be operating in 2012, with twenty-four camps holding over 130,000 Rohingya. The camps lack adequate access to education, health care, food, and shelter.⁴³

Humanitarian Crisis

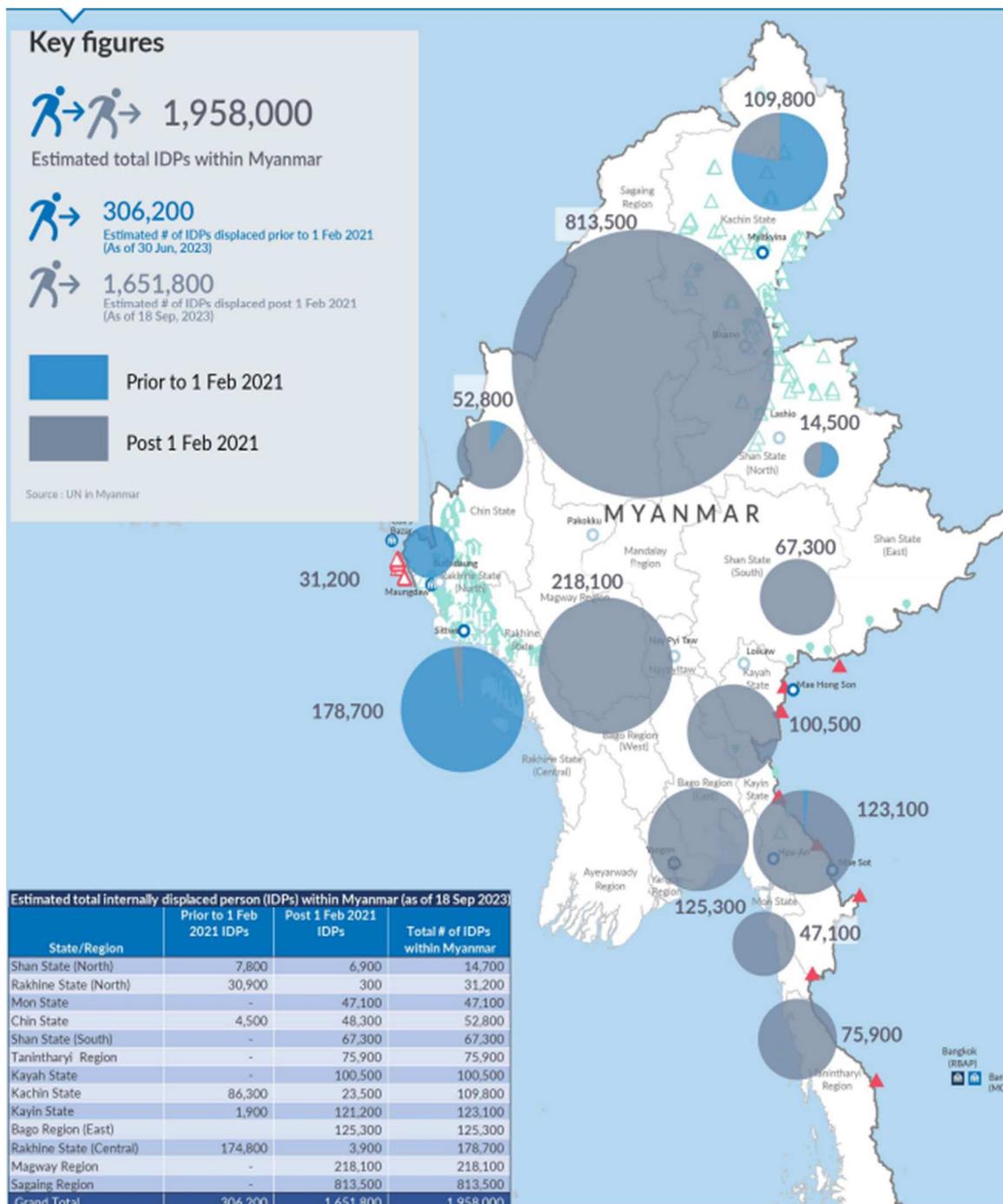
Violence and unrest associated with the military takeover in Myanmar have led to a humanitarian crisis and a surge of internally displaced peoples (IDPs). According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, over 370,000 individuals had been internally displaced due to instability prior to the February 2022 coup, and the political unrest forced an additional 440,000 citizens from their homes. While the UN supports this vulnerable population through relief aid, efforts are limited by “insecurity, roadblocks and challenges in obtaining access approvals.”⁴⁴

The humanitarian crisis in Myanmar goes far beyond just those who have been displaced recently. About 144,000 Rohingya have been displaced since the unrest in 2012 and conflicts between the military and armed resistance groups have led to the burning of both churches and homes, and have placed millions of civilians at risk of food insecurity.⁴⁵ Compounding this, over 286 attacks have occurred on healthcare infrastructure and the providers themselves as of early 2022 as part of a coordinated effort by the military to solidify its control and eliminate dissent. The military government has used mass arrests and lethal force to “punish local communities for their assumed support for armed elements”, even using helicopter gunships and airstrikes. Executions and torture have been further employed to punish and crackdown on dissent.⁴⁶

This situation has only worsened during 2023 as “[escalating] clashes and attacks have had dire consequences for millions of civilians who are enduring widespread insecurity and aerial bombardment, mass displacement, and limited access to critical services, including health.”⁴⁷ The immense destruction of infrastructure, homes, and farmland wrought by a natural disaster, Cyclone Mocha in May 2023, combined with the continued conflict, has further degraded the situation for the citizens of Myanmar.⁴⁸ As of September 2023, almost two million

individuals remained internally displaced, while only twenty-five percent of the funds required for vital humanitarian aid due to Cyclone Mocha have been obtained.⁴⁹ The map below may be useful in designing strategies to effectively address displacement issues.

Figure 3: Map of Internally Displaced Peoples in Myanmar by location.⁵⁰



Blue circles represent those displaced prior to the military coup, and gray circles represent those displaced following the coup. Teal markers indicate IDP settlements and camps from before the coup, and red markers indicate those established afterwards.

International Response to the Coup

In response to the sudden overturning of democracy due the coup, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 2669 (2022) on December 21, 2022 with notable abstentions from China, Russia, and India due to the violent nature of the military's response to the uprising.⁵¹ The main focus of the resolution was to condemn the military's violence against civilians, expressing concern for the detention of Aung San Suu Kyi and other opposition leaders, as well as a call for improving the humanitarian situation, addressing the crisis in the Rakhine state, and providing resources for displaced peoples.

The resolution also offered continuing support for a regional political organization, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), to use a Five Point Consensus as the main channel to resolve human rights and humanitarian concerns.⁵² The Five Point Consensus calls for “an immediate end to violence in the country; dialogue among all parties; the appointment of a special envoy; humanitarian assistance by ASEAN; and the special envoy's visit to Myanmar to meet with all parties.”⁵³

While this plan provides a structure and goals to meet through further negotiation, a review of the pact's progress by the ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR) concluded that that these are simply rules for creating a space of discussion, and not immediate action to support the public. The APHR chair stated, “It has been almost three years since the coup, during which millions of people have had their lives irrevocably shattered by the junta's

atrocities. And yet ASEAN seems content to continue to act as if the Myanmar crisis was some bureaucratic mix-up that can be periodically ‘reviewed’ and not an ongoing armed conflict where lives are on the line every day.”⁵⁴ Since the Security Council is working through ASEAN, the committee might consider how it can utilize the Five Point Consensus or update it to be more effective.

Bloc Positions

Delegates can see that Resolution 2669 (2022) was passed over a year after the conflict began, because an impasse among Security Council members prevented the passing of any meaningful resolution. Amnesty International’s Ming Yu Hah observed that “There is no denying that the military is able to carry out its nationwide assault on human rights because of the shockingly inadequate global response to this crisis.”⁵⁵ Your role as delegates will be to work within the existing consensus and either improve the existing resolution or enact your own. The voting for Resolution 2669 (2022) was recorded as follows:

In favor	Abstained
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • France • United Kingdom • United States • Ireland • Kenya • Mexico • Norway • Albania • Brazil • Gabon • Ghana • United Arab Emirates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • China • India • Russian Federation

Western and Democratic Countries

Countries such as the United Kingdom⁵⁶ and United States⁵⁷ (both of which are permanent members) have significantly provided aid to the citizens of Myanmar and quickly

condemned the coup. They also placed sanctions on the military and related economic practices. Additionally, democratic nations, such as the U.S., continuously have supported the transition of the Myanmar government to a democratic state.

ASEAN Member States

ASEAN members include the ten nations of Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. The bloc's primary focus is on regional support and integration in the areas of security, economy, social progress and culture. It also aims to "promote regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and the rule of law in the relationship among countries of the region and adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter".⁵⁸ At the same time, three of its fundamental principles might indicate that ASEAN member states would be reluctant to favor intervention in Myanmar's affairs, including "The right of every State to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion or coercion; Non-interference in the internal affairs of one another...and Effective cooperation among themselves."⁵⁹

Guiding Questions

1. Is your country a signatory, sponsor, or voting for/against/abstaining of UN resolutions that support/condemn Myanmar's actions against the Rohingya?
2. Has Tatmadaw attempted to build a relationship with your country in any way?
3. Does your country have a history of political instability like coups? How did they resolve this or was it not resolved?
4. Has your country provided any aid to Myanmar?
5. What kind of government does your country have? (democracy, etc.)

Endnotes

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