



United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

Background Guide

On the Question of the Situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan



MIT Model United Nations Conference (MITMUNC) II
February 5-7, 2010
Cambridge, Massachusetts

1. Introduction

The eight-year long war in Afghanistan, aiming to eradicate Taliban influence, is again facing major setbacks. While post-war Afghanistan never realized its full stability, seeing numerous IED explosions and increased opium and drug trade economically linked to Taliban demonstrates that today's challenges in Afghanistan are even more serious; the direct influence of Taliban has resumed its growth, and Taliban-backed insurgency is, again, on the rise.

The issue, which was previously a problem exclusively in southern Afghanistan, has been spreading in all directions. North and West Afghanistan are witnessing increased Taliban influence, and the Taliban is also rapidly expanding its base into Pakistan. There is internal instability in the Pakistani state, which is making it even more difficult for Pakistan to resist the militant infiltration.

2. Background

The War on Afghanistan started on October 7th, 2001 as a response to the September 11th attacks on the United States by al-Qaeda. The War on Afghanistan officially marked the beginning of the War on Terror. Following 9/11, a U.S.-led coalition under the name of "Operation Enduring Freedom" (OEF) was formed, upon which the most major branch is OEF-A: Operation Enduring Freedom - Afghanistan, which includes participants from all over the world (check <http://www.defense.gov/news/May2002/d20020523cu.pdf> or <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/6207.pdf> for more detail). The OEF-A entered Afghanistan on October 7th, 2001, and since has defeated the Taliban government, eradicated most of their political influence from Afghanistan and even Pakistan, and embarked on the long and difficult process of re-establishing stability in the country.

The Taliban themselves came to power as Afghanistan rose against the Soviet rule, where Islamist Jihad movements played an important role in the independence of the country. Out

of the vacuum of power created, the Taliban emerged initially as a religious-political group that embraced people's Islamic beliefs that lead to their own independence. However, after seizing control over Kabul, the Taliban initiated a fundamentalist system of rule that implements extreme interpretations of the Islamic shari'a. The Taliban were known and outspoken about their support for al-Qaeda and harboring Osama bin Laden. After it became apparent that al-Qaeda and Bin Laden were responsible for the 9/11 attacks, the U.S. issued a five-point ultimatum for Taliban (see the points of the ultimatum in transcript of George W. Bush's speech on the night of September 20th, 2001, here <http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/09/20/gen.bush.transcript/>).

After the beginning of the OEF-A operation in Afghanistan, on December 20th, 2001, the United Nations Security Council voted in resolution 1386 to establish the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, which continues to be run to this day parallel to the OEF-A. In the southern region of Afghanistan, OEF-A military operations have been - since 2006 - succeeded by the NATO-led ISAF. The United States Army conducts operation both as part of the ISAF in the southern region, and 'independently' under the OEF-A banner in other parts of Afghanistan. Note that the ISAF itself does operate outside the southern region, and is present and influential in all parts of Afghanistan, however, it is only in the south that the ISAF operates solely, rather than in parallel with the OEF-A.

(For information on military placement of the ISAF currently, see <http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/placemat.pdf>)

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1890 (here <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/550/19/PDF/N0955019.pdf?OpenElement>), adopted on October 8th, 2009, extends the mandate of the ISAF in Afghanistan "for a period of 12 months beyond 13 October 2009". The situation was gradually improving, with occasional lapses where Taliban insurgency rises in different "waves". However, 2009 saw the first major Taliban resurgence since 2007. Indeed, the Taliban are slowly gaining the upper

hand, especially in the devastated southern region, and ISAF actions against Taliban are insufficient.

The opium industry in Afghanistan supports the Taliban. Today, Afghanistan is the number one producer of opium in the world. The August 2007 Afghanistan Opium Survey (see http://www.unodc.org/pdf/research/AFG07_ExSum_web.pdf) states “in 2007 Afghanistan produced an extraordinary 8,200 tons of opium (34% more than in 2006), becoming practically the exclusive supplier of the world’s deadliest drug (93% of the global opiates market)”. Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, states in an article published in the Washington Post (see it here http://www.csdp.org/news/news/post_costa_042507.htm) that:

Drug traffickers have a symbiotic relationship with insurgents and terrorist groups such as the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Instability makes opium cultivation possible; opium buys protection and pays for weapons and foot soldiers, and these in turn create an environment in which drug lords, insurgents and terrorists can operate with impunity.

Opium is the glue that holds this murky relationship together. If profits fall, these sinister forces have the most to lose. I suspect that the big traffickers are hoarding surplus opium as a hedge against future price shocks and as a source of funding for future terrorist attacks, in Afghanistan or elsewhere.

As for North-West Pakistan, war in the region of Waziristan broke in March 2004. The it was a result of tensions after the Pakistani Army entered various regions, originally as an attempt to regain and establish military control over desolate areas controlled by tribes, but quickly escalated into a search for al-Qaeda and Taliban members. As a response, local tribal members, along with Taliban and al-Qaeda militants, were engaged with the army in an armed clashes as a “resistance movement”.

Taliban is believed to have a strong presence in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, especially in the region of Waziristan, and many believe that Osama bin Laden presides currently in Waziristan. The situation is extremely alarming in North-West Pakistan, and conflict continues strong despite a

truce between Baitullah Mehsud and the Pakistani Army in the first half of 2008. Since September 2008, the local tribesmen in North-West Pakistan have engaged in war with the Taliban, and an internal “civil war” of some sort unfolds, adding to the existing Pakistan Army-Taliban armed conflict going on. The U.S. supported the local tribesmen in their conflict and provided aid to the region.

Starting late August and through September of that year, the U.S. intensified its attacks - primarily in the form of air raids - on villages along the northern border of Pakistan, such as South Waziristan. Pakistani president Asif Ali Zardari commented: “Just as we will not let Pakistani’s territory to be used by terrorists for attacks against our people and our neighbours, we cannot allow our territory and our sovereignty to be violated by our friends” (read more: <http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5iGTgxqoTldD4lBtlbyfU5MSNowjg>). The region continues to be under fierce bloody conflict, with an abundance of offensives, assassinations, attacks, and counter-attacks occurring between the Pakistan Army, Taliban insurgents, and local tribesmen.

In March 2008, the Khyber Border Coordination Center was formed as a collaboration between the Afghani and Pakistani governments, NATO, and the ISAF, in an effort to share intelligence regarding the situation of Taliban insurgents. The center’s achievements, however, have been stagnant, due to a lack of coordination and - most importantly - an apparent mistrust between the involved groups.

From an Afghanistan perspective, the situation in Pakistan harbors Taliban, who themselves represent the core of the recent escalations within that country. From a humanitarian perspective, the situation has resulted in the displacement of more than 3 million individuals, and the death of more than 7000 civilians and ~16,000 police officers, militant tribesmen, soldiers, and Taliban insurgents. From a Pakistani perspective, the ongoing war has cost the country an equivalent of billions of US dollars, and continues to drain the country’s budget.

3. Committee Goals

The UNSC session does *not* aim in its session to address concerns and goals of the United States. That is, though finding Osama bin Laden is important and of international concern, the priority remains the stabilization and revitalization of Afghanistan and Pakistan's southern borders. Such stabilization and revitalization includes the eradication of the Taliban, reconstruction of the infrastructure, and the rebuilding of the economy. Such goals can be achieved in a multitude of ways, ranging from direct military-oriented resolutions to those that indirectly attempt to squander the Taliban by blocking their sources of power (i.e. the drug and opium industry). We appeal to your critical thinking and creativity to come up with innovative effective solutions that, if implemented in real life, can make real change in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The crises we give will also aim to reflect your understanding of the depth of the problem, and appeal to your ingenuity in order to handle the new developments.

4. Conclusion

In this particular topic, the United States would probably have a large role to play as it is involved directly in the region. Our criterion for judging delegates would not be how much they speak, but how well they represent their country's foreign policy, their initiatives in proposing measures and bringing new ideas to the committee, as well as the quality of their negotiations with other delegates to help the committee reach a consensus. Again, knowledge of history of the conflict will be important. Delegates should be aware of the previous UNSC resolutions aimed at maintaining peace in the region, and should aim to build upon them, try to analyze the shortcomings of the proposed solutions of the past, and discuss how to build upon the solutions in the quest for sustainable peace and stability in Afghanistan and Pakistan.