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SUMMER SCHOLARSHIP COMPETITION 2009

Winner: Kelsey Price
College/University: University of Utah

Topic Title: US Policy and The FATA Region of Pakistan

Kelsey's winning entry follows below.

Topic:

The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) are the remote and mountainous regions of Pakistan that borders Afghanistan. Not only is FATA poorly controlled by the Pakistani government, but home to many insurgency groups such as the Taliban. Osama Bin Laden was last believed to be hiding in the Waziristan province of the FATA (Riedel, Bruce. "Pakistan and Terror: The Eye of the Storm" July 2008). A terrorist sanctuary, the FATA is plagued by societal tensions, civil conflict, geography, corruption, external interference, and policy failure. There have been numerous attempts by the Pakistani government to reach agreements with the tribal leaders and terrorists present in the FATA.

Why This Problem is Urgent Now:

The fate of the United States relies on a successful relationship Pakistan; which could be either the key America's victory against terrorism or an inconceivable threat to the United States and its allies. According to former CIA office Bruce Riedel, the worst horrors of the twenty-first century come together at the crossroads of Pakistan: nuclear proliferation, drug smuggling, military dictatorship, and international terrorism. Developing a multi-faceted approach to the conflict in Waziristan is essential to the future of Pakistan itself, the United States, and the world. It is crucial for the United States government to note there is a direct link between increasing violence in Afghanistan and decreasing Pakistani pressure on militants in border areas. Violent attacks against Afghan and NATO troops in Afghanistan reportedly have increased significantly in 2008 (National Intelligence Council). Without a successful partnership with Pakistan, the United States and the international community faces a likely scenario of the collapse of the fragile India-Pakistan peace, nuclear proliferation, increased terrorist activity, and possibly nuclear war.

A successful United States policy is the keystone to long-term international security and peace.



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ProblemSolver Nominated by Kelsey Price: Dr. Hassan Abbas
Kelsey Found Dr. Abbas Through: Research

ProblemSolver Experience:

Dr. Abbas is a former Pakistani government official who served in the administrations of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and President Pervez Musharraf. Additionally, he is a Research Fellow at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, and is part of the Belfer Center Project on Managing the Atom and International Security Program there. Dr. Abbas is also a Fellow at the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU), and an Associate of the Pakistan Security Research Unit (PSRU) at University of Bradford, in the United Kingdom.

Dr. Abbas' ProblemSolver Solution:

TEN STEPS: FOR THE US AND PAKISTAN

1. FATA should be fully incorporated into Pakistan by scrapping the FCR (as already promised by the new government), thereby extending the Pakistan Political Parties Act (allowing all political parties to function there), and either make it a part of the NWFP or declare it to be separate province, as an equal federating unit. This would make its people stakeholders in the future of Pakistan as a state.
2. A reconciliation commission should be established to ease the tense relations between the security forces and FATA's residents, thousands of whom have been killed in military operations. The internally displaced should be helped to settle back into their hometowns and those responsible for human rights abuses should be prosecuted.
3. FATA's seven agencies, as demarcated by the British Raj, should be abolished, as these are named after certain major tribes; many smaller tribes resent this. The area should be divided into smaller districts named after the tribes that reside there, which could potentially enfranchise more groups and improve the administrative structure.
4. Involve FATA's inhabitants in the decision-making processes. An extra effort should be made to convince them that their opinions matter and that reforms are not being introduced at the behest of any foreign power. FATA residents should be involved in identifying quickly implementable small development projects to create a feeling of ownership. Educated and professional Pashtuns from the NWFP, Karachi, and even from the Pashtun Diaspora in the West could be asked not only to participate in the process of streamlining a development agenda for FATA, but also to run some projects.
5. Convert the paramilitary FC into a well-equipped and well-trained law enforcement/police force in which senior command positions are not be doled out to the military. These positions should initially go to Pashtun police officers (from the NWFP).
6. Close down the extremist madrassas operating in FATA, which provide recruits to militant groups. For the rest of the madrassas, establish a separate board that involves the NWFP's leading religious authorities to monitor the curriculum and other activities. A major effort is required to ban various extremist publications and confiscate propaganda CDs distributed by the Taliban.
7. The Durand Line should be converted into a well-demarcated border manned by Pakistani army units until a proper border force can be established. Travel between Pakistan and Afghanistan should be properly regulated through several formal checkpoints.



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8. The state should adopt a special focus on FATA's youths as one of its top priorities in order to delink them from the violent circumstances to which they are accustomed. This could be done by making major investments in schools, vocational training, and incentives for starting small businesses.

9. In the case of the NWFP, undertaking a major reform of the police service should be a top priority. This requires major financial support. The counter-terrorism funds that Pakistan receives from international donors should be shared with the province's civilian law enforcement agencies.

10. Pakistan's political leadership must concentrate on bringing all of the major political forces on board to develop and implement the above-mentioned steps so it can build a national consensus on the subject as well as provide moral support to the military for effective counter-insurgency operations.

For questions and information about the Summer Scholarship Competition, email press@ourvoiceourcountry.org or call (914) 772-0472