

Teaching Notes:

CFR InfoGuide on the Taliban

The following discussion questions, essay questions, and in-class activities are designed to help educators use “The Taliban” InfoGuide in the classroom.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Ideas for questions to use in facilitating full-class discussions, assigning small group discussion topics, or posting on a class discussion board. Questions allow students to critically reflect on the material provided in the InfoGuide and hone their communication skills.

1. What are the major historic events and factors underwriting the tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan since 1970?
2. What were the conditions in Afghanistan during 1994 that led to the ascent of the Afghan Taliban, led by Mullah Muhammad Omar?
3. Who were the major outside sponsors of the Afghan Taliban’s emirate which governed most of Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001? What were the major interests of these sponsors? How did sponsor interests align and how did they diverge?
4. Who toppled the Afghan Taliban government in late 2001 and why?
5. Why did Pakistan continue to worry about Afghanistan after the rout of the Afghan Taliban government and the formation of a new constitutional republic there?
6. What is the Pakistan “double game”? How has that game been played and what have been its stakes?
7. How has the Afghan Taliban organized as an insurgent group based in Pakistan since 2002? What are its main components?
8. What are the domestic factors that have handicapped the post-Taliban Afghan government and sustained support for the Afghan Taliban insurgency?

9. What are the origins and aims of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)? How is it different from the Afghan Taliban? How is it similar?
10. Why is the Haqqani network believed to be a special element of the Taliban constellation in Pakistan and Afghanistan? What actions taken by the Pakistani military during 2014 led some observers to question whether the Haqqani network's special status would continue?
11. What events inspired the U.S./NATO military and diplomatic "surge" into Afghanistan from 2009 to 2012? What did this "surge," as part of a new U.S. Afghanistan-Pakistan strategy, accomplish? What did it fail to achieve?
12. What are the chances that Afghanistan and Pakistan will mutually agree that the Taliban, in all its forms, constitutes an equal threat to both governments and combine forces to defeat the Taliban along the border region? What might lead to such an agreement? What factors might inhibit them from finding a common cause?

ESSAY QUESTIONS:

Suggestions for essay topics that enable students to dive deeper into the material found in the InfoGuide and conduct their own research and analysis.

1. Discuss the prospects for reconciliation between the Afghan Taliban's insurgent leadership and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Compare and contrast these prospects with those between the Pakistani government and the Pakistani Taliban (TTP). Does political accommodation in either conflict seem feasible when each has been dominated by violence for so long?
2. How does the India-Pakistan security dilemma affect the Afghanistan-Pakistan relationship? Will this effect become more negative or positive as Western military forces exit Afghanistan?
3. What are the prospects for stability and security in Afghanistan in 2015? Will these improve with greater Afghan autonomy and authority and a greatly reduced international military, diplomatic and economic presence? If not, should American and Western leaders revisit—and perhaps revise upwards—their commitments to remain in Afghanistan? Why? Why not?
4. Discuss Pakistan's relations with the United State beyond 2014. What will be the foundation of this relationship—one that has been anchored in a counterterrorism alliance since late 2001, but that has been troubled by accusations of a Pakistani "double game" and American fecklessness in

supporting Pakistan in its multifaceted security requirements? How can this relationship be prevented from turning mutually harmful?

5. Did U.S. and NATO-led intervention in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2014 achieve its intended objectives at a justifiable cost? Make the best argument that it did, and then, the best argument that it did not. Which answer seems most correct?

ACTIVITIES AND ASSIGNMENTS:

In-class activity ideas and homework assignments based on “The Taliban” InfoGuide that promote participatory learning and critical thinking. These can be adapted based on students’ levels and classroom needs.

1. Map Activities: Provide students with a map of South Asia indicating only the countries and their borders. Ask them to identify the following key bits of geography and discuss the importance of each:
 - The Durand Line.
 - The areas of ethnic dominance for the following groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan: Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Turkmen, Hazaras, Balochis, and Punjabis.
 - The principal cities and provinces in Afghanistan where the Taliban arose during the 1990s.
 - The principal cities and provinces in Pakistan where Afghan Taliban fighters found sanctuary during the insurgency that began in 2003.
 - The principal locations of insurgent and antigovernment activity by Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in Pakistan from 2007 to the present.
2. Policy Memorandum: Assign students a writing project of a two-to-three page memorandum to a senior United States foreign policy leader (president, secretary of state, National Security Council director, etc.) analyzing what the United States should do during the near term (2015-2017) to inhibit the return of international terrorist groups to safe haven in Afghanistan and prevent a resurgence of the Afghan Taliban to a point that might threaten the stability and sovereignty of the Afghan government. Have the students prepare the memo such that it:
 - concisely defines the reasons this is important to U.S. security policy,
 - discusses the pros and cons of current U.S. policy for this period,
 - recommends the continuation of current policy or a clearly stated alternative,
 - provides a rationale for why the chosen policy is best, and
 - advocates steps to be taken in support of this policy.

For policy memo guidelines, see http://twp.duke.edu/uploads/media_items/policy-memo.original.pdf.

3. An Op-Ed Piece: Ask students to write a one-page opinion piece making the best case for the United States to continue, or even expand, its program of military and civil assistance to Pakistan for the remainder of the decade. The op-ed should address major complaints by those who believe Pakistan plays a “double game” with the United States and clearly declare what the United States will gain from continuing strong military and economic support to Pakistan beyond 2014.
For more guidance on writing an op-ed, direct students to
http://www.theopedproject.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=68&Itemid=80.

4. A Regional Perspectives Debate: Break students into three groups for a debate on the topic, “Resolved, the Afghan government should take all measures possible to negotiate political reconciliation with the Taliban insurgent leadership.” One group will develop and defend the dominant Pakistani perspective on this topic. One group will develop and defend the Indian viewpoint on this topic. The third group will develop and defend the perspective of the Afghan government.
Prior to class: Instruct group leaders to research Indian, Pakistani, and Afghan newspapers. Read and synthesize seven to ten articles summarizing the policy perspectives of each nation on the topic of Taliban reconciliation. Distill each country’s perspective into a five-minute presentation and prepare answers to questions in backup.
In-class exercise: Have each group leader make a five-minute presentation on the resolution, clearly stating whether it should be granted or not. After each group has presented, the instructor should pick a second group member at random to ask a follow-up question based upon the competing views provided—and determine whether the group’s case is persuasive in light of the competing government viewpoints.
After-exercise discussion: After the exercise, the instructor can conduct a twenty-minute review of the major points made and their implications of these points for Afghan Taliban reconciliation prospects.