**Forum:** Security Council

**Issue:** Security Concerns Related to Swat Valley

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Introduction

Swat Valley, a Pakistani administrative district near Afghan border, had turned from a famous tourist spot into a Taliban-controlled terrorist hub until a military reclamation by the Pakistani government in 2009. However, the district remains unstable with Taliban’s units in the peripheral areas surrounding major cities.

Taliban has garrisoned itself in this area and trained suicide bombers and other forms of the so-called ‘jihadists’ in the past few years; it has also been recruiting local residents and trying to increase its influence. The United States’ ongoing drone attacks since 2004 has created an anti-American sentiment and hardened the momentum of Taliban’s recruitment. It’s estimated that over 3500 victims have been killed, over 300 of them being innocent civilians. More than 2 million people fled in 2009 during the intensified conflict between Taliban insurgents and the Pakistani government, but today 80 to 90 per cent have returned to their home areas. The United States claims that drone attacks are a necessary strategy to the eventual destruction of Taliban, the main targeted opposing belligerent, while the UN Special Rapporteur Ben Emmerson has disparaged such tactic and stated its violation of Pakistan’s national sovereignty and international laws.

Definition of Key Terms

Sovereignty

The supreme, absolute, and uncontrollable power by which an independent state is governed and from which all specific political powers are derived; the intentional independence of a state, combined with the right and power of regulating its internal affairs without foreign interference.

**Taliban**

A Islamic fundamentalist movement started in Afghanistan, yet its history can be traced by to the Soviet-backed northern Pakistan, After the overthrow of its Afghan government by the American-led invasion, it has regrouped itself as insurgent and continued to fight against the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force. The United Nations has accused Taliban of multiple human rights abuses, including systematic massacre against civilians. Taliban is also known for its continuous use of terrorist attacks, frequently with improvised explosive devices (IED). According to the United Nations, the Taliban and their allies were responsible for 75% of Afghan civilian casualties in 2010, 80% in 2011, and 80% in 2012.

**Drone (UAV)**

Formally known as unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), it is an aircraft without a human pilot physically on board and usually controlled remotely. The United States government has extensively employed drones to conduct surveillance and drone strike missions starting in 2004 in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Obama Administration has formally declared an increased use of drone attacks targeting Taliban strongholds. There’s an estimated of ~3500 casualties with two third of them being militants. Such attacks are still ongoing till this day.

**Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

Drafted by representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world, the Declaration was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948 as a common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations. It sets out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected.

History

First Battle of Swat

Also known as *Operation Rah-e-Haq*, it was a battle fought between Pakistan and the Taliban in late 2007 over control of the Swat District of Pakistan. The battle started on October 25, 2007 and ended on December 8, 2007.

Seizure of Swat by Taliban

From October 25, 2007, to November 7, 2007, Taliban, or Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM) to be specific, quickly seized control of the region. Taliban troops immediately started to implement its version of Sharia Law that violated human rights in multiple forms. Over 3000 Pakistani infantry troops were deployed to regain control in the valley. Heavy fighting started with typical terroristic tactics being employed by Taliban, including suicide bombers and massive killings of civilians.

Pakistani Offensives

Staring from November 12, the Pakistani troops gradually regained momentum and in 3 days they had Swat back in their control. On November 25, Taliban forces decided to retreat from Alpuri back to the mountainous area due to the constant advancement made by the government troops. On 27 November, Pakistani forces secured Shangla.

Second Battle of Swat

The battle began in May 2009 and involved the Pakistani Army and Taliban militants in a fight for control of the Swat district of Pakistan.

Battle of Mingora City

In the end of March, over 300 Taliban militants began to attack the main city in Swat Valley – Mingora. Heavy street fighting began when two sides clashed. The most noteworthy point in this event is the massive emigration of population in the aforementioned region caused by the conflict. The United Nations estimated that over 2 million refugees during that period. The conflict temporarily ended with several important captures of Taliban’s top commanders. The region has remained devastated and unstable till today.

Key Issues

Security

Security issues are often considered the most prevalent on this topic. In the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1989, measures to tackle Taliban have been extensively listed, including freezing of financial accounts and listing of targeted personnel.

Terrorism

Taliban has conducted a significant number of terrorist attacks in the Swat region. Suicide bombers have been used. Also, Taliban holds jihadist training camps in the peripheral mountainous areas and widely recruits for new blood, spreading its extremist ideology and making this region a terrorist hub. Some terrorizing technique employed by Taliban includes floggings and the burning of schools.

Sharia Law

A New York Times report in 2009 states “ the government [of Pakistan] announced that it would accept a system of Islamic law in the Swat valley and agreed to a truce, effectively conceding the area as a Taliban sanctuary and suspending a faltering effort by the army to crush the insurgents.” The Pakistani authority has allowed Sharia courts to be established in its northern territory as part of the ceasefire agreement. Amnesty International has iterated its concern about this decision as it might undermine the protection of fundamental human rights.

Pakistani Sovereignty

United States’ drone attacks

United States of America has employed and continued drone attacks hundreds of time in proximity of Swat Valley, killing over 3500 people. Several scholars have held the growing anti-American sentiment in Pakistan to such actions. According to survey, over 90% of the Pakistani people show disapproval and alleged that the United States has violated their sovereign nation. The Government of Pakistan publicly denounces Americans’ involvement in this military affair, yet there are reports showing that it surreptitiously provides intelligence to assist American military actions in the area.

Influence from Afghanistan

Taliban and Al Qaeda have huge influence in Afghanistan and Northern Pakistan. America’s war in Afghanistan has further generated instability, despite the fact that Tiliban’s influence is greatly reduced. Taliban currently still has semi-control over the Southern area of Afghanistan and continues to employ unconventional and small-in-scale attacks to hinder a direct American victory. This prevents a direct American-Taliban interaction in Swat and allows Taliban to continue dispensing its radical ideology and twisted vision toward the West.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

United States of America

Terrorism

Ever since 911, the United States has drastically become conservative on its national security policies. Department of Homeland Security was established. Department of Defense, National Security Agency, and the Central Intelligence Agency hold frequent meetings and actively gather intelligence. Americans value their ways of life and fight to defend them. They have identified a number of terrorist groups in collaboration with UK and UN, some well-known ones are Al Qaeda and Taliban. America is also a major party involved in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The war in Afghanistan is to suppress Taliban’s influence and it is ongoing.

Drone strikes

The United States has employed drone tactic for over a decade, mostly for surveillance not restricted to military. However it began to utilize it for foreign military action starting in 2002 in Yemen and subsequently in Pakistan-Afghanistan areas. The use of drones has also experience a change from of pure surveillance to performing lethal air strikes. American President Barack Obama has claimed that drone attacks are necessary to maintain peace and the American way of life. Yet survey has shown that the American public holds a bipolar view on the application of drone strikes.

Pakistan

Taliban

Taliban was originally backed by the Pakistani government in late 90’s and early 2000’s. Currently the Pakistani government publicly criticizes the practice of Taliban. However, the government has had a hard time combating against the Taliban forces. Taliban repeatedly conducts unconventional attacks and assassinations against foreign targets. On June 23, 2013, Taliban killed 9 foreign hikers in response to the American drone strikes, as quoted from Ehsanullan Ehsan, a Taliban spokesman, “ through this killing we gave a message to international community to ask U.S. to stop drone strikes.”

Sovereignty

Both the United Nations and Pakistan recognize the American drone strikes illegal, yet no concrete legal actions have been taken. Drone strikes are extremely unpopular in Pakistan, yet are widely welcomed by India as it states that it’s necessary to maintain peace and security.

Timeline of Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

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| **Date** | **Description of event** |
| June 18, 2004 | First drone attack in Pakistan by the US |
| October 25, 2007 | First Battle of Swat |
| November 2008  May 16, 2009  Ongoing | Obama drastically increased drone strikes numbers  Second Battle of Swat  Minor personal attacks on travellers, foreigners, and government and military officials or transported goods |

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Drone attacks have been applied for several years and produced valuable results including the killings of key Taliban leaders. However, such attacks might have also contributed to the growing anti-American sentiment in Pakistan, which makes a peaceful ending unforeseeable at current stage. Taliban, although hasn’t been able to create an attack significant enough to be compared to 911, it hasn’t shown a downing trend whatsoever.

The Pakistani government has repeatedly tried to ensure the safety and security in its northern territories. However, it has failed to fully accomplish such goal for a number of reasons, the lacks of technological support, military training, informational intelligence, and financial support being some of them. Also, the discontent against the American involvement on this matter among the Pakistani people makes civilian cooperation with the government really difficult.

The United Nations Security Council has requested member states to freeze major Taliban assets in foreign banks and complied a list of targeted terrorists, yet no serious military actions have been authorized. The United Nations High Commissioner For Refugees has been in coordination with the Pakistani government to support the return of displaced refugees after the Second Battle of Swat.

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