

University of Alberta High School Model United Nations 2011

Security Council – The Question of Cross-Border Terrorism

Scope of Problem

The issue of cross-border terrorism is highly complex. In addressing the issue, two questions must be answered. First, what constitutes terrorism? Second, how to deal with terrorism transcending national boundaries? The most common definition of terrorism is the use of terror to accomplish a goal. Digging deeper, this definition establishes two necessary frameworks: the use of terror, and that there is a goal. This in turn means that there are actors, means, and motivations.

The use of terror has been ubiquitous in warfare. Even in primitive societies, there were instances of terror being used: whistling arrows, music, and masks to name a few. Technological advances have resulted in new means to inflict terror. Modern terrorists rarely act in the interest of states (except in cases of state-sponsored terrorism). They use tactics and means of fundraising similar to those of crime syndicates (extortion, connections with local leaders, drug running, kidnapping) in order to carry out their missions. A general goal of terrorism is to force political and/or social change by means of terror. A common tactic is to attack a civilian target and allow the media to propagate fear, forcing people to question their safety and the stability of their society. In many cases, terrorist organizations base their operations in one nation and launch attacks on a neighbouring country (i.e. Tutsi militants launching attacks in Rwanda from the Congo and Pakistani-sponsored groups attacking the Kashmir and Jammu provinces in India). Some cases involve terrorist groups whose interests are aimed at multiple nations such as al-Shabab, operating primarily in Somalia but launching attacks in Ethiopia, Tanzania, and around the horn of Africa. The most notable example of cross-border terrorism, at least one more close to home, would be 9/11.

Cross-border terrorism kills thousands of innocent civilians each year and often has greater effects in nations with weak infrastructure (consequences of Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan). Crime and drug trafficking becomes incorporated into the terrorist operations and worsens the situation. Tensions arise between nations who are victims of terrorism and nations within whom terrorist organizations are basing operations (tensions between India and Pakistan due to accusations of Pakistani state-sponsored terrorists operating in India). Terrorist groups inflame local tensions against the West, further complicating counter-terrorist actions. The connection between terrorist groups and local leaders often results in the spawning of smaller, local terrorist factions in target countries. In North America, cross-border terrorist attacks by extremist Islamic groups have led to a demonization of Muslim culture, persecuting peaceful Muslims in the West. In your possible resolutions, it is imperative that these consequences are addressed.

Possible Solutions

There have been past attempts by the United Nations to solve this issue. In response to the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the Security Council passed Resolution 1373 on September 28, 2001. Resolution 1373 established the Counter-Terrorism Committee whose mandate is to monitor how UN member states implement their international commitments to fight terrorism. One of their specific focuses is to eliminate instances of state-sponsored terrorism.

Combating cross-border terrorism is a challenge that poses many hurdles. Many regions affected by cross-border terrorism are underdeveloped. In these cases, it is very difficult to monitor the migration of people between nations. Terrorists are not military personnel, blending in with the civilian population. Attacks on terrorist groups involve a high risk of killing innocent civilians. In some cases, as mentioned, terrorist groups receive shelter, training, and supplies from the host country. Then, not only do international forces combat terrorist groups, they often have to work around the state in question. Then it becomes an issue of sovereignty. As witnessed in the media, the United States has come under severe criticism for missile strikes on Taliban in Pakistan. How can an international coalition pursue and combat terrorist groups without infringing on state sovereignty? This is one of the many questions you will face in determining your country's position on the issue.

The issues of cross-border terrorism are multiple, not limited to one region or even one way of combating it. Cross-border groups require international responses. Cooperation is paramount and thus we are hopeful that the Security Council will be able to come to consensus on a path forward to combat cross-border terrorism.

Resources

In conducting your research, start off with your country's policy on terrorism in general. Are they active in counter-terrorist activities? Are they notorious for involvements in cross-border terrorism? If you are still having difficulties understanding cross-border terrorism, use Google and news sites to look into cross-border terrorism. Be sure to follow the blog leading up to the conference as we will be posting more information to help you out. In the meantime, here are some links to help you browse the UN website and the following sources:

<http://www.un.org/webcast/ga/57/statements/020913indiaE.htm>

http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/CEF/Quarterly/May_2006/Zeb.pdf

<http://www.un.org/documents/ga/docs/56/a56837.pdf>

<http://www.securitychallenges.org.au/ArticlePDFs/vol5no4Gordon.pdf>

http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=4804&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=167&no_cache=1

<http://www.un.org/webcast/ga/58/statements/pakeng030924.htm>