WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

On June 7, 2010 the war in Afghanistan became the longest military engagement in the history of the United States. The US military's Operation Enduring Freedom has been launched in response to the September 11, 2001 attacks on the US (Billitteri, 2009, para.12). These actions have caused the United States to be hostile towards al-Qaeda and its Taliban supporters. However, the real intentions of the American government have been very controversial. In reality, it was not the attempt on 9/11 that led to the US involvement in Afghanistan, but the economic and political interests. This brought the death of thousands of people and instability to these countries.

The cause that has been put forward by the U.S. government was related to the events on September 11, 2001 when four commercial airlines were hijacked for a terrorist purpose. On September 11, two of them crashed into the World Trade Center in New York City, which collapsed after less than two hours and caused the death of 2,752 citizens (Hirschkorn, 2003, para. I). The hijackers crashed the third airliner into the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia. And finally, the fourth plane had planned to attack Washington D.C. However, when the passengers and the flight crew tried to retake control of the plane, it crashed on a rural field in Shansville, Pennsylvania. This event shocked the majority of Americans. As a result, measures had to be taken and the US Government rapidly came to the conclusion that al-Qaeda, headed by Osama Bin Laden, was responsible for the assault. The FBI stated, "evidence linking al-Qaeda and Bin Laden to the attacks of September 11 is clear and irrefutable" (Watson, 2002, para.11).
Consequently, on September 16, 2001 President Bush announced the war on terror by invading Afghanistan to eliminate the Taliban, who harbored al-Qaeda terrorists (National Museum of America History, n.d.).

This famous, endless war in Afghanistan, and later in Iraq, began as an attempt to end terrorism. Although, we are well aware of the video showing Bin Laden's confession about his implications during the attempt, on September 12, 2001 he seemed to be uninformed of the details of the event (Pincus & DeYoung, 2001, para.21). In fact, during the following days, Bin Laden denied his responsibility about the attack to Al Jazeera but that he had "thanked Almighty Allah and bowed before him when he heard this news" (2001, para.21). It is vital to realize the contradiction between these two statements to be able to understand the real intention of President Obama in sending 30,000 troops to Afghanistan when only few terrorists are still living there (Roye, 2009).

The real motivation for such investment is related to the economic and strategic interests developed by the US government. According to Patrick Martin, the intrusion in Afghanistan by the U.S. Army was premeditated precisely long before the terrorist assaults provided the ruse for setting it in action (Martin, 2001). We can deduce that even if that the attempt of 9/11 had never happened, it is very likely that the United States would have gone to war in Afghanistan, and on the same schedule. However, the terrorist attack has become the perfect pretence to gain the public support. Michael Meacher, who was the minister of the Environment department in the British Blair Administration, said that "Until July 2001 the US government saw the Taliban regime as a source of stability in Central Asia that would enable the construction of hydrocarbon pipelines from the oil and gas fields in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, through
Afghanistan and Paldstan, to the Indian Ocean. But, confronted with the Taliban's refusal to accept US conditions, the US representatives told them "either you accept our offer of a carpet of gold, or we bury you under a carpet of bombs" (Meacher, 2003, para.16). According to researches, there is no potential oil in Afghanistan, but Meacher demonstrates that Afghanistan is a strategic place to export the oil (2003). It is important to be aware that the energy dilemma is still a problem for the United States.

Considering that oil is the most critical source of worldwide energy, it is crucial for any country to have access to these resources and especially the US for their economic survival. This will also permit them to stay in a position of world power. Indeed, the US is the biggest oil consumer in the world, consuming more than 19 million barrels of oil per day (CIA World Factbook, 2001). As a result, they will consume more than their actual oil platform can support over the next decades (Upham, 2010). In our day, it is reasonable to admit that a new depression would occur if the US could not provide the energy required by their citizens. Additionally, possession of these strategic oil areas would provide an opportunity for any country to become a stronger world power. Given this background, it is not surprising to see the enthusiasm the US Government demonstrates by employing a large amount of effort in this part of the world.

One of the numberless effects caused by the war is primarily the causalities due to the severe confrontations. The cost of a war is not measurable in terms of dollars, but has a value much greater. This is to say the lives of civilians, the brave men and woman of service who simply magnify their duty. Despite the fact that the
Bush Administration endeavored to define the number of deaths, the estimated number has widely been disagreed upon in the War on Terror. There is no single official figure for the overall number of civilians killed by the war since 2001. According to the United Nations, 1,013 civilians have died in the first six months of 2009; nonetheless, at the same period in 2008 only 818 civilians had lost their lives (Otterman, 2009). The US Army must consider potential death in time of war, especially in an area such as the Middle East. This death toll becomes extremely complex when trying to make a distinction between civilians and terrorists. It is well know that the number of civilians who have been killed are the proof of this complexity. Additionally, the repercussions of using weapons are tremendous for the environment. The pervasive damage is not only deteriorating the health of the population and animals, but also resources that perpetuate life. For instance, the destruction of community resources has caused the bacterial contamination of water as well as the deterioration of forests (Enzler, 2006). The aftermath of using weapons has a terrible and definitive impact on society that only people who locally can truly understand.

Another tragic effect of the 'war on terror' is the political instability in the Middle East. It is important to remember that the purpose of this war was to oust the terrorist threat. Therefore, since 2003 the war in Afghanistan has extended to Iraq leading to thousands of death. According to the US government and the United Kingdom, Iraq is in possession of weapons of mass destruction, for that reason measures have been taken with the launching of Operation Iraqi Freedom for security of mankind (Prah, 2005).
Unfortunately, it is difficult to see the benefits of these wars because they are still ongoing. Nevertheless, the side effects of the war in Afghanistan are prevalent in the Middle East. One of them is the slow, but certain, disintegration of Pakistan. A Washington Times headline, "Pentagon Spies al-Qaeda in Pakistan," shows the clear concern that al-Qaeda would move to Pakistan (Lind, 2008). Their reasoning is simple, when groups of rebels are put under pressure, they almost automatically change their bases. Therefore, it is truly plausible that al-Qaeda has turned towards Pakistan (2008). It will be logical that the occupation of terrorists in Pakistan leads the U.S. Army to entry into a war, which will have a repercussion on their economy and the lifestyle of 175 million citizens who definitely want to live in peace. Their lives are already difficult and a war would only worsen.

In conclusion, in accordance with the events occurred before the attempt of September 11, it becomes logical to make the connection with such an investment by the US government. The financial investments as well as military implemented in the Middle East demonstrate their profound interest in this part of the globe, which is the most fertile in terms of oil. Therefore, it is inadequate to assume that "the war on terror" is close to see the end. The conflicts will continue until the US Government attains their objectives, which are the extinction of al-Qaeda and the control of the oil production. However, actions need to be taken to rescue the civilians who suffer loss of family, an economic depression and environmental. Nevertheless, only a majority of the opinion public will be able to influence the US Government to revise their methods.
REFERENCES


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LOW VOTERS TURNOUTS

Election Day has come and will come again; however, in a majority of countries the disinterest of voters is expanding. During the U.S. election of 2008, only 66.8 percent of citizens voted; whereas in 1960, 63.1 percent participated (Federal, 2008). French presidential elections show similar trends. In 196S, 84.4 percent of the French citizens participated in the election. Despite a surge in 2007 of 73.9 percent, 88.9 percent voted in 2002 (Silterville, 2008). The commitment of citizens is becoming disastrous; local elections are severely being affected as fewer voters are involved. In order to reverse the trend of low voters turnouts, governments should teach the importance of civic duty at school.

In order to discover the solutions to this problem, it is crucial to be aware of the causes of low voter turnout. According to the United States Census Bureau, "the most frequently cited reason non-voters give for failing to vote is that they are too busy." (Cooper, 2000, para. 34). Citizens express that time is the biggest impediment to voting due to U.S. elections being held on working days "(2000). Another reason citizens do not vote derives from their lack of interest in politics. Although the majority of citizens have political opinions, they do not consider voting a high priority in their lives. Besides, the director of the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press says, "Only about half of people under 50 are paying attention to campaign news, compared to nearly two-thirds of people over 50 years of age" (2000,para.19). Research demonstrates that young Americans between 18 to 24 years old are addressing a cynicism attitude towards politics (2000). Moreover, patriotism is losing value in consequence of the decreasing number of voters.
The choice not to vote perpetuates complaints about the decisions taken by high authorities. As a result, they do not sustain their country's decisions because they do not feel engaged in its cause. Another result from the lack of voting is that candidates with extreme opinion have a chance to be elected. For instance, in France, Mr. LE PEN is the most feared politician because of his extreme opinions about discrimination. Despite this fact, he obtained a significant number of voices in the first turn of the French presidential election in 2002. The number of votes given to Mr. LE PEN terrified the majority of French people who had a foreign background because he planned to expulse them from France.

However, Australia is one of the countries that are ahead in establishing the system of compulsory voting for all adults to prevent this abstinence. As a result of this law, their participation reaches 95 percent. This is extremely encouraging for others countries who are wondering if they should adopt the same system (Weiner, 2004). There are several arguments in favor of this process of imposing citizens to be politically committed. The primary benefit of this process is that candidates are more concentrate in their campaigning energy on affairs instead of motivating people to vote. Compulsory voting also permits the opinions of citizens to be more accurately represented by Parliament. Additionally, voting in the local and provincial elections is increasing. This is a benefit because it is indubitably complicated to get the community involved in this domain. Furthermore, citizens may be encouraged implicitly to reflect more about politics. Nevertheless, the probability that people vote haphazardly is significantly high due to poor information or a lack of interest in politics. Furthermore, those who abstain from voting for specific reasons, run the risk of getting fined or even imprisoned in some cases, which infringes on our liberty. Also, it is undemocratic resolution because citizens lose their basic
freedom when they are forced to vote. Consequently the outcome of the election may not represent the real desire of the population.

Another solution to this controversial issue is the famous day-off policy instituted by the government of Spain. A survey showed that 34.9 percent of people stated that they did not vote during an election due to a lack of time (Cooper, 2000). Therefore, Spain and many other countries use the day-off to encourage the citizens to act. Because Election Day is acknowledged as a national holiday, people have time to vote and as a result Spain reached 75.7 percent voter participation in 2004 (Lozano, 2009). The main concern associated with this method is that their country loses millions of Euros because of the fact that nobody is working that day. Additionally, they have no assurance that the citizens will fulfill their duties. In fact, 25 percent of people are still considered non-voters (2009). And more importantly this solution does not solve the problem that people are disinterested in learning about the issues and candidates.

In consequence, the best solution to increase the turnouts would be to help the population understand what a privilege voting is and the importance of exercising their rights. Therefore, knowing that the age group from 18 to 24 years old contains the majority of non-voters, it is vital to inform the next generation and enable them to be more engaged in politics in the coming years. High School is definitely the best place to learn because we already have a civic duty class in the education system. It would be easier to improve the education curriculum, not only by highlighting the importance of voting and how to vote, but also the repercussions of not voting, which will certainly have an effect on them. People may act completely different when they know the consequences of their actions. Additionally, the cost of implementing this solution is relatively low compared to the other
solutions. This is because the teachers of these civic duty classes are already present and paid for, and thus the Department of Education will just need to reform the curriculum of this part of the program. Because students can not have an interest in something that they are not familiar with, this program will help them to understand and be aware of how participating in voting is essential to their futures. Therefore, this solution is the best way to solve this issue, because students will personally understand their role in the progress of their countries.

Consequently, governments have already approached different resolutions such as compulsory voting or day-off policy to reverse the International trend of abstaining from participating in the elections. The lack of time and disinterest towards politics appear to be the causes of so many controversies in our countries. As a result, it is vital to solve this problem of low voting turnouts quickly through an investment on the Education. The negative repercussions on the government and the nation can be severe. Now is the time to prepare our youth to become good citizens and to help them realize the importance of exercising their rights, because we are looking a solution that will last for a long time.


Lozano, E. (2009, November 22). With voter turnout low, what is the solution?

Paragraph 9.

