

a. Why does President Obama feel it is important to ramp up American efforts in the war in Afghanistan?

Because as soon as the American forces began leaving Afghanistan, Taliban militants began streaming back into the country, bombing schools and institutions, and basically trying to scare the people into submission. If there is no intervention, Afghanistan may once again fall under the control of the Taliban, an organization that does not like the US.

b. What is President Obama's "clear and present goal" in Afghanistan and what steps does he want to take immediately to help achieve this goal? Why?

He wants to train the Afghan military, help with the poverty and empower people and the government, all to weaken the Taliban's power over the populace. But he knows that there will be fighting, and so he is authorizing that 17,000 extra combat troops be sent to Afghanistan to help.

c. Why do you think Richard Holbrooke thinks that the "most daunting" problem that we face will be respecting Pakistan's sovereignty? Why do you think Mr. Holbrooke thinks this is important and why do you think it will be difficult?

It will be important if we want to convince Pakistan to focus less on India and more on its border villages, which is where the Taliban forces are hiding out. This will very important, because if the Taliban forces are stuck between two hostile countries, their power will weaken even more, and they won't have as many bases to fall back on.

d. Why do you think President Obama makes a distinction between Taliban forces and "other opposition forces"? Why and how does he want to approach them in different ways?

The Taliban have to be approached carefully, because they have already taken over some communities, which may hide them or even fight with them. They are even more dangerous because the people are afraid of them, and so the people must be helped out of poverty in order to weaken the Taliban's hold over the country. But the ones who are just fighting for money and not for their beliefs are different, and may be bargained with.

e. What other approaches, aside from military force, does President Obama want to use to address the situation in Afghanistan?

He wants to, as I said above, help the people out of poverty and protect them, so as to weaken terrorist organizations' grip on them. He also wants to help the government out.

f. How was President Obama's plan received by the Afghan president, the international community, and members of congress?

Congress seems a bit split on this, but the ones who are against it say that they are "reserving judgment for the moment." Both Afghan and Pakistan officials seem a bit unsure about the plan, and Pakistan seems more interested in working against its long-time enemy, India, than in stopping the Taliban.

g. Given what you already know about Afghanistan, Al Qaeda, and the war on terrorism, do you think President Obama's plan is a good one? Why or why not?

I really couldn't say. If it works, then it will be a good one!