



Guide to Position Papers
for
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Position papers can be daunting, especially if you are a new delegate. However, if you follow the relatively straightforward structure we outline below, you should have little trouble putting together an excellent position paper! It is also worth noting that different conferences and committees may have their own specifications for how position papers should be written and formatted, so you should always check your background guide for further details.

However, it is good to know that most strong position papers include the following:

1. *Background on the topic.* This is usually the shortest part of the position paper. After all, the position paper is for the benefit of you and your chair—since each of you should already be very familiar with the topic, it is advisable to briefly summarize the most salient aspects of the topic and then move on to the more substantive material below. (Note: a fine rule of thumb is to spend about 10% of your position paper on the background information.)

2. *Your country and the topic.* Now that you have introduced your reader to the topic, it's time to explain how the topic relates to your country. For instance, this section could include the following:

- a. A brief discussion of the history of the topic and your nation;
- b. How the issue currently affects your nation;
- c. Your nation's current policies with respect to the issue, as well as justification for these policies. This is an opportunity to lay out the general philosophy of how your government approaches the topic, before you get into the more specific details in future sections.

If you touch on each of the subtopics above, then you will have a very strong second section of your position paper. This is also a great place to include quotes and statistics that describe your nation's policies and previous experience with the issue. In terms of length, this section should be somewhere in between the sizes of the first and third sections; a good rule of thumb is to spend about 30% of your position paper discussing your country and the topic. As Directors, we often get emails from

delegates confused about what to write for this section because they represent nations that are not intimately involved in the topic. This is a very reasonable concern. We try to choose topics for committee that are broadly applicable, but we are very sympathetic to these kinds of concerns. If you find yourself in this position, don't worry! It's not worth your time to spend hours searching for information about how this topic could possibly pertain to your nation; we would much prefer it if you spend that time researching the topic, as well as its solutions, in general. Therefore, you can make this section a little shorter and write that the issue does not strongly pertain to your nation. Even if this is the case, you can still take the opportunity to lay out your country's general approach to the issue. For instance, if you are representing Switzerland in a committee discussing humanitarian efforts in Syrian Refugee Crisis, you can write that the crisis does not directly affect your nation, but in general Switzerland favors more expansive and aggressive humanitarian efforts. This gives your chairs a general idea of how your government's ideology with respect to this kind of issue, and this will help inform how you should act in committee.

3. *Solutions.* This is by far the most important part of the guide. It is key to know the issue and how it relates to your nation, but, in the end, we are here to think of solutions. Therefore, we recommend that you devote around 60% of your position paper to your proposals for solving the problem on which your committee is focusing. This section is also very important because it will serve as your reference during committee. When a problem arises in debate and you do not completely remember how to solve it, you should refer to the part of your position paper that dealt with the problem. A detailed solutions section will be make you a much more effective delegate in committee. In terms of organization, we recommend mirroring the breakdown that your Director used in the background guide; most of the background guides will be broken down into somewhere between 3 and 5 subtopics, so we recommend organizing your solutions section around

the same subtopics. For each subtopic, be sure to include each of the following:

- d. What your nation believes should be done to address the issue;
- e. How your proposed solution should be executed;
- f. Why this is the best course of action for the committee, the agents involved in the issue, and your nation.

Be sure to address each of these points *in depth*, particularly the first point. Note that we have italicized “in depth.” We cannot possibly emphasize how important this is. The whole purpose of the committee is to propose workable solutions to the topics being debated. Therefore, even if you know the issues in incredible depth, you will *not* be in a strong position to contribute to committee unless you are ready to propose in-depth and feasible solutions. Push yourself to be as detailed as possible; the staff places a very high value on the depth of your proposed solutions, rather than on their breadth! Therefore, it is acceptable if you decide to focus on a few aspects of each subtopic in your solutions, so long as you make sure that you still understand the topic as a whole.

That’s most of the points we wanted to make on position papers. If you have any questions, be sure to reach out to us, your Director, or your faculty adviser. Finally, remember that position papers are representation of a nation’s position and not a statement of your personal opinion. Therefore, they should be written formally and in third person. For example, a paper written from the perspective of Nigeria should read, “Nigeria believes that...” Position papers should be at least two single-spaced pages in size 12 font, with one-inch margins. Please follow the guidelines on HMUN India’s website for the heading of the position paper.

The final, and most important element, of a position paper is that your paper must consist of completely original or well-cited ideas. In other words, like all parts of HMUN India, plagiarism is not tolerate for position papers. Indeed, if we see any instances of

plagiarism in your position papers, you may become ineligible for awards. Plagiarism is the use of another’s ideas without giving them proper credit. In other words, if you copy and paste, then it is definitely plagiarism. If you list facts directly from an internet or book source, that is also plagiarism. To avoid plagiarism, make sure that you do your research and then write your paper in your own words. Make sure you construct sentences on your own and if you plan to use a quote or direct fact from a source, then you need to cite it, which means listing the website and author that the information came from. We take our plagiarism policy very seriously. If you have any questions about what does or does not constitute plagiarism, please reach out to committees@hmunindia.org for clarification. Remember that plagiarism will also not be tolerated in working papers, draft resolutions, directives, or Press Corps articles.

SAMPLE POSITION PAPER:

We have included a sample position paper on the following two pages. It is written by the delegate from Russia on the border dispute between Afghanistan and Pakistan. We decided to include this paper because it is a strong example, but it also has some flaws. The paper follows the general outline described above, as well as the approximate lengths for each section. However, the paper could certainly use addition depth in terms of the solutions proposed and how those solutions should be implemented. With these considerations in mind, we strongly encourage you to study the example position paper on the next page, note its strengths and weaknesses, and use that knowledge to make your position paper as strong as possible. Good luck and happy writing!

Joe Smith, Delegation from Russia, DISEC

The Afghanistan-Pakistan Border Dispute

While both Afghanistan and Pakistan have wrangled with border issues for decades, the conflict now approaches the critical mass. In the past three years a motley of military confrontations have lit up the

border, ranging from brief skirmishes to artillery bombardments of nearby towns. The movement of terrorist and rebel groups that operate in both nations likewise engenders tension. Afghanistan claims that Pakistan is aiding the insurgents, while Pakistan accuses Afghanistan of the same. This border dispute exemplifies declining relations between two nations that play a major role in the region's security and stability. We, therefore, must negotiate a solution that not only addresses the conflict, but also sets Pakistan and Afghanistan on the path to political and economic cooperation.

Russia, although not directly involved in this dispute, has deep economic interests in both countries. A conflict would thus not only beset the engaged nations with economic hardship, but also deal serious harm to Russia's interests. Further, we understand the challenge of terrorism and gratuitously violent rebels; Russian freedom and authority is under the relentless assault of Chechen rebels (source: Mansur Mirovalev, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/12/chechnya-russia-20-years-conflict-2014121161310580523.html>). Considering our experience and knowledge with such circumstances, as well as our undeniable interest in regional stability, Russia is well equipped to effect meaningful resolution.

Any resolution must recognize and mend three key realms of the current constitution: the current border dispute, cooperation in combatting terrorism, and long term Afghanistan-Pakistan relations. Among these the border is most pressing. And so, we call on both nations to officially recognize the Durand Line (Source: Viany Kaura, <http://www.mei.edu/content/article/durand-line-british-legacy-plaguing-afghan-pakistani-relations>). Further, Afghanistan and Pakistan must demolish guard towers within ten miles of the border, as well as legislate for a gun-free zone for civilians within that ten-mile belt. Finally, to ensure the border's security, we propose the construction of neutral outposts and fences along the border. Optimally, the two states will cooperate in staffing these posts. Yet if the fruit of this newly stabilizing relationship is not yet ripe for

such tangible harvest, UN peacekeepers could temporarily act as the border security force.

As for integration, we cannot neglect the plague of strict border controls on international trade and commerce. And so, Russia recommends that the two nations commit to an annual summit focused on promoting such economic collaboration, such as programs for joint citizenship and business visas. On the whole, the consequences of this conflict do not only in the harbor of discontent, but also that of unprecedented cooperation.

However, without plans to jointly battle terrorism, the above endeavors will surely prove futile. Therefore, both nations must denounce all terrorist and rebel groups (rebel groups as defined by the United Nations) in the region, ending all military, political, and economic support to such organizations. Meanwhile, Afghani and Pakistani agencies must inaugurate a system of terrorism-related intelligence sharing in order to maximize the products of their efforts. As both nations wield limited resources, the UN could provide monetary aid to help build this anti-terrorism system, which would be subject to UN inspection.

Lastly, we must ensure long-term stability in Afghan-Pakistani relations. To further discourage future aggression, we demand that the Security Council strongly condemn any action that violates the committee's resolution or that threatens the tentative peace. As for the nations themselves, they must seek resolution to future disputes through the UN, rather than through unilateral action. To cement this spirit of cooperation, Russia calls on Afghanistan and Pakistan to abolish diplomatic visas in order to affirm their permanent diplomatic missions to each other. This is a pressing situation with seemingly heaps of complication—and Russia will gladly hear constructive additions to our strategy. Yet it is indisputable that through these methods belligerents can realize lasting peace, stability, and prosperity in the region.