



U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

**Chairman Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations Hearing
“U.S. Policy Options in Post-Election Pakistan”
February 28, 2008
Opening Remarks
As Delivered**

Ten days ago in Pakistan, three Members of this Committee witnessed a truly extraordinary thing, and the world observed an outcome better than anyone anticipated, in my opinion. People went to the polls, and overwhelmingly cast their ballots for democracy, moderation, and the rule of law. Not merely was President Musharraf’s party clearly out-voted, but religious parties suffered serious losses, which is a significant statement made by the people of Pakistan.

Senator Kerry, Senator Hagel, and I were privileged to observe this election. We met with a wide cross-section of Pakistanis, in and out of government. We met with the leaders of the three largest political parties, two of whom are expected to form the coalition that leads Pakistan’s first truly civilian government in nearly a decade.

We met with the wife of the imprisoned leader of the lawyers’ movement—a brave woman carrying the message of those judges and attorneys arrested for the “crime” of practicing law.

We met with Pakistani journalists, human rights advocates, and other members of civil society— many of whom had faced detention and physical intimidation in recent months.

And we were the first foreign visitors to meet with President Musharraf the day after the election, relatively early in the morning. He promised to honor the message delivered by the Pakistani voters. And he showed, in my opinion, nobility. He told us “the people have spoken” and that he would abide by their judgment and even indicated – in my words – that he was willing to step back the powers of the president in relation to the power of the Prime Minister, who many of you know actually is given the most power under their constitution. I take him at his word. And I hope the Administration will hold him to it.

The Pakistani people have expressed a very clear vision for what they want their nation to look like: moderate, democratic, grounded in rule of law, with leaders who provide good

governance and the basic necessities of life to all citizens. It is in America's vital national interest to help Pakistanis make this admirable vision a reality.

Why? Because Pakistan, along with its neighbor Afghanistan, can provide the ballast of moderation to stabilize the Muslim world and that part of the world—or it can become a generator of violent radicalism that would directly threaten our own security.

The Afghan-Pakistan border region is where the 9/11 attack was plotted. It is where most attacks in Europe since 9/11 originated. It is where Osama bin Laden lives and his top confederates still enjoy safe haven, planning new attacks. And it is where we must urgently shift our focus, in my view -- to the real central front in the so-called war on terrorism -- using the totality of America's strength, not merely our military, incredible as it is.

The border area between the countries remains a freeway of fundamentalism -- with the Taliban and Al Qaeda now finding sanctuary on the Pakistan side -- and where the suicide bombers they recruit and train wreak havoc in Afghanistan and, increasingly, within Pakistan. Pakistan's cooperation in the fight against extremism is critical to success in Afghanistan -- but that cooperation has been sporadic at best.

The reason is that, until recently, the terrorists we are fighting and the extremists Pakistan fears were not one and the same. Islamabad's main concern is indigenous militants in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Successive Pakistani governments have taken turns fighting them, appeasing them, playing one militant group against the other, or using them to make trouble in Kashmir and Afghanistan. This different focus is the reason for some of the disconnect between us. It's why President Musharraf decided to divert Pakistan's resources from fighting Al Qaeda and the Taliban to keeping his political opponents at bay.

It's why -- when Musharraf concluded that we were not serious about finishing the job in Afghanistan -- he began to cut deals with extremists in Pakistan. It's why Pakistan could concentrate most of its military might on the Indian border, not the Afghan border. It's why the Pakistani people have not supported what we call the war on terrorism.

But now, the monster that Pakistan's Intelligence Services helped create is turning on its master. Today's enemy number one is Baitullah Mehsud - an indigenous militant -- who is taking the fight beyond the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, and is likely behind the assassination of Benazir Bhutto. Mehsud is independent of the Afghan Taliban and Al Qaeda in Pakistan - but he is giving them sanctuary and they are training his forces.

As Islamabad awakens to this new reality, there is an opportunity to put Pakistan - Afghanistan - and the United States on the same strategic page. Some argue that, imperfect as Musharraf has been, the civilian leaders that last week's elections returned to power will be even worse partners in fighting terrorism and fostering real progress in Pakistan. I disagree -- if we change our policy.

For Pakistan, nothing is more important than giving the moderate majority a clear voice and stake in the system. That's what this election was about. Without that, dissent gets channeled underground and, over time, moderates make common cause with extremists.

We've been down that road before - in Iran - and it leads nowhere good. With this election, the moderate majority has regained its voice. The United States should seize the moment to move from a policy focused on a personality - Mr. Musharraf - to one based on an entire country - Pakistan.

I believe we should: First, triple non-military assistance, and sustain it for a decade - from about \$500 million to \$1.5 billion. This aid should be focused on schools, roads and clinics—and on expanding the development of the tribal border areas. Second, give the new government - if it is formed consistent with democratic principles - a democracy dividend of \$1 billion above this annual assistance to jump start progress. Third, demand transparency and accountability in the military aid we continue to provide.

At the same time, we have to recognize that even as Pakistan develops the will - it still lacks the capacity. One of the things I came away with in this last trip was not that the president and the military establishment lacked the will to take on terrorists in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, but that they lack the capacity. While we help them militarily, we should be helping them to build capacity. Pakistan's military is designed to fight a conventional war with India - not conduct counter-insurgency operations in the tribal areas. So we should make it a priority to help Pakistan train and reorganize its military.

Last, we should engage with Pakistanis on issues important to them, rather than just on those topics of interest to us. For the last three decades, our relationship has been transactional - and that's how people in Pakistan have seen it. We must demonstrate to the people of Pakistan that ours is a partnership of mutual conviction - not American convenience; that we care about their needs and progress, - not just our own interests, narrowly defined.

That happens to be the best way to secure the support of the people -- and their democratically elected leaders -- for our priorities, starting with the fight against Al Qaeda and the fight for Afghanistan.

Our witness today is Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte, who has taken on challenges as diverse as serving as ambassador to Iraq and Director of National Intelligence. Mr. Ambassador, welcome.