



Transcript

Pakistan Assistance

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Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee it is an honor to have the opportunity to appear before the committee this morning. It is especially a privilege to be able to comment on a piece of proposed legislation that I support with enthusiasm.

I will be brief in my remarks this morning but would like to make three key points. The legislation recognizes the critical linkage between U.S. and Pakistan security interests. It is sufficiently bold and comprehensive in scope to address current problems. And, finally, it focuses U.S. assistance on the right place...on the welfare of the people of Pakistan.

Regarding my first point, the terrorist attack on our soil on September 11, 2001 was a stark example of how globalization has compressed our world both for good and for ill.

A shrinking world means the well being of Pakistani communities thousands of miles away is vital to the protection of Americans in our homeland.

When tribal leaders provide protection and hospitality to al Qaeda fighters in remote regions beyond the writ of law, it is no longer a local problem.

When terrorists disappear into the teeming urban slums of Karachi, it becomes an urgent issue for America.

Mr. Chairman, my first point is that this legislation is right to identify Pakistan as the frontline state that deserves our attention. For too long, America's focus has been distracted, and its efforts diluted. We launched a war ostensibly against al Qaeda in Iraq, creating the very conditions for it to flourish.

We deployed too few forces in Afghanistan to create stable conditions for reconstruction. And, to the point of this legislation, we have viewed the security effort in Pakistan from the very limited lens of the Afghan frontier.

The value of this legislation is that for the first time since 9/11, it focuses our efforts in the right place – the entire country of Pakistan.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that by confronting the challenges and economic needs of the Pakistani people, the legislation also contributes to the protection of the American people from foreign terrorist threats.

The media often refers to Pakistan as the ‘most dangerous country in the world’. I personally believe this is an overstatement – one that diminishes core values we share with Pakistan.

An Indian friend recently commented to me “we share the same DNA as the Pakistanis.” Like India, Pakistan was founded on the principles of a democratic state. It has had several periods of military rule to be sure, but the election last February brought Pakistan back to the vision of its founding father – installing a democratically elected civilian government.

I hardly need to remind this august body that Pakistan has been a reliable ally of the United States throughout the decades. Pakistan became a CENTO pact member to contain the Soviet threat in the 1950s and was instrumental in the successful campaign to drive the Soviets out of Afghanistan in the 1980s. And we all appreciate the alacrity with which President Musharraf reversed an entrenched security policy of support for the Taliban, when we asked him to join us following September 11.

In short, the stability and well being of Pakistan is vital to the interests of the United States, we share core values and have a history of cooperation. This legislation is a commendable initiative to articulate a comprehensive strategy for Pakistan.

My second point is the legislation offers a bold and innovative solution that thoughtfully addresses problems in our relations with Pakistan. It incorporates and builds upon the lessons of the past.

To be fair, we have made much progress in our relations with Pakistan since I first arrived as Ambassador in August 2001. At that time we had placed Pakistan under

sanctions for its continued development of a nuclear weapons program and had suspended all security and development assistance.

Since the end of 2002 we have provided over \$11 billion in aid. Unfortunately, it has not been balanced. Over 90% of the aid has been delivered to the Pakistani military, largely as compensation for deployments along the border. Our \$100 million in annual developmental aid, which is managed by USAID, was a big jump from zero, but it is simply not enough to have an impact on the society or affect perceptions of the population. In short, our current aid program is at best having little impact, or worse, breeding resentment among the population for U.S. favoritism toward the Army.

This legislation presents a stark departure from the status quo.

It is sufficiently bold in scope to be effective. I believe that only with an aid effort on the scale and ambition presented in this legislation will we be able to affect the deeply skeptical Pakistani population.

Our aid must be transformative. A common weakness in aid programs is that they often are reported in terms of the total sums spent. “We allocated \$10 million on education projects, \$8 million on child health, etc.”

This time we must measure the program by the impact it has on the lives of people. I would rather know that 100 million children are literate because of American aid projects, or that a million new jobs were created. These measures impact people’s lives. We should measure our aid in results.

This is no easy task. If we hope to sway a population as large as Pakistan’s – with over 160 million people -- it will require a significant investment. This legislation admirably makes that commitment. Anything short of \$1.5 billion annually runs the risks failure.

Another critically important element of this legislation, one that distinguishes it from past practice and strengthens its chances for success is its timeline. A 10-year commitment for development aid will go a long way toward overcoming the widespread perception that the United States is a fickle friend.

In the immediate aftermath of 9/11 when Congress swiftly lifted sanctions and we resumed military and development aid, as ambassador to Pakistan I encountered a

fierce and deeply rooted conviction that the U.S. was simply setting up Pakistan for another fall. My interlocutors lamented that the U.S. had dropped Pakistan abruptly after it had helped us drive out the Soviets from Afghanistan. Careful review of the history had little effect in dissuading educated officials, let alone the larger population. To Pakistan, we had abandoned them.

Unconditional, multi-year aid over a 10-year period will do a great deal to disabuse the public of this false notion. Public support and buy-in for the aid program is essential to its success.

Another strength of this legislation is that it focuses on transparency and accountability to the people.

One of the reasons why US approval ratings are so low in Pakistan - only 15% in December 2007- is that the people believe we are only pursuing our own interests and have no care for their concerns.

They believe we care only for counter-terrorism efforts along the Afghan frontier. The fact that we provided the lion's share of aid in Coalition Support Funds to the Pakistan Army and only a fraction to civilian programs through USAID is held up as evidence.

We have evidence that aid changes perceptions in Pakistan. American aid in the aftermath of the Pakistani earthquake was distributed generously, efficiently and directly to the most needy people. Our approval ratings spiked to 45%.

The way our current aid program is structured draws criticism from American observers as well. They charge that we have seen very little impact for our investment in the counter terrorism effort. The Pentagon provides \$100 million to the Pakistani military monthly, yet al Qaeda camps have reconstituted in Pakistan, Taliban extremists attack US and NATO troops from safe havens in Pakistan, and the Pakistani Army has made few arrests.

To be fair, Pakistani communities are also victims of internal terrorists. They want to be able to send their daughters to the local market without fear of a suicide bombing. They have the same complaint. Both the Pakistani people and the Americans want better results.

This legislation ties security aid to performance. This won't be easy. Conditioning aid is a neuralgic point with Pakistanis. Historically, Pakistan viewed conditioned aid

as a colonial practice that belittles the recipient. In the case of this legislation, however, I believe it is an approach that serves both our interests.

I am sure the authors of this legislation do not intend to put any aid recipient through a cumbersome bureaucratic exercise. What we really want is to ensure that funds are used in a way that meets the intended objective. We want impact. So do Pakistanis.

Along with impact, the Pakistani people also want transparency. So do we.

These funds are meant to provide greater security for both our populations, so it stands to reason that the people should be able to see how it is used. Their officials should be accountable for budgets, even for those funds provided as foreign aid. Ultimately, the people must feel more secure in their communities and city streets.

A final innovative point in the proposed legislation – and maybe one that I believe is the most important – is that it focuses on the people of Pakistan. The legislation provides a significant increase in aid for education, health, market roads, and job-creation. And not just for those who live in the FATA, but throughout Pakistan.

The strength of this legislation is that it calls for greatly increased American non-security aid. It is directed at the civilian population. And importantly, it is for all of Pakistan, rather than a counter terrorism program focused along a small strip of land along the frontier.

The proposed legislation is a bold departure from previous practice. It recognizes that we are failing both the American and Pakistani peoples in our current approach and it presents an innovative solution.

Mr. Chairman, Pakistan is an extremely complicated society. Pakistan may be a fragile and dangerous place, but we can build on our positive history of cooperation, common values and concern for the common citizen in Pakistan to find solutions.

I believe the proposed legislation has thoughtfully assessed US-Pakistan relations. It compensates for the misjudgments and weaknesses in our current approach. It takes U.S. equities into account and protects US interests.

It crafts a program that is both in American interests and in the interests of the Pakistani people. In short, it is a win-win program.

If approved in its entirety, so that the bill's generosity and pragmatism is preserved, then this legislation could have a significant impact on our relations in this most critical country.

This is a practical approach and one that I believe can be successful. We do not have to stand in the middle of the road with our eyes locked on the lights of the truck bearing down on us. We can do something about it.

Assertions and opinions in these remarks are solely those of the above-mentioned author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Middle East Institute, which expressly does not take positions on Middle East policy.

Wendy Chamberlin is president of the Middle East Institute and served as U.S. ambassador to Pakistan from 2001 to 2002.