



U.S. Policy Options in Post-Election Pakistan

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to address recent developments in Pakistan, where the stakes remain very high for the United States and for the world. Pakistan has been indispensable to our world-wide struggle against violent extremists, and successful American engagement with a stable and democratic Pakistan is vital to our national security interests. As Afghanistan's neighbor, Pakistan plays a pivotal role in the Coalition's war effort there. Without security and stability on the Pakistani side of the border, success in Afghanistan will prove elusive. Pakistan's future will also be decisive in the search for stability in South Asia – a region of vastly increased importance to the United States. The United States and Pakistan have a common interest in the success of a robust and multi-faceted fight against violent extremism, focused on democracy and economic development as well as on security cooperation. We intend to pursue that common interest vigorously with Pakistan's next government.

Pakistan took a big step toward civilian democracy on February 18, holding successful elections under challenging circumstances. We thank Senators Biden, Kerry, and Hagel of this Committee, and Representative Sheila Jackson-Lee, for their interest in Pakistan's democratic progress. You were in Pakistan on election day, observing polling places and talking to political leaders, and I believe your presence helped underscore for the Pakistani people the importance we place on their democratic progress.

The election outcome demonstrates that Pakistanis are strongly committed to democracy, and the outcome in the North West Frontier Province shows that Pakistanis want good governance, including effective action against violent criminals and suicide terrorists. Although not perfect, the elections reflected the will of the voters, the vast majority of whom have embraced the results.

More than 70 Pakistanis lost their lives on election day. We condemn the violence that led to those deaths. I think it is fair to say, however, that the violence could have been worse. The Pakistani people refused to be intimidated by a wave of murderous terrorist attacks prior to election day. In fact, they voted in higher percentages on February 18 than during the last general elections in 2002, when conditions were undeniably safer. We think that democratic participation and the election results will help focus Pakistan's resolve on countering the growing threat of violent extremists.

Thanks to strong Congressional support, the United States was able to help Pakistan prepare for the elections. International observers got the accreditation they needed to do their jobs, and they were allowed to visit and monitor polling stations. We helped the Election Commission post voter information online, including a list of polling station locations, the voter rolls, and a roster and running tally of election complaints. We also supplied 215,000 translucent ballot boxes for election day. Our private and public engagement with senior Pakistani leaders helped end the state of emergency in December 2007, which we believed was a setback to Pakistan's democratic progress. We supported the international observer effort as well, deploying some 40 American monitors, and an additional 38 independent observers. Along with six other countries, we financed and helped train more than 19,000 domestic observers. In general, the observer groups' reports judged the elections successful, even while pointing out serious flaws in the process. The United States continues to believe that only democracy can build a long-term consensus among Pakistanis on a moderate, prosperous future for their country. Our engagement with Pakistan's leaders reflects those beliefs.

Looking ahead, the United States must help the Pakistani people seize the opportunities that these successful elections now present. We supported Pakistan's elections, and now we will support the Pakistani people as they choose their leaders. Political parties are negotiating the formation of a government, and we look forward to working with the leaders who emerge from that process. Our assistance and engagement in Pakistan are designed to help the country develop into a modern, moderate, democratic, and prosperous country. We should now renew our efforts by continuing to support Pakistan's democratic progress, to improve its education system, to improve governance across the country, and to offer more economic opportunities to its citizens in impoverished areas. We will also continue to help Pakistan increase the capacity of its security forces to fight the violent extremists that threaten Pakistan's gains and the world's security. In many areas in the Northwest, in particular, local forces cannot defend their homes and towns against militants and terrorists.

For national security reasons, much of our assistance to Pakistan will continue to focus on the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Al Qaeda leaders exploit this area to plot, plan, and train for attacks in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and, indeed, throughout the world, including against the United States and against U.S. interests abroad. Thanks to strong bipartisan support, we are implementing a multi-year program to expand, equip, and train local security forces in the Tribal Areas. The goal is to give these forces the capabilities they need to protect their towns and to fight violent extremists who are trying to undermine Pakistan's modernization. In the short-term, we continue to encourage Pakistan to aggressively target al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and other violent extremists who enjoy safe haven in the Tribal Areas.

Militants and terrorists treat the Afghanistan/Pakistan border region as a unified battle space. Coordination among Afghan, Pakistani, International Security Assistance Force, and U.S. forces in the border region is therefore crucial to denying violent extremists space to plan and train there. In mid-March, we and our Afghan, Pakistani, and Coalition partners will open the first of six planned Border Coordination Centers at Torkham, Khyber Agency. The Centers will make it possible for Pakistani, Afghan, and International Security Assistance Force representatives to coordinate more effectively to stop the enemy from skirting both sides of the rugged border to avoid engagement.

Enhancing Pakistan's counter-insurgency skills and improving coordination along the border is only part of the story, however. Also thanks to Congressional support, the U.S. Agency for International Development is implementing programs to support the Pakistani government's nine-year, \$2 billion Sustainable Development Plan for the Tribal Areas. We hope to continue supporting this program with a total commitment of \$750 million over the five years from FY 2007 through FY 2011. Our and Pakistan's programs are increasing economic opportunities, developing capacity and improving governance in sections of the Tribal Areas with little hope and few jobs. Nowhere is the battle for hearts and minds more evident than here, where towns and villages without strong economic foundations are vulnerable to extremist infiltration. Just as our earthquake assistance to Pakistan in 2005 and 2006 had a profoundly positive impact on the people of Pakistan – generating good will that has lasted to this very day – so do we envision our support for development of the Tribal Areas opening this challenged environment to government and opportunity.

We are accomplishing much in the Tribal Areas. This month we will help refurbish several hospitals' delivery and surgical facilities, and will train maternal health and other medical professionals. We will continue a four-year polio eradication drive. We recently provided water and sanitation facilities to 108 girls schools and 54 communities in the Tribal Areas. We are supporting a range of education programs, from school construction to curriculum development, that seek to expand opportunities at all education levels. In another area, we are talking to local officials about how to restore police authority to a central market. We are even providing blankets, stoves, utensils, and other relief items to individuals in North Waziristan who have been displaced due to fighting in South Waziristan. These are just a few examples of the activities we are pursuing to improve lives and enhance governance in the Tribal Areas.

Our security and development programs in the Tribal Areas are critical to achieving our highest long-term objectives in the War on Terror. These programs will boost sustainable economic development for citizens in impoverished areas at the epicenter of the war on terror and drugs. Just as important, these efforts are essential to maintaining forward momentum in strengthening our long-term, broad-based relationship with the Pakistani people. In this regard, we urge you to consider and pass legislation to create Reconstruction Opportunity Zones, which can play a major role in development of this part of Pakistan and on the other side of the border in Afghanistan. This legislation is vital to long-term development, to creating jobs, and to providing an alternative to illicit activities, including terrorism and narco-trafficking,

in some of the most troubled regions of Pakistan and in Afghanistan.

On February 18, the Pakistani people cast their votes for freedom and democracy. We must continue to help the Pakistani people seize the opportunities that these successful elections now present. We are fully prepared to work closely and intensively with all of Pakistan's leaders to create a strong civilian democracy and to continue to aggressively prosecute the War on Terror. I note with interest Chairman Biden's far-reaching proposal on restructuring our assistance to Pakistan, which we are studying closely. We look forward to talking with the Committee about how we can strengthen our commitment to Pakistan's democratic progress, to economic prosperity, and to continued close cooperation against violent extremism. With the support of Congress, we will remain close allies with Pakistan in support of our common objectives.

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