



Remarks at the National Endowment for Democracy's Pakistan Forum

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DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: Thank you very much Carl, for your kind introduction. I'm delighted to be here with you this afternoon. I also want to mention, right at the outset, what a pleasure it's been to know and work with Carl Gershman over the years. I think we first met when he worked for Jeane Kirkpatrick at the United Nations, a place which, as he mentioned, I learned to know even better myself when I occupied the same position that she had a number of years earlier.

But I also want to thank the National Endowment for Democracy for holding this forum on this important topic. I'm happy to be here today to discuss U.S. policy towards Pakistan. But before addressing how we plan to build our relationship with Pakistan's new, democratically elected government, I'd like to step back and consider Pakistan's tremendous importance to the United States. More than ever, our national security depends on the success, security, and stability of Pakistan. Pakistan is a vitally important nation. It is the world's third most populous Muslim state. It is a nuclear power and it is situated in a strategically crucial neighborhood of India, Iran, Afghanistan, and China. And it is a front-line state in the battle against terrorism.

The fact, however, is that for decades we did not have a relationship with Pakistan that took in the whole panorama of our policy priorities. As a result, our relationship with this important country has not been as strategic as it could have been, and it has been more prone to being easily disrupted.

I believe it is necessary to build a comprehensive partnership not only with the Pakistani Government but with the Pakistani people. We recognize that our fate -- that is, our security, our freedom, and prosperity -- is linked to the fate of the people of Pakistan, and that enabling the Pakistani Government to control its territory and to govern its people justly and humanely is a national security imperative for the United States, an essential condition for success in Afghanistan, as well as the right thing to do. By pursuing a comprehensive partnership with Pakistan, we will be better able to address the many individual issues in our relationship and to promote the success of our shared values in a strategically vital region.

Pakistan's transition to democracy presents an opportunity for our two peoples to forge the enduring partnership that will secure our societies. Despite the tragic assassinations of Benazir Bhutto and other innocent people by irreconcilable elements, Pakistanis courageously rejected violent extremists in favor of moderate, democratic political forces committed to economic development and rule of law. Together with those forces, we must pursue two overarching goals: first, the success of Pakistan's transition to a stable, democratic Muslim state; and secondly, the empowerment of Pakistan's Government with the resources, capabilities, and the will to prevail against violent extremists. We cannot achieve these goals if we return to the tumultuous relationship of past decades. Our partnership must be long-term, substantial, and comprehensive.

Pakistan's return to democracy is strategically significant. Pakistanis rejected extremism by supporting moderate, pro-democratic forces, pro-democratic parties. We now have an opportunity to work together with Pakistan in building a broad national consensus to defeat terrorism and extremism and to encourage the success of a moderate, modern course for the country. More broadly, we have the opportunity to support Pakistanis as they consolidate democracy and civilian rule in their country. Our goal is to support a democratic Pakistan that is a source of stability, prosperity, and moderation in a transitioning region.

In this effort, promoting education, good governance, economic development, and rule of law in Pakistan are as important as our military and security cooperation. The surest way to suffocate violent extremism is to build a strong, prosperous, and democratic Pakistani society.

Such a society has long been our goal. Since 2005, America has invested \$300 million each year to strengthen Pakistani civil society and civilian institutions. We have built schools and health clinics and supported political parties and rule of law.

Thanks to strong support from the Congress, the United States also helped Pakistan prepare for the recent elections. With six other countries, we financed and helped train more than 19,000 domestic election observers. We helped the Election Commission post voter information online, including polling station locations, the voter rolls, and a roster and running tally of election complaints. We supplied over 200,000 translucent ballot boxes for election day.

And when this progress was put at risk by the declaration of emergency rule last November, our government was quick to advocate an end to the state of emergency, the holding of a credible election in February that was open to all Pakistan's leaders, and the return to civilian rule. Now we must ensure that that return is enduring. We have a number of programs already in place to help Pakistan succeed.

On the economic front, the United States is Pakistan's largest trading partner, and we hope to increase bilateral trade and investment ties in response to Pakistan's economic reforms. We are enhancing our capacity-building assistance to strengthen private sector competitiveness and expand Pakistan's integration with regional and global markets. Because economic development requires assured energy supply, we are working with Pakistan to help it overcome its current energy crisis. These steps can help move Pakistan down the path to stability and prosperity.

Looking ahead, for our commitment to Pakistan to be long-term, it must also be bipartisan. The Administration has a good ally in the Congress, thanks particularly to the leadership of Senators Biden and Lugar. Congress has already generously funded United States policy and priorities in Pakistan, and Chairman Biden has issued a new, far-reaching proposal on restructuring our assistance to that country. We hope to establish a new framework for political, economic, and security assistance to Pakistan's democracy -- one that represents the type of partnership only possible between two democracies with a common interest in good governance, economic development, and combating violent extremism.

I want to emphasize that military cooperation will remain an important feature of that partnership, for reasons related specifically to the war on terrorism and more generally to the value of cultivating good relations with regional powers. During the 1990s, the estrangement between America and Pakistan created a strategic disconnect between our two militaries. A generation of United States and Pakistan military officers did not cooperate with one another as closely as they could have. So we are exploring ways to increase military exchange and training programs to reengage with middle and senior ranking Pakistani officers, to give them experience working jointly with the United States.

A more robust training and education program will enhance Pakistan's security capabilities and will help us encourage democratic values in a professionalized officer corps trained to do its job, none -- not that of its civilian leaders. The Pakistani armed forces' withdrawal from politics and their new leadership will enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of our cooperation.

We also expect Pakistan's civilian and military leadership to be strong partners against violent extremists in Pakistan's frontier areas. Pakistan's Government recognizes that bringing those areas under control is an urgent priority for Pakistan's own sake. But let me be clear: we will not be satisfied until all the violent extremism emanating

from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas is brought under control. It is unacceptable for extremists to use those areas to plan, train for, or execute attacks against Afghanistan, Pakistan, or the wider world. Their ongoing ability to do so is a barrier to lasting security, both regionally and internationally. Pakistan's Government must bring the frontier area under its control as quickly as possible and we are certainly prepared to provide appropriate assistance to the Government of Pakistan in order to achieve that objective.

To help extend the Pakistani Government's authority into those regions, we are implementing a multi-year program to expand, equip, and train local security forces in Pakistan's tribal areas. Both we and the Pakistanis, however, understand that military assistance alone will not solve the problem.

In all of my recent meetings with Pakistani leaders, I have heard a consensus: while we all recognize that a successful strategy in the tribal areas must include the possibility of military operations, it must also include a serious and sustained economic development program and improvements in education and governance. So our strategy for this vulnerable region features a comprehensive development assistance package to help fundamentally reshape the political and economic landscape in these regions and abolish conditions that allow extremism to take root and flourish. It directly supports the Pakistan Government's own development program for the tribal areas.

We will continue to support economic, security, and political efforts to facilitate the linkages between Afghanistan and Pakistan, such as Reconstruction Opportunity Zones to promote growth, border coordination centers to monitor the frontier, and cross-border jirgas. The United States will also work to help Pakistan and Afghanistan develop fruitful links with each other, their neighbors, the West, and the moderate Muslim world to further expand their diplomatic and economic horizons. This includes an intensified Pakistani-Afghan dialogue on border security.

Closer economic relations among Pakistan, Afghanistan, and their neighbors are also essential to building a secure peace in South Asia. Regional economic integration, and expanding South Asia's ties with the world economy, are essential foundations for human security and prosperity. A region encompassing a thriving Pakistan alongside a secure Afghanistan and trading freely with an increasingly wealthy India would constitute a new arc of stability in what has been until now one of the world's most dangerous regions. Together, Pakistan and Afghanistan could form an economic bridge between Southeast Asia, the Persian Gulf, and Central Asia. We envision such a future for both Pakistan and Afghanistan and want to work with them to make it possible.

Ladies and gentlemen, on February 18, the Pakistani people expressed a clear vision for what they want their nation to look like: responsible, democratic, grounded in rule of law, with institutions that provide good governance and the basic necessities of life to all its citizens. It is in America's national interest to help Pakistanis make that vision a reality.

In Pakistan, history will judge the rejection of extremism at the ballot box as a decisive victory in the long campaign against terrorism. We have a strong ally in the Pakistani people, who stand on the front lines of the struggle between moderation and tyranny. We will help Pakistan protect and defend its democracy against extremists whose political ideology cannot prevail under accountable and effective governance, which we will work to help empower. I sincerely hope the Pakistani people will see us as a committed friend and partner in this endeavor.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MODERATOR: We've got about 30 minutes for questioning. Before we begin, I just want to welcome Senator Paul Sarbanes, who has joined us for this meeting, as well as Senator Sarbanes is a member of the NED's board. Let me start there, please. If we can get the mike right here.

QUESTION: Thank you, Ambassador. (Inaudible) from Amnesty International. I'm pleased to note your strong support for democracy in Pakistan. As you are aware, President Musharraf can dissolve the parliament whenever he feels threatened. Will you consider this forum as a message to send a strong message to President Musharraf that you will not accept President Musharraf dissolving the current parliament? Thank you.

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: My answer to that would be, look, I think the country of Pakistan took a very important step with the elections of February 18th. Our Secretary of State has certified to the Congress that the restrictions that had been placed on our assistance to Pakistan previously could now be lifted because these democratic elections have taken place. I think that Pakistan is on a very positive path at the moment. But I think it would be inappropriate and imprudent for me to try to answer the kind of hypothetical question you should raise. I think these are issues that have got to be worked out in the context of Pakistan's own political process.

MODERATOR: Over here, please.

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: And by the way, if I could add one point. I think that if I remember correctly, before the elections there was a conventional wisdom that somehow these elections were almost inevitably going to be seriously flawed. And I think it is to the credit of the authorities who oversaw the conduct of those elections at the time that they turned out to be as well conducted as they were.

QUESTION: Thank you, Ambassador Negroponte, for speaking with us. (Inaudible) I'm with Human Rights First. We, Human Rights First, has been concerned about the U.S. policy specifically on judicial independence and the judiciary in Pakistan, and one of the things you remarked about in your speech just now was the importance of building a relationship with the Pakistani people. The coverage -- the Pakistani press covered your statements and other government statements about the judiciary in great detail, often awaiting a stronger position by the United States on judicial independence and specifically on reinstatement of the judiciary. Your comments in the Senate on February 28th were covered in great detail. I wonder what your perception of the Pakistanis' perception of the United States is with respect to the judiciary and how that -- how the U.S. position on reinstatement has affected your efforts and the United States efforts to build that relationship with the Pakistani people and the new leadership. And specifically, I'm also wondering if you might use today to remark about -- to remark on last week's developments with respect to reinstatement and how the United States views the agreement on Friday between the two parties to reinstate the judges.

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: Right. I think what I would say, and I have a feeling this is -- although I can't recall the precise words I used in my previous public comments to which you referred, I think this is something that's got to be worked out by the Pakistani political actors themselves. And if I recall correctly, when I was last in Pakistan, this was an issue that people envisaged would be referred to the legislature and it was also something under discussion between the political parties. And I think that those discussions and that process continues. And we will be supportive of what is worked out by the democratically elected leaders of Pakistan. But I think -- I don't think it's for us to prescribe specific or detailed outcomes, which it sounds like the two questioners up until now have been trying to rope me into, if I might say. (Laughter.) So perhaps the third question could avoid that.

QUESTION: Thank you, Ambassador. (Inaudible) from the Congressional Research Service.

You made a perhaps not so indirect reference to Baitullah Mehsud as an irreconcilable element in Pakistan, held responsible by both the Pakistani and U.S. Government for the assassination of Benazir Bhutto and other innocent lives taken. Given past efforts of the Pakistani Government to negotiate with militant elements in the tribal region or in western Pakistan and a general conclusion that those efforts failed, can you maybe identify what might be new about current efforts that seem to be underway and is this a potential area of friction between the U.S. and the new civilian government in Islamabad?

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: Yeah, it's a good question. I think that one would have to wait and see what is actually concluded, if such an agreement were to be concluded. Certainly, our past -- our concern with past agreements regarding South Waziristan have gone to the issue of how much it really -- those agreements really limited the scope of action of terrorism -- of terrorists, extremist militants operating in the area, or was it some way of allowing them greater scope for action than we're comfortable with.

I think perhaps rather than commenting on a putative agreement that might be struck or reached with the tribal leaders or various elements in the tribal agencies, what I

could tell you is what I think is a desirable end state in that part of Pakistan. And it seems to us, speaking from a perspective of the United States, and I alluded to this in my speech, we want to be supportive of the Government of Pakistan's efforts to enhance the standard of living, the level of development of that region, and we're very supportive of those efforts. In fact, we have a five-year, \$150 million a year program to support the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. But when it comes to the issue of international terrorism, we don't think that area should be a platform from which attacks can be conducted against other parts of Pakistan, nor do we think it should be a platform for the conduct of attacks into Afghanistan across the border, where we have, of course, great interests in the stability of that country and we have our own troops and other NATO troops stationed there who end up being the victims of some of these attacks. And of course, we don't want to see the tribal area being used as a platform for plotting and executing international terrorist activity against the West. So any kind of agreement or understanding which might be negotiated, we would have to look at in the light of those imperatives for United States policies.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) Middle East Institute. Mr. Secretary, you are undoubtedly aware of the perception in Pakistan -- perception in Pakistan -- that the United States micromanages Pakistan's affairs. You're also aware of the connection of that with high-level visits by American diplomats to Pakistan. Can you suggest some way, particularly in light of, I thought, your statement here today, how we might be readjusting our approach to Pakistan, to avoid this perception of micromanagement?

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: Yeah. Well, I guess first of all, my answer to that would be almost anywhere in the world where we are engaged with either assistance activities or we have strong strategic interests, we're always susceptible to that charge, at least by some -- by some elements of the society in question, perhaps more sharply so in the case of those elements who have a difference with the policy that we're advocating or the difference in the nature of the relationship that we have with that government. I don't think it's because of something necessarily the way we behave or the profile of our diplomacy. I notice that quite a bit of attention is given to some of my visits; but on the other hand, I think the Chairman of the JCS had preceded me by a day or two and it didn't generate quite the same controversy. So I think it was a consequence of somebody wanting to make a commentary on U.S.-Pakistan relations.

I think that we just have to, first of all, carry out the policies that we best believe serve our mutual interests. I think, secondly, we have to work -- and perhaps I should have put that first. I think we've got to work with the government in question and the people of that society to try and reach as much of a consensus between us as to the best way forward. And that certainly is the desire and the objective of our diplomacy.

But controversy will always arise, and sometimes it'll manifest itself in the kind of criticisms to which you allude. But I think that's just one of the -- it goes with the territory, so to speak.

QUESTION: Thank you. (Inaudible) Times of Lahore. Ambassador Negroponte, there is a universal belief in Pakistan that the United States continues to support General Musharraf and the fact that he remains in office even after his party has -- the (inaudible) has been trounced and the people have rejected army military rule, it is because of the United States. So how can the United States claim on the one hand that it supports return of civilian government in Pakistan and on the other hand continue to support a man who is the murderer of democracy?

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: Well, I mentioned earlier the strong support that we gave to the electoral process. I mentioned the fact that we were strong advocates very early on to the lifting of emergency rule. In fact, we also encouraged Mr. Musharraf to take off his uniform, which was something that the other political party leaders had been strong advocates of. And of course, now we're working as best we can and as closely as we can with the new government which is led by Prime Minister Gillani. So I would -- and of course, we maintain very close contact with the political party leaders, foremost among them Mr. Zardari. So I think if you look at what we've been doing, I don't think you would conclude that our policies are as narrowly based as your question might suggest.

MODERATOR: A question in the back there.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) the U.S. Institute of Peace. Thanks for your remarks. I wanted to come back to the question of the relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and particularly the border areas. Your successor and many other high-level government officials have fairly clearly stated in the last six months that they believe that there is sanctuary in Pakistan for Afghan Taliban forces, for al-Qaida forces, as well as the Pakistani forces -- extremist forces. And so this is not a hypothetical situation, but a reality, and that we are dealing with, obviously, on a daily basis on both sides of the border.

And I wonder if you have sensed from your recent conversations with Pakistani civilian, military and intelligence leadership that there is a some renewed approach or renewed will to deal particularly with those elements of the Afghan Taliban that have had relatively safe sanctuary for the last four to five years given the increasing challenges that Afghanistan and the NATO forces are facing as a result of that insurgency.

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: Perhaps I could take your question in the following way. It seems to me that the situation in these two countries, and as I suggested in my prepared remarks, security in each of these two countries, Afghanistan and Pakistan, are interdependent. And they are interdependent because of the border region to which you refer, and it's rather difficult to visualize a completely successful Afghanistan security strategy without security in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region, and vice versa.

I think there's a recognition of that fact on both sides of the border. After all, the Government of Pakistan has put something like 120,000 troops into the FATA area and the Northwest frontier area, which represents a considerable shift from a number of years ago. They've taken a lot of casualties themselves from extremist activities in that part of the country.

I think one of the positive developments that took place in the past year was the beginning of this jirga, these -- cross-border jirga process, which -- the first one was in September of 2007. And we're hopeful that some -- another such jirga can take place in the fairly near future, because we think it's important to encourage this kind of cross-border dialogue.

So, I think there's a general commitment to bringing militant extremism under control. I think there's also a general agreement in our dialogue with the Pakistani authorities that whatever the approach, it's got to be multifaceted. It's got to include the social and economic and development component on the one hand, but it also has to include a security component. You can't let the irreconcilables, as I call them, have a free hand, have a free pass. They must be confronted. So I'm sure we can have discussion, and we will, over time, about what the best way to accomplish that is and what the best way for the United States to be supportive of that objective. But I don't doubt that that will be a shared objective on our part. And as time goes on, we will -- we will have more and more discussions with the Government of Pakistan and the Government of Afghanistan about these matters.

And I guess my last point would be that the most sustainable way of dealing with the militant extremist threat in the FATA area is through collaborative efforts or efforts where we are supporting the Government of Pakistan in its efforts and not through unilateral action.

QUESTION: (Inaudible). I'm a Reagan-Fascell Fellow here.

Ambassador Negroponte, do you think that there's a conflict of interest in what's good for the U.S. in the region being different from what's good for Pakistan in the region? Because given U.S. policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan, there's been a blowback and consequences on Pakistan on account of that policy. Is that -- do the two go side by side or is there one way of dealing with --

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: Well, I mean, no national interest of any country is ever identical to the national interests of another. I mean -- but the whole purpose of diplomacy and strategy and relations between countries and, certainly, when confronting the kinds of challenges that we confront now is to try to find points of convergence and then build on those to elaborate, sort of, cooperative policies. And I certainly think that there's enough convergence of interests between the United States and Pakistan that we have a sound basis for moving forward. But it requires effort, dialogue, understanding and patience on both sides, in my view.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) the Center for American Progress. Does the Bush Administration still consider President Musharraf an indispensable ally? I believe that was an

adjective used over the last six or seven months. And then secondly, given all of the increased assistance and work on the military front, security front, as well as economic development, are there any special mechanisms that the Administration's putting in place to make sure that the interagency effort is well-coordinated? Because this has been a challenge in many complicated situations, as you well know, in Iraq and Afghanistan.

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: Well, first of all, I think what you -- your first question is prompted by the fact that at times in the past, when we talked about the war on terror, particularly in the wake of 9/11, we personalized the characterization of Pakistan's collaboration with us by saying that Mr. Musharraf was an indispensable ally in the war on terror. And I myself used that phrase on a number of occasions.

But it really is shorthand for the nation of Pakistan and it's a shorthand for saying that we have an -- I mean, Pakistan is in an indispensable situation in terms of dealing with the threats we confront in the war on terror because of the border area, because of al-Qaida, because of the position that this whole al-Qaida threat poses to our interests, the interests of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the rest of the world. So I think that's -- that would be what I'd say to that one.

As far as the question of interagency mechanisms, we have an interagency process to deal with the Pakistan -- to our policies towards Pakistan, which is overseen by the National Security Council, and I think they are adequate to this task.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) with the Pakistani American Leadership Center. In your speech just now, you said that the U.S., on the economic front, has programs to strengthen the private sector competitiveness with Pakistan. What programs are you referring to specifically?

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: We have such programs that are being carried out through our Embassy. I wouldn't be able to give you the specific examples. What I can tell you is one of the ideas we've been pursuing with the Government of Pakistan is a bilateral investment treaty, which we think would be, if concluded, could give a boost to our economic relationship and trade between our two countries.

Another initiative, and I did mention it in my speech and I suppose it would qualify as an example to your question, would be we have legislation pending, which we proposed to the Congress, for these reconstruction opportunity zones, which would encompass all of Afghanistan and important parts of Pakistan where products could be produced duty-free under certain conditions for export to the United States. Senator Cantwell, I believe, has introduced such legislation on the Senate side. I believe that companion legislation has been proposed in the House and we would strongly urge the Congress to pass this ROZ legislation which could also help be a real stimulus to trade and investment in Pakistan.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) from Voice of America. My question to you, Mr. Negroponte, is that it's understandable when Pakistan is expected to control its territory. But if Afghanistan does not accept Durand Line as a border, what kind of border is Pakistan supposed to protect?

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: Well, I believe the working basis for cooperation between the two countries is the de facto border, if you will, between the two countries. And I believe also, I've seen a -- I would argue, in the last several years, a trend towards greater dialogue and cooperation between the Governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan. There have been more meetings between the Pakistani leadership and President Karzai. There's the jirga that I referred to.

And my sense of the new government in Pakistan, based on the conversations I had when I was in Islamabad recently, is that there's a strong disposition in Islamabad to continue this policy of intensified outreach to the Government of Afghanistan. And I think that augers well for the future. In other words, I don't see a serious problem or a serious antagonism in the relationship between the two countries, and if anything, that situation has improved somewhat in recent months.

MODERATOR: Are there any other questions from any of our Pakistani visitors? Would any of them like -- go right ahead.

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: Oh, dear, now we've opened phase two. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: Hi. If Ambassador Negroponte could kindly tell us, in his view, what would success in FATA look like, that -- there is an issue that have been defined that -- you know, that there is a problem?

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: Well, if --

QUESTION: The first question.

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: Yeah, sure.

QUESTION: The second is, in the U.S. Government's view, do you believe that whatever problem Pakistan had with nuclear proliferation in the past, has Pakistan managed that successfully now?

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: What would success in the FATA look like? Well, we've talked a bit about some of the elements of that, haven't we? Economic development, my understanding -- I mean, I have very limited experience personally. I did visit the Khyber Agency, but just only briefly. So I can't claim to be a close-up, personal expert, but I understand there are some -- there are issues about the modernization and development of that part of Pakistan, the better linkage of the FATA area to the rest of the country, its economy and so forth.

So I think those -- those issues -- I think success would involve a greater interconnectivity and integration between the FATA and the rest of the country. I think on the security front, what it would look like would be a curbing and hopefully, eventually, elimination of attacks launched from or infiltrated into Afghan territory from the FATA. I think that would be important. An end to the presence of al-Qaida and other foreign fighters in that area and, of course, most importantly to the interests of Pakistan itself, an end to extreme militant violence in the settled areas of the country, which I believe have risen substantially in the past couple of years, and which is very much symptomatic of the problems that I think we're all concerned about.

MODERATOR: We have time for one more question and let's go to Larry Goodson here.

QUESTION: Yes, Mr. Secretary. Larry Goodson from the U.S. Army War College. Truces with militant segments in Pakistan seem to be in the air at the moment. And we've been down that path before, or a similar path before, and in the last iteration, we saw an upsurge in cross-border operations into Paktia Province and other areas of Afghanistan. I was wondering what, in effect, the U.S. position is on this approach to dealing with the militants in Pakistan this time around is.

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: Well, I'm going to use two words without -- and I think I avoided earlier getting drawn into a discussion about a hypothetical agreement that we haven't seen yet or we're not even certain it'll be concluded. But I think the words would be "concerned" and "skeptical" for the reasons that you cite.

I also -- I failed to answer the second question that you had about proliferation and while, obviously, this has been an issue in the past vis-à-vis Pakistan and while one can never be happy about increased -- one can never be happy about what happens to the nonproliferation regime and the Treaty of Nonproliferation, which was of great concern to us with regard to Pakistan's behavior, I think that you could fairly say that the United States has accepted the fact that Pakistan has nuclear weapons and I think I would leave it at that. I mean, we certainly hope that -- and work with your government to ensure that they are properly secured and we think it's very important that things stay that way.

MODERATOR: Well, I first want to express, I think, on behalf of everyone here, our sincere thanks to Ambassador Negroponte for giving so generously of his time and

for answering all of the questions so frankly. And I think it's a sign of how seriously he takes this issue, the issues that we've been discussing today. And I want to thank him for helping to advance the agenda of this meeting, which is to strengthen the understanding of democracy as a precondition for dealing with these security problems and also, ultimately, to strengthen the friendship between Pakistan and the United States. Thank you.

DEPUTY SECRETARY NEGROPONTE: Thank you, Carl. (Applause.)

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