



Democracy, Authoritarianism, and Terrorism in Contemporary Pakistan

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss our relationship with Pakistan. Pakistan has been in the news a great deal during the past several months, and not without reason. Events in Pakistan deserve our country's full attention. What happens in Pakistan directly affects our vital interests.

Pakistan is a nation with 160 million people, the vast majority of whom are Muslim. A nuclear-armed country with a historical rivalry and record of armed conflict with India, Pakistan sits on the crossroads between South and Central Asia. It shares a 1,600-mile-long border with Afghanistan, where we and our NATO allies have so much at stake. Pakistan's continued cooperation is vital to our cause in Afghanistan. It is a country founded with a democratic mandate, that has made fitful progress toward the ideal of democratic civilian rule. Under President Musharraf, Pakistan has become a more moderate, more prosperous partner, than it has been at some points in its past, with a government that shares many of our most basic strategic imperatives. Until recently, Pakistan seemed to be on a path toward civilian democratic rule. However, as you all are well aware, on November 3 the government of Pakistan implemented a state of emergency that impedes Pakistan's democratic development and transition to civilian rule and compromises its tradition of an independent judiciary.

We strongly counseled against emergency rule, but Pakistan's leadership did not follow our advice.

Let me review our rather unusual and tumultuous history with Pakistan over the last half-century. We had very close cooperation after Pakistan's independence in the 1950s through CENTO and SEATO. That gave way to a period of inaction in the 1960s. There was President Nixon's famous tilt towards Pakistan and then, of course, some of his successors tilted away. We had a very close period of partnership with Pakistan against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s but then we parted ways over Pakistan's unwelcome advancement of its nuclear weapons program.

After 9/11, President Musharraf made the strategic decision to throw in Pakistan's lot with us. And we are together with the government of Pakistan and, more significantly, with a great majority of the Pakistani people, in wanting their country to be peaceful and stable and wanting their country to resist al Qaeda and the Taliban. The single greatest change to the way we see our strategic interests is the newfound realization that what happens in Afghanistan, and in Pakistan, is now vital to our most important national interests.

We can't escape the fact that Pakistan is important to the United States as we try to fight violent extremists and terrorist groups and stabilize Afghanistan. Unfortunately, many average Pakistanis believe the United States has been very inconsistent in its engagement with their country over many decades and very inconsistent in our commitment to support their democratic aspirations. And I think the answer is that there's nothing more important at this time than for the United States to be consistently engaged and committed to try to do the right thing with Pakistan and help that country to become more stable and democratic.

And so I hope that the Pakistani people will see us as a reliable friend and a reliable partner. I hope they'll understand as well, and the government will understand, that as a good friend, we need to speak frankly from time to time with them and about them. We strongly disagree right now with the government's recent decisions and feel those decisions are contrary to the steps needed, to build a stable democratic state. As President Bush said on Monday, November 5, we had stressed before President Musharraf decided to issue the Proclamation of Emergency that emergency measures undermine democracy. President Bush called for democracy to be restored quickly, for elections to be held as scheduled and for President Musharraf to resign his position as Chief of Army Staff. But the President also pointed out that President Musharraf has been indispensable in the global War on Terror, so indispensable that extremists and radicals have tried to assassinate him multiple times.

The bottom line is, there's no question that we Americans have a stake in Pakistan. It needs to be a long-term stake, and, as the 9/11 Commission has documented, we need to sustain our engagement if we are to effectively assist the majority of the Pakistani people to realize their desire for a more moderate, stable and democratic state. The period of estrangement in the 1990's and the Pressler, Symington, and Glenn Amendments created a strategic disconnect between our two countries. A generation of U.S. and Pakistani leaders, including our military leadership, did not cooperate closely with one another, and we suffered the consequences. As the 9/11 Commission Report described, those amendments, while well intentioned, limited our ability to fully address counterterrorism with Islamabad before the 9/11 attacks.

Many Pakistanis are skeptical of our stated commitment to a long-term partnership based on common democratic objectives, and this skepticism makes it difficult for our governments to focus on the fight against terrorism and progress toward a more democratic future for Pakistan. We cannot afford to return to our past estrangement. Partnership with Pakistan and its people is the only option. As we assess our relationship with Pakistan, we need to protect our vital, long-term interests in Pakistan by helping the Pakistani people ensure Pakistan's progress toward democracy and civilian rule.

I'd like to talk now about the U.S.-Pakistan relationship since 2001. Since that time, the Government of Pakistan has been an indispensable leader in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism. Pakistan's Government and security forces have captured or killed hundreds of Al Qaeda operatives and Taliban militants, including some of the most senior terrorists from these groups, since 2001. Pakistan has become a more moderate and prosperous country. According to an October 2007 International Republican Institute poll, 74% of Pakistanis believe religious extremism is a problem in Pakistan that needs to be confronted, a ten percent increase since just June 2007. In 2002, a Pew Research poll found that 33% of Pakistanis believed suicide attacks were sometimes justified. In 2007, that figure had dropped to 9%, with 72% of Pakistanis saying suicide attacks were never justified. In 2006, Pakistan's National Assembly passed the Women's Protection Bill, landmark legislation in Pakistan's history that aims to protect female rape victims. Pakistan has enjoyed an average of 7% economic growth since 2001, due in part to President Musharraf and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz's sound economic policies.

These successes were in no small measure due to the growth of civil society and media groups under President Musharraf. A rapid increase in television and Internet media outlets helped spark a broader and more participatory national debate about the direction of the country, and human rights and other civil society groups played a more influential role in the political process than they have at many points in the past. Pakistan has undoubtedly made progress toward becoming a more moderate, stable, and prosperous country since President Musharraf came to power, and that is why we are so concerned that the backsliding inherent in the state of emergency be reversed before it damages these positive trends. Only full democracy can build a sustainable, long-term consensus on a bold counter-terrorism agenda and a moderate, prosperous future for Pakistan.

It is for this reason that we are urging the government to return to laying the foundation for a sustainable transition from military to civilian rule, and fulfilling its commitments to do all it could to ensure that upcoming parliamentary elections occur on time and reflect a free, fair, and transparent political process. The current state of emergency calls into question these commitments, but we should work to achieve their fulfillment, not pre-emptively write them off.

For example, President Musharraf repeated his commitment November 5 to resign as Chief of Army Staff before he re-takes the presidential oath-of-office. We strongly urge him to keep his commitments about the timing of elections and resigning as Chief of Army Staff, and we stand with the Pakistani people in expecting that he fulfill those commitments. President Musharraf's resignation as Army Chief will not in itself represent a full transition to civilian rule in Pakistan, but it would be a key important

step in the right direction.

Another important gauge of Pakistan's progress toward democracy will be the upcoming parliamentary elections. Prime Minister Aziz said on November 5 that the elections would take place as scheduled, in January 2008. We again stand with the Pakistani people in urging their government to uphold its commitment to this important democratic benchmark. The Government has repeatedly stated that it will do all it can to ensure these elections are free, fair, and transparent. We are doing our part through assistance programs geared toward improving election practices in Pakistan. One thing is certain, the United States and others in the international community will be watching the upcoming elections closely.

We are also hoping that government efforts to reach understanding with opposition political parties will bring about a broader and more participatory political process leading up to the parliamentary elections. Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto returned to Pakistan on October 18 after eight years in self-imposed exile. She leads one of the major national political parties in Pakistan, and her intention to contest parliamentary elections in January will add to the democratic choices available to Pakistani voters.

Secretary Rice talked about our relationship with Pakistan on November 4, shortly after President Musharraf declared the state of emergency. She said that we would be reviewing our assistance programs to Pakistan in the context of statutes governing provision of aid to that country; and, she said that while we did so we needed to keep in mind that we have an obligation to protect the American people. She noted that much of our assistance in Pakistan contributes directly to our national interests and to the counter-terrorism mission, whether addressing terrorism and security concerns directly, or whether addressing the underlying social, economic and political conditions that terrorists and violent extremists exploit.

Thanks to bipartisan Congressional support, our assistance to Pakistan is accomplishing a great deal for the American and Pakistani people. Our programs are empowering Pakistan's moderate center to resist and eventually defeat a violent minority. This minority is seeking to undermine a peaceful, law-abiding citizenry. The Agency for International Development's economic development programs are laying the foundation of a sustainable economy in areas that previously had little hope and were 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 – we envision our Federally Administered Tribal Areas program laying the foundation to permanently open this challenged environment to government and opportunity.

We have a wide range of programs planned and in fact just getting started in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, including security and law enforcement training, development and economic growth initiatives, and on-going infrastructure projects. The goal is to make these regions inhospitable to violent extremists. These programs, along with the Reconstruction Opportunity Zone legislation we have consulted about with Congress, are critical to achieving our highest short and long-term objectives in the War on Terror. Our International Military Education and Training and Fulbright exchanges programs are building essential bridges between our countries. These programs buttress our efforts in the War on Terrorism, and are essential to maintaining forward momentum in building a long-term, broad-based relationship with the Pakistani people. Cutting these programs would send a negative signal to the people of Pakistan. The safety of our citizens, and the stability of the region, depend on our nurturing positive ties to the people of Pakistan and using them to push the military government to allow its citizens to enjoy democratic freedoms to which they are entitled rather than leaving violent extremism as the only political alternative.

I believe that given the long-term nature of our relationship, it is important that our assistance programs continue to help the Pakistani people through this difficult current period and solidify our long-term relationship.

Long-term partnership with the Pakistani people aimed at building a stable, democratic society is the only option. We cannot afford to have on-again, off-again interactions that characterized our relationship in the past. Pakistan's future is too vital to our interests and our national security to ignore or to down-grade. Our challenge is to effectively support the Pakistani people and to help them strengthen the influence of the moderate, democratic center and fight violent extremism. With strong Congressional support of the U.S.-Pakistan relationship since 2001, we are helping the Pakistani people move down a difficult but necessary path of moderation, stability, democracy, and prosperity. We are asking for Congressional support in renewing our commitment to long-term partnership with the Pakistani people. There is not a mission in the world more deserving of our persistence and considered patience.

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