

# A New Course for Pakistan

PCR Project Research Visit



By Frederick Barton, Mehlaqa Samdani, and Karin von Hippel

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INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

May 2008

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## **Analysis and Recommendations**

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May 14, 2008

### **BACKGROUND**

During a two week research trip to Pakistan in mid-April 2008, the PCR team interviewed more than 200 Pakistanis and several dozen expatriates in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Peshawar, Attock, Quetta and Karachi. The team met with the newly elected leadership, former generals, journalists, economists, nationalist leaders, trade unionists, diplomats, university professors, bloggers, ulema, aid workers, security analysts, leaders of the lawyers' movement, and students at an elementary school, a madrassa, an Afghan refugee primary school, and a university.

The post-election visit focused on the major issues affecting the country and examined ways in which the United States can be most supportive of Pakistani-led initiatives during this critical transition period.

### **GENERAL CONCLUSIONS**

After eight years of military rule, the lawyer's movement protests and the restoration of civilian government in Pakistan have animated the Pakistani people. Pakistanis recognize this transitional period as a critical moment in the country's history. A developing sense of national self-confidence can be detected across a wide spectrum of society, from the tea shop to the corporate boardroom to the university debating chamber. The public appears to be more focused on the challenges that really matter to all Pakistanis: governance, the rule of law, education, the wheat crisis, and energy. Pakistanis hope and expect their new government to fulfill – finally - Pakistan's potential and promise.

Even if Pakistanis are skeptical and uncertain that the new leadership will be able to deliver results, at the same time, they emphatically do not want the military to "rescue" Pakistan again. The army seems to be listening, potentially because it has recently suffered from direct attacks and has also been losing popular support. General Kiyani has taken initial steps to move the army back to the barracks and away from the political limelight. These steps need to be reinforced to ensure that the separation is real and long-term.

Pakistan's new leadership has demonstrated an interest in working closely with the United States, but on the basis of a more equal partnership, rather than returning to the intrusive and prominent role the U.S. government played during the Musharraf era.

## MAJOR CHALLENGES

In order to capitalize on this positive momentum, the PCR Project endorses a more strategic U.S. approach to Pakistan, rather than the current involvement in tactical matters and over-reliance on the military. A focus on four critical areas would comply fully with American values and principles, and would allow America, as well, to fulfill its promise.

The four critical challenges are: 1) rule of law, 2) governance, 3) the economy, and 4) security.

**1. Rule of Law.** Pakistan needs fundamental rule of law reforms throughout the entire security sector, that is, in the legal, penal, police, intelligence, and military spheres. Three initial reforms would jumpstart the process and pave the way for a larger security sector transformation.

*i) Restoration of the judges.* The restoration of the 60 deposed judges is one critical first step in addressing the larger rule of law crisis, even if the act alone would not automatically result in an independent and competent judiciary. Despite several delays, the difficulties involved and potential problems that may transpire, the momentum behind restoring the judges is strong enough that it is likely to happen in the coming weeks.<sup>1</sup>

While many are concerned that if the judges are restored, this would herald the end of the PML-N – PPP coalition, it is a necessary step that will be a basic confidence building measure.<sup>2</sup> Pakistanis believe that the United States was against the reinstatement of CJ Chaudhry because of his “activism” on the missing persons issue, the likelihood he will question Musharraf’s re-election in 2007 as well as his more relaxed stance on Dr. AQ Khan’s detention. There are likely to be multiple complications that follow, but if the restoration of the judiciary is encouraged Pakistan could begin to resolve many of its historic rule of law challenges – from violations of the Constitution to official corruption.

*ii) Independent inquiries.* The UN-led inquiry into the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, which has been proposed by her PPP party, should build public confidence in Pakistan. Additional inquiries led by a mix of well-respected Pakistanis and international legal and financial investigators into other controversial occurrences, such as the Red Mosque incident in July 2007, political violence in Karachi in 2007 and 2008, the disappearance and detention of a number of Baluchi nationalists, and official corruption could help ensure a wider healing process and promote reconciliation.

*iii) Anti-corruption measures.* New safeguards need to be developed and installed throughout the government and monitored by the Pakistani public, donor governments and civil society organizations, the media and other watchdog groups, to ensure that technical and financial

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<sup>1</sup> The ongoing discussions between the two major parties are aimed at seeking a compromise on the restoration of all judges, the future role of Chief Justice Chaudhry, and the status of the replacement judges. The talks have now been extended past several deadlines.

<sup>2</sup> Those who are worried argue that the PML-N’s insistence on a simple parliamentary resolution followed by an executive order to restore all deposed judges is Sharif’s way of preparing for the next elections. Asif Ali Zardari, the PPP’s new head and the widower of Bhutto, seems to be stalling on the issue because of the possibility of the National Reconciliation Ordinance being repealed if CJ Chaudhry is allowed to return, which was seen by many as undermining the rule of law in Pakistan and as being politically expedient. Zardari and others may also be worried about corruption charges resurfacing.

assistance goes to the right places. This would allow foreign assistance to address the budget shortfall and would give the Pakistani government the necessary breathing space to implement critical reforms. Reliable partners should be found in the provinces, in local governments as well as among the many existing Pakistani aid recipient organizations.

**2. Governance.** Here too, progress in three areas could help consolidate this fragile democracy.

*i) Presidential transitions.* The February 18 elections were seen as a referendum against Musharraf and his party, the PML-Q. Musharraf's departure from government in the near term would be a positive step and further clear the national mind-set. If an honorable and safe departure is arranged for Musharraf, neither the Pakistani army nor the U.S. government will come to his rescue.

*ii) Constitutional reforms.* The new parliament should reclaim some of its powers from Musharraf, which he had arrogated to himself in the form of 58-2(b). Yet other more significant challenges are in the pipeline, such as the integration of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) into North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), and a general overhaul of the power and resource-sharing agreements between the center and the four provinces. There is general resentment over the current structure in Baluchistan, as well as in Karachi and other parts of Sindh province. Devolution of power to the provinces could take place in parallel with the integration of FATA into NWFP, but a nation-wide public debate is required to push this process forward in a meaningful and timely way.

*iii) Power sharing.* The overdue ten-year review of the government's financial priorities by a high level panel, the National Finance Commission, could be the place to start these contentious discussions and build consensus over what formula or formulas make the most sense (e.g., population size vs. territory or land mass vs. development needs vs. resources and revenue base). The United States could offer technical assistance to the Pakistani government and civil society groups as they work through several different scenarios.

**3. Economic Reforms.** A public debate that leads to new power and resource-sharing arrangements would help the government focus on Pakistan's economic and development concerns. Recent growth was fueled by a real estate bubble and consumer spending, but now there are signs of significant financial stress: a budget shortfall of \$5-10 billion, rising food and fuel prices, energy and power shortages, and reports of growing hunger.

The new government is moving responsibly, and recently mandated a "massive cut" in energy subsidies and public expenditures, including military spending and development funding, in order to address rising fuel and food costs. Special deals may well need to be negotiated with oil companies, since there are reports of large unpaid bills.

In addition to multilateral lending agencies, Pakistanis expect that America will provide major financial support, as will China (which has promised \$500 million in budget support) and Saudi Arabia.

A universally held national priority is an increase in spending on education. International lenders will be necessary to advance this goal and to motivate the Pakistani government to expand its own efforts to undertake critical reforms.<sup>3</sup>

**4. Security.** Since the government took office on March 17, there has been a pause in major incidence of violence – of both the extremist and nationalist-inspired versions. This has been welcome relief: in the past year, militant activity and violence has spread from South and North Waziristan into all seven agencies of FATA and also into settled parts of NWFP. Moreover, prior to elections, terrorist attacks had also taken place in other parts of Pakistan, including Lahore and Islamabad.

The Pakistani Assembly coalition government is now embracing a more comprehensive counter-insurgency approach that is supported by the vast majority of the public. Rather than relying on the use of force first, the civilian led government seeks a balanced model that begins with negotiations, includes political, economic as well as security reforms, and is prepared to take “firm action” if talks fail. The current talks should not be dismissed because of prior failures; there are significant differences today. For example, the government is currently engaged in talks *with* full public support, as opposed to previous attempts, which were undertaken after government forces had been militarily humiliated. In order for the new strategy to succeed, however, two main hurdles must be overcome.<sup>4</sup>

i) *Confusion over negotiations.* There appear to be a number of different negotiations transpiring concurrently, with little overall coordination. Having won the election and replaced the “Mullah” dominated MMA government in NWFP, the Awami National Party (ANP) is leading the talks inside the province. The ANP does not have jurisdiction over FATA - the Pakistani President and army has primacy over that area and hence over FATA negotiations. Baluchistan is likely to present a third model.

The ANP may well be better positioned to make progress than the military because it understands its home area, has a base of popular support, senses the urgency of law and order as its primary governance challenge, and knows it will have to live with the results. Party leaders believe it will be too difficult to rein in insurgents without political reform, and want to see FATA move under provincial control.

Real reforms will require the full support of the federal government and the military. At present, Islamabad is playing a passive role, leaving the ANP in charge and perhaps allowing the center to avoid blame if talks fail. In addition, if the terrorist problem is seen as a regional and Pashtun issue versus a national threat, that will be a further concern.

Progress has been patchy thus far: the Pakistan Taliban (Tehrek-e-Taliban-Pakistan) led by Baitullah Mehsud, the militia commander in South Waziristan, withdrew from talks on April 28 because he claimed the army should withdraw from the territory as a precondition, which

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<sup>3</sup> The UN Development Program places Pakistan in the bottom quarter of its Human Development Index (at 137 out of 177 countries), that is, in terms of life expectancy, educational enrollment, and per capita income.

<sup>4</sup> Some Pakistanis and American analysts are very concerned that the militants would use the space provided by the ceasefire to re-arm. In fact, the pause in fighting has already enabled the militants to cross into Afghanistan with greater ease and attack NATO troops.

they have not agreed to do. Informal talks are likely to continue, however. In the NWFP, the ANP is moving quickly to establish its credibility. Overall, the political negotiations need to be a top priority of the new government and will require a central organizing principle.

ii) *Poor understanding.* Pakistani and American analysts and officials have only a rudimentary understanding of the complicated alliances, dynamics and threat posed by the numerous groups operating in these areas, notably the Pakistan Taliban, the Afghan Taliban, Al Qaeda, and other militant groups.<sup>5</sup> Nor does anyone seem to have a good grasp of who the foreigners are and the alliances among and between Pakistanis, Afghans, the Arabs, and Central Asians (e.g., the Uzbeks, Chechens, Tajiks, Kazaks, and Uighirs). The Pakistani and U.S. governments, as well as NATO forces, need greater and broader expertise.

An improved understanding of the various militant groups operating in the tribal areas would enable Pakistani and NATO forces to exploit schisms between and within groups. Not all are unified in their goals and tactics: some have a Pakistan agenda (the establishment of a Caliphate in Pakistan), others have an Afghan agenda (attack NATO troops), still others a global agenda (attack the United States and the West), some are sectarian focused, and others still may be more opportunistic and less ideologically-driven. Can these differences be exploited? Can alleged disputes between the Central Asians and the Arabs or even between the Egyptians and others be exacerbated?

A better understanding will also help with the negotiations. The ANP leadership is willing to talk to the Pakistani Taliban, but it will not negotiate with foreign militants. Is this practical and how can the foreigners truly be isolated? Their first step is to rely on principles of *Pakhtoonwali* to appeal to the Pakhtoon Taliban. One of these principles is the concept of “larr”, that is, sitting down and discussing grievances. If “larr” is invoked and the opposing group rejects it, they automatically become the guilty party. Given the serious threat posed by the foreign fighters, this policy on its own will not succeed, and will need to be buttressed by serious economic and other reforms.

While the Pashtun voice will be heard by the ANP, the Baluch argument also needs a full appreciation. Decades of neglect, repression and exploitation have created a deep alienation that will not be easily resolved. Distrust and antagonism towards the military and intelligence agencies is complete, and new intermediaries will be required.

Complementary efforts will have to be made to win back “hearts and minds” in the tribal areas, beyond the necessary improvements in social services. Pakistani and NATO media and other advocacy groups need to have surge capacity to take advantage of opportunities for generating revulsion, and changing minds, when the militants attack their own. Experience has demonstrated that successful counter-terrorism policies capitalize on the “mistakes” of terrorists, especially when they kill innocent civilians. The Pakistani

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<sup>5</sup> Richard Holbrooke remarked in congressional testimony on May 7, “I don’t have a clue what’s going on in the FATA. And if anyone ever comes before this Committee and says so, you’d better ask twice, because it is one of the most elusive areas in the world.” The quote can be found at 24:50 in the video recording. See “U.S. Foreign Policy in Pakistan: Implications for Regional Security, Stability, and Development,” House Committee on Foreign Affairs, May 7, 2008, <http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/dayevent.asp?date=5/7/2008>.

government needs a strategic communications capacity in order to implement this approach, with support from the U.S. government. Currently there is no such capacity.

In order to succeed over the long-term, Pakistan needs a regional approach to confront violent extremism. Pakistan's neighbors – notably Afghanistan, India and China – are also interested in “draining the swamp” of extremist militants from the region. The proposed Pakistan-Afghanistan Jirga could be fully endorsed by international partners so as to develop new means of guarding porous borders, de-radicalizing some militants, capturing those who have already committed crimes, as well as rebuilding governance capacity.

At the same time, both India and Pakistan are finally experiencing “Kashmir fatigue.” They should use this opportunity to broker a lasting deal over the disputed territory, especially in light of improved trade and other exchanges.

## **CONCLUSION**

Pakistan is facing several daunting systemic challenges, and failure in any of these areas could derail the fragile democratic transition. These four challenges will require vigilance and close attention by Pakistanis, with full support from America and other allies. Senator Biden recently proposed a \$7 billion aid package for Pakistan to encourage democratic reforms. If approved by Congress, this could inject the right type of energy into the economy, and would be welcome relief for the government. Now, more than ever before, the United States needs to ensure that its support addresses the country's most pressing concerns, in full partnership with the people of Pakistan.

## BIOGRAPHIES

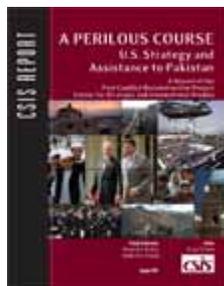
**Frederick Barton** is a senior adviser in the CSIS International Security Program and Co-Director of the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project. A member of the CSIS Commission on Smart Power, an expert on the Iraq Study Group, and on the Task Force on the United Nations, Barton is a regular writer, commentator, and contributor to global public discussions. For the past five years, Barton was also a visiting lecturer at the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University, where he was the Frederick H. Schultz Professor of Economic Policy and lecturer on public and international affairs. His work is informed by 12 years of experience in nearly 30 global hot spots, including serving as UN deputy high commissioner for refugees (UNHCR) in Geneva (1999–2001) and as the first director of the Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) at the U.S. Agency for International Development (1994–1999). A graduate of Harvard College (1971), Barton earned his MBA from Boston University (1982), with an emphasis on public management, and received an honorary doctorate of humane letters from Wheaton College of Massachusetts (2001).

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## RELATED PCR PROJECT PUBLICATIONS

**[A Perilous Course: U.S. Strategy and Assistance to Pakistan](#)** by Craig Cohen, Frederick Barton, and Karin von Hippel, August 2007



For American assistance to be effective in a large-aid-recipient state such as Pakistan, it must go beyond transactional, quid pro quo deals and address the country's main drivers of conflict, instability and extremism. Despite more than \$10 billion in U.S. assistance since September 11, 2001, distrust, dissatisfaction and unrealistic expectations continue to undermine the official goal of developing a strong, strategic and enduring partnership.

Pakistan's main drivers of conflict, instability and extremism include: a culture of impunity and injustice, discontent in the provinces, ethnic and sectarian tensions, a rapidly growing and urbanizing youth population, and extremist views among traditional allies. Militant groups exploit these underlying conditions to recruit followers on the basis of a narrative of shared suffering and injustice and the failure of the state to provide stability or prosperity.

### **[Dealing with Extremism](#)**

*Daily Times* (Pakistan)

by Mehlaqa Samdani, Rick Barton, Karin von Hippel

March 20, 2008

*The aspirations of the Pakistani people must be central to the war on extremism in Pakistan. Anything short of that would be unacceptable to the Pakistani population and disastrous to US interests in the region*

The recent surge in extremist violence across Pakistan requires a dramatic shift in the current campaign against terrorism, in Islamabad as well as in Washington. Already, in early 2008, Pakistan has suffered the tragic consequences of more than 100 suicide and other bomb attacks, with more than 30 people killed in Lahore in a recent attack.

The recent parliamentary elections provide an opportunity for a citizen-driven campaign to reduce violence against civilians. Indeed, the one area of post-election political convergence is that extremist violence is now a critical threat in Pakistan.

### **[A New Course for the U.S. and Pakistan](#)**

*Boston Globe*

by Frederick Barton

February 12, 2008

As Pakistan faces two near-term crises, parliamentary elections on Feb. 18 and increasing extremist violence, the United States has an opportunity to build a new and constructive relationship with the country. In the past, America has been reactive, driven by fear and uncertainty, with the end-result a military dominated policy. Now, there is a chance to forge a more values-centered partnership.

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