

**TESTIMONY TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL  
SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS, U.S. HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES, “ U.S. CONTRIBUTION TO THE RESPONSE  
TO PAKISTAN’S HUMANITARIAN CRISIS: THE SITUATION AND  
THE STAKES”**

**Sherry Rehman, Member of National Assembly and Former Federal  
Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Government of Pakistan.**

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Thank You Chairman Teirney, and members of the Subcommittee, for taking notice of the magnitude and scale of the humanitarian crisis Pakistan is facing today.

The IDP’s challenge is clearly an outcome of the military operation undertaken by the state in response to a Taliban advance from the Malakand area, but in a broader context, it has become a critical test of the national campaign against militancy and terrorism in the name of religion.

Let me briefly set the context. This is important because it is linked to crucial public buy-in for the anti-terror effort, as well as to sustained political outcomes and military successes.

Pakistan is at a critical juncture. Our government has been able to use the public recoil generated by Taliban excesses in the fallout of a flawed peace deal between the Malakand militants and the provincial government to its advantage. Before this specific episode, public opinion on militancy was divided down the centre, muddied by religious symbolism and partisan public responses to terrorism. Even as we speak, many religious political parties have little hesitation in condemning the campaign against terrorism as an American-sponsored strategy, with little gain for Pakistan.

The principal challenge for the Pakistan Government today is twofold: to maintain public support for a military operation with high human costs, and to provide urgent relief for the NWFP’s displaced millions. Any serious

lapses in coordinated relief, rehabilitation and rebuilding efforts will create dangerous fissures in the broad but fragile public consensus needed for powering the morale critical for sustained operational successes.

While the government faces an unprecedented challenge at multiple levels, the crisis has opened up opportunities to build public-private partnerships and manufacture trust with civil society groups. That space exists as much in the heat and dust of the refugee camps as in the registration and coordination process for IDPs outside camps. This is the time to replace the relief and charity pipelines of the Islamist groups that use public service as a cover for laundering terrorist activities.

## **THE SITUATION TODAY**

The displacement of over 2.5 million people over a period of three weeks has caused a huge overstretch on government capacity. As it stands the government has announced a staggering total of 3,950,320 IDPs in circulation. The trauma of internal migration, of curfew casualties, and lost family members has shaken both government and citizens into responses that still need channeling and coordination.

The fact that 80 per cent of refugees are not living in camps is also a crisis waiting to unfold. Most IDPs have settled with extended families, made possible by Pakhtun hospitality, but the pressure of hosting such large numbers without adequate registration or welfare support is unsustainable. Vacant school buildings accommodate thousands outside the tented camps, but these too have become clogged with the debris of human waste and an overstretch of first-aid and health care resources. Medical centers in the NWFP and Mardan are unequipped to deal with the pressure of wounded and women patients, and the International Red Crescent's operations are restricted by crucial aid deficits.

Conditions in the camps continue to be sub-human. 229,520 are living in 22 camps. The pressure on services is high, but there is too much reliance on centralized distribution, even though 25 Humanitarian Hubs have been set by international agencies such as the World Food Program. Although government is now beginning to coordinate with civil society support-groups, the 2005 earthquake effort and transparency issues as well as delivery lags from that experience hamper higher public involvement. Food subsistence is only certain for a few more weeks, and the goal of minimum

food security requires higher nutrition, variation and involvement from the community in preparation and tent-doorstep delivery. Many go hungry for inability to stand in a dole-line.

In terms of pledges made for the IDPs, the Prime Minister of Pakistan has appealed to the international community to step up its assistance, and the President of Pakistan has noted that only a small amount of the \$ 430 million pledged has actually been translated into goods and relief. The UN has warned that its appeal for \$ 543 million in emergency aid is still unmet, and if by July, the deficit in international commitment continues at 80 per cent, food supplies to the camps will be severely compromised. Oxfam has said the same. The Government of Pakistan has allocated Rs 50 billion in the budget for RRR efforts, but it requires urgent cash, grant and capacity assistance to sustain minimum operations just at the camps. It has announced Rs 25,000 cash grants per refugee and is trying to provide urgent income-relief to as many IDPs and possible.

The biggest obstacle to mobility in the camps is the debilitating heat in a grass-free wasteland, where tradition keeps the women enclosed in sauna-like tents. Electrical power is itinerant for the fans in the sheds and school-buildings where refugees are housed and more fuel-powered stand-alone generators are needed for night safety and day survival.

Semi-potable water is now available through central pumps, but pit-latrines are key vectors of disease. Women's healthcare deficits continue to mount, challenging Pakistan's healthcare system. Aid agencies should be warned about the dangers of token-ism and model schools set up for up to 30 children in make-shift tents in camps where the children number in thousands. With most displaced children minus any schooling now, we run the risk of raising a new lost generation which considers war a function of religion.

Rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts are areas where government is being tested. Battlefield gains will have to be secured by representative community inclusion in medium-term planning and long-term justice-delivery and constitutional reform for the troubled areas, but the security of Malakand returnees and the resumption of disrupted income sources will have to be addressed before anything else. This means that recruitments for civilian levies and police rehabilitation programs will have to work in tandem with continued military supervision of key logistic and traffic arteries.

The Taliban ability to re-group and resurface must not be underestimated for the Malakand area, nor must their resolve to unnerve citizens by retaliating in high-density urban centres. This tactical ability to enlarge the scope of the battlefield to the full stretch of urban and rural Pakistan will pose a serious challenge to security planning as well as to relief workers and international agency operations. The Peshawar PC Hotel blast on June 9th 2009 was one such clear message. Since the operation began, just Peshawar has suffered 18 bomb blasts.

The commando style assaults show an increasing level of sophistication in their organization and planning. The state response will have to be much heavier in terms of upgraded security measures for hotels, police precincts, key checkposts, schools, hospitals and government installations. All provincial governments will have to be equipped with a massive injection of scanners and technology-intensive screening devices. This is where the US Government can help, after asking for a local needs-assessment checklist

## **I. STAKES IN WINNING THE PEACE**

For Pakistan, the stakes in winning the IDP challenge are linked inextricably to maintaining state stability and defining the identity of Pakistan. For the government, it is more than a battle for its own political survival. The project is about securing the safety and protection of Pakistan's citizens. There can be no ambiguity. If we are not able to do that then we face the dangerous prospect of losing not just territory but the public consensus against terrorism, militancy and extremism. The government's objectives have to extend far beyond providing relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction, because our collective handling of the military operation and the IDPs crisis is central to the reassertion of a robust, progressive Pakistani state governed by democratic norms and the rule of law. In the broader context, the state's success in delivering on the crisis is critical for retrieving public space for its citizens to live by the rights and guarantees provided in the Constitution of Pakistan.

The heart of the crisis is that we are in the middle of a full-fledged war, and the continuing IDP trauma counters the mood that traditionally feeds morale for a war. Each time a woman dies for lack of a doctor, or a non-combatant loses life or limb in the cross-fire of curfew, the narrative of public resolve

takes a blow. This must be acknowledged and iterated for the huge challenge that it is. There should be no equivocation that the price of reinstalling the Pakistan flag continues to be perilously high. The sheer magnitude of the humanitarian tragedy should mobilize the international community and civil society to recognize the limits of government capacity to handle alone the size of the task ahead. But so far, the international community has been slow to mobilise aid in real-time assistance. Calls for transparency as well as more humane military operational tactics are productive and indeed necessary; they spur executive accountability and action. But calls that question the political will or motives of state action at this stage only endanger the federation's unity, not just the government.

At the same time, Pakhtun alienation is the most dangerous possible fallout of this military operation and subsequent humanitarian crisis. Despite government responses to set up camps in Karachi and Punjab, sub-national faultlines are dividing public discourse, with the worst-case scenario being a situation where Pakhtun identity and self-image suffers from entitlement erosion in mainstream Pakistan. The US can help by exploring options other than US- conducted aerial bombings in the tribal areas, so that Pakhtun sentiment is not further radicalized as a result of US forces stationed in Afghanistan. Reducing the US predatory footprint in Pakistan will build support for Pakistan to fight militancy, extremism and terror as its own existential battle.

## **II. THE WAY FORWARD**

### **Change Will be Painful but Unavoidable**

In Pakistan's current crisis, clearly, necessity has been the mother of intervention. But if the country is to survive what is left of it after 1971, invention is also a necessity. We can no longer afford the backlash of unintended consequences. The level of change required will be painful, but fairly predictable.

**Refugees Cannot Return to Pre-Taliban Malakand:** Firstly, the IDP catastrophe is just the beginning of a long counterinsurgency and counterterrorism transition which will not be resolved by a return to the status quo ante. This must be acknowledged by all stakeholders in power in the NWFP. If this is not explicitly understood, then there will be a massive security and social crisis in the affected areas in less than six months.

Second, there are calls for IDPs' return to some areas like Buner, but some dots still need connecting. There needs to be a clear recognition that we can't just be laissez faire about meeting a challenge that will require focused state-management of refugee-return in a local law-enforcement and infrastructure vacuum. Goals will have to be prioritized or else government machinery will not be able to process tasks amid multiple transitions at this level.

**No More Peace Deals with Militants in Malakand:** The first responsibility of any government, no matter how diminished its local abilities in certain areas, is to provide safety to its citizens. There should be no compromise on that again, and despite pressures from the religious right there is no appetite in government circles for any peace accord that replicates the Swat experience. Clearly, lessons have been learned from all peace deals with militants: they provide more space to the Taliban than they do to the state in Pakistan. Policy-makers in Washington should also understand that experiences that worked in Iraq or Afghanistan will not translate into common or productive outcomes in Pakistan, which still carries the burden of a proxy war it fought for the US against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.

### **Security First**

While the Taliban were terrorizing the citizens of Malakand, a huge gap in security services rose. The police fled from the area, unequipped in both numbers and weaponry to fight the Taliban onslaught. Frontier Constabulary reinforcements were later brought in, but they too needed the back-up of the army to tackle resistance. Large-scale police and FC injections have to take place, with better equipment and training in counterterrorism skills. These measures are the best guarantee against the law and order vacuum that has, over the years, facilitated the entry and re entry of non-state forces seeking to exploit the vulnerability of the local population.

In the post Taliban scenario, it is imperative that fear should not be allowed to tip local sentiment toward the Taliban. And neither should elite attrition and lack of provincial executive will to re-build state institutions. The provincial government of the NWFP will need international assistance. Without real-time police enhancements, FC reinforcements and security sector reform, the army will end up bogged in holding areas it needs to move out from. For the foreseeable future, the military will have to patrol routes and potential choke points for the areas it has cleared, but it has serious work to do elsewhere to block and interdict critical massing of renegade Taliban leadership from Swat. The theatre of operations has to move from Malakand

to the Tribal Agencies and Frontier Regions bordering Afghanistan, and refugees are already pouring out from FR Bannu.

Post- Taliban Malakand and the FATA would need manpower for schools, hospitals, primary health-care services, offices, shops and state services to secure their mobility and ensure daily protection from future Taliban coercion. Right now the areas that the military has worked on may be clear of militants, but that is not how they will remain. The Taliban have a history of resilience, are trained to disband, melt-away and re-group. They must be put out of business.

### **Blocking Escape Routes through Afghanistan**

If the Taliban return to any of the evacuated areas, the state will find it very difficult to answer for why it displaced so many people, which will diminish its ability to counter terrorism. What often compromises the capture of Taliban commanders is the terrain. But ultimately it is the open border with Afghanistan that operates as the largest terrorist escape route in the world. If the US cannot pressure its way in the Trilateral Commission to increase secure patrols on this border, which can work in Afghanistan's favour as well, then we have a problem of sanctuaries that cannot ever be dissolved. If Pakistan's identifiable Taliban commanders cannot be located and permanently evade capture, then we risk a real long-term slide into anarchy and warlordism in many areas of Pakistan. In response to being hit in the territory they had captured, the TTP and others have already announced and executed bomb blasts and suicide attacks in urban nerve centers.

### **PATA and FATA Reform**

As soon as operations subside, a serious FATA reform plan has to be put into place, if reclaimed territory is not to be lost again.

It will be a massive challenge, as the army has incessantly waged battles here since 2003, but if peace deals don't hold, and experience tells us they do not, then territory has to be regained, and even slowly incorporated as mainstream Pakistan for the first time through a mixture of reform and state force. The Government of Pakistan has already prepared an amendment in the FCR in consultation with representatives of FATA, and is waiting for military operations to end to initiate executive action.

Extending the Political Parties Act to the FATA will also allow progressive forces more space in that area, enlarging the scope of opportunities for locals to articulate social and political concerns within a mainstream plurality.

There is a recognition that a larger social justice deficit lies at the root of many quests for rough and ready mongrelisations of Islamist systems. PATA justice and revenue systems can be brought into conformity with the Pakistan Penal Code if they are seen as delivering, especially if justice is dispensed within a fixed time frame, pendency is regulated, and the jurisdiction of Pakistan's superior courts be extended to the PATA. If the social pyramid leaves the poor increasingly dispossessed and the area remains without constitutional protections extended elsewhere, we may see a dangerous trend of community buy-in for future Taliban take-overs. Reconstruction of infrastructure, the accountability of rehabilitation aid flows, the creation of income opportunities and public trust will go hand-in-hand. Local bureaucrats that harboured or favoured the Taliban must also be screened out.

### **Interrupting the Taliban Narrative:**

All the IDPs of Swat speak with a mixture of anger and awe about the ability of the militants to broadcast dogma and threats with impunity. This mobility needs to be disabled. In Swat, the Fazlullah radio frequency was not just used to spew propaganda against the military and state, it was used as a basic communication device for field commanders to recruit criminals, coordinate attacks and make surgical get-aways. These renegade FM transmissions need to be jammed if we are to interrupt this anti-state narrative.

For mainstream Pakistan, the power of strategic communications must not be underestimated. The Taliban narrative has been interrupted by the state capture of some militant leadership, but it is heard in pulpit-thumping idiom through itinerant dissent against the military operation. The discourse of dissent is important to watch for as it has the power to tip the scales against the anti-terror initiative. Young people, seeking to construct radical identities are especially vulnerable, irrespective of their access to resources and opportunities. Investments in cultural products, especially Pakistan's booming music and pop entertainment industry will go a long way in both absorbing the energy of the second-largest youth cohort in the world. It will also provide a productive counter-narrative to the extremism peddled by the non-state jihadist actor.

### **Building an Inclusive Peace**

All local agreements to restore peace will hinge on working with the local community, but this time committees or jirgas should include non-Maliks, women leaders and the marginalized. In all Taliban take-overs women have suffered the most attacks on their images, bodies, rights and autonomy. They

need to be heard. The narrative from behind the conventions of Pakhtun purdah is mostly rooted in pragmatism and the value of peace.

### **III. AREAS FOR US CONTRIBUTION:**

For years, the US security bargain with Pakistan was seen as a purely transactional military-centred equation. Today, US assistance for the IDPs will lay the foundation of a renewed relationship between the people of Pakistan and the US, making a major contribution to American efforts for reconnecting with the our public, a goal that President Obama's Administration has committed to pursue as it seeks to recast itself as a friend and as a supporter of Pakistan.

**Urgent Relief Measures:** Given the enormity of the IDP challenge, it is imperative at this stage to provide urgent international support, some in terms of financial outlays, ensuring food security, but equally importantly, in terms of enhancements of field capacity to address resource gaps in bridging critical health, sanitation and trauma-management deficits. As things stand, the needs assessment done by international aid agencies is frequently revised to accommodate changing pressures, but requires far better inter-agency coordination.

**Rebuilding Infrastructure and Governance Capacity:** A well-rounded assistance package incorporating support at multiple levels can be the first fundamental step towards establishing a secure, and no-return-to-Taliban order for Pakistan's troubled territories. The strategy should encompass serving the needs of the displaced population as well as supporting the state in rebuilding governance and law enforcement structures for the Malakand and the FATA citizens. Eventually, the Pakistan Government's capacity to deliver on the basic obligations of governance, justice and social service delivery as well as on security fundamentals is important. It must be enabled to renew a state-citizen relationship that allows the state more influence over the regions that had earlier been exploited by non-state actors because of existing constitutional and political gaps.

#### **Camp- Specific Measures**

- For effective camp specific measures to provide relief to the physical hardships of the local population, the US can step up its contribution

for food, tents, clothing, emergency medical aid, bedding, and schooling aid to enable displaced populations to continue livelihood activities.

- The unbearable 104° F temperature could be countered to some extent through air-conditioned tents as the government comes through on a commitment to provide unhindered power supply, but generators and fuel are a real need.
- There is also space for supporting the Benazir Bhutto Income Support initiative, monthly cash assistance, for the IDPs that was launched by the GoP recently.
- Planning and work for the July rains must be undertaken now, without which standing water and soggy ground will cause a fresh crisis.
- Despite the desperation of camp-dwellers to return to their homes, and military optimism about operations ending soon, in areas where the prospects of safe rehabilitation are not imminent, the best option may be to jointly plan for a longer haul than to encounter worse weather and further IDP anguish.
- Transportation for FATA Refugees will be required, as will Transition Camps and returning and incoming refugees;
- Major enhancements in the registration and outreach capacity of NADRA would be useful.

### **Rehabilitation:**

Post Taliban infrastructure rebuilding will require serious attention. The USAID can fund a number of girls' schools, build teacher-training programmes in partnership with provincial NGOs.

Basic Health Units will need rebuilding, nurses and paramedics re-inducted, LHWs given protection and mobility, as well as sanitation repair and energy transmission lines.

The inclusion of Malakand in the US ROZs Programme will have some downstream effect, but urgent incentives to regenerate local employment and create public works opportunities would be more productive in an environment where crop and tourism losses will take more than a fiscal year to recoup.

The rehabilitation work could begin either in the temporary IDPs shelters or, the security situation permitting in their own villages, in partnership with local NGOs, providing support to rehabilitate normal activities even if on makeshift arrangements, including schools, health clinics, administrative units, sewerage and sanitation, water supplies, sanitation facilities, local markets and homes.

### **Partnership with Pakistan's Government**

Despite challenges from the tribal areas, the Pakistani government has control of state power in the mainland. But as a result of the use of that power, it is traumatized by the largest refugee population since the October 2005 earthquake. This is clearly not going to be a short-haul, and expanding operations to the tribal areas will pressure both the military and federal government on many counts.

US assistance for Pakistan's Government in this backdrop will not only consolidate Pakistan's capability as a state to deliver on its obligations for protecting citizen's rights, it will also support a redefinition of the state-citizen relationship on the principles of a participatory and responsive engagement.

The US can, just for a start, take a leaf out of its own book in the 2005 earthquake trauma in Pakistan, and re-emerge as a heavy lifter in its partner's distress. Dividends will accrue to both in the medium and long-term. Special Envoy, Ambassador Holbrook's aggressive public diplomacy to raise support for the IDPs with the international community is welcome, but so far has generated little real resources in the aid-pipeline.

In the Trilateral Commission with Afghanistan and Pakistan, the US can help block Taliban sanctuaries by increasing Kabul's investment in border security and interdictions. This will prevent a negative fallout in Pakistan from the US troop surge in Afghanistan, but will also be critical in choking escape routes for escaping militants now that the military response from Pakistan is at full force. It will also help Pakistan in sanitizing the border for Taliban commanders that flow freely back and forth, compromising the state's ability to prevent attacks from Pakistan's soil.

Apart from equipping Pakistan's government to make effective interventions through law enforcement, training for civil bureaucracy to develop its delivery capacity will boost the state's position in the post Taliban order. Furthermore, strategic communication solutions, as well special scholarship opportunities will go a long way in developing a more educated and informed perspective of the local population on important issues, enabling them to make a meaningful contribution to the country's development. The US can make a major contribution towards dismantling the support structure of the Taliban by providing mobile jammers for illegal FM radio transmissions as well as equipping Pakistan's security services to launch an effective crackdown on arms and ammunitions that enable the Taliban to continue its offensive against the state

Most importantly, US (or international) assistance should incorporate a serious commitment for a sustained transformation of the existing social order along progressive lines incorporating a participatory model. Inclusion, even if it is incremental, of Pakhtun women in all post Taliban relief, rehabilitation and resettlement efforts is critical to ensuring a sustainable peace as women have a degree of domestic control, and hence, influence over family rejection or acceptance of competing ideologies. Mainstreaming women in national life should form a crucial part of the framework for any form of assistance that the US is seeking to extend to Pakistan.

The international community can provide the resources for the Pakistan state to emerge as a major welfare agent, but relief must flow through government pipelines. While all governments in Pakistan have shown a below-average ability to execute budget allocations, there is no comparison to the scandalous aid reflux of US money being re-routed back to intermediaries through earmarked contractors.

### **Building Partnerships with Civil Society in Pakistan**

The IDPs crisis also provide the US an opportunity to strengthen the civil society of Pakistan enabling it to make a meaningful contribution to democracy consolidation as well as to fill the development vacuum that was ruthlessly abused by the Taliban. Many NWFP-based NGOs have an impressive track record of contribution to local development and an association with them could always be a useful instrument for effective interventions for Pakistani public's benefit. These NGOs include: SRSP, SUNGI, KhwendoKor, Pakistan-Based Organizations: Hum Pakistani(an

umbrella organizations of 20 NGOs) Concerned Citizens of Pakistan(CCP), Bali Memorial, Rising Pakistan, Karawan, Pakistan Medical Association, Shirkatgah, Care Schools etc.

While partnership with local civil society structure is important for effective relief delivery, the principal interlocutor should be the recently set-up Emergency Response Unit (ERU) which coordinates the working of all service-delivery by government departments to the IDPs. The NWFP Chief Secretary leads the ERU. For rehabilitation and reconstruction however, the government has set up the Special Services Group led by the Army.

#### **IV. US-PAK THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT**

Even before the high human cost of the IDP crisis triggered public responses that potentially erode support for military operations, the biggest challenge the government faced was managing ownership of the battle against terrorism, not because the people of Pakistan tolerate militancy, as they certainly do not, but because an international military presence in Afghanistan, whatever its merits or demerits is seen largely as a hostile occupation next door. This has fuelled a deep vein of Pakhtun resentment against the US, a dynamic that defies the logic of rational outcomes about possible endgames in Afghanistan. The Taliban that had dispersed after 2001 have re-grouped and challenge sixty percent of Kabul's writ in Afghanistan. This does not reflect policy success for the US in Afghanistan, but more importantly threatens to further de-stabilize Pakistan.

A history of Washington coddling unpopular dictatorships, and being an unreliable partner, has also led to public ambiguity about converging US' strategic goals with Pakistan's own interests. The IDP crisis has opened up another battlefield for a fragile democracy that is struggling to create a mass constituency against militancy as its own homegrown initiative. In a terrain where suicide bombings have come to Pakistan primarily after September 11, this is as tough as it gets. Things are changing after the Taliban exposed their expansionist motives post the Swat deal, but any political buy-in to mutual Pak-US strategic goals remains compromised when coercive language and difficult conditionalities are built into assistance packages passed by the US Congress.

The prospect of a troop surge in Afghanistan without US pressure on Kabul to police its border may threaten to roll back anti-Taliban military gains on

the ground in Pakistan. Public opinion in Pakistan may then tip the scales against any military offensive and hamstring the democratic government from maintaining a clear consensus against terrorism simply because the Taliban problem will once again be squarely re-branded as a heroic resistance response to self-serving US policies in the region.

In an environment of crisis, when a strategic ally is seen using Pakistan as a dumping ground for pursuing its regional goals, the entire project of running a campaign against terrorism could well be conflated with anti-US resentment which has accumulated over the years. This will compromise Pakistan's own goals of combating militancy and terrorism, but also give its government little leverage in the future to create public space for harnessing international resources for converging goals.

### **Broader Pak-US Aims**

There has to be a sense in Washington that managing public opinion in Pakistan about a partner with an intrusive footprint on sovereignty diminishes the ability of any government in Islamabad to create an unambiguous consensus on the battle against extremism. The US-operated drone, or UAV, has become a powerful symbol of American violation of Pakistan's territorial integrity. This is reinforced on 51 news channels in vivid graphics every time there is a drone attack. It negatively impacts Islamabad's project of building a sustainable public partnership with Washington, because the most frequently asked question in Pakistan is framed in negative outlines: how can a strategic partner be targeting its ally's territory?

Two, the policy drift on key national security roadmaps and outcomes from both the US and Pakistan needs to be addressed. While terrorism is seen too often as a purely military challenge, the existential worries, whether real or imagined, of Pakistan's security establishment are ignored to mutual peril. Regional rivalries and the perilous politics of crisis-driven outcomes remain a major driver in official bilateral and multilateral discourse.

Three, it is clear that we are in a moment of opportunity as much as a period of challenges. The challenges stem from both the arenas of domestic politics as much as they do from foreign policy lag. Partisan politics and systemic creep bogs urgent action down in both countries. In Washington, the tone is

bullish on investing in democracy in Pakistan, but for a new administration the learning curve is steep. President Obama's thrust on recalibrating a damaged transactional relationship between Pakistan and the United States into a more broad-based and multi-layered project is part of a key change, and is filtered through the prism of an open commitment to a sustained engagement by powerful leadership in Congress. Yet broad gaps in grappling with the levers of a complex strategic and political dynamic remain un-addressed. While a great deal of attention and nuance has emerged in US public and academic discourse on Pakistan recently, the extent to which the instruments of American soft power have been, and can be used, remains severely underestimated.

## **CONCLUSION**

The IDP's crisis is the fallout of a military operation against terrorists. If the international community is not responsive to the largest internal refugee migration in history, then all its claims to support Pakistan in its larger existential battle against militants that use religion to advance their hold will be seen as meaningless. The challenge for Pakistan is that the theatre of operations is not a battlefield, another state's army, nor even a mission to reclaim territory. It is a much larger project, frontloaded with the tragic baggage of civilian casualties and scorched earth. The government has done well to build political consensus through parliament, which took its own circuitous route, and for now the broad agreement is holding.

Counterinsurgency in such difficult terrain is not an experience that a conventional military is trained for. This has caused untold hardships, loss of lives, refugee recoil against the operation, and a degree of hard questioning about the viability of aerial bombardment on partially-evacuated ground. The good news is that the military's sustained encirclement of non-state actors has restored a level of public confidence in pre-Taliban governance. The loss of its own soldiers in a stand against fighters equipped with the advantage of stealth and sophisticated weaponry has bought it an image-boost on a national level. Another byproduct of battlefield successes is the re-emergence of local resistance. The local inhabitants of Lower Dir and adjoining areas are now emboldened to join the battle against indigenous and foreign fighters, and are seeking an operational partnership in policing the area.

The success rate of this enterprise will make or break the vital consensus required on a national scale to sustain the public resolve needed for a long-term political campaign against terrorism. There is no point flushing Malakand of terrorists if Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, and the rest of the NWFP are forced to tolerate them.

If the state is seen as enfeebled from Taliban assaults or the political momentum against terrorism is lost, the militants will stand to gain.

Thank You.