

**Opening Statement**  
**The Honorable Steve Chabot, Chairman**  
**Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia**

**“Assessing U.S. Foreign Policy Priorities and Needs**  
**Amidst Economic Challenges in South Asia”**  
**April 5, 2011**

Good afternoon. I want to welcome all of my colleagues to the second hearing of the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia.

This hearing was called with the intention of following up on Secretary of State Clinton’s testimony that the full committee heard last month, but with an exclusive focus on South Asia. This will give Members the opportunity to ask more specific questions both about the FY2012 proposed budget as well as broader U.S. strategy throughout the region.

South Asia continues to be the source of many of the most critical challenges to U.S. national security and will likely continue to be in the future. The most immediate challenge is the war in Afghanistan. At the NATO summit in Lisbon this past November, NATO members presented their plan to cease all combat operations in Afghanistan by 2014. The Administration’s strategy to meet this deadline relies on a vast number of complex variables, many of which are out of our control. At the center of this effort lies the mission to build the capacity of the Afghan National Security Forces.

Although we have seen significant gains within the Afghan National Army, the capabilities of the Afghan National Police lag behind. I would like to call the Subcommittee’s attention to the tragic incident just yesterday in which two coalition soldiers were shot and killed by a man wearing an Afghan border policeman’s uniform. While it is not yet clear whether this man was indeed a policeman or an insurgent masquerading as a policeman, incidents like this are too common. They raise significant concerns about how successful our efforts have been so far, how effective our screening process is, and whether our 2014 deadline is too ambitious. The most tragic outcome for this conflict would be to repeat the mistakes of the past by leaving Afghanistan before we have had the opportunity to solidify the gains that our troops have fought so hard for over the past decade.

The Administration’s policy also emphasizes the importance of reconciliation with the Taliban which is an extremely thorny issue. Setting aside the question of whether it is even possible to achieve reconciliation, we are talking about allowing to return to power the same extremist thugs who terrorized women and ruled according to an radical interpretation of Islam that disregards basic human rights. I hope the witnesses here today will elaborate on the Administration’s plans for the conduct of these negotiations as well as what exactly is considered negotiable. I hope they will also discuss how the Administration is planning to balance the concerns that India and Pakistan may have surrounding both the negotiation process as well as how the Afghan government that may emerge would affect the strategic balance of the region.

Afghanistan, however, is not our only concern in South Asia. Years of Pakistani mistrust of the U.S. has resulted in a relationship in which cooperation on certain issues is often accompanied by obstruction on others. The Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act of 2009, also known as the Kerry-Lugar-Berman legislation, was intended to change this by authorizing up to \$1.5 billion in civilian aid per year through 2014. Amongst other goals, this legislation is supposed to convey to Pakistan that the U.S. is interested in a strategic partnership and not just a transactional relationship.

Although we have seen improved cooperation with certain elements of the Pakistani government, the positive benefits of Kerry-Lugar-Berman have not yet spilled over into other arenas, such as security, in any meaningful way. The fact remains that Pakistani and U.S. strategic interests diverge on certain issues, especially those concerning Islamist terrorist groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba which the Pakistani Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence continues to view as a strategic asset vis-à-vis India. How, then, does the Administration plan to address these critical issues that continue to warp our entire policy in the region? I would hope that as a strategic partner Pakistan would not merely cooperate with us when it suits their immediate interests.

Although I have focused almost exclusively on Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan, I hope some of our panelists will discuss our programs in the other countries of the region. Several examples include our programs to assist the Sri Lankans in their post-civil war reconciliation and our efforts to help the Nepalese government continue its transition to democracy.

Without any further delay, I recognize my good friend from New York, the Ranking Member Mr. Ackerman, for 5 minutes.