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## February 18, 2008 Elections: Democracy's Turn

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### 1. Background Details:

On February 18, a total of 35 million Pakistani voters registered their message loud and clear. According to The U.S. News and World Report, "Some prospective Pakistani voters may have stayed home during Monday's parliamentary election, fearing terrorist attacks or other kinds of pressure, but enough turned out to send a loud message to Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf. The ruling party that supports the beleaguered leader was trounced in the election, which went more smoothly--and less violently--than many had expected."

### 2. Situational Analysis:

America has its realpolitik and its agenda. Pakistani voters have mandated the PPP and the PML-N to carry out the Pakistani agenda. Yes, the two agendas--ours and theirs--do overlap. America has an interest in defeating extremism. So do we. America is against nuclear proliferation. So are we. Yes, we are dependent on their financial support while their supply lines are dependent on our land routes and our air corridors. For us, our democracy without rule of law is like a chariot with no wheels and no horse. Similarly, violence on the Pakistani street has a direct correlation to lack of justice. America's power politics, to be certain, couldn't care less about our democracy or rule of law.

The PML-N has 90 seats in the National Assembly and that's 81 seats short of a majority. Mian Nawaz Sharif therefore ought to refrain from imposing preconditions. The PPP has 120 seats in the National Assembly and that's 51 seats short of a majority.

First things first. The PPP and the PML-N would first have to find a way for the president to call the first session of the parliament. Election of the speaker, deputy speaker and the leader of the house would then get underway. The Parliament must first reclaim its rightful domain--and only then can the PPP and the PML-N proceed to meet the demands of their voters (according to an IRI Survey, 55 percent Pakistanis want inflation brought under control, 15 percent are concerned about unemployment and 12 percent are worried about terrorism followed by poverty, electricity, education and corruption).

Pakistani voters have spoken in favour of three things: democracy, rule of law and moderation. The first two are of great value to us--America couldn't care less. The third, moderation, is where America's interests and the interests of Pakistani voters overlap. The White House is distressed because its 'one-window operation' into every aspect of Pakistani life is about to shut.

Democracy may slow down America's 'war on terror' but a suicide attack every week--and Bhutto's assassination--has turned the tide against extremism (according to a survey by Terror Free Tomorrow, in August 2007, 33 percent Pakistanis had a favorable opinion of Al-Qaida and in January 2008 favorable opinion had gone down to 18 percent). I am sure that America's attempt to wrest victory away from Pakistani voters will backfire. Pakistani voters have done what they could. It's now up to the PPP and the PML-N to reverse our march towards chaos, discord and lawlessness.

Asif Zardari and Nawaz Sharif must respect democracy's verdict--or remember her revenge.

### 3. Recommendations of CRSS:

Keeping Musharraf's European visit in perspective, CRSS strongly recommends the following:

CRSS strongly recommends the following:

1. PPP and PML-N must honor the mandate given to them by Pakistani voters.
2. External forces planning to subvert democracy's verdict must refrain from treading on thin ice.

3. PPP and PML-N must persuade their respective constituencies that the 'war on terror' is our war as well.