

2007 Model Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearings Simulation

Topic 3: Pakistan as a Strategic Ally in the U.S. Global Terrorism Policy

Subcommittee on International Operations and Organizations, Democracy and Human Rights

Chairman: Bill Nelson (D-FL)
Robert Menendez (D-NJ)

Ranking Member: David Vitter (R-LA)
Jim DeMint (R-SC)

Introduction

Following September 11, the U.S. government launched Operation Enduring Freedom, a military offense designed to overthrow the fundamentalist Taliban government in Afghanistan, which was thought to be a training ground for Osama Bin Laden and al-Qaeda. The President of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf, played an important role in the attacks, agreeing to assist the U.S. military in tracking down Taliban and al-Qaeda members.

While Operation Enduring Freedom ended with the overthrow of the Taliban government, it failed to capture senior Taliban leaders or kill the leaders of al-Qaeda, including Osama bin Laden or al-Zawahiri. It is believed that these terrorists escaped into Pakistan and still reside there. Critics contend that the Pakistan government has done little to destroy terrorist or Taliban fighters within its territory and has allowed its territory to be used as a staging ground for attacks into Afghanistan. Pakistan's government is currently highly unpopular and under attack from both Muslim extremists and also from pro-democracy groups that are unhappy with the autocratic manner in which Musharraf rules his country.

A key question facing members of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee is whether the U.S. should continue to support Musharraf's undemocratic regime in light of the growing political instability in the country and Musharraf's inability to rein the mounting violence waged by radical Muslim groups and other political dissidents. Senators also should consider the even more pressing question of what the consequences would be—not just for U.S. foreign policy but for global security—if Musharraf, who is at least a nominal ally of the U.S., lost control of his government to a militant Islamic group.

Background

Pakistan was formed in 1947 following the breakup of British-controlled India into Hindu-dominated India and Muslim-dominated Pakistan. The relationship between Pakistan and India has never been an easy or peaceful one; India and Pakistan engaged in war twice over the Kashmir region, once in 1947 and again in 1965.

General Pervez Musharraf now leads the government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Musharraf came to power in 1999 through a military coup. While many U.S. officials see the Musharraf government as America's most steadfast ally in the region, our policies are simultaneously undermined by the fact that the regime is undemocratic. U.S. foreign policy not only aims to destroy international terrorist organizations and prevent the rise of Islamist states but it also aims to promote democracy and transparent governments, with the idea that living under a more democratic regime will give people less cause to turn to extremist measures to achieve political ends. Thus, Pakistan remains a contradiction in U.S. policy: our most important ally and linchpin in our anti-terrorism campaign is run by an autocrat who seized power through a military coup.

The problems with Musharraf reflect the general ups and downs that have marked U.S.-Pakistan relations. Good relations were at their height during the 1970s and 1980s when General Zia ul-Haq ruled the country. Zia was staunchly anti-communist. When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, Zia aided the mujahedin resistance movements. The United States, in turn, supported Zia's regime and sent money to the mujahedin through Peshawar, Pakistan. Zia died before he could see an Islamic government in Kabul. His successors were democrats, but they were ineffective and corrupt.

1998 marked a low point in U.S.-Pakistan relations. Pakistan, in reaction to India's development of a nuclear program, detonated its own nuclear bomb. The U.S. reacted swiftly, cutting off all diplomatic ties with Pakistan. The following year, Musharraf seized power through a military coup, and the United States continued to isolate Pakistan, economically and politically. Relations between the countries only grew worse in the ensuing years as Pakistan was only one of two nations in the world that had diplomatic ties with Afghanistan when it was under Taliban rule.

September 11, 2007

U.S. foreign policy shifted abruptly in the wake of September 11, 2007, when U.S. foreign analysts determined that the terrorist attacks were most likely the work of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda militants, who were then thought to be living under the protection of Afghanistan's Taliban government.

As part of the military lead-up to invading Afghanistan, the Bush administration struck a deal with Musharraf: the U.S. would resume diplomatic and economic relations with Pakistan provided that this strategically located country assisted the U.S. in its military effort to oust the Taliban government and flesh out Osama bin Laden. Under great pressure to comply with the U.S. "request" for support, Musharraf abandoned his seven-year alliance with the more radical Islamic factions in both his country and neighboring Afghanistan and assisted U.S. military operations in Afghanistan.

In the years following September 11, Pakistani soldiers joined American and NATO troops in their effort to root out al-Qaeda and Taliban militants in the remote and mountainous region between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Hundreds of Pakistani soldiers

have died in this campaign. Yet Afghanistan remains a breeding ground for Islamic militancy: the Taliban move freely between the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, and Osama bin Laden is thought to roam just as freely in the same remote border region.

As the U.S. continues to prosecute an unpopular war in Iraq, Musharraf faces mounting criticism at home. Many factors contribute to the unpopularity of Musharraf's government, the first of which is Musharraf's alliance with the United States. U.S. popularity continues to remain low in the region, and many Pakistanis see Musharraf as a puppet of the United States. Secondly, the country's secular middle class has condemned Musharraf's policies. In March 2007, an attempt by Musharraf to remove the top judge from the country's Supreme Court was met by violent street protests by lawyers and other demonstrators. There is criticism of Musharraf's simultaneous hold on both the executive power and position as the top military official.

On the other side of the political spectrum are the increasing vocal, radical Muslim groups, who are demanding that the government adopt Shariah, or Islamic law. The Pakistan government has been fighting extremists in its tribal territories and, in July 2007, seized a mosque held by extremists. Extremists have also killed foreign journalists and scientists, carried out terrorist attacks on American, Pakistani and NATO troops, and tried to assassinate Musharraf. More recently, these radical Muslim groups have begun leaving the remote mountainside and infiltrating the more populous, urban areas of the country. Some U.S. policy analysts now fear the Talibanization of Pakistan.

In recent weeks, the political situation has grown more complicated. Musharraf won a third term as president by a unanimous assembly vote, but the opposition boycotted the vote, and the election is now being contested in the courts. In mid-October, former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto arrived back in Pakistan with the intent to enter into some form of power-sharing alliance with Musharraf following an eight-year self-imposed exile stemming from corruption charges. Bhutto is openly critical of Muslim extremists, and on the day of her return, her motorcade was struck by a suicide bomber, killing 134 bystanders and police and injuring hundreds more. Musharraf, in an effort to build support among the pro-democracy groups, continues to promise to step down as head of the military and has also indicated a willingness to share ruling authority with former Prime Minister Bhutto. However, neither politician is popular with the general population.

The sobering conventional wisdom is that Pakistan is a highly unstable country that possesses nuclear weapons. In a recent *Newsweek* article, writer Ron Moreau labeled Pakistan as the most dangerous country on the earth. (*Newsweek*, October 20, 2007). Moreau wrote, "It has everything Osama bin Laden could ask for: political instability, a trusted network of radical Islamists, an abundance of angry young anti-Western recruits, secluded training areas, access to state-of-the-art electronic technology, regular air service to the West and security services that don't always do what they are supposed to do Then there's the country's large and growing nuclear program."

Purpose of the Hearing

The United States is obviously unsure how to respond to Pakistan. On one hand, Pakistan is an important strategic ally in America's global terrorism policy, and Musharraf has been fairly consistent in his policies. On the other, Musharraf is increasingly unpopular among all factions of the population, and his hold on power seems ever more tenuous. The recent arrival of Benazir Bhutto has done little to quell the growing unrest. While most of the population is not anxious to see a Pakistani government fall under radical Islamic rule, there are few moderates on the political horizon ready to battle both Musharraf and the militant Islamic groups.

Questions

1. Is Pakistan an effective ally of the U.S? Can Musharraf be a reliable partner in U.S. anti-terrorism policy given the competing demands that are threatening his government?
2. What are the political costs to the U.S. if it continues to support the Musharraf government?
3. Should the U.S. push for popular elections? What are the consequences to U.S. interests in this strategically important area of the world if a popular election results in Muslim extremists winning control of the government?
4. Is supporting Musharraf the best way to prevent Muslim extremists from getting access to nuclear materials?
5. Should the U.S continue to support an undemocratic government? Is it better for Pakistan to be run by a dictator or a democratic government? Does it matter?

Witnesses

John Negroponte, *Deputy Secretary of State*

R. Nicholas Burns, *Under Secretary for Political Affairs*

Richard Boucher, *Assistant Secretary of State for Central Asian Affairs*

Admiral William J. Fallon, *Commander, U.S. Central Command*

Anne W. Patterson, *Ambassador to Pakistan*

Stephen P. Cohen, *Senior Fellow, Foreign Policy Studies, Brookings Institute*

Hussain Haqqani, *Director, Center for International Relations, Boston University*

Peter Bergen, *Schwartz Senior Fellow, New America Foundation*

Max Boot, *Senior Fellow for National Security Studies, Council on Foreign Relations*

Lawrence Wright, *Journalist, The New Yorker*,

Daniel Benjamin, *Director for the Center on the United States and Europe, and Senior Fellow of Foreign Policy Studies, Brookings Institution*

Daniel Markey, *Senior Fellow for India, Pakistan and South Asia, Council on Foreign Relations*

Steve Simon, *Senior Fellow for Middle Eastern Studies, Council on Foreign Relations*

Samina Ahmed, *South Asia Project Director, International Crisis Group*

Teresita C. Schaffer, *Director, South Asia Program, Center for Strategic and International Studies*

Dr. Frederic Grare, *Scholar, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*

Resources

Boucher, Robert. "Briefing on Pakistan." July 17, 2007.
<http://www.state.gov/p/sca/rls/rm/2007/88582.htm>

Brookings Institution, "Turmoil in Pakistan."
<http://www.brookings.edu/comm/infocus/pakistan.htm>

International Crisis Group. "Pakistan."
<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=1267&l=1>

Moreau, Ron. "Where the Jihad Lives Now." Newsweek (Oct. 29, 2007).
www.newsweek.com

Senate Foreign Relations hearing. "Pakistan: Building Democracy or Fueling Extremism." July 25, 2007.
<http://foreign.senate.gov/hearings/2007/hrg070725p.html>

United States State Department Background Notes
<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3453.htm>

Wall Street Journal op-ed. "The Musharraf Dilemma."
http://www.cfr.org/publication/13574/musharraf_dilemma.html?breadcrumb=%2Fregion%2F283%2Fpakistan

