Congressional Testimony

U.S.-Pakistan Relations: Assassination, Instability, and the Future of U.S. Policy

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Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for your invitation to testify on the emerging problems facing the U.S.-Pakistan relationship and their consequences for the United States. As requested by the chairman in his letter of invitation, I will focus my remarks on four issues: (i) the prospect for a free and fair election in Pakistan and the consequences of its absence for stability; (ii) the willingness of the new government to vigorously pursue counterterrorism operations; (iii) the wisdom of reorienting U.S. assistance to Pakistan; and, (iv) the security of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal in the context of the current crisis. I respectfully request that my statement be entered into the record.

(I) Free and Fair Elections in Pakistan

The tragic assassination of Benazir Bhutto on December 27, 2007, capped a year of great institutional turmoil in Pakistani politics. It also complicated President Musharraf's hopes for an undisturbed validation of his own reelection as president. And, it undermined the administration's efforts to broker a marriage of convenience between Musharraf and Bhutto that would produce a governing dispensation that is civilian in appearance; accept Musharraf's continuance in office because of his importance to U.S. interests; and strengthen the elements of moderation in Pakistan. Bhutto's violent death instantaneously frustrated these three goals and inaugurated an interregnum of uncertainty.

The critical question now for Pakistan and for the United States as well is whether the forthcoming elections to the National Assembly in Pakistan scheduled for February 18, 2008, will be free and fair. This is an issue of some importance because, after eight years of military rule, the political "market" in Pakistan has been sufficiently distorted to the point where it is simply not evident what the authentic preferences of the nation actually are. If nothing else, therefore, a free and fair election in Pakistan is finally necessary so that both Pakistanis and the outside world can assess the yearnings of the electorate in regard to a variety of issues ranging from the desirable form of governance to the commitment of the Pakistani people to combating extremism.

The quality of the forthcoming elections is also important for another critical reason—determining President Musharraf's future—and it is this quandary that has the greatest bearing on whether the February 2008 polls will in fact be a genuine exercise of participatory democracy. Understanding the conundrum here is critical to assessing whether the forthcoming elections can be free and fair as demanded by the administration, the Congress of the United States and the international community.

President Musharraf secured his reelection as president for another five years on October 6, 2007, through the consent of the outgoing National Assembly. This body happened to be dominated by his supporters, which included the alliance of Islamist parties, the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), as a result of the flawed political process leading up to the elections of October 2002. Musharraf has promised, however, that this reelection would be submitted for validation by the incoming National Assembly, which means that, at the very least, he needs an outcome in the February elections that would not cause him to renege on that commitment. Further, Musharraf cannot afford to find himself in a situation where the new National Assembly begins to reconsider or emend the constitutional distortions that he has ordained during his past tenure in office, particularly insofar as these affect the prospect of his continued rule. And, finally, he cannot countenance any elected government that would

attempt to remedy his dismissal of the former Chief Justice, Iftikhar Chaudhry, and his associates or resuscitate an independent Supreme Court either through direct legislative action or through the protection of writ petitions aimed expressly at securing this end.

Musharraf's survival as president for an extended term, accordingly, depends on securing a favorable outcome in the National Assembly, where parties that benefit from his unchallenged continuance in office win the election decisively enough to prevent any future challenges to his rule emanating from the legislature. In practice, this means that Musharraf's first preference would be that the Pakistan Muslim League-Q (PML-Q) dominate the new government because it is led by individuals who detest his most fervent political antagonist—Nawaz Sharif and the Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N)—perhaps only slightly less than he does. Given the PML-Q's rather narrow electoral base, however, it is unlikely that the party would secure an absolute majority without large-scale rigging that would discredit the election entirely. Musharraf's next most favorable outcome, therefore, would be a coalition of friendly parties, similar to the kind of arrangement seen in the outgoing National Assembly. In this context, it is possible to imagine a post-electoral outcome that involves Musharraf striking a bargain with Asif Zardari and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), whereby the latter—if it does well at the polls—is enticed to join (or lead) a coalition that is permitted a certain latitude in governance so long as it does not direct or support any fundamental challenge to Musharraf's continuation in office.

The worst outcome from Musharraf's perspective would be a strong electoral performance by Nawaz Sharif's PML-N: the bitterness between these two leaders would inevitably produce a political collision that would undermine the president's interests and possibly threaten his hope for an unchallenged tenure. Somewhat less challenging would be a coalition between principally Sharif's PML-N and Zardari's PPP: although Sharif has certainly made overtures towards to the PPP suggesting such an arrangement, in part to benefit from the sympathy vote that many expect will aid the latter in the forthcoming polls, it is not clear today whether such a coalition is viable and who its other constituents might be. Musharraf's relations with Sharif at any rate are so poisonous that he is likely to respond to the threat of any PML-N presence in the government by attempting to isolate the party politically.

This discussion about electoral outcomes is pertinent only because it highlights a central point about the forthcoming election: President Musharraf needs to be assured of a *favorable* electoral outcome a priori, if he is to avoid a raft of political challenges to his desire to stay in office. Or else he will be forced to engineer an outcome after the election results are tallied in order to produce a ruling coalition that will not defy his continued presence as president. It is most likely that he will settle for the latter course only if his efforts prior to the election do not succeed in producing a victory for his preferred partners who are both comfortable with his continuation in office and undisturbed by any of the past mutilations inflicted on the country's constitution and its mode of governance.

Given these realities, it is unlikely that the forthcoming elections in Pakistan will be truly "free and fair," that is, remain an adequately neutral process which permits the electorate to convey its political preferences effectively. There are two kinds of impediments to such a free and fair election. The first and most obvious kind of obstacle relates to violations of "process": these include the ever-present threat of manipulation of the electoral rolls,

intimidation of voters, especially in the rural areas, and the dangers of rigging, usually effectuated by "adding" the votes required to secure the desirable results before the tallying centers are permitted to announce the official results. While such "process" violations are commonplace in Pakistani elections and can be mitigated somewhat by the presence of election monitors, the major hazards this time around arise from violations of "structure," that is, from the deliberate maintenance of an irregular playing field designed to illegitimately advantage certain favored parties in the election. Examples of such structural violations include the Musharraf government's refusal to suspend the *nazims* (mayors) who orchestrate the local misdeeds required to produce the desired outcomes at the polls; the failure to fill the slots allocated to the North West Frontier Province and the Sindh on the Election Commission; the regime's refusal to allow exit polling as a means of mitigating, however partially, the threat of rigging; the continued restrictions on the media; the blatant use of official and state machinery in support of certain political favorites; and most problematic of all, the manifest partiality of the president and the provincial governors along with the caretaker and local governments. Not surprisingly, then, one watchdog group of eminent Pakistanis, the *Citizens Group on Electoral Process (CGEP)*, has assessed the pre-poll electoral process in Pakistan to be highly unfair, giving it a score of only 26 on a scale of 100 in respect to the overall fairness of the polling environment in a period spanning 12 months.

Despite these efforts, however, it is not clear whether Musharraf's preferred partners will be able to win the election. If this is the case, and if Musharraf is unable to cobble together a coalition that would acquiesce to his continuation in office, the stage would be set for a serious constitutional crisis in Pakistan. Given the failure of the political "market" in Pakistan referred to earlier, it is possible—perhaps even likely—that any election result, even if fair, will be challenged vociferously by the losers. And the lack of reasonable prior information about the preferences of Pakistan's electorate makes it difficult to judge whether such complaints are in fact justified or whether they simply understandable but nonetheless illegitimate protests provoked by political defeat. In any event, if such dissatisfaction results in violence that leads to a breakdown in law and order requiring the Pakistan Army to be deployed for policing operations, this diversion to internal security duties would not only distract from the counterterrorism operations currently underway in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) but also would strain the comity currently existing between President Musharraf and the Chief of Army Staff, General Pervez Kiyani. Depending on how such a crisis unfolds, a major meltdown in domestic order that results in significant fatalities as a result of military action could be one important driver (among others) that compels the leadership of the Pakistan Army to force Musharraf's exit as president. The potential for civil unrest and instability emerging from a flawed election in Pakistan, therefore, ought to remain the most problematic contingency from the viewpoint of the Bush administration.

Attempting to avert just this prospect and to further the cause of a genuinely free election in Pakistan, many critics of the administration have argued in Joshua Kurlantzick's words, that "the U[nited] S[tates] needs to abandon Musharraf today."[1] While that sentiment is understandable, the prescription is premature. It is also among the more risky responses that

[1] Joshua Kurlantzick, "Time's Up: The U.S. Needs to Abandon Musharraf Today," *The New Republic,* November 5, 2007.

could be adopted by the United States right now. The Bush administration almost certainly will reject it—until it is confronted with no other choice. There is no need, moreover, to embark on such a drastic course of action at the present moment. After all, it is possible that the forthcoming election could produce a result—either through pre- or post-election negotiations between Musharraf and the political parties—that is compatible with his desire to remain in office. What is, therefore, important from the viewpoint of U.S. interests is that no premature decision with respect to supporting or abandoning Musharraf be made right away. Rather, U.S. policymakers and the Congress ought to focus on prevailing upon Musharraf to oversee a fair election that reflects certain standards of legitimacy by remedying the structural and process irregularities that currently threaten to vitiate the electoral process and thereby distort the desire of the Pakistani people to express themselves clearly. If this can be achieved, it would be a considerable accomplishment that would help to provide the important missing information about Pakistan's political preferences, clarify Musharraf's own future options and, by implication, delineate the reasonable alternatives facing the United States.

If this cannot be achieved at the end of the day, the administration will be confronted with difficult choices. Irrespective of how it is inclined to respond to such a contingency, three considerations ought to be borne in mind.

First, the Pakistani people today are tired of both President Musharraf and continued military rule and, given the political crisis that has been underway in Pakistan almost uninterruptedly since March 2007, are unlikely to give Musharraf the benefit of the doubt if the February election is marked by gross irregularities.

Second, the administration would be unwise to put itself in a position of diametric opposition to the will of the Pakistani people, whose inclinations will become more and more evident through both the character of the electoral process and—if fair—its result. In this context, the administration ought to avoid pretending to be neutral as structural violations of the electoral process by Musharraf continue merely because that might help to avoid an unfavorable electoral outcome that either increases domestic instability in Pakistan or compels the United States to make some hard choices. Such an approach, however appealing it may appear in the short term, will only exacerbate the problems in Pakistan, not eliminate them. The administration also ought to focus less on playing midwife in delivering certain political outcomes in the forthcoming election and more on assuring a responsive, credible, and legitimate electoral process.

Third, the ongoing political transition in Pakistan—including the growing national clamor for a return to democracy centered on an abiding rule of law—can no longer remain isolated from the larger war on terrorism. Although the legitimacy of Musharraf's rule and the character of Pakistan's apex governing arrangements were initially not central to either U.S. counterterrorism interests or Islamabad's counterterrorism performance, both these variables have now become important to Pakistan's ability to win the struggle against Islamist extremism. A continuing constriction of democracy could, if it leads to social disorder, distract the Pakistan Army even as it widens the opportunity for the more radical elements in Pakistani society to dominate their nation's political space to the long-term detriment of both Pakistan and the United states.

(II) Pursuing Counterterrorism Operations

Even if a reasonably fair election were to be completed and a legitimate civilian authority arrives in office, it would be too much to expect that Pakistan's counterterrorism operations would be dramatically transformed either in motivation or effectiveness. Appreciating this fact requires understanding the nature of the terrorist groups within Pakistan and the character of Islamabad's counterterrorism strategy vis-à-vis these groups.

As things stand today, it is possible to identify five distinct extremist groups that ought to be the legitimate target of Pakistani law enforcement and military operations:

(i) Sectarian groups, such as the Sunni Sipah-e-Sahaba and the Shia Tehrik-e-Jafria, which are engaged in violence within Pakistan;

(ii) Anti-Indian terrorist groups that operate with Pakistani military and ISID support, such as the Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), and the Harkat ul-Mujahideen (HuM);

(iii) The Pakistani "Taliban" groups, consisting of the extremist outfits in the FATA, led by individuals such as Baitullah Mahsud, the chieftain of the Mahsud tribe in South Waziristan, Maulana Faqir Muhammad and Maulana Qazi Fazlullah of the Tehrik-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammad, and Mangal Bagh Afridi of the Lashkar-e-Islami in the Khyber Agency;

(iv) The original Taliban movement and especially its Kandahari leadership centered around Mullah Mohammad Omar and believed to be now resident in Quetta; and, finally,

(v) al-Qaeda and its affiliates, meaning the non-South Asian terrorists currently ensconced in the FATA region of the North West Frontier Province in Pakistan.

Since September 2001, President Musharraf has pursued a highly differentiated counterterrorism policy that has involved treating each of these targets differently. He systematically suppressed mainly those domestic terrorist groups like the Sunni Sipah-e-Sahaba and the Shia Tehrik-e-Jafria that had engaged in bloody internal sectarian violence but, more importantly, had subverted critical state objectives. By contrast, he largely ignored the terrorist outfits operating against India in Kashmir and elsewhere: although he has controlled their infiltration into Kashmir in recent years, this restraint has not extended to either abandoning or eliminating them in the manner witnessed, for example, in the case of the more virulent anti-national sectarian entities operating within Pakistan. Fearful of Washington's disfavor, Musharraf has attacked al-Qaeda resolutely, if not always effectively. Although the Pakistani Taliban did not exist as realistic threats in 2001, Musharraf has also combated them vigorously and as best he can, though in *all* instances where active counterterrorism operations are underway, Pakistani military effectiveness remains hobbled by real limitations in capacity. Musharraf has approached the original Taliban in a manner more akin to the Kashmiri terrorists and has avoided targeting them comprehensively; he has especially overlooked their leadership now resident in and around Quetta.

A summary assessment of Musharraf's counterterrorism operations against extremist groups, therefore, must conclude that they are at the very least "segmented" and that this discordance can be accounted principally by how important the exempted groups are to

Pakistan's national interests. Because the original Taliban and especially its Kandahari leadership is critical to the attainment of Islamabad's objectives vis-à-vis Afghanistan, just as the Kashmiri terrorist groups are vis-à-vis India, the Pakistani state has refrained from attacking them in any significant or decisive way. Although this discriminative approach to fighting terrorism was shaped and implemented by General Musharraf in his dual capacity as president and previously chief of army staff, it would be erroneous to conclude, however, that this prevailing strategy is owed simply to the whim of one man. This is particularly relevant today when Musharraf's hold on power has become progressively weaker and the future of his political status and effectiveness increasingly clouded. Rather, Musharraf's decisions in regard to counterterrorism strategy since 2001, although publicly perceived as personal dicta, invariably reflected the consensus among the corps commanders of the Pakistan Army and, hence, represent the preferences of Pakistan's military-dominated state.

In other words, even if Musharraf were to suddenly exit the Pakistani political scene at some point, Islamabad's currently discordant counterterrorism strategy would still survive so long as the men on horseback continue to be the principal guardians of national security policymaking in Islamabad. Because it is unreasonable to expect that the uniformed military will give up its privileges in this regard anytime soon—even if a civilian regime were to return to the helm in the future—the internally segmented counterterrorism policy currently pursued by Pakistan will likely persist for some time to come.

Even if it could be imagined that a civilian dispensation could wrest some control of Pakistan's national security policy from the military, it is not at all certain that the current strategic direction would change dramatically. A civilian regime would probably have greater incentives to combat all sectarian terrorist groups more evenhandedly, but that too is uncertain. Whether they would do better in regards to anti-Indian terrorist groups is also unclear: after all, both the principal Pakistani civilian political parties historically permitted their military and intelligence services to aid, abet, and arm the terrorist groups operating in Kashmir and elsewhere in India, sometimes because they were simply powerless to prevent it but at other times with their full knowledge and consent. Both the principal civilian political alternatives in Pakistan would likely continue to prosecute the current antiterrorism operations against both al-Qaeda and the Pakistani Taliban because there is a consensus among the country's centrist political elites that these groups remain grave threats to both their country and the writ of their state. It is not obvious, however, that they either could or would extend this campaign to include the original Taliban and especially their fugitive leadership.

This fact, however, only underscores the continuity that is likely to persist in Pakistan's approach to counterterrorism even if a civilian government were to ascend to power in Islamabad. Although there are likely to be differences in style, nuance, and emphasis, the weaknesses of Pakistan's moderate political parties, Islamabad's enduring interests vis-à-vis Afghanistan and India, and the likely inability of any civilian government to exercise comprehensive control over the Pakistani military and intelligence services all combine to suggest that dramatic changes in attitude and performance toward the Taliban and the terrorist groups operating on Indian soil may not be forthcoming. And, although sectarian groups within Pakistan as well as liberal ideals in Pakistani politics may be pursued more urgently and hopefully just as resolutely as the war against al-Qaeda, the net deviation from

Musharraf's currently segmented antiterrorism policies may be either too subtle or too insignificant to really matter.

(III) Reorienting U.S. Assistance to Pakistan

The issue of reorienting U.S. assistance to Pakistan as a means of shaping Pakistan's political evolution is a tricky one and fraught with uncertainty and risk.

As Craig Cohen and Derek Chollet have pointed out, the majority of the $10 billion transferred to Islamabad since 2001 has gone towards military assistance: fully 57 percent, or $5.64 billion, has gone toward Coalition Support Funds (CSF); roughly 18 percent, or $1.8 billion, has been obligated towards security assistance; about 16 percent, or $1.62 billion, has been absorbed by economic and budget support in the form of direct cash transfers; and only the residual amount, some 9 percent, or $.9 billion, has been allocated towards development and humanitarian assistance.[2] This assistance pattern suggests quite emphatically, as Cohen and Chollet have phrased it, that American aid to Pakistan since the September 11, 2001, attacks "is not money intended to transform the nature of the Pakistani state or society or to strengthen Pakistan's internal stability. In effect, it is politically determined assistance, a "thank you" to Musharraf's regime for the critical role Pakistan has played in Operation Enduring Freedom."[3] That such a conclusion should be drawn is not surprising because the Bush administration unfortunately has ended up emphasizing counterterrorism objectives in Pakistan to the neglect of promoting democracy, renewing Pakistani society, and refurbishing its economic foundations so as to permit stability and development.

What should Congress do at this juncture then? First, since counterterrorism operations will continue to be important to American security for the foreseeable future, cutting back on CSF will be difficult, if not impossible. Because these funds have been very shoddily dispersed since 2001, however, reforming the disbursal system—by amending the authorizing legislation if necessary—is critical. The current system of simply cutting checks for whatever bills are presented monthly by Islamabad as the costs borne for counterterrorism support engenders institutional corruption in the Pakistani military, destroys the integrity of the U.S. assistance program, and is unfair to the U.S. taxpayer. Because money is ultimately fungible, and because it is very likely that Islamabad charges Washington for far more than it actually spends on counterterrorism operations, the current CSF allocation ends up becoming a straightforward subsidy for Pakistani purchases of expensive weapon systems whose principal value derives primarily from their utility against India. An alternative modality of disbursing coalition support funds to Pakistan, where reimbursements are tied either to specific tasks and linked to the performance of specific objectives or allocated for specific purposes, is long overdue. Such reform would, not only better align U.S. financial burdens with the true services rendered by Pakistan but also ensure that U.S. military assistance would actually be used for counterterrorism efforts rather than diverted toward other programs, while simultaneously serving as a subtle reminder to

[2] Craig Cohen and Derek Chollet, "When $10 Billion Is Not Enough: Rethinking U.S. Strategy toward Pakistan," *The Washington Quarterly*, 30:2 (Spring 2007), 7–19.
[3] Ibid., 11.

Islamabad that U.S. generosity cannot be taken for granted in the face of continuing prevarication.

Second, many of the components of the recently obligated $750 million U.S. assistance program to the FATA are eminently sensible and, if properly implemented, could help considerably in advancing the common U.S. and Pakistani goal of local stability. This includes the effort to improve Frontier Corps training; expand access to education, health, and community services; increase the investments in infrastructure; and strengthen local public diplomacy, counter-narcotics, and border control management. Several elements, however, remain of concern. To begin with, Pakistan's financial contribution to the FATA improvement program is asymmetrically minuscule in comparison to that of the United States, raising questions about Islamabad's stakes in, and ownership of, such an ambitious effort. Further, the complicated and time-consuming nature of this project, the uncertainty about its effective implementation, and the acute physical risks to what will inevitably be "high demand, low density" investments spark concerns about the ultimate success of the program. Finally, Washington's failure to condition the availability of these new funds on Islamabad's implementation of political reforms in the tribal regions embodies a great lost opportunity: Requiring Islamabad to begin the process of revising the Frontier Crimes Regulation, eliminating the political agent as part of the larger process of integrating the FATA into Pakistan's North West Frontier Province under the full jurisdiction of the provincial and national legislatures and the judicial system, and withdrawing the restrictions on political parties operating in the FATA with an eye to introducing conventional political institutions, would have provided the critical complementarities required to ensure that the current U.S. investments in the FATA would finally pay off in terms of local stability.

Third, Congress ought to revisit the larger composition of U.S. assistance to Pakistan, specifically the mix between military and developmental assistance which hitherto has been lopsidedly tilted towards the former. Given that Pakistan has also now passed its most serious moment of economic crisis, the United States should cut back on economic support funds, cash transfers, and other forms of budgetary support because these subsidies function as the equivalent of the "resource curse"—unearned "rents" that prevent Islamabad from having to pursue sound economic policies, exculpate it from responsibility for its decisions, and inexcusably liberate it from the constraints of opportunity costs, not to mention helping to destroy whatever notions of democratic responsiveness may still survive within the polity. While the level and desirability of economic support funds to Pakistan should, therefore, be reviewed by Congress sooner rather than later, Congress also ought to refrain from blocking the transfer of high-end weapons that Pakistan has already purchased. While there is a compelling case to be made that the administration ought to be more restrained in its willingness to transfer certain high-leverage weapons such as advanced air-to-air missiles and airborne warning and control systems to Islamabad for reasons related to both regional stability and technological security, Congress should not today interrupt the transfer of certain high-profile systems, such as F-16 aircraft, already committed to Pakistan.

The reasons for eschewing such action are many: first, to avoid further abrading Pakistani sentiments in regard to an aircraft that enjoys a convoluted symbolism in the recent history of U.S.-Pakistan relations; second, to avert in crisis in relations with the Pakistani military and especially with the new Chief of Army Staff, General Pervez Kiyani, who is by all

accounts a professional soldier sympathetic to advancing U.S. counterterrorism objectives; third, to refrain from reinforcing the impression in Pakistan of the United States as an inconstant and self-serving ally; and, lastly and perhaps most importantly, to move the bilateral relationship away from a "transactional approach" centered on "specific reciprocity," where Islamabad performs certain desirable actions as a response to some tit-for-tat stimulus, to something that resembles a "relational equilibrium" based on "diffuse reciprocity," where Islamabad pursues the right policies because the expectation of a steady and lasting partnership with Washington propels it to act with rectitude, confident that its good conduct would lead to a wider institutionalization of trust that would pay for itself over time.

(IV) The Security of Pakistan's Nuclear Arsenal

Although the security of Islamabad's nuclear arsenal remains uppermost in the public mind during any crisis in Pakistan, it is my judgment that Pakistan's strategic assets—to include its nuclear devices, its delivery systems, and its stockpile of fissile materials—are fundamentally safe today. Compared to the situation in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when Pakistan's nuclear arsenal was still relatively vulnerable to a variety of external and internal threats, the security of these assets has improved dramatically as a result of the protective measures put in place since the late 1990s. The Director General of Pakistan's Strategic Plans Division (SPD), Lieutenant General (retd.) Khalid Kidwai deserves singular credit for remedying the security vulnerabilities that traditionally plagued the Pakistani nuclear arsenal. These remedies, focused on insulating the strategic reserves against both external and internal dangers, involve a combination of solutions ranging from tightened physical security at strategic installations, to large investments in opacity and deception and denial, to incorporation of technical controls on the nuclear weapons themselves, to the institutionalization of organizational solutions aimed at preventing insider threats. As a result of these cumulative improvements, I believe that Pakistan's nuclear arsenal today is impervious to virtually all threats that might be imagined as materializing in peacetime.

The following exceptions apply to this general conclusion. The most potent threat to the security of Pakistan's nuclear estate currently arises primarily from contingencies involving a fissure in the Pakistani military and a breakdown in the system of authority and command. I do not believe this to be a realistic threat in present circumstances and even if relations between President Musharraf and the Chief of Army Staff, General Kiyani, were to become estranged to the point of rupture, the threat of a breakdown in the command system of the Pakistani military would be minimal, given that Musharraf no longer enjoys any line-level control over his nation's armed forces. Even if some Islamist parties were to come to power through the ballot in Pakistan, they would enjoy no operational control over Pakistan's nuclear assets. Unless one posits, therefore, a truly extreme scenario where the chief of army staff himself turns out to be secretly a political extremist, the security of Islamabad's nuclear capabilities ought not to become a matter of more than prudential concern. The real threats to the security of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal are likely to arise mostly over the longer term: if the rising tide of Islamization in Pakistani society seeps into its armed forces or into its scientific establishments—as many fear it already has, especially in the lower ranks—*and* the SPD's internal security mechanisms fail to detect the threat either because they are themselves compromised or because of oversight errors and deficiencies, the security of

Pakistan's nuclear weapons and materials may once again be at risk. Obviously, this is a contingency that the current military leadership in Pakistan is especially sensitive to, but it remains a good reason for the United States to stay engaged with the Pakistani military to help mitigate this threat should it arise.

To end this discussion, the relative high level of security that currently characterizes the Pakistani nuclear arsenal implies that the administration ought to make its decisions about supporting Musharraf without reference to any fictitious fears about the dangers his exit may pose to the protection of the arsenal. Whatever the reasons for buttressing or abandoning Musharraf may be, the impressive improvement in the security of Pakistan's nuclear assets during the last decade or so implies that concerns about a compromise of these capabilities should be among the factors least relevant to that decision.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your attention and your consideration.