CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT
FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

AMBASSADOR TARIQ FATEMI
ON
PAKISTANI POLITICS AFTER LAL MASJID

THURSDAY, AUGUST 9, 2007
10:00 A.M.

Transcript by:
Federal News Service
Washington, D.C.

ASHLEY TELLIS: Let me thank you all for coming this morning to the endowment to listen to Ambassador Fatemi on the subject before us, which is Pakistani politics in the aftermath of the Lal Masjid event. My name is Ashley Tellis; I am a senior associate here at the endowment and I work in the South Asia program.

It is a privilege to have with us this morning Ambassador Fatemi, whom I have known for almost 20 years actually, going back to his previous stint when he was the DCM in the Pakistani Embassy here in Washington in the second Reagan administration. Ambassador Fatemi subsequently was his country's ambassador to the United States for a short period of time before going to the European Union and to Jordan.

He is a career foreign service officer, now retired, and has had the privilege of serving successive Pakistani governments in varying capacities. Just before he came to the United States, he actually served as the principal officer on the staff of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif with responsibilities that included oversight of Pakistan's strategic programs and its foreign policies. We are delighted, of course, to have Ambassador Fatemi here with us this morning at Carnegie. And I will take the privilege of claiming the perspicacity for having invited him today – (laughter) – at this very significant juncture in Pakistani politics.

I don't need to remind an audience like you that the kind of attention that Pakistan is getting today is clearly quite unprecedented. The country is at a very important moment in its own political evolution. It has become not surprisingly also an issue an American domestic politics. And it has become also a subject on the campaign trail. What is happening in Pakistan today obviously is of great importance for the future of Pakistan and for Pakistanis. But because of our intimate relationship with Pakistan and the role that it is playing in the war on terror, the developments in Pakistan also have very important implications for the United States. I don't think we have a better person who can interpret for us, who can in a sense describe and analyze the landscape of current domestic developments than Ambassador Fatemi.

And so, without further ado, I would like to welcome Tariq once again to the endowment, invite him to speak on the subject that we have before us and thank you all for coming here this morning.

(Applause.)

TARIQ FATEMI: Thank you, Ashley. That was very kind and sweet of you. I see so many familiar faces, you know; it's always wonderful to come to back to Washington, D.C., where I spent many, many years, and where I left part of me, because my kids decided that this was a better place for them and had better prospects. So I have to come to Washington every summer for what, in our part of the world, we call a yatra. So that is what I am doing here, and Ashley felt that I could be of some advantage to him to come down to Carnegie and speak to you.

Most of you, if not all of you, are very familiar with Pakistan and its very colorful history, so there is not much that I can add to, except to tell you that Pakistani politics has become even more uncertain, and even more tumultuous. Ashley felt that Lal Masjid and the military operations on July 10 would be a very good starting point to describe where Pakistan is currently. I would, with your permission, Ashley, go back a little bit.

And in fact, I may say that Ashley and I have spent many an evening discussing Pakistan and their relations and Pakistan-U.S, India-U.S. relations. And he is the one who has made me familiar with such arcane terms as force multipliers and throwbacks, and the advantages of AWACs over other similar systems. And now I see that he has fathered what we in Pakistan are very disturbed about. And I hope the offspring does not add to our worries. But Ashley is a friend of Pakistan and I have always greatly valued his help and assistance, especially when I was running from Rayburn to Russell, and from one place to the other on the Hill, trying to drum up support for our assistance package in the '80s. My successors are doing the same here, and I think their task is certainly no easier than what I faced.

But coming back to Pakistan and today's subject, a week in politics is a lifetime. I would say four hours in Pakistani politics is what transformed the country. It really did; those four hours during which the chief justice of the supreme court was literally kept locked up in the camp office of the president of Pakistan.

When on the 9th of March 2007, the chief justice was invited to come to the presidency, no one – least of all the president – could have anticipated that here was a person with a track record of being a team player, with having been thrown into office on the provisional constitutional order – would even think in terms of saying no to the president. It was unprecedented. It had never happened in Pakistan's history. The judges had always been extremely cooperative, and much more so if they were confronted by military rulers.

And here, this individual would neither succumb to pressure, nor give into enticements. Obviously, the president and the intelligence chiefs and the others who were all resplendent in the glories of wars lost and campaigns unfinished, they just couldn't comprehend it. It had never happened before. And therefore, I would say, Ashley, that it is really 9th March, which represents a watershed, a defining moment in the Musharraf regime's history, because up to the moment of 9th March, the president of Pakistan was not only in supreme control of the situation at home, but all over the world he was being upheld as the progenitor of enlightened moderation – nobody exactly knows what that means – and he could walk the corridors of power in Washington, spend time in Camp David, and the rest of it.

Suddenly, out of the blue, he is confronted by this man Chaudhury, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhury, who says no, he will not walk away into the sunset. Sorry, I won't do it. And you have utter confusion. All kinds of explanations were given as to why he was kept there; the prime minister was offering prayers, which was something new for the prime minister – I didn't know he offered prayers. The president had to take off for Karachi, leaving his guests behind; whatever it was.

More than the fact that the president tried to dismiss the chief justice was the humiliation that was then showered upon him three days later when he wanted to go back to the supreme court to face his fellow judges who were members of the so-called Supreme Judicial Council. The sight of the chief justice of Pakistan being manhandled, the hair on his head is being pulled by security officials, his neck being wrung by goons dressed as intelligence officers was too much even for the Pakistanis, immune though we have become over the years to all kinds of insults.

And the reaction in Pakistan was remarkable. Every section of society virtually rose up in sheer disgust at the manner in which a military regime was treating the chief justice of Pakistan. And even that has galvanized civil society in Pakistan. The politicians were not there on the scene. Political parties were virtually non-existent. Their leaders of the two major mainstream political parties were outside the country. And therefore, everything appeared hunky-dory on the morning of the 9th, and the president was very right to say that he would get elected, and elected in his uniform.

In fact, the Panjaf (ph) chief minister had made a statement a few days earlier saying not only would Musharraf be elected this time, he would continue to be elected any number of times he wanted. And a few months earlier, when he had gone to Cairo, he wanted to know how President Mubarak had succeeded in getting elected every time. And so, when I visited Cairo a couple of months ago, I said, what happened? Mubarak should have told him not to treat the chief justice in this manner. They have other ways; my Egyptian brothers have devised other more sophisticated methods of dealing with the judiciary.

Anyway, then you have the media getting into the act. By now, we have dozens of channels, each vying for audience and competition with the other. And when the party officials felt that the media was becoming too independent to their liking, they attack on one of the media stations, and the manhandling and the physical assaults on some of the journalists added to the woes of the government.

So 9th of March, Ashley. When coupled with – when problems come, they don't come alone. When it rains, it pours, as in our part of the world. And at the same time, suddenly you have the militants next to the headquarters of Pakistan's intelligence agencies, suddenly going around and trying to impose sharia in Pakistan, the Islamic law. No one really knows, even after 1,400 years, what exactly it means. But nevertheless, there is a body of opinion that believes that we would all be better humans if we were to follow this sharia.

And these people who had been mollycoddled, who had been nurtured and nourished over the years by the establishment itself, had taken the law into their hands on dozens of occasions, and ministers and police chiefs had gone and begged and pleaded with them to be more reasonable, suddenly became even less reasonable. They went around kidnapping people, including kidnapping Chinese nationalists. Now, where you kidnap Chinese nationals, you don't have the People's Daily writing an editorial on it; you have China's president making a telephone call. And it matters, because if there is one country that matters to Pakistan, it is China. After all, it is the single biggest investor, our most important friend, source of great sustenance and support over the years, and therefore that woke up the establishment to what was happening in Islamabad.

But even in that Lal Masjid operation, which you have made the title of today's talk, you will see that the signals emanating from the establishment were very mixed. While the military and the police and the paramilitary was laying siege to the Lal Masjid – Lal Masjid means Red Mosque; it was painted red for no apparent reason – and they had managed to capture ground around them and turn it into a seminary, into a religious school known as Jamia Hafsa. While the paramilitary forces were laying siege to it, the government ministers were going every evening and dining with the militants and trying to persuade them to be more reasonable.

So when the operation finally culminated on the 10th of July, you would have expected the liberals, the progressives, the urban elite to be very happy about it. But they were not, because they felt that the operation should have taken place much earlier, that they should have been stopped from encroaching on government property, that they should have been stopped from seizing a children's library, that they should have been stopped from accumulating sophisticated arms and food and water that could last them for months.

The religious elements, on the other hand, felt that the operation was unnecessarily bloody and brutal, and no one until now really knows how many people died in that operation. A week later, when the mosque was opened, some of the worshippers found human body parts strewn amongst the rubble. So you had again, the government messing up what could have at least been an opportunity for them to demonstrate, a) the writ of the state and a very clear decision that they would not permit the militants, the extremists, the radicals from taking over power in the capital of Pakistan. Therefore, you will see that even though the operation was supported by a large number of people, many of the so-called progressives, including leaders of the human rights organizations, were extremely with the manner and the methodology used to carry out the operation. So the government came out a loser with both sides.

And finally, Ashley, the 20th of July supreme court decision restoring the chief justice to his office, and declaring the president's action as unlawful, this judgment has shaken up the government. It was totally unprecedented, according to Pakistani newspapers, who reported well-informed sources that the cabinet meeting a day earlier had formed the opinion that either the judgment would go in favor of the government unanimously, or at best, it would be something like 8-5. It just shows that our intelligence guys are as smart as yours. They totally misread it.

And the spontaneous reaction of joy and happiness, as if a cloud had lifted from over Pakistan; there was tremendous relief in all sections of society. People were genuinely happy that finally there was some good news coming from somewhere that could dispel the darkness and the gloom that had come over the country since the 9th of March. And therefore, every single institution, every single newspaper welcomed the decision of the supreme court and felt that this could possibly be – this could possibly usher in a new era in Pakistan where the judiciary would become the protector and the defender of the rights of individuals and of institutions.

It was a horrible setback to the government, because it made it very clear that it was not the chief justice alone who would be a problem. His brother judges too have suddenly found courage, determination, and a vision of what they felt Pakistan should be. Fakaldin

Jiabra (ph), a very senior retired judge of the Supreme Court, commented on television that day. He said that the supreme court had to choose between the supremacy of the gun and the supremacy of the constitution. And we are all proud of the fact that the supreme court has chosen to uphold the supremacy of the law of the constitution.

Earlier, as if the government hadn't made enough mistakes, another very important date in the current crisis is the 12th of May. Because on that day, the chief justice of Pakistan was to go to Karachi to address a lawyer's meeting. The ruling party in Karachi, or part of Centurban (ph), the MQM, had decided that they would not permit the chief justice to land or at least to enter the city. And therefore, they kind of created a situation wherein they themselves became the infringers of the law and the breakers of all codes of legality and decency. The result was the death of over 40 to 45 individuals – men, women, and children – and the carnage let loose in Karachi was a shocker for the people of Pakistan.

But even more shocking was the fact that while this was taking place in Karachi, the president – with the help of the ruling party – had organized a rally in Islamabad. And even though provided many an occasion to at least express his regrets over the Karachi killings, the president continues to believe that the MQM was right to demonstrate its strength and its hold over the city of Karachi.

Now, that also, I think, was politically a very short-sighted statement on the part of the president, because the MQM, and he – all kinds of allegations and charges have been made of ethnic affiliations and ethnic bias and the rest of it, which the president himself has had to deny on a number of occasions. But nevertheless, everyone felt that by first permitting the MQM to do what it did in Karachi, and then to defend the action of the MQM, the president was calling into question very seriously his bona fides as a genuinely neutral and independent political personality.

So therefore, having told you the lie of the land, where are we standing today? Only this morning, as I was living my daughter's apartment, I was wondering whether, by the time I get in and meet Ashley, whether there would be a declaration of emergency in Pakistan. I am told that the minister of information has said that the president has decided not to do so, but that it was seriously mooted. It was given serious consideration. The fact that senior American officials had to speak to him on the telephone and to discuss domestic developments in Pakistan is all evidence of the drift that is currently taking place in Pakistan.

The writ of the state had been challenged. The general has been serially weakened. And this is also evident from the fact that the core commanders for the first time in Pakistan's history actually met and had to declare their support for Musharraf in his capacity as both the army chief and the president of Pakistan. Core commanders meetings are not supposed to focus on domestic political developments. And if and when they do, it's not supposed to be said so in public.

The civic society has been energized. The NGOs have become very active. The media has taken on a role unprecedented in Pakistan's history. The political parties that were virtually dormant have suddenly woken up and they suddenly feel that the time may be ripe for them to once again enter the fold of active politicking in Pakistan.

Now, in another year and at another time, these events would not have mattered. But they matter because 2007 is most likely going to be the election year in Pakistan. The term of the current parliament, the term of the current president is expiring. When it is expiring is, of course, a matter of great debate, because it depends on who is actually doing the explanation. But whatever it is, the elections are supposed to take place some time in September or October, unless emergency is declared, which under the Pakistani constitution would permit the current parliament to stay on for another year, or parliament to be sent home, but the government to stay on and not have elections for another year.

So whatever the decision is, the fact is that the ruling political party, the PMLQ, is in disarray. Many of its people are looking over their shoulders and wondering where and when they should abandon ship, number one. Number two, the president's election in uniform is now out of the question, because every single political party in Pakistan has made it clear that they will oppose the president's election if he were to stay on in uniform; not only through the judicial process, but if required, through street demonstrations.

Thirdly, the president himself has had to eat humble pie and enter into serious negotiations with Ms. Benazir Bhutto, the leader of the Pakistan's People's Party, who until a few months ago had been accused of being the most corrupt politician in Pakistan's history, and against whom the government had instituted or continued pursuing more than half a dozen criminal cases relating to corruption, nepotism, and the rest of it, including a case currently being fought in the Swiss courts. Now, Benazir Bhutto is kosher, and a deal with her would be very much within the purview of the Islamic sharia law. If you are sinking, you can cling at even a straw.

Now, Ms. Benazir Bhutto is a smart and intelligent lady. After all, she spent her youth in this country and learned all the tricks of the trade here. So, she now wants not only a deal with the general, but one that is going to not only give her a clean chit – in other words, totally remove all allegations, charges, and cases against her – but also remove the constitutional restriction that presently inhibits her or does not permit her for standing for the office of the prime minister. The leader of the other political party, Nawaz Sharif, who is still in London biding his time, his people have filed a case in the Supreme Court, and I think the hearing took place today and will continue for the next few days. Most likely, the supreme court will rule in favor of Nawaz Sharif and he and his brother Shabaz will be permitted to return home. If they do, then the election season will really have been launched in full gear.

So currently, you have the Pakistani president who appears lost, confused, unsure of himself. The political parties have been galvanized. Civic society has become very aware and conscious of its newfound strength. The media wishes to assert itself more. And the president's political party itself is in a state of disarray. Now, what does it do relations between Pakistan and a) India, b) Afghanistan, and c) the United States?

First of all, India. The peace process with India, which was launched in January 2004 – and made considerable progress because we agreed to a large number of confidence building measures, and both countries appeared to have entered a period of cordiality and normalcy – in any case, had gone into a state of frozen animation since earlier this year, because they had already decided and agreed upon the CBMs. And when it came time for a

discussion or a negotiation on the core political differences between the two countries, obviously, the going got tough, and not much has happened since early this year. Most likely, the Indians would want to wait and watch and see what happens in Islamabad before they pick up the thread of negotiations, even though the Indian national security advisor, Mr. Narayan, stated a few days ago that he felt that Musharraf's troubles were over, or most of it was over.

Now, as regards Afghanistan, again, today, for the first time, a Afghan-Pakistani jirga is taking place outside Kabul, which is being led by the prime minister, Shaukat Asia. The president could not leave because of pressing engagements at home. Now, the jirga, which is supposed to bring an understanding between the tribes and encourage them to get rid of the foreign militants that are living on both sides of the frontier, will be a very good public relations exercise. And people in Washington will feel very happy and satisfied about it. But neither in Kabul nor in Islamabad, if the media is to be believed, is there expectation of any real understanding or agreement being arrived at. In any case, large number of Pashtun leaders from Pakistan, including – (unintelligible) – Raman (ph) and others declined to travel to Kabul. And the Afghans themselves feel disappointed, because they know that without the president being present in these deliberations, the Pakistani side will not really be prepared to agree to anything substantive.

Relations between Pakistan and the United States, which is critical – after all, you are providing us nearly $700 million of aid every year, and of course, around a billion dollars that comes to Pakistan unaccounted and unbudgeted, which is of course always far more welcome. Now, you are also a close friend and ally. We are partners in the global war on terror. Your president is on record as having expressed his strong love and affection and admiration and appreciation for the Pakistani president. So what happens to Pakistan-U.S. relations?

As regards the war on terror, I do not think that the induction of a civilian political set up will really matter, because most of the mainstream parties in Pakistan are as committed to the war on terror as the current political dispensation. It would also be wrong to claim that the war on terror is being conducted more efficiently because the president happens to be the army chief. The Pakistan armed forces are a disciplined and professional lot, and when given the orders, I'm sure they will obey them as well as they are obeying the president.

But it is very important for this audience to note that there is growing skepticism in Pakistan regarding the objective, the long-term objectives, on the war on terror. Growing number of Pakistanis believe that the war on terror has become an endless saga of American pressures and demands for greater concessions, and that it is more America's war, and less Pakistan's war. Now, that perception is a bad perception. It is a negative perception, and something that both sides will have to work very hard to remove.

The stream of criticism and denunciations that emerged from Washington at very regular intervals regarding the lack of commitment on the part of Pakistan or the ability to perform up to American expectations is not helping the cause either. I think the Musharraf government has done as much as it could given the conditions on the ground in Pakistan. It has deployed nearly a hundred thousand troops in the troubled (?) tribal areas of Pakistan;

nearly seven (hundred) to 800 Pakistani soldiers have died in these operations. And on occasions, the Pakistani government has been willing to that it carried out operations rather than ICEF (?) or U.S. forces when the insurgence took place in the border areas.

So I am personally of the view that the Pakistani government, whichever it is, in the future will remain committed to it. But the American administration will have to be a little more sensitive or a little more aware of Pakistanis' sensitivities. These regular demands, especially when they are made in public, even if they happen to be part of the election campaigning, do not help the cause. As I stated, the peace process with India will continue undisturbed after the current lull or the current suspension because both Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif are committed to the normalization process. Benazir tried it in her time. She didn't make much success, not because of lack of desire on her part, but she wasn't permitted to do so. Nawaz Sharif, as you would recall, took the historic decision of inviting Prime Minster – (unintelligible) – in February 1998 and their agreement in Lahor (ph) was a very far-reaching one and had the Kargil operations not taken place that summer, India-Pakistan relations would have taken a totally different turn and a far more pleasant one at that.

So if in the next two minutes, if you'll permit me actually to conclude, Pakistan today, 60 years after its birth, remains an extremely troubled and tormented land, I regret to say. It has not yet been able to determine what it should be, what direction it should take, or should it be a parliamentary constitutional democracy, should it be a presidential system? What should the rights of the provinces be? What kind of arrangement should be made for running the affairs of the state? Should it be a liberal Western-oriented democracy? Should it be an Islamic state in the mold of some others in our neighborhood? These are major questions that continue to trouble people in Pakistan.

It is also very important that the Pakistanis are able to determine these questions, because unlike other states, Pakistan is a multiethnic state, meaning, in other words, there are at least four, if not five, major ethnic groups in Pakistan with one of them, Punjab, being the dominant partner, with overwhelming majority in the armed forces and in the civilian bureaucracy. Therefore, unless an arrangement is made whereby all the federating units of Pakistan feel that they have a stake in the future of Pakistan, the absence of democracy in Islamabad encourages vociferous tendencies and the smaller provinces have a tendency to pull away from the center and look for advantages elsewhere. That can only be curbed by bringing about restoring democracy to the country.

And finally, if the United States genuinely wants to have Pakistan as a long-term friend and ally, it must – and I really urge it with all the vehemence at my command – it must encourage and promote the restoration of genuine democracy to Pakistan, an establishment of a government in Islamabad that is truly represented, that is truly legitimate, can have the credibility, that can have the clout to thereby become your long-term friends and partners, not only in the global war on terror, but on a whole series of other issues.

Unrepresented military regimes may appear very orderly, may appear very disciplined. The decision-taking process is far simpler and a democracy may be far messier, as you know better than us. But believe me, it is only a democracy that can be a genuine

partner of the United States in the multiple problems that we in Pakistan and the Islamic world will be facing in the coming years. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MR. TELLIS: I didn't mention in my introduction that since Tariq retired from government service, he has become a very prominent public affairs commentator in Pakistan, and I think all the skills that he brought to his diplomatic service, his (unintelligible) – analytical powers, he has continued to deploy in the work that he now continues to do. Thank you very much for that really comprehensive story of the evolution of where Pakistan is today. I want to open the floor and invite your questions and comments, I would just request you, though, to raise your hand, of course, so that I can recognize you, but identify yourself so that Tariq gets at least some sense of who's asking the question. Tessie (sp).

Q: Thank you. Tessie Schaffer from CSIS and it's lovely to see you here, Tariq. One factor that you didn't mention was the impact of homegrown extremism on the domestic political scene. I've spent much of my professional life arguing that there is less to this problem than meets the eye, but I wonder if that isn't changing. And I'd be interested in your thoughts on whether the experience of this government during and after the raid on the Lal Masjid is going to cast a shadow over this government's and future governments' ability to exercise the authority of the state over militant groups that are accustomed to having their own way.

MR. FATEMI: Thank you, Tessie. That's a very important aspect. My observation, which is shared by a large number of people, is that the Musharraf regime has never been able to determine where its heart lay. Did it want Pakistan to become a genuinely liberal, progressive, modern Muslim state? Or was it willing to permit the extremists and the militants to have a say in the affairs of the state as long as they were not going to become a problem for the regime.

You see, the difference in my view between Zia (?), another military dictator who went through the entire '80s, was that we all knew where Zia stood. He was Islamist; he wanted all of us to become good Islamists. You got to offer prayers. So we knew where we were headed. Now, in the case of the Musharraf regime, I really don't know. From all accounts, he is a liberal person. From all accounts, he likes and believes in things that you and I would like to believe in. But his regime has always shirked away from coming out definitely in favor of what he believes in. Thereby, the signals have been very confusing.

All Lal Masjid, these Lal Masjid characters were doing what they did not in the last few weeks; they have been doing this for the past many months and years. I mean, after all, they were trucking in weapons, taking in money, turning it into a fraud and right within, literally within a hundred meters away from the headquarters of the intelligence, of the ISI, Inter-Services Intelligence. And even on the day the operations took place, the chief of the ruling party was sitting there and discussing with them what terms and conditions would be given so that they could operate elsewhere, do whatever they were doing.

Therefore, the problem of homegrown extremism, Tessie, in my view, will be better handled by a political setup because this needs to be debated and discussed by parliament, by the political parties, by civic society, by the NGOs, as to where should Pakistan be headed. How long can you permit Pakistan to become the hunting ground for all kinds of foreigners

to come in and take refuge and take advantage of that refuge to do what they have been doing?

So if this operation had taken place a year earlier, you would have then seen that this would be representing a decision on the part of the Musharraf regime to abandon the alliance with the Islamists. But even now, even today, ministers of the federal cabinet are actually offering their apologies for the operation carried out against the Lal Masjid. So we don't know where they stand. And I think that as long as you do not have a genuinely free and fair election and a government that is legitimate and democratic, these issues will continue to fester and continue to breed, much to our distress and regret in coming years.

Q: I'm Mohammad Adah (ph) from Voice of America's Urdu television. I have two questions, sir. First of all, we were talking about the deal between government and – (inaudible) – Benazir Bhutto. Do you think that this deal can prevent the emergency in Pakistan, because until last night, everyone was saying that there are good chances for emergency in Pakistan, but in the morning they've said that no, they won't apply any kind of emergency in Pakistan. And secondly, most of the senior political leaders of People's Party have said and showed their disappointment on Benazir and the deal. So do you think that Benazir will still go for that deal? Thank you.

MR. FATEMI: I honestly don't know whether the deal will be a deal and what the terms of the deal would be. Benazir Bhutto claims that she's entering into negotiations with President Musharraf because she believes that if Musharraf is pushed out, he could be succeeded by another military general. I discount it. A, because the armed forces and the generals are much too smart. They would not want to step in at a time when sentiment is strongly against their coming back into power, number one.

Number two, you will see that DDD (?) with the judiciary as in its active mode currently and the kinds of judgments that are emanating, even on the Karachi incident. You know, all these months, the court didn't say a word and then suddenly yesterday the – (unintelligible) – high court has sent notices to all the senior officials asking them to come up with their responses as to why what happened did happen. So I really don't know whether the deal will take place.

Yes, most People's Party senior leaders do not want the deal because they feel that a deal with a military ruler at a time when he is maybe at his weakest would not send the right signal to a large of number of People's Party supporters who have a track record of having stood up to military rule because People's Party workers have actually suffered in the past enormously when they stood up against Zia, in particular. So they don't want that. I really don't know.

As regards the emergency, you never know. This is being discussed. This is being mooted (?). One day they say it is very much on the – (inaudible) – next day they say it is not on the – (inaudible). A lot will depend on the coming day. For example, if the supreme court rules in favor of Nawaz Sharif's return, it would set the cat amongst the pigeons and you would then expect further turmoil within the country. Because please do not forget that Nawaz Sharif's party, most likely, still enjoys considerable support at least in the Punjab.

And the president's supporters also constitute a powerful group in the Punjab, the kuli (ph). So you could have confrontation. So lots of uncertainties are being thrown out.

Q: Thank you. I'm Radiya Kirgen (ph). I've done some writing on South Asia. Mr. Ambassador, you've talked of the clerics in Pakistan. Now, I'd like you to distinguish between the Patan (ph) clerics, the Muhajia (ph) clerics, and the Punjabis' clerics and their following and their impact, especially on the armed forces of Pakistan. Thank you.

MR. FATEMI: Having never been much of a religious person myself, I really have no expertise on this whole business of clerics. In fact, I spent more time in a Catholic institution than in a Muslim constitution. I really don't know. But I do know that the Afghan jihad had a very powerful impact on the Patans, on the Pathouns (ph), and that explains the proliferation of religious schools, seminaries in the frontier provinces, in the tribal areas. And you would also know that many of these Taliban leaders, at one time or the other, also were educated or spent time in the institutions in the frontier. But as to what the differences are, clerics from the areas that – you have to really excuse me. I have no expertise on this issue.

Q: Howard Schaffer of Georgetown University. First, just asking you to follow up briefly the question asked by the gentleman from BOA (?): is a mixed regime, civilian and military, feasible in Pakistan? My other question has to do with India-Pakistan relations. General Musharraf has gone quite a way in revising Pakistan's traditional position on Kashmir and in December of last year, he went so far as to suggest that the line of control could become an international boundary in a settlement with India. Do you think that a successor regime would continue with this conciliatory far-reaching approach? Or will we go back, not all together to square one, but a policy involving a considerable retreat from the positions that Musharraf has taken publicly.

MR. FATEMI: Thank you, Howie. The answer to your first question is I think a mixed regime or a government was possible before 9 March, or let me say before 20th July. After the judgment of the supreme court and the tremendous upliftment of the soul of the Pakistanis, there is, I think, very little likelihood of a mixed civilian-military regime being in power, number one.

Number two, please remember that General Musharraf, by his nature, is not one who is inclined to sharing power. That is what people say. That is his style. You know, he always – his most favorite phrase, as you would know, is unity of command. He believes that it is the source should be a single source, all powerful. And all power must emanate from that source. And that is why the prime minister, even though under the Pakistani constitution the chief executive is the prime minister, but in truth, the prime minister in Pakistan today is nothing more than a glorified secretary of the government of Pakistan. I'm serious. Everyone knows this. I mean, the finance – as Finance Minister Shaukat Aziz had greater control over the finance ministry than he has over the government of Pakistan today. If even the extension, a year's extension in service has to be – (unintelligible) – it has to go to the president. So I think that's unlikely.

Now, as regards the relations with India, I think both India and Pakistan have traveled a long way. I think there is great body of opinion in both countries that feels that

we really have lost all these years engaged in an exercise that did neither any good. And that is why you will see that whenever these kinds of statements that you refer to were made by Musharraf, they did not evoke any anger or hostility in Pakistan, because Pakistanis are convinced that it is to their advantage to have good relations with India. Of course they do not want to live a life of subservience. They will not accept Indian hegemony; that's a different thing, but to have friendly, cordial, cooperative relations.

There is also a considerable body of opinion that supports business, trade, commercial, and economic ties with India as well. And both the leaders of the two mainstream parties, Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, have and did make it clear during their terms of office that they were in favor of normalization with India and Nawaz Sharif was the one who really surprised everyone by inviting Mr. Watchby (ph) and as a participant in that meeting, I can tell you that it was a very good and substantive meeting. So I am not worried about relations with India falling in the wayside if there was to be a change of government.

Q: I'm Robert Boggs (sp), Department of State. It's been a long time, Tariq. I wanted to ask you, given the newly demonstrated independence of the courts, what are the chances that the Pakistani executive or somehow sweep under a rug the current corruption charges that have been – that are on the books against Benazir. And I think there are also charges against Nawaz as well?

MR. FATEMI: No, there are no charges against Nawaz.

Q: So he could come back?

MR. FATEMI: He can come back if he were to be permitted to come back.

Q: But what about the corruption charges against Benazir and her husband, is that – what happens to those?

MR. FATEMI: It's very interesting. The first sign that something was cooking was when the government shut shop of that particular section of the National Accountability Bureau that was pursuing the cases against Benazir. That's why. And then two days ago, three days ago, there was a news item in Pakistan – I had already arrived in Washington; I came here on Monday – that the government of Pakistan has also requested the Interpol, the international organization, to withdraw – whatever it means, I really don't know – red letters – red notices or something to the effect that so and so is required for a criminal case. That notice has it, so that's the second thing.

And in the Pakistani system, unless the government itself pursues corruption charges, they fall by the wayside. So the government could very easily – I think the worry is really regarding the Swiss cases, whether it is any longer for the GOP to withdraw those cases. I don't know. Some people believe that the Swiss courts, having already taken these cases up, may not be in a position. Other people claim that if the Pakistani government were to so advise the Swiss court, the Swiss court would also drop these cases. I really don't know the technicality. But here there is a definite wind of change regarding government's attitude toward Ms. Benazir Bhutto and the People's Party.

Q: Ken Timmerman from NewsMax. A couple of just quick factual questions. What is your best information about Osama bin Laden? Is he being sheltered in the northwest frontier province? If he is being sheltered there, why is he being sheltered there and why can't the government go and find him? And you said that the best way of dealing with the Islamists in Pakistan would be to restore civilian government and a real democracy. How would the civilian authorities or civilian government be able to deal with the Islamist threats in Pakistan if the military cannot? How would they be able to control the northwest frontier province if the military cannot and how would they deal with the Islamists in ISI and how penetrated is ISI by the Islamists? Thank you.

MR. FATEMI: You asked me questions on which, sir, I have no expertise. I have absolutely no idea if Osama is dead or alive – (inaudible) – is alive, where he is alive, what is he doing, I honestly don't know. I don't follow that subject at all.

But the second part of your question – why a civilian government should be more effective – a civilian government, in my view, would be more effective because its conduct of the war on terror would carry greater support of the people of Pakistan. This perception that the Musharraf regime has agreed or become a partner of the war on terror with the United States for its own ends is what impedes, what discourages, large numbers of people from being as supportive of the war.

You see that it's a very, very complex situation. For example, if you have the invasion of Iraq, obviously in Pakistan people get upset about it. And then subsequently when they find out that the whole invasion was based on information that was cooked up, the credibility is even weaker. So in the case of Pakistan, if the civilian government were to bring this issue up in parliament, debate it, discuss it, bring in the mainstream politicians onto it, explain to them that this war is to our advantage, that we are not doing it because we are getting a billion dollars a month, that we have to do it because Pakistan has to determine what will this country be in the next 10, 20 years. Do we want Pakistan to become a resting place for militants? Do we want Pakistan to become a breeding ground of foreign militants?

So this debate has to take place and this debate can only take place when you have a parliament that represents all the political parties and all those political parties can sit down and discuss this issue and also arrive at a consensus as to the kind of engagement that we can with the United States. We don't really know what the terms of that engagement are.

And why the civilian government would be as effective: if the military operations are carried out by military people but the command can be with the civilians, it makes no difference, it's not President Bush who's conducting the military operations in Afghanistan or Iraq. He is the political leader who enjoys authority by virtue of his constitutional office. So if you have a political leader in Pakistan who is genuinely elected, who enjoys credibility and legitimacy, his or her position will also be as effective as that of General Musharraf, in fact in my view, even more, because as I stated that leader will enjoy the support of the people of Pakistan and he or she will have to convince the people of Pakistan that this engagement in the global war on terror is actually to the advantage. The most important issue facing the next government in Pakistan will be to take the people of Pakistan along on this policy on the war on terror.

Q: Two questions, Ambassador. I have not read anything about why there were tunnels between the – (inaudible) – of Lal Masjid and the girls' (?) seminary behind and from what I know of a similar operation in the Golden Temple, Amritsar (ph) and what was discovered there, I'm curious about why those tunnels were constructed and what has been discovered subsequently. The second question is a more – arises directly out of the last question and your excellent response. I have been a student of American policies for some time so I'll keep the question simple. What are the chances of the American establishment ever accepting the arguments that you have made that a civilian, democratic government in Pakistan would in fact be preferable, given the long history of strong American support for military governments in Pakistan and, in my opinion, lack of support for civilian governments?

MR. FATEMI: The answer to your first question is very simple. I really don't know if there's a tunnel and what the purpose of that tunnel was. I have not dared to approach the Lal Masjid since the operations. I really haven't. It's gruesome; it's sickening, the whole place. And the stench is unbearable, it really is.

Your second question, which is a very profound one, if I may be so bold as to remark in this audience that it is not only in Pakistan, but in many other countries that the United States has historically supported non-representative governments. It's sad because the United States arises tremendous admiration in the Third World. The admiration is on account of many things, but one is the fact that the United States is held up as a country where freedom truly reigns. So therefore, the expectation is that Washington would also pursue freedom elsewhere. Sadly, it has not happened. But at the same time, it is incumbent on people like myself and people like you to explain to the administration that short-term advantages do arise from dealing with non-representative regimes because they are far more efficient, they appear more orderly, they appear more effective, but these are only ephemeral. These are only surface impressions.

A relationship with a country which is a democracy, however flawed the democracy may be – (inaudible) – is far more preferable because you will not have the kind of hostility that you get when you have relations with non-representative regimes, and I will only bring to your attention the fact that three of the major recipients of U.S. assistance are the three with the highest anti-American sentiment prevailing in them, and that august group includes Egypt, Jordan and Pakistan. How sad and ironic that you should be providing massive assistance, and at the same time, the people of those countries are not only not appreciative of that assistance but they are visibly ungrateful.

So the question is, why are they ungrateful? Why cannot the people of these countries appreciate your help and assistance? Because you are presumed to be propping up unrepresentative regimes that have lost both credibility and legitimacy at home.

Q: Colonel Datta, Foreign Policy Association. History has shown that politically, once you create devil, it tends to consume the creator itself, and as a matter of fact, I would refer to, as a follow up question to the last question, and that is, there was in design – (inaudible) – planning, there was a foreign element involved in the oppression of Blue Star, Azores (?), and the Operation Silence, and regretfully, that Pakistan had helped in the

insurgency, Sikh insurgency, in the Operation Blue Star. Was there a foreign element in this operation, Operation Silence, where – (inaudible) – headquarter was stationed in – (inaudible)? Would you please articulate?

AMB. FATEMI: I don't know. There was a speculation to that effect that there may have been some foreign hands involved in it. No foreigners were found, either amongst the dead or the alive. There were reports to the effect that maybe there's some prominent al Qaeda figures or Taliban figures, but there are none to be found.

I think they were basically all Pakistanis, and most of them were, in fact, from the frontier province and the tribal areas. You see, you have got to understand that these madrassas, they are not evil institutions. They perform a very important function as well. Hundreds and thousands of families who are far too poor to provide food and education and clothing and shelter to the children do take advantage of these madrassas, and these madrassa are run primarily from the donations provided by people, by common Pakistanis.

In these – (inaudible) – these madrassas, or some of them, were encouraged to inculcate the spirit of jihad because this was then the in thing. I remember taking the – (inaudible) – leaders to the White House for a meeting with President Reagan where President Reagan hailed them as the heroes of the 20th century. Those same gentlemen today have massive bounties on their heads. They were then serving your purpose. Today they are not serving your purpose.

But the young boys and girls from very poor backgrounds who are in madrassas, their requirements need to be appreciated. What is required is a reformation process whereby the madrassas can be brought up and the products of these madrassas can fit into the requirements of modern-day life. Right now, or at least until a few years ago, they were only confined to religious education.

The Musharraf regime has tried to widen the – (inaudible) – to broaden the education, to make them more useful members of society. There is no doubt about it, but much more needs to be done, and there should be an institution to oversee the activities of these, all that, but to have a wholesale condemnation of madrassas would be very counterproductive because you will suddenly have a quarter of a million or more young boys and girls virtually out on the street, and that is not something that we would like to see.

Q: Khalid Hasan, Daily Times, Lahore. Mr. Fatemi, you were in – you were working in the secretariat of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif as the representative of the foreign ministry at the time of Kargil. Can you please tell us what you know about that operation?

AMB. FATEMI: (Inaudible) – you are much too senior and much too wise – (laughter) – to know that I have come on a visa and I have to go back. (Laughter.) Kargil will certainly be written about, but let some more time pass. It is one of the most fascinating chapters in Pakistan-India relations and one that I consider as extremely tragic. It was tragic for both countries and for the people of that region, and I cannot, even after the passage of so many years, think of any single advantage having come Pakistan's way – and I see you have started writing immediately – (inaudible) – please do not do so – coming to Pakistan's

advantage from that operation, but I will leave it at that, if I have your permission. I have tremendous respect for you, you are one of our very senior journalists, and I hope you will not press me on it.

Q: (Inaudible) – here. There's a leap of logic that I can't make. If you say that Egypt, Jordan and Pakistan have populations that are so against the United States right now, how would promotion of a representative democracy in these states be to the interest of the United States? Surely the opinions of the people there aren't that fickle.

AMB. FATEMI: You have to live in these countries, and I have lived there, and you have to then go through what the people of these countries go through. You see, if you live in the United States, you are not aware of the tremendous powers that authoritarian regimes enjoy over every aspect of an individual's life.

I have also served as ambassador to Jordan, and I have great respect for King Abdullah, but please understand that all these shortcomings and all the problems that you face in your daily life, if it can be passed on to an unseen power outside, it is a very easy process, and therefore, every time there is some problem in Pakistan, for example, you know the general perception in Pakistan is that the United States even determines and decides who the local magistrate in Islamabad should be.

Now you know it's not true, I may know it's not true, but then every time there is a problem in these countries, the impression is that it is the United States, it's Washington that is manipulating even the details of governments, and when that government happens to be poor and inefficient and corrupt and authoritarian, who gets blamed for it? Obviously, it's the United States that gets blamed for it. That is what I meant to say when I said that in all these countries.

When I was a very young officer and I was working on the staff of the then head of state, I was asked this question: why is it that every time there is a turmoil, it is the American embassy that gets burned? Why don't people go and burn the Soviet embassy? And I had just come from the Soviet Union after having worked there and studied in Moscow and everything, so I was asked this question by the president. Why don't people go and burn the Soviet embassy after the Soviet Union has invaded Afghanistan, has done this, has done that?

I said, yes, you're absolutely right, but the Soviet leaders and the Soviet Union are also as disliked as the Americans in Pakistan, but they are disliked in Poland, in Czechoslovakia because there, they are perceived as the main props of the ruling powers. Brezhnev never ran Warsaw or Prague, but the regimes in power there were perceived – please note my word; I am not saying necessarily true, but the general perception, the belief was that all these people, whether it is – (inaudible) – or whoever it was was kept in power by Soviet forces, Soviet influence, Soviet money.

So a common man is not as sophisticated as the intellectuals in Carnegie. They go by general perceptions, and the general perception is, and somebody here made the same point, that the United States is more supportive – the lady made the point – is more supportive of

authoritarian regimes because the authoritarian regimes appear far more efficient and far more willing to do the biddings of Washington.

It's a false expectation, but nevertheless, that is the perception, and that is why I believe that the United States would serve its interests far more if it was to support – (inaudible) – if you have genuine democracy, you will have Hamas. I know the answer. You will say you will have Hezbollah. But whose creation is Hamas? You are all experts on the Middle East. Are you not aware who created Hamas? We all know who did. We shall not talk about it.

Hamas, once given responsibility, I believe – I could be wrong – if given the burdens of office, the chances of it becoming more moderate was better. But if you ostracize them and isolate them, they are likely to become more extremist. But that's another subject. We shall not go into that.

My point, basically, is that Pakistan is different from the other Muslim countries. Please note this. Saudi Arabia never had democracy. Kuwait never had democracy. The Gulf states, no, they were all – (inaudible) – princedoms, Maliks in power, Sultans in power. Pakistan has had a long history of constitutional training. The Muslim League and the Congress negotiated the terms of the establishment of Pakistan and India. The terms were negotiated by lawyers who had been educated and trained and practiced in the U.K., and therefore, Pakistan never was owned by an individual or by an institution.

Again, it is different from Turkey. In Turkey, the armed forces can claim to be the fathers of Turkish republic. They would, after all, Ataturk, after all, was responsible for creating modern Turkey. The Pakistan army remained loyal to the British – (inaudible) – of 14th August. We in Pakistan believe that we are as good or as bad as our neighbors next door. If they can have democracy, why can't we? Of course – (inaudible) – our fault . It's our shortcoming. It's our mistakes. But at least our foreign friends should not compound our problems by continuing to prop up unrepresentative regimes. Sorry for the long answer. (Laughter.)

Q: Hi, I'm Greg Dubinsky. I'm junior fellow here at Carnegie, and it seems that however messy a democracy is, the transition from military rule to democracy is the messiest of all, so pursuant to your very eloquent and convincing argument about the preferability of democratic rule in Pakistan. I was wondering, what is the best path to democracy in Pakistan, the transition? What's the best way to affect that, and what should be Washington's role in that? Thank you.

AMB. FATEMI: I agree with you it could be messy, but in Pakistan, we have had a very smooth transition in a far messier time. This is after the breakup of Pakistan; I am talking of 1972. Most constitutional experts are of the view that if the general was the shed his uniform and stand for elections as a civilian, after the election of the assemblies, the new assemblies, if they come into being through free and fair elections, will carry credibility and legitimacy, and then he can come up before them as a candidate for office and be either elected or not elected. Most people are convinced that there will be nothing mess about it, that it can be managed, provided, of course, A, he is willing to shed off his uniform, and B, willing to stand as a genuine candidate and compete with the others.

The important thing is, the question mark at the present moment, the conundrum, the dilemma facing the regime is, should the president seek his reelection from the existing assembly because most constitutional lawyers in Pakistan are convinced that that would be against the constitution, and if that were to happen, they would go to the supreme court, and if they went to the supreme court and the supreme court ruled against, that would really create an extremely messy situation because you would have the president insisting on being reelected by the current assemblies and the supreme court declaring that as – (inaudible) – of the constitution, and you would literally have a constitutional crisis in which the role of the court commanders, the role of the Army chief, the Army, Navy would become very critical, and I hope and I pray that that situation does not arise.

Again, the emergency, if such a step were to take place, it would create a messy situation. Why? Because you would have half a dozen people running to the supreme court and claiming that the position of the emergency was not in conformity with the constitution. But a transition from a military rule to a civilian-elected government would not be messy because you don't have a situation whereby you have a military dictator without parliament. If parliament is – (inaudible) – and the judicial system is not only there but it is very active and it has very high credibility, so if the supreme court were to rule on something at the present moment, you would see that most people would be willing to respect and honor that.

Q: Steve Cohen, Brookings. Tariq, it's always great to see you back in Washington, and I think your talk today and especially some of the responses to the questions, really one of the high points in the discussions we've had about Pakistan over the past couple of months, so it's hard for me to ask a question which you haven't touched on, but there's one point which I'd like you to respond to.

Air Marshal Asghar Khan the other day said in a public statement, in effect, that Pakistan should give up the bomb, and the army should, in a sense, transform itself. Now that may seem outlandish and outrageous, but in fact, he was a responsible and thoughtful, thoughtful former head of the Pakistan air force.

Given the fact that the army – this touches on something you said – doesn't know how to do counterinsurgency warfare and it's faced with a two-front war against India analogous to the two-front war it manufactured against India by supporting Kashmiri separatists, is there a prospect, or do you think this is something that's going to happen in the next few years, assuming a civilian government or in a civil military alliance of some sort, that the Army will redeploy itself, in a sense, give up its massive mobilization against India but requiring, of course, an Indian agreement to settle up on Kashmir in some acceptable way, in a sense, take on counterinsurgency seriously?

That implies a political as well as a military side, and the Pakistan army has not done counterinsurgency. In fact, its failure to do counterinsurgency properly or to understand the political roots of insurgency led to the partition of the country in 1970. So do you see this as a reasonable prospect, something that might happen in the next couple of years, or do you think the army will continue to be, essentially, a large ground armor-oriented army failing at counterinsurgency in the West?

AMB. FATEMI: A lot will depend on what happens in the coming months. Somehow, my feeling is that we in Pakistan are reaching a moment which will have a profound influence for many years to come. I think President Musharraf, more than any of his predecessors, has contributed to growing opposition, if not hostility, to the involvement of the armed forces in the governing of the country.

The manner in which huge numbers of Army people have been inducted into the civilian services, they are involved in every aspect of society, has brought about a strong reaction, and therefore, I believe that if the transition were to take place and if the civilians – (inaudible) – to come into being, you would see a reexamination or an examination of civil-military relations, and the next parliament and the next civilian leadership will have to actually redefine the rules of the game.

For example, Nawaz Sharif's position on this is so hard, so rigid, that a lot of his party people believe that he's not being practical, but he has gone to the extent of saying that I shall ensure a total exit of the armed forces from all aspects of governance. Whether he succeeds or not or whether that he comes to power in the first place, that's a different – (inaudible) – so that is number one.

Number two, this whole business of insurgency and counterinsurgency. I believe that Musharraf's contribution to making the peace process with India kosher in the armed forces of Pakistan will be one very positive legacy of his. I really believe it because even though Benazir and Nawaz Sharif had been in favor of the normalization process, there was always a bit of a question mark – how far can they go? Will the armed forces permit them to do so or not?

And I still recall that when Mr. – (inaudible) – came to Lahore, the General Musharraf was extremely reluctant to be present because he didn't want to be even associated, not to be seen within the mind of the leader (?). After all, he was there defending not only the sovereignty and honor of Pakistan but also of its ideology.

But having brought about the transformation, I think that is a very positive legacy of his. Now, no civilian leader can ever be accused of succumbing to Indian hegemony by engaging in the normalization process and by expanding it further, and therefore, if a civilian leadership does go in for a long-term settlement on the disputes between India and Pakistan, including that of Kashmir, which in any case means that there should be no solution, the only solution in Kashmir is there should be no solution, in my view, because it would be too upsetting of too many power centers.

I think the involvement in insurgency or counterinsurgency or all that that you state will come to an end. I think there is a growing body of opinion in Pakistan which believes that the armed forces are a first-rate professional lot and they should remain professional and they should remain totally involved in their professional affairs and out of the national domestic political as well as all this business that you refer to as insurgency – (inaudible). That is the sentiment in Pakistan, and thanks to the media and the resurgence in the electronic media, a lot of it is now being actually discussed on the TV, on the television

stations, subjects that one would not have dared bring up only six months ago. So I'm quite hopeful, Steve.

Q: Thanks. I'm Jen Leonard with the International Crisis Group. Building on some of the points made earlier about assistance, responsibility of the U.S. government, how to promote a secure and stable, peaceful South Asia, what is your view on some of the congressional proposals that are floating around about the conditionality for military assistance, conditioning that to free and fair elections, progress in the war on terror, and what would the impact of conditionality be, not only on the political and military elites but the public at large that you talked about as being sort of increasingly hostile toward the role of the U.S. in some of the, what you alluded to as potentially irresponsible statements coming out of Washington and political leaders? Thanks.

AMB. FATEMI: I have lived through this conditionality syndrome, the Solarz, the Presslers, the Symingtons, the – (inaudible) – one had to – the most difficult part was to explain them to your leadership. They were so – and I think most of it were drafted in such a manner as to leave the other side totally confused, and I think similar is my reaction.

I think this whole business of Congressional conditionality is counterproductive, in my view. You see, you are not going to get Pakistan's cooperation because you place a particular provision in the – (inaudible). You will get it when the Pakistanis are convinced that it is to their advantage to pursue the war on terror with the required degree of commitment. That is my view. Pressler did not stop Pakistan from pursuing the nuclear option. It couldn't. It's as simple as that. Even I knew about it when I was not supposed to know about it.

My point is that, please treat Pakistan as an honorable, respected member of the war on terror coalition. By A, coming up with these conditionalities, and B, by issuing public statements that are demeaning and insulting to Pakistan, you do not serve your purpose, and certainly you do not serve General Musharraf's purpose. As it is, General Musharraf has enough problems in Pakistan to now get this barrage of criticism emanating from Washington.

It appears to be the bird hunting season so you can take potshots, but General Musharraf's effectiveness, credibility, and his ability to deliver is so much more weakened because people are saying, you have done so much, and the truth is that General Musharraf has done more for the United States. The Pakistani government has agreed to more terms and conditions laid down by Washington than would have been possible for an elected, civilian, democratic government. Maybe that answers your question whether Washington prefers dealing with non-democratic governments, lady.

So that is the truth. Please do not add to these conditionalities because it becomes extremely difficult. It will be extremely difficult for one or two – (inaudible) – it is based, you will have to look it up in the map, but even for a tiny island in the Pacific Ocean to be publicly imposed with these conditionalities and certainly not the people of Pakistan. So it is going to damage U.S.-Pakistan relations in a manner that will not serve either your interest or our interests.

Q: So we were talking about democratically elected governments. We have a democratically elected government in the Northwest frontier province, and to my knowledge, the MPAs and MNAs of that government are supporting Taliban in the tribal and northern areas of the country, and there are some news that Taliban are controlling – (inaudible) – which is like 60 minutes to drive from the northwest provincial capital, Peshawar.

So, I mean, on one hand, we know that military has taken serious actions against the extremist groups and Taliban, and on the other hand, a democratically elected government from the people of northwest frontier province is supporting Taliban. What would you like to say about that?

AMB. FATEMI: In Pakistan – I think you have raised a very important issue which I'm sure many of you would like to -- in Pakistan, the impression or the feelings about Taliban are different from what they are in Washington. In Washington, Taliban and Al Qaeda have become synonymous. They appear like conjoined twins.

In Pakistan and, incidentally, let me tell you, large section in Afghanistan do not share that view. Large number of people in Pakistan, especially in the frontier province, believe that the Taliban could, in fact, be the element that could be co-opted (?) in the war on terror if you are going to be able to eliminate the genuine, the real terrorist, the Al Qaeda elements.

The Taliban – I don't want to disappoint you guys, but the Taliban were being feted (?) in America few weeks before 9/11. I can tell you that, good authority. Your government was negotiating with them on the TAPI, on the Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India gas pipeline project.

The Taliban only became terrorists on 9/11. The Taliban also have number of views and opinions within them. Those Taliban that can be brought back within the fold need to be brought back. This is the view in Pakistan. I do not necessarily agree with it, but I'm just trying to explain to you. That by branding all Pashtuns as Taliban, and then considering all Taliban as al Qaeda, you are in fact creating tremendous hostility through this whole concept of the war on terror.

That is why in fact the Pakistani government on many occasions have tried to impress on President Karzai that he needs to broaden the net and bring within the fold. And by the way, President Karzai has done it. On a number of occasions, you will recall, he has declared amnesty. He has strived to persuade what we call the moderate Taliban to –

So the frontier government – if it is talking to the Taliban, there is nothing wrong about it because they at the seminaries, they are at these madrassas. Now, as the tribal areas, fatah, others – yes, they are disturbed. Yes, large numbers of militants have gone in and taken refuge about – (inaudible) – but the government of Pakistan has undertaken – the truth is that the Musharraf regime has taken very strong measures against these people.

The Fatah have a history that is different from Pakistan, not from now; for the last 200 years from the time the British – it is for the first time that Pakistan has actually sent its

armed forces into the tribal areas. It is for the first time that the Islamabad, the federal government has tried to impose laws and regulations. They were virtually like no-man's land, you know, running their own affair. It is a very difficult process. You have to appreciate and understand local conditions.

And the second thing is Islamabad does not also believe there is only a dead Taliban who is a good Taliban. No. You don't have to necessarily eliminate all Taliban. You can bring some of them in. It's the same as the situation in Iraq, if I may be permitted. So your first reaction was the de-Ba'athification. All Ba'athists are per se, not accepted. Now, a large number of Ba'ath members are being brought back into the fold because when the regime was in power, it was inevitable that thousands of people would join the Ba'ath Party if, for nothing, for housing and food and for education and other things. The same situation in the Taliban.

Q: Hello. It's Sonni Efron with the Los Angeles Times.

Sir, on the one hand, you argue that the U.S. should stop propping up unrepresentative governments. On the other hand, you argue that conditionality is a bad idea. If the U.S. were – or if some future U.S. administration were to try to send a signal that it was going to support representative government in Pakistan, how should that signal be sent in a way that doesn't undermine the support of the Pakistani people in the way you have explained –

AMB. FATEMI: When the question was asked, the conditionality was on the performance on the war on terror. That was what was demeaning and upsetting. The government of Pakistan is wedded, is committed to the concept of bringing back democracy. Even president Musharraf has on many occasions said that he wants to bring genuine democracy to Pakistan. The people of Pakistan believe that that commitment is being honored, number one.

Number two, your laws, the foreign assistant secretary and all of the rest of the laws that I had to memorize when still I was capable of memorizing state very clearly that it shall be the United States administration's primary objective to promote democracy and human rights in country especially where American assistance goes.

And finally, one of the last things that I did before leaving Brussels was to sign what is known as a third-generation agreement between Pakistan and the European Union, which commits Pakistan to being a genuine democracy and upholder of human rights if it were to receive aid and assistance from the European Union.

So if you were to ask me to be committed to democracy, you will be making an unfair demand on me. That is what the constitution of Pakistan requires. That is what the promises of our leaders demand. That is what all laws and regulations demand. This is what – I was making a distinction between the kind of conditionalities that relate to things like the war on terror and conditionalities that say that Pakistan must rule free and fair elections, the Pakistan must ensure the restoration of democracy because that is what President Musharraf has said in Islamabad. That is what he said when he came here to Washington in his meeting with the president and his meeting with the press.

Q: Marvin Weinbaum, the Middle East Institute. Sir, a comment, and then a question.

I would take exception to your observation that the United States was negotiating with the Taliban over the tap just before – that is not the case. We were talking to the Taliban. We were talking about bin Laden. That is what the discussions were on. And by that point, the tap issue was – the companies had backed out. There was no discussion.

My question is this: Earlier on you said that there would be – a mixed government was not – a mixed civilian government was not really possible; it was too late for that. However, later on, you said that you had to see some kind of agreement between the two, some contract, some renegotiation I think is a term you used.

Can you suggest what might be the incentive for the military to be willing to realistically step down? After all, in 1998, they stepped away. They stepped away but they didn't really get out of the picture at all. I think what you're asking for is a legitimate democracy, a democracy where the military, which has such deep inroads, not just into government positions but into the economy, what incentive would there be for them to back off in the fashion you like because I share your sentiments about where you would like things to go? Thank you.

AMB. FATEMI: On your first comment, I was ambassador in Washington till the last days of the civilian government. So I presume that I know what I am talking about. Number one. On the second part, what I meant to say was that the – till now we have had an arrangement where the military was in the driver seat or behind the driver seat but steering the – managing the steering will.

Now, my point is that given the last six, seven years of the Musharraf regime, there is tremendous opposition to the kind of involvement that has been brought about by the army in the civil affairs of the country. And more and more people are convinced that the military must step away, genuinely and comprehensively away from involvement in the affairs of the state.

I agree with you that it is very unlikely because their involvement is very deep and so very much institutionalized over the last many years. For example, you are a scholar and a highly – you know the country very well. You know that even when Benazir was in power or Nawaz Sharif was in power, the armed forces retained a high degree of influence in the decisionmaking process. You know that. So to expect that not only will the later regime, the current regime fade into history, but that you will have a genuinely civilian setup is asking for too much. I am admitting that.

What I am saying is that at least people in Pakistan now are publicly calling into question the deep involvement of the armed forces. You know recently a young Pakistani scholar has come out with a book – I'm sure you have seen – in which she has detailed the manner in which the armed forces have penetrated the economy of the country. It is a very good, useful, scholarly book.

Now, that book, and the kinds of things that she has written are also being written about by a large number of people, and therefore there is a growing sentiment within the country that the rules of the game have to be changed. Whether those rules of the game result in a total exit of the armed forces, I have my doubts; I agree with you. But certainly the next civilian government will endeavor to at least reduce the influence, the current influence that the armed forces enjoy in running the office at this time.

MR. TELLIS: Can I ask you for one question on that? Is it unreasonable as a long-term objective, to get to where you are going, which is to think of the complete exit of the military from matters of government. It may not happen within the term of the next hopefully civilian government of Pakistan, but over a period of time, is that an unreasonable objective, or is the military enmeshment with governance so deep that even as a long-term objective it's infeasible. What is your sense about that?

AMB. FATEMI: Actually, I would want – I would wish, but I think it's – it appears very unlikely, given the history of Pakistan, given the long period during which the military has been in the driver seat. The military intervention in Pakistan civil affairs started in 1954. Nineteen fifty-four was the first coup in Pakistan's history when the army chief brought about the soft change and in turn became the defense minister. And of course, the formalization of that took place in 1958 too.

So I really cannot envision any civilian leader in Pakistan being strong enough and being determined enough to ask for a total withdrawal of the armed forces from the political scene. And the other thing – the – (inaudible) – political situation of Pakistan and its involvement in Afghanistan with India, with the Gulf, with the Saudis, all of that only adds to an enlarged role for the armed forces because the armed forces also become an instrument of the country's foreign policy to project and promote its interests vis-à-vis some very important friends in the Gulf in the Middle East.

Q: Thank you. Raghubir Goyal from India Globe & Asia Today.

I have just come from the White House, from the president's press conference, and the president said that General Musharraf yet has not declared emergency in Pakistan, and also, he has said that he has spoken with him about the free and fair elections. My question is here, that since General Musharraf is glued to his military uniform – he will not take off, and they will not be free and fair elections, which you have been calling about, and everybody in – also, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto – what I'm asking is that do you think that General Musharraf has any choices here since he will not give up his powers but only to declare emergency or marshal law again to remain in power?

AMB. FATEMI: I don't know. As I stated, 9 March onwards, and especially after the July 20 decision of the Supreme Court, his options have become circumscribed; they have become limited. If he does what is perceived as illegal, it will be challenged in the Supreme Court, and the expectation is that the supreme court will then reject such a move. If he does not, then the chances of his being reelected get sharply reduced. So this explains the desperation with which the regime is entering into some kind of a discussion or a debate with Ms. Benazir Bhutto. And even with – (inaudible) – because with Benazir Bhutto – (inaudible) – and they will enjoy the kind of majority that they require. But that majority is

only in the current assembly. If the current assemblies are dissolved, and his election takes place in the next assembly, it's up for grabs; we really don't know what will happen.

But I think even Benazir Bhutto, I – my feeling is – has now become – I think she is insisting that there can be no deal if the president remains in uniform. I think opposition is becoming very tough on that and rightly so.

Q: Sir, just a quick follow-up. With your all experiences, why he's going to declare emergency is to abolish all the supreme court and all the disputes with the supreme court chief justice, so then he will be in power because he would abolish everything including the constitution, just like he did seven years ago. And where do the Pakistanis do stand – there won't be any supreme court anything in the country or parliament.

MR. FATEMI: Yes and no. It depends. You see, the declaration of the emergency will define exactly whether it will mean suspension of human rights, fundamental rights. Will it also mean dissolution of the assemblies? Will it also mean suspension of the courts of law? We really don't know. We are in a very gray zone at the present moment. And of course we hope and pray that such a step will not be taken, but if it is taken and, for example, it is challenged in the supreme court and the supreme court accepts that challenge, you then face a constitutional crisis.

You are much too young, but in 1954, when the – (inaudible) – dissolved, dismissed the prime minister and wanted to dissolve the constituent assembly, they went to the court and the – (inaudible) -- high court declared the – (inaudible) – action as – (inaudible) – of the constitution. And then the federal government went to the federal court, the supreme court, where the supreme court came up with this very ingenious judgment calling it the doctrine of necessity, saying the – (inaudible) – action may not be fully in conformity with the constitution of Pakistan, but we would prefer that the country not descend into chaos, because it will be chaos because you will have the two arms fighting with each other. So they came up with this doctrine, calling it the doctrine of necessity that in order to prevent the country from going through a period of chaos, we are upholding the action of the – (inaudible) – in dismissing the prime minister. So you are entering into a very uncertain and a very dangerous phase.

MR. TELLIS: Last question.

Q: Hello, Ambassador. My name is Bernard Bloom with the Center for Science, Technology, and Security Policy. You raised a specter if General Musharraf seeks reelection he would have to lose his uniform. What kind of assurance is there if having lost the uniform and he were to gain reelection that he would not, at some point, perhaps in the case of desperation, reassume that uniform, reassume his control over the armed forces?

MR. FATEMI: That's a very interesting question. I never thought of it. (Laughter.) But once he takes off his uniform, he will be succeeded by another chief. That chief will ensure that he doesn't come back. (Laughter.)

MR. : (Off mike.)

MR. TELLIS: Well, I want to just take the opportunity on behalf of all of us here this morning to thank Ambassador Fatemi for a very forthright presentation and for actually answering all the questions that he was asked, which can sometimes be a challenge for visitors. And I want to thank all of you for having come here. I think this is an important moment in Pakistan's own political evolution and I expect that all of us will stay tuned to developments in this country for some time to come. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MR. FATEMI: Thank you. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

(END)