

CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

Pakistan After Musharraf

Q&A with:

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Question: What are the implications of Musharraf's departure for the international community at large?

Frederic Grare: I think that for most people it is a relief. Musharraf was an impediment to the democratic process in Pakistan—a democratic process which has had enough difficulty taking off by itself. For others it is the end of an era and the beginning of uncertainty where many people fear the worst.

One of Musharraf's few talents was his ability to assure people. 'Under my watch everything's going to take place properly. We do have difficulties, of course, but we're doing what we can.' For a long time the international community supported Musharraf as a result of that propaganda. Of course, the international community saw that there were some flaws, that the situation wasn't so black and white. But by and large it accepted his assurances out of convenience. What they face now is deep uncertainty and the prospect that there is no solution to the current terrorism issue without addressing the fundamental issue still affecting Pakistan today—the nature of civil-military relations. This is precisely what they tried to avoid for so long.

Question: Who are the main internal political actors in Pakistan currently, and how might they react in the aftermath of Musharraf's departure?

Frederic Grare: Basically you have had four sets of players in recent history: the coalition government, the military, Musharraf himself, and the civil society.

The coalition, which is ruling the country at the moment—or pretends to rule the country at the moment—is made up of two major partners. One is the PPP, the Pakistan Peoples Party, of the late former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, and the other is the PML-N, the Pakistan Muslim League of Nawaz Sharif. Musharraf's departure was a bone of contention between the two, partly because Asif Ali Zardari feared being faced with an overtly and impatiently ambitious Nawaz. If you look at Musharraf's departure, you could say 'the in-fighting between the PPP and the PML-N, which made up half of Pakistan's problems, are now gone. But the other half, the judiciary's fight over the status of the supreme court, will continue.' It's going to be much more difficult now, given the aspirations of the population, for somebody like Nawaz Sharif to just play the kind of virtuous opponent that he has been so far—very successfully, by the way, because the PPP has lost a lot of political support and the PML-N has won some support.

The second player, and perhaps the most important of all, is the military, and the military is doing something quite interesting. On the surface it seems that Pervez Kiyani, the chief of army staff, is playing ball with the new government. But at the same time we've seen, since the beginning of the summer, an intensification of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) activity almost everywhere—in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), in Afghanistan, and of course, in Kashmir. For all practical purposes, this intelligence agency is a military institution. While the ISI officially answers to the prime minister, it is in reality accountable primarily to the Chief of Army Staff. One can therefore doubt the total sincerity of the military when it comes to the democratic process. If you look at the consequences of what we have seen over the past few weeks, the military is undoubtedly the main beneficiary. They did suffer some losses, but at the same time the overall situation is very favorable for them: a fragile civilian government under international pressure. This removes

direct scrutiny from the military—and the civilian government will inevitably have to turn to the military for security, be it in Kashmir, be it in Afghanistan, be it in the FATA. So that's not a bad situation for the military.

The third actor was, until recently, Musharraf himself. When he resigned as chief of army staff and was no longer part of the military, he became a very convenient player because he could take the blame from both sides. In his civilian role, he didn't expose the military to direct criticism. At the same time he had no choice but to stick to the military position whatever the issue and try to divide the coalition government as much as he could. On two occasions at least, he denounced an international conspiracy against the ISI and the Pakistani military once it became clear that Pakistan had been involved in an attack in Kabul. In regards to dividing the coalition, the simple fact that he stayed in power was sufficient to generate infighting within the coalition. So, on both counts he succeeded wonderfully until the past few weeks.

And the fourth set of players is, of course, civil society and the Pakistani public. For a long time, and this is still very much in the mind of many, it was convenient to say 'well they don't count, those guys don't matter.' And to some extent the general public is still not a dominant player. But there is a lesson to learn from the past 12 to 15 months—civil society did have an impact and will be a constraint for whoever is in power now. This could change the current dynamic, at the political level at least.

Question: How might Pakistan's civilian/military relations change following Musharraf's departure?

Frederic Grare: It's quite difficult to tell right now. We do have the ISI almost everywhere in the country and its borders, and although Pakistan's military formally plays ball with the current government, there is no doubt that the ISI is a military organization and takes its orders from Pervez Kiyani. So what kind of game is

the army playing? This remains to be seen. But this is definitely a major factor in the present situation, and a major factor in the evolution of the country.

The main challenge for the civilian government is to gradually assert their predominance over the military. They have to avoid any bravado that could humiliate the military, and avoid direct confrontation. They also need to re-appropriate the foreign and security policy process and authority—that's absolutely key—and gradually re-establish a framework in which the armed forces will have a role similar to any other major country. There is no reason to believe that Pakistan should be different than anywhere else. But this necessary process is at the beginning stages, if it has even really started.

Question: How might all of this affect U.S.-Pakistan relations, especially in counterterrorism efforts?

Frederic Grare: First of all, Musharraf now has stepped down, and there is no going back. This is a reality that the U.S. has to acknowledge, and so far has acknowledged. It is quite clear that the U.S. has a new Pakistani government to deal with.

I think it will be well-inspired for future U.S. policymakers to take a close look at Pakistan's fundamental problems. The question of civil-military relations has to be addressed first by the Pakistanis themselves, but there are ways and means by which the U.S. could help. It may be frustrating in the short-term because it will mean renouncing the expediency of working exclusively and systematically with the military, and doing things which are not necessarily as efficient as they would like. What is absolutely essential, though, is to avoid any situation which could destabilize the civilian government. There is an understanding now that over the long-term there is no better way than democracy. There will be good and bad governments, like there are good and bad governments everywhere. But the civilian origin of security and foreign policy is essential. Yet if the U.S. and other countries really put pressure on the civilian government—which doesn't control the security apparatus—and puts

them between a rock and a hard place, it's going to be extremely difficult for them to do anything over the long-term. They need some breathing space, they need some time.

Question: How might these changes affect Afghanistan?

Frederic Grare: It has been clear since the beginning of the summer there has been an increase, an intensification of attacks against NATO. You've probably noticed that ten French troops were killed this week. NATO is under fire. Some people in Pakistan understand that Afghan President Hamid Karzai is under international pressure and are using this situation to their advantage by intensifying support for the Taliban, knowing that part of the blame will fall on Karzai.

Question: Looking back, how will people remember the Musharraf era in Pakistan?

Frederic Grare: The Musharraf era demonstrated that civilian governments and military regimes can be equally bad at governance. Everybody blamed the Nawaz government for corruption and economic decline. But, during the wars, Pakistan was in a position to discuss the possibility of selling electricity to India. Now there is a shortage of electricity in the capital city itself, Islamabad. That says a lot about the failed economic policies of Pakistan's military. We've also seen an increase in Pakistan's external debt due to the credit policies of the Musharraf regime—a sort of real estate bubble. We should reflect on these factors when it comes to whom we support and what kind of relationship we entertain with a country like Pakistan in the future.

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