

## **Testimony of Dr. Marvin G. Weinbaum**

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#### **Musharraf As Catalyst: Balancing Counterterrorism and Reforms**

Pakistan's performance in countering terrorism and its progress in promoting political, social, and economic reforms cannot be understood without probing the mindset of Pervaiz Musharraf and the corporate interests of his military. Pakistan's president regularly displays his well-meaning, principled intentions, and has ordered actions consistent with his stated commitments. Yet Pakistan's policies regarding terrorism and reform are noticeably incomplete, inconsistent and, not infrequently, disingenuous.

Behind my remarks today is the proposition that a military-guided regime bears major responsibility for many of Pakistan's problems but is also indispensable to finding their solutions. The same military that fails to provide for a more democratic, stable, and secure country is also uniquely positioned to advance those goals.

Pakistan, as it is presently, cannot serve as a reliable partner for the United States unless its leaders accept reasonable risks associated with harnessing popular forces. To build the necessary consensus and coalitions that can further a more just society and progressive Islamic state also requires democratic institutions that honor civilian rule and constitutionalism. While the United States cannot tell Pakistan how to fashion its political system, it does have leverage that has been used to date in an often counter-productive way.

#### **Musharraf and Our Expectations**

The United States has invested heavily in President Musharraf as valued partner in preventing Pakistan and its region from becoming a safe haven for terrorists and descending toward armed conflict, potentially between two nuclear-armed powers. We have also seen in him a leader who possesses the personal values that we believe can bring together a Western-oriented foreign policy with a Pakistani state dedicated to what he calls "enlightened moderation."

Specifically, we look to Pakistan for enhanced cooperation in flushing out Al-Qaeda and Taliban terrorists and their support network along the Afghan frontier. Our government expects Musharraf to honor his pledge that Pakistan will not materially aid the armed insurgency in India's Kashmir. We furthermore are anxious for him to reverse a trend toward Islamic extremism by reforming madressahs and cracking down on radical Islamic groups inside Pakistan. To match the country's observable progress in growing and disciplining the national economy, the United States encourages Pakistan to also address its formidable economic deficits, notably worsening poverty and unemployment, and its broken educational and health systems.

The United States has been prepared to take Musharraf and his military at their word that they are committed to installing genuine democracy. This would entail not only holding elections and appointing civilian officials, but instituting the kind of open politics that allows for full competition and expression. While Pakistan's military would no doubt retain influence and perhaps a constitutional role, it would divest itself of much of its formal and informal hold on power. Ideally, the military would transform itself from rulers to guarantors of the political system. Indeed, it can be argued that Musharraf and the military have ultimately more to gain from viable democracy than from authoritarianism.

### **Musharraf As Marginal Satisfier**

To understand the half-measures and often seemingly contradictory aspects of Pakistan's foreign and domestic policies, it is necessary that we see Musharraf as a leader who functions, above all, as a marginal satisfier. Musharraf seems particularly adept at calculating what is required in order to manage competing demands and keep everyone minimally satisfied. He has shown a keen sense of limits, usually knowing how far to pursue policies. Musharraf has managed to placate his military with perks and please Washington with occasionally apprehending militants. He has been adept over time at maneuvering with the religious political establishment, and in understanding how to appease political loyalists, jihadi groups, the business class, ethnic and tribal groups, intellectuals, and democrats, among others. Though Musharraf has taken decisive actions on the international front, including Pakistan's break with the Taliban and restraint on Kashmir, here too his actions seem compromised by an unwillingness to sever completely older ties or alienate sympathizers.

Not surprisingly, this tactical approach has become increasingly difficult, and Musharraf's popularity and reputation at home have suffered as his various constituencies become less willing over time to defer their expected payoffs. For the country's more progressive elements, there is disappointment that he has not used his considerable authority to create a new framework for domestic politics. Instead, despite his declared intentions about bringing enlightened moderation, most of Musharraf's attention politically has gone into sidelining and undercutting his real or imagined enemies in the political mainstream. And in his effort to retain power, his security forces have employed the same manipulative political tactics normally associated with the discredited politicians of the 1990s. However, for all of the accumulated disappointments with Musharraf, virtually none of his domestic and foreign constituencies -- aside from those sectarian terrorists who have targeted Musharraf for assassination -- can imagine him leaving the political scene anytime soon.

### **Counter-Terrorism and the Afghan Border Region**

At least until recently, Pakistan's efforts against the Taliban and other anti-Kabul elements have been unconvincing. Notwithstanding the difficulties encountered in the rugged, porous border areas, Pakistan's security forces have failed to effectively monitor and control the movement of those who continue to launch raids into Afghanistan from sanctuaries in Pakistan. Military actions by Pakistani troops along the border have been

brief and largely unproductive in apprehending higher level Taliban and Al-Qaeda leaders. Elements of both groups have reportedly established training camps and terrorist cells in and around Quetta and Peshawar. Extremist groups in Pakistan have been allowed to finance and facilitate these activities. Though Pakistan's religious parties and tribal leaders raised objections to the army's border operations, few took the raids by Pakistani troops as much more than necessary theater.

Pakistani military operations have, however, broadened and intensified over recent weeks. In their sweeps, the Pakistani army units have increasingly engaged in bribing, threatening, and punishing the local tribal population. Washington is pressuring Pakistan to give greater urgency to finding Osama bin Laden through coordinated intelligence and joint U.S.-Pakistani military operations along the frontier. In the course of those operations, mostly focused on South Waziristan, the Pakistani army has encountered far more resistance than in the past and taken surprisingly heavy casualties. Negotiations to enlist tribal militias to turn in "foreign" fighters have brought no results. Frustrated and humiliated -- and smarting from the near assassination by jihadis of the Karachi corps commander -- the military has mounted forays into the area with a new determination.

And yet Musharraf, to mollify mounting criticism, could soon return to his more accustomed satisfier mode. The seeming new leaf in clearing the border regions may instead mirror Musharraf's supposed resolve to attack extremism following two attempts on his life during December 20003. In a matter of weeks his declared war on some of the more notorious groups turned into a familiar truce between their leaders and security forces.

Islamabad's recent military actions are serving not only to please Washington but also to quiet complaints from Kabul charging Pakistan with negligent border policies. For some time, the United States has been concerned that Islamabad might be contributing to destabilizing the Kabul government. Islamabad insists on its common objectives with the Karzai government in fighting terrorism and has offered development assistance. A politically stable Afghanistan, able to secure the flow of commerce, is in fact preferable to any current alternatives. However, Pakistani agents continue to befriend power brokers within Afghanistan's Pashtun tribal belt. A pro-Pashtun policy serves Islamabad as insurance against the possibility that should the Afghan experiment fail, Pakistan can complete with other regional powers in their likely bids for spheres of influence inside Afghanistan.

### **Compromising on Reform**

Musharraf's cautionary weighing of demands on a wide range of reforms is easily documented. Some issues such as land reform have never made the reform agenda. Musharraf quickly backed off an initial attempt to modify the country's misused blasphemy law. Moreover, religious-inspired ordinances that fundamentally compromise women's rights remain untouched. While a self-confident finance minister has addressed a number of economic reforms, including more effective revenue collections, the promised pursuit of corruption in business and politics by a specially appointed bureau

has largely petered out. In any case, the political selectivity of the process has been all too evident. Musharraf's boldest domestic policy initiative, involving the devolution of power to local councils and officials, has also been temporized under pressure from provincial and national office holders.

Though some extremist groups have been declared illegal, the most influential of them continue to flourish, and their fund raising and recruitment are hardly affected. Most of their leaders move freely and are active politically. Widely touted policies to gain control over the country's madressas have produced very few results. Registration of religious schools has been stubbornly resisted, as have attempts to revise curricula. Elaborate plans for reform of state schools are starved for a lack of funds. Like other social programs, education cannot compete with the military's claims on the country's treasury.

Any successful political figure must balance interests and make prudent judgments about what issues to push and which to defer. But Musharraf's continuing fears of Pakistan's mainstream parties and their leaders, and the military's disdain for the country's traditional political class have resulted in the promotion of political opportunists and a de facto alliance with Pakistan's mostly obscurantist Islamic parties. Musharraf has chosen to placate and seek alliances with elements that in fact preclude his delivering on most of his pledges to pursue a reform agenda and enact progressive laws.

## **U.S. Policy**

Since September 11, 2001, Washington has taken the view that virtually any change from the present leadership in Pakistan is likely to set back the prime objectives of the United States in the war on terror. In turn, Musharraf has staked much of his political future on his close ties with the United States and the benefits it can bring to Pakistan. With American interests hanging so critically on Musharraf's remaining in power, Washington, however, may have shortsightedly tied the future too closely to a single individual. A bilateral relationship so personality-dependent is unavoidably fragile, its survival subject to outcomes over which the United States may exercise little or no control.

Cooperation on counter-terrorism operations and, in particular, targeting high-value leadership, has long trumped all other American demands on Musharraf. The lavish praise heaped on Musharraf by Washington, designed to strengthen his resolve on combating terrorism, has, in effect, given Musharraf a pass on satisfying Washington on the issues of democracy, nuclear proliferation, domestic extremism, and social investment. Ironically, though, we may not have helped to insure that he stays the course on combating terrorism.

Repeated expressions of support for Musharraf from the highest echelons of the U.S. government strengthen his claim that he is personally indispensable for attracting American and Western resources to Pakistan. Even many elements in Pakistani society that object vigorously to American foreign policies are unwilling to alienate the United States. At the same time, Musharraf, carrying our unqualified endorsement, is regularly

charged with being a puppet of Washington by deferring to American interests in the region. The religious establishment questions his commitment to Islamic causes, and most democrats in the country accuse the United States of indiscriminate support for Pakistan's military at the expense of meaningful political reforms. Because Musharraf may believe that he can take American backing for granted on all but the issue of terrorism, we may have also inadvertently emboldened him to act -- arranging a sham 2002 presidential referendum, arbitrarily invoking constitutional amendments, and unashamedly pre-cooking a parliamentary election -- in ways that have, in fact, weakened him politically.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The United States must alter the impression that our support for Pakistan is essentially support for Musharraf. Instead, we must emphasize by our statements and actions that our policies are not about keeping one man in power to serve our interests but are aimed at strengthening the country's institutions and the well being of its people. We should be prepared to engage with all of the country's political parties and work with civil society. We must refocus our aid to Pakistan on education, health, and employment generating projects, and find other ways to help create a more solid foundation for a sustained relationship with Pakistan.

It follows that the United States must refrain from the kind of unqualified public praise that we have accorded Musharraf for his cooperation in anti-terrorism. We require a more nuanced approach that blends strong incentives with conveying a better appreciation in Islamabad that the red lines in our relationship are not effectively erased by our concerns about terrorism.

We must recognize that our terrorism agenda with Pakistan cannot be detached from the broader needs for reform. If Pakistan fails to make progress in resolving its civilian-military strains, compromises with forces of intolerance and radicalism, and ignores basic popular grievances, we could find ourselves without a partner for any of our objectives.

The United States must better appreciate the stakes in Pakistan. If we get it wrong, Pakistan could dwarf Afghanistan, Iran, and even Iraq in threatening our national interests. Above all, we must convince Pakistanis that our concerns in the region are multifaceted and long term, and that we will not desert them once we have achieved our leading objectives.

