



PROJECT *on* Middle East Democracy

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Hearing of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia

US-Pakistan Relations: Assassination, Instability and the Future of US Policy

2141 Rayburn House Office Building, 16 January 2008, 2:00 PM

The Middle East and South Asia Subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee held a hearing on U.S. policy towards Pakistan in the wake of **Benazir Bhutto's** assassination and subsequent political turmoil.

In opening remarks, several members discussed the problems that have emerged from the United States relationship with Pakistan's President **Pervez Musharraf**, who recently retired as chief of staff of the military. Rep. **Gary Ackerman** (D-NY), chairman of the Subcommittee, summarized the recent events that occurred prior to the assassination. He blamed Musharraf for **contributing to tensions within Pakistan** as the retired general struggled to maintain power. Rep. Ackerman recommended that the United States must reevaluate how it allocates aid to Pakistan and focus on its efforts on the entire country rather than the military complex.

Rep. **David Scott** (D-GA) echoed Rep. Ackerman's sentiments on the U.S. relationship with Musharraf. Scott asked, "Are we putting all of our eggs in one basket, which may be the wrong basket in the eyes of the people of Pakistan?" Rep. **Dana Rohrabacher** (R-CA) urged his fellow members **to be more cautious in their words against Musharraf**, reminding his peers that he has been an important ally in the War on Terror. He recommended that Musharraf hold free and fair elections and seek additional time in office through democratic means.

Criticizing past inconsistencies of U.S. foreign policy, Rep. **Joseph Crowley** (D-NY) asserted that the United States must stop supporting authoritarian leaders when it is convenient. Crowley claimed that the U.S. government seems willing to support undemocratic regimes despite its rhetoric on spreading democracy.

In her testimony, **C. Christine Fair**, Ph.D. of RAND Corporation claimed that the American and Pakistani governments have contributed to the current crisis, accusing Washington of focusing on Musharraf and forgiving his unconstitutional actions. "The United States must transition from supporting one person and the army." She urged the Subcommittee to back the institutions and processes that would buttress a representative democracy, such as the media and the judiciary. She also recommended that the U.S. government should reach out to all political parties and civil society groups. While Fair advocated for a continued relationship with Pakistan's armed forces, she proposed that certain deals should be contingent on U.S. interests.

Ashley J. Tellis, Ph.D. of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace claimed that Musharraf has been able to stay in power by virtue of political irregularities within the country.

Tellis admitted that he was uncertain about the outcome of upcoming parliamentary elections. However, he mentioned that there was the possibility that the Pakistani people might be unhappy with election results and question their fairness and validity. In this scenario, the United States would be forced to choose between supporting the winner of the elections and supporting the general public.

On the subject of military aid, Tellis cautioned the Subcommittee from hastily ending funding or arms deals. To do so, he argued, would confirm Pakistani notions that the United States is an inconsistent ally. Tellis urged the government to move away from transactional behavior with Pakistan and establish a stable, reciprocal alliance.

Lisa Curtis of The Heritage Foundation told the committee that the current political situation in Pakistan is a transitional phase. Washington and Islamabad should work together to ensure that stable democracy emerges out of the situation. She said that Pakistan needs political reform and economic development in order to rescue itself from current turmoil.

Curtis also contended that it is difficult to distinguish between the actions of local militants and foreign terrorists, suggesting a critical danger for the government. Despite concerns over Pakistan's nuclear arsenal falling into the wrong hands, Curtis discouraged the U.S. government from confiscating the materials. She applauded past diplomatic efforts to secure these weapons and recommended that the government pursue similar measures.

Chairman Ackerman:

Death one incident in a string of attacks.

President Musharraf fired chief justice

Needs a change of strategy against terrorism

U.S. needs a new approach to Pakistan.

USIP poll

International monitors

Investigation into Bhuttos death

Provided military with bulk of assistance, needs to help Pakistan beyond military

Pence (Indiana):

First appeared that we were going towards democracy, then assassination

The situation is unquestionably bleak unsatisfactory

Challenge rests on ensuring the overall success of peaceful actors.

Praised \$750 million FATA

Royce

the loss of Benazir Bhutto makes much more difficult

a well held election, empowering those willing to take a stand against extremism

intelligence agency

the military owns the state, politically and militarily

Mr Scott

What I think we need to do is not overreact

Nuclear proliferation

Is there a contingency plan that if this government breaks down, a civil war happens there are we putting all of our eggs in one basket, which may be the wrong basket in the eyes of the people of Pakistan.”

Rohrabacher

Saudi Arabia

Musharraf should run in a real election

Burton

He has been an ally and we should support him

Crowley

We have supported dictatorships in the past when it suited our needs

We seem willing to support countries that are not democratic

Iraq, Iran

Fair

Should engage other states, such as China, increasing influence

Support institutions and processes

political party, key institutions, and civil societies

f-16s should be contingent on interests

“the United States must transition from supporting one person and the army”

Musharraf has been a declining asset, widespread unpopularity, struggles with ties to US

Optimistic about elected PM

Washington hasn't intimated the need for reform

Ashley Tellis

Political irregularities and exist and will continue, Musharraf likes it because it eliminates

Given these objectives, hard to eliminate irregularities

Will this election be acceptable to Pakistani people?

If not, U.S. will have to choose.

U.S. assistance to Pakistan-

We need to authorize legislation to tie ESF to specific programs and services

Economic support is a resource course

Urge congress not to touch security measures, wants to give the new guy a chance

Doesn't want to reinforce image of the inconstant ally, move away from transactional

Lisa Curtis-

Musharraf's continuation could bring into crisis

Washington should view it as a transitional situation

Washington and Islamabad need collaborative approach

Needs economic development and political reform

Pakistan's distinction between foreign terrorists and homegrown militants, hard now
Careful U.S. actions in the past make sure that nuclear weapons keep it away from terrorism,
don't seize them

Pakistanis have not acted on FATA's
U.S. has made intermittent demands

Tellis – we have to make demands. Musharraf reminded us on how difficult it would be to fight
terrorists on all fronts.

Things have changed, we haven't changed it or pushed back

Why would the Bush administration not make these demands?
Ashley – scared of pushing him over the edge

Curtis – can't support Islamic militancy

Royce – What we have is al Qaeda is being defeated across the world except northwest frontier.”
How do we bring a policy makers to apply right pressure? To bring that power?

Fair

Majority thinks that Musharraf were involved in her death

Ashley – people have linkages that could become an embarrassment

Curtis – most paks don't think its gonna be a fair, 50% think that he had hand in it
Musharraf has lost a lot here

Scott - NUCLEAR problem

Military controls nukes, organizes safety and security, firmly under control by senior military
leadership

Scott- could it go off

Tellis no, but there could be a corrosion while nuclear subset is stable

Pence: where do you see him in a category of transitional figure

Curtis For U.S. officials it may seem bonejarring, his credibility has plummeted, began with
dismiisal of supreme court justice, red mosque, paks don't like him nomore, Bhutto assassination

A few months ago, he was singular locust of authority, changed with new army, Pakistan will be
diffused,

Suggestion: complex issue but things can be done, “move away from a system where we simply
cut checks.”