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AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN: THE STABILITY CHALLENGE
VISITING SPEAKER: ROBERT TEMPLER,
INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

Suman Bhattacharyya,
Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development
June 17, 2002

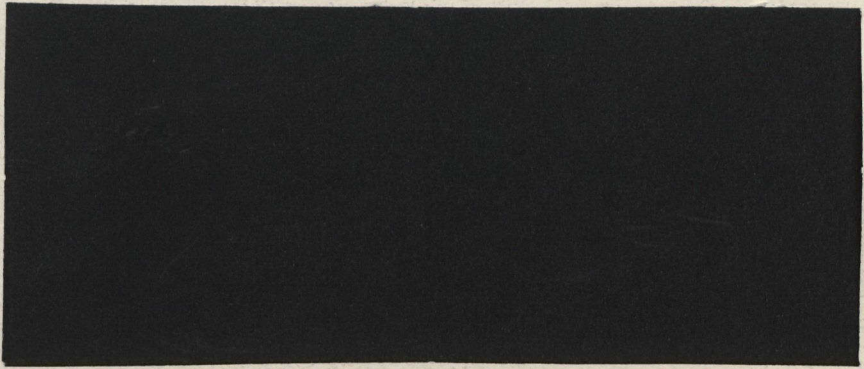
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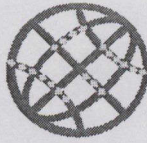
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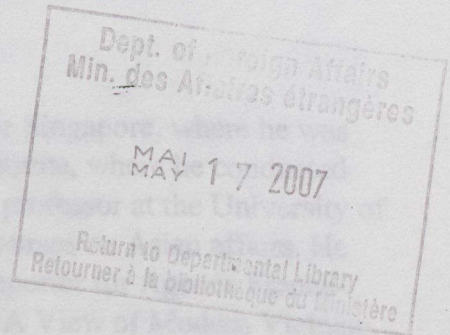


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Biography of Robert Templer,
Asia Program Director, International Crisis Group

Robert Templer joined ICG in June 2001 from Strategic Intelligence Singapore, where he was regional editor. Previously he was a fellow of the Open Society Institute, where he conducted research on corruption and political instability in Asia, and visiting professor at the University of California, Berkeley, where he taught graduate and post-graduate courses on Asian affairs. He has worked as a columnist at the Asian Wall Street Journal, and a reporter for Agence France-Presse and the China Post. He is the author of *Shadows and Wind: A View of Modern Vietnam*, and of the forthcoming publication *Reading Between the Lies* (on political corruption in Asia). He holds a Masters Degree from Cambridge University.

Afghanistan and Pakistan: The Stability Challenge¹

Robert Templer, Asia Director, International Crisis Group

Monday, 17 June 2002

Room C3-400, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

Part 1: Afghanistan

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Robert Templer opened his presentation by stating that the the *Loya Jirga* was a remarkable achievement, despite the obstacles. However, creating a durable peace remains a continuing challenge.

PROBLEMS WITH AFGHANISTAN

Two key problems were identified with Afghanistan, namely level of insecurity, and the power of commanders and warlords. The Afghan central government acts as a municipal government whose power does not extend far beyond Kabul. The regions are still controlled by warlords. Until now, the government has been comprised of warlords with a thin civilian veneer.

It has been difficult to end “war lordism” in Afghanistan. Some of these warlords were of minor importance before they received funding from the U.S. to combat *Al-Qaeda*. Hence, the short-term aims of the international coalition are at odds with nation-building in Afghanistan. Different warlord factions want to remain in power and retain resources.

CONSEQUENCES OF “WAR-LORDISM” AND WEAK GOVERNANCE

The weakness of the central government and increasing regionalism have resulted in attacks against Pashtuns in northern Afghanistan. It has been difficult to move toward reconstruction. The West has also been unwilling to expand its presence in the country. Therefore, it will be difficult to bring the warlords into the central government.

THE INABILITY TO BUILD AN AFGHAN MILITARY FORCE

The post-Taliban Afghan military force trained by the US and France has been largely unsuccessful. Training has also been carried out in a haphazard fashion. Given the current rates of training, only 10 percent of forces needed will be available by 2005. Another problem will be to determine how to deploy this force into combat missions. Will it fight against local warlords? Little has been done to determine the criteria for admission to this force. As well, no screening process exists to prevent human rights abusers from joining the Afghan military force.

GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES

In the past, Afghanistan had strong central governments that did not tolerate regional diversity and autonomy. In order to combat the present weakness of the state, we need to emphasize state creation, in addition to building civil society. According to Templer, one key state institution to guarantee security is the creation of a viable Afghan police force. Hence, building schools alone

¹*Rapporteur's note:* The above text constitutes a summary of remarks for the presentation and discussions. It is not a transcript.

will not improve the Afghan situation:

“You can build as many schools as you like, but no one is going to go if they’re going to be overrun by gunmen,” he said.

The Afghan justice system also needs to be developed in tandem with the police force. Overall, the Europeans and Americans have yet been unable to develop a coordinated plan for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. We need to move beyond the Post-Soviet model.

The weakness of the central government has been exacerbated by Western policies. There is a desperate need to find a funding mechanism to strengthen resources and institutions in Kabul. For instance, Ismail Khan, a local warlord, currently controls 70 percent of customs revenues. More of these revenues should be going to the central government. While strengthening the central government, a governance arrangement needs to be established whereby local and provincial governments are able to design local aid programs.

CONCERNS WITH U.S. MILITARY ACTIVITY

U.S. policies run contrary to the interests of the central government. For instance, the drug policy pursued by the U.S. was ill-conceived. Alternate training and subsistence strategies need to be developed for former opium farmers. As well, while poppy farms were destroyed as part of a strategy to curb drug production, farmers’ debts were not cancelled. Furthermore, it appeared that anti-drug efforts targeted certain ethnic groups, particularly the Pashtuns.

CONCLUSION

Reconciling the ethnic divisions is key to the future of Afghanistan. In particular, Pashtuns, the largest ethnic group in the country, have been left feeling “shut out” from the Afghan political system. As well, though it is important to support women’s and children’s aid programs, we need to also strengthen the central government, particularly security and justice mechanisms. Finally, drug control efforts need to take into account the ethnic balance of the country.

POLICY OPTIONS

1. Afghanistan’s long-term security needs should be considered when formulating policy.
2. We quickly need to develop a defence and security doctrine, in addition to a clear criteria on who can serve on the police force. As well, a sustainable, long-term funding plan must be secured for the police force. Without a funding plan, we run the risk of funding factions which abuse human rights. Afghanistan could disintegrate again.

Part II: Pakistan

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The stability of Pakistan is key to security in South Asia, argued Templer. The situation is very serious and deserves at least as much attention as the Middle East. A worrying cycle of tension between India and Pakistan needs to be broken. To do this, Pakistan needs to restrict cross-border militant activity across the Line of Control that divides Indian and Pakistani-controlled Kashmir. As well, more needs to be done to bring India to the negotiating table on the Kashmir issue, he added.

AGAINST CONVENTIONAL WISDOM: MYTHS ABOUT PERVEZ MUSHARRAF

Templer argued that the “conventional” wisdom that characterized Western thinking after September 11 was that Musharraf had made a “heroic policy shift” by siding against the Taliban in the U.S.-led “war on terror.” Templer expressed a contrary view, stating that these actions of the Pakistani military are premised on a broader strategy to remain in power, rather than a sincere desire to crack down on extremism.

One of the main myths propagated by the Pakistani military is that they are under threat from extremist elements in the public. In fact, Templer stated, the military is firmly in control of these groups. He remarked that terrorist attacks within Pakistan are rarely directed against the military establishment.

The Pakistani military and extremist groups have acted in a symbiotic relationship. In fact, the relationship between terrorist groups in Pakistan and Pro-Taliban elements is very close. Since January 12, 2002, when Musharraf made a pledge to crack down on extremist groups operating in Pakistan, the groups themselves have expressed little fear of punishment from the military regime, said Templer, basing his findings on recent interviews with militant groups in Pakistan. The Musharraf regime has opted for a “round up the usual suspects” strategy, characterized by jailing suspected terrorists and releasing them shortly after.

On education, Templer argued that Musharraf’s regime has made little headway on reform of Pakistan’s religious schools (*madrassas*), which many analysts have called bases for the propagation of extremist thought and ideology. While the Pakistani government insists they are capable of self-regulation, Templer was skeptical about this assessment. Much of the difficulty with *madrassa* reform is that they provide useful services for poor families unable to send their children to schools.

THE KASHMIR MILITANTS

Efforts to crack down on Kashmir terror groups operating within Pakistan’s borders have so far been inadequate. Pakistan’s strategy on Kashmir is to “bleed India” using the Kashmir militants, said Templer. He added that unless Pakistan halts this strategy, tensions in the region will only further escalate.

A RETURN TO DEMOCRACY: THE ONLY WAY FORWARD FOR PAKISTAN

“Our sense is that the military will stay in power for a long time,” said Templer. Unless Pakistan

returns to democracy, it is not likely that the military will change its relationship with pro-Kashmir terrorist groups in Pakistan or improve relations with India. In addition, the view that civilian governments are more corrupt than military regimes is also a myth perpetuated by the Pakistani military. In Pakistan today, there is a durable desire for democracy, as demonstrated by the lack of voter turnout for his Musharraf's recent leadership referendum.

Further, the military regime has also created the myth that the level of corruption in civilian governments endangers economic growth. Expressing a contrary opinion, Templer argued that evidence exists to suggest that military governments are no less corrupt than civilian administrations. By contrast, research demonstrates that government corruption increases in military regimes. Pakistani civil society wants to see a government that can implement a long-term strategy for economic growth and social services, Templer said. However, under the military, the state will continue to erode. Long-term economic growth can only be achieved under a durable democracy.

U.S. POLICY ON PAKISTAN

Americans have misread the desires and aspirations of the Pakistani people. Templer argued that Western engagement with Pakistan should continue. However, it should concentrate on the provision of services, rebuilding the state, and ensuring that aid is properly allocated. At the moment, little is known about how budgetary funds are disbursed by the military regime. In fact, evidence suggests that the military regime is no less corrupt than the previously elected democratic governments. It also has far less accountability.

CONCLUSION

We cannot accept myths about the military regime at face value. There is a need for analysis, study and discussion. The military regime requires close scrutiny and pressure.

POLICY OPTIONS

Templer noted that the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has carried out useful work in Pakistan. In future efforts, attention must be directed toward rebuilding the institutions of the state. Also, further action needs to be taken to persuade the military regime to allocate more funding for education. Pressure could also be applied to persuade Musharraf to crack down on militants operating within Pakistani borders and in Pakistani-controlled territory.

Part III: Questions

1. "How independent is the ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) [of the military regime]?"

Answer: Civilian governments never had a handle on it, but military governments do. It is convenient for the military to say it is not in control of it.

2. "If the military is in control of militant groups, how was the recent attack on the Indian army personnel and families in Jammu possible? Surely this is of no advantage for Musharraf."

Answer: Musharraf is in control of the military. It is unclear whether the attackers are rogue elements within the ISI. In any case, none of the militant groups would like to completely sever their links with the military.

The Pakistani military is not cracking down on them. Those responsible for the murder of Wall Street Journal Reporter Daniel Pearl and others are not controlled by Musharraf, but the Pakistani military has been providing support for militant groups in Kashmir. Operating in Kashmir requires a level of logistical support that militant groups cannot provide on their own. As well, terrorist incidents in Pakistan do not threaten the Musharraf government. Musharraf is not a force for stability at all; he is neither thinking of Western interests nor broader Pakistani interests.

3. "If we are supporting faith-based schooling in the West, why have madrassas in Pakistan come under attack by Western analysts? And further, I'd like to comment, that nothing is going to change without bringing the Kashmir issue to the fore."

Answer: There needs to be greater knowledge of the opinions of the Kashmiris themselves. Kashmiri groups have been characterized by factional in-fighting and ineffective organization. It is in the interest of both India and Pakistan to listen to Kashmiri voices.

On *madrassas*, I do not support faith-based education. *Madrassas* provide useful services, but some are bases for jihadi extremist activity. It is key to develop a policy to identify extremist groups. We also need to support efforts to create a secular education system in Pakistan, and dry up funding for extremist *madrassas*. To a great extent, the funding for *madrassas* is coming from Saudi Arabia. As part of globalization, Saudi money is diminishing the uniqueness of the area. Saudi *Wahabism* is pushing out local forms of Islam and supporting militant activity.

4. "One of the myths out there is that Kashmir is essential to Pakistan's national identity. What can be done to dispel it?"

Answer: It is indeed a myth that the Pakistani public would not support a U-turn on Kashmir policy. I was recently in Pakistan on "Kashmir Solidarity Day" which was largely "government noise." The Kashmir myth is useful for the Pakistani military. The Pakistani army is still deeply humiliated by its military defeat in the 1971 war with India. As well, nearly 2 million Bengalis were massacred by the Pakistani army during this war. Hence, the humiliation resulting from this event will make a policy shift on the Kashmir issue problematic. Certainly, any solution [to the Kashmir issue] will require some serious compromises on the Indian side. However, the Indian middle class is now expecting the government to deliver economic success and this may prompt

India to move closer toward resolving the issue. The Kashmir issue is seen by many in India as a burden on the government.

The level of Western engagement must be maintained; the U.S. should send regular emissaries to the region to diffuse tensions. In addition, efforts must be made to involve Kashmiris in these discussions. Pakistanis would be surprised to learn that many Kashmiris would settle for an autonomy arrangement within the Indian union, with Line of Control as an international boundary between India and Pakistan.

Question 5. *"Who are regional players in Afghanistan? Does Islamic solidarity have a role?"*

Answer: Islamic solidarity is only a factor when outsiders are attacking Muslims. Iran has been providing funding for various Afghan projects. More sensible elements within that country favour a stable government in Afghanistan. The U.S. has acted in an unwise fashion by pursuing a policy of "shutting out" Iran. Apart from that, Afghanistan has not received any sustained, long-term interest from the Muslim world.

RELATED REPORTS FROM THE CANADIAN CENTRE FOR FOREIGN POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Marketa Geislerova, "Summary Report from the Roundtable: The Impact of September 11 on International Relations and Canada's Foreign Policy," Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development, 2001.

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Marketa Geislerova, "Summary Report from the Roundtable on Afghanistan: Governance Scenarios and Canadian Policy Options," Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development, 2001.

RECENT INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP (ICG) REPORTS ON AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

J. Alexander Thier, "Will Ballots or Bullets Rule? Afghanistan's fate hinges on the outcome of this week's Loya Jirga," (June 9, 2002) online:

<http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/showreport.cfm?reportid=677>

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Note: The International Crisis Group's website is located at www.crisisweb.org.

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