



Pakistan: The Military Sans Musharraf

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Summary

Pakistani leader Gen. Pervez Musharraf finally stepped down as military chief Nov. 28 to become a civilian president only. The move came in the wake of intense pressure on Musharraf from both the United States and the Pakistani opposition. Though intended as a step to stabilize the situation, Musharraf will face difficulties balancing the army on one hand and civilians on the other.

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Analysis

In a move Stratfor predicted as early as [March](#), Pakistani President Gen. Pervez Musharraf retired from the military Nov. 28. Musharraf relinquished the post as chief of the army staff (COAS) to his deputy, Gen. Ashfaq Kayani, who until October served as head of the country's premier spy agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence directorate. Musharraf will take the oath as a civilian president Nov. 29 and reportedly will lift the state of emergency he imposed Nov. 3 ahead of parliamentary elections in early January.

However, giving up his controversial dual role will not ease the continuing crisis of governance in the country, which has resulted from political unrest and a growing jihadist insurgency. On the contrary, instability likely will increase because Musharraf will be faced with the challenge of balancing the army (which he no longer commands) with parliament. A civilian Musharraf will find himself sandwiched between both institutions, and could ultimately lose the job of president.

Under the current legal setup, his position as president allows him to dismiss parliament. Furthermore, stepping down as army chief does not mean he will immediately lose his influence over the military establishment, as it takes several months for a new COAS to settle into the position. However, by stepping down from the military, Musharraf has begun the process of losing his grip on the armed forces, and the new army chief increasingly will be calling the shots.

Musharraf has ventured into uncharted territory because he is the first army chief in the country's history to retire from the service and attempt to maintain power as a civilian president. Both of Pakistan's two previous military rulers held onto the post of military chief until they left office. Before that, Pakistan's first military ruler, Field Marshall Ayub Khan, gave up the post of military chief after being elected president, though he did not leave the service altogether. Therefore, it remains to be seen whether a former military chief will be able to maintain his position as president.

There are a number of indications that Musharraf's position as a civilian ruler is untenable. For starters -- and contrary to what has been percolating in the media -- Kayani is known to be an independent-minded man with solid professional credentials and, unlike Musharraf, a tough attitude toward Islamist militants. Kayani also has a decent working relationship with the country's top opposition leader, Benazir Bhutto, whom he served as deputy military secretary when she was prime minister in the 1990s. Additionally, as COAS, he now will move to appoint a new deputy and reshuffle the deck of generals to his liking.

On the other side, Washington is working with key opposition players to reach an accommodation with Musharraf regarding some semblance of free and fair elections. In any case, the elections will produce a coalition government, likely led by Bhutto, which not only will be unstable in of itself but also will be locked in a power struggle with Musharraf.

Under normal circumstances, the army would view a civilian Musharraf as one of its own and would prefer to work with him to deal with the civilians. But this assumes he can manage the civilians, which is doubtful. Therefore, it is likely that in a future confrontation between the president and parliament, the army will choose to remove Musharraf in order to break the gridlock.

Essentially, as Stratfor has said before, [personalities](#) -- in uniform or otherwise -- do not matter. In his farewell speech, Musharraf himself acknowledged this much, saying, "The system continues, people come and go." It is the military institution -- the collection of top generals -- that drives events in the country. Therefore, the thing to watch for in the days ahead is not what Musharraf does or does not do, but whether the army can restore political stability and deal with an unprecedented jihadist insurgency.