

IRI Index II: Musharraf's Options

There have been reports in the press of a rift opening up in the ranks of Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-e-Azam (PML-Q) (the party associated with Musharraf) as a result of the political crisis; there have been a number of defections, inter-party squabbles that have gone public, and talk of a forward bloc (a splinter faction of PML-Q) forming in the parliament. IRI's poll presented Pakistanis with the following scenario:

Two factions are emerging in PML-Q: the first believes that the Chief Justice should be restored, that Musharraf should resign from the Army, and that he should call parliamentary elections before seeking re-election himself; the second faction is opposed to these changes. Which faction would you support?

- **PML-Q voters prefer the faction that supports making changes.** A plurality of voters (38 percent) responded that they would support the faction that supported these changes while 14 percent said that they backed the faction that is opposed to these changes; 21 percent said neither and 26 percent had no response or did not know. Of more relevance is the response of just PML-Q voters; 36 percent said that they backed the faction that supported changes while 29 percent said that they supported the faction that is opposed; 14 percent responded neither and 21 percent had no response or did not know.

The poll also probed voters' attitudes regarding the current assemblies, Musharraf maintaining his dual role as Army Chief and President, and the role of the Army in civilian government.

- **Voters are increasingly opposed to the current assemblies (made up of legislators elected in the last election) re-electing Musharraf.** Only 34 percent supported such an action whereas 62 percent were opposed; a large percentage, 40 percent, said that they were strongly opposed.
- **Voters want Musharraf to resign from the Army.** When asked if they agreed or disagreed with the statement that President Musharraf should resign his post in the Army, 62 percent replied that they agreed that he should resign and 33 percent said that they did not; a very significant 41 percent said that they strongly agreed that he should resign. The 62 percent of voters who wish to see him resign his Army post represents an increase of six points from the February/March poll, when only 56 percent responded that they wanted Musharraf to resign his post in the Army. Even 43 percent of PML-Q voters want to see Musharraf resign his Army post, although 55 percent were opposed.
- **Fifty-five percent said that the Army should not play a role in civilian government** while 40 percent said that it should. The 55 percent who were against any such role represents an increase of nine points from the February/March poll, when only 46 percent were of that opinion. Again, even PML-Q voters were trending against Musharraf, with 61 percent agreeing that the Army should not have a role in civilian government.

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As noted in IRI's last press release, a majority of Pakistani voters are against the re-election of Musharraf to another term as president; 64 percent were against re-election while 33 percent were for. IRI's June/July poll also tested two different election scenarios under which Musharraf could be re-elected to see which garnered the most support.

- Voters were first asked if they would support the re-election of Musharraf if he *did not resign from the Army* and if he stood for re-election before *current assemblies*; only 29 percent said that they would support his re-election under this scenario, while 67 percent said that they would not.
- Voters were then asked if they would support the re-election of Musharraf if he *first resigned from the Army, called elections*, and then stood for re-election before the *new assemblies*. Under this scenario, 48 percent said that they would support his re-election while 44 percent said that they would oppose. This represents a very significant departure from not only the previous scenario but also from the initial re-election question where 64 percent were opposed. These numbers, showing a move from a strong majority opposed to re-election to a plurality supporting it, indicate that Musharraf could pick up significant support if he resigned from the Army and called elections before standing for re-election himself.

Another political option open to President Musharraf, which has received attention in the media, is to make a deal of some sort with the increasingly popular Benazir Bhutto. The poll also explored voters' attitudes towards this potential deal.

- **A plurality of voters supports a deal between Musharraf and Bhutto.** When voters were asked if they supported such a deal between Musharraf and Bhutto, 47 percent responded yes and 37 percent said no. Analyzing the responses by party vote shows that both Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) (the party associated with Bhutto) and PML-Q voters support a deal by a ratio of two-to-one; 63 percent of PPPP voters said that they supported a deal while 31 percent were opposed; PML-Q voters supported the deal by a margin of 58 percent to 29 percent.

Respondents were then presented with two different deal scenarios to see which garnered the most support. Voters were first asked if they would support a deal if the details of the deal were that *Musharraf would remain as Army Chief-of-Staff and stand for re-election before the current assemblies, and Benazir Bhutto would be allowed to return to Pakistan but only after the parliamentary elections*. A majority of respondents reported that they were against this scenario; 24 percent said that they would support it and 52 percent said that they would oppose. This scenario also failed to garner much support from either PPPP or PML-Q voters; 33 percent of PPPP voters said that they would support such a deal while 57 percent were opposed; 38 percent of PML-Q voters indicated support while 42 percent did not.

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Next, voters were asked if they would support a deal if the details were that *Musharraf would resign from the Army but still stand for re-election before the current assemblies, and Bhutto would be able to return to Pakistan before the parliamentary elections*. Pakistanis indicated that they would be more inclined to support such a deal, with 44 percent saying that they would support it and 30 percent saying that they would be opposed. This scenario also picked up significant support among PML-Q and PPPP voters; 63 percent of PPPP voters said that they would support while 25 percent were opposed; PML-Q voters supported the scenario by a margin of 48 percent to 29 percent.

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