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Bush Rules Out a Nuclear Deal With Pakistanis

By [ELISABETH BUMILLER](#) and [CARLOTTA GALL](#)

ISLAMABAD, [Pakistan](#), March 4 — President Bush made clear on Saturday that Pakistan should not expect a civilian nuclear agreement like the one with India soon, and he bluntly said the two rivals on the subcontinent could not be compared to each other.

Mr. Bush said he and Pakistan's president, Gen. [Pervez Musharraf](#), had discussed a civilian nuclear program for Pakistan during talks on Saturday morning.

"I explained that Pakistan and India are different countries with different needs and different histories," Mr. Bush said at a joint outdoor news conference with Mr. Musharraf on the grounds of the presidential palace, Aiwan-e-Sadr. "So as we proceed forward, our strategy will take in effect those well-known differences."

Before Mr. Bush's remarks, administration officials said General Musharraf had no chance of making such a deal when proliferation and terrorism remained concerns in Pakistan. But it was striking that the president spoke so directly as his host stood at his side.

Mr. Bush showed strong support for Mr. Musharraf's efforts in combating militants, even though [Osama bin Laden](#), the mastermind of the Sept. 11 attacks, and Mullah [Muhammad Omar](#), the [Taliban](#) leader, are believed to still be hiding in Pakistan. Without being specific, General Musharraf himself made reference to "slippages" in the past.

Mr. Bush said, "Part of my mission today was to determine whether or not the president is as committed as he has been in the past to bringing these terrorists to justice, and he is."

The Pakistani foreign minister, Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri, made clear that the two leaders had had a frank discussion, saying General Musharraf had made a "comprehensive and telling response" to American concerns about Pakistan's commitment to fighting terrorism.

"They had a level of discussion I had not seen before," he said, adding that General Musharraf shared intelligence and documentary evidence with Mr. Bush.

Pakistan had had to deal with 30,000 foreign fighters passing through from Afghanistan over the years, Mr. Kasuri said, had more troops in the border areas than foreign and Afghan forces together on the other side, and had lost 600 soldiers in fighting in Waziristan. That was more casualties than forces had taken across the border, he said.

Mr. Kasuri struggled to answer local journalists who asked if Pakistan had not been left empty-handed after the visit.

Speaking at a news briefing Saturday afternoon to release the joint statement issued by both presidents, he said General Musharraf had pressed the case for civil nuclear cooperation, since Pakistan had urgent energy needs, too. "These things take a long time," he said. Mr. Bush had hinted at something, he said, but he declined to explain further.

Critics of Mr. Bush's nuclear agreement with India say it will only encourage other nations to demand similar

arrangements. Under the terms of the Indian pact, the United States will end a moratorium of decades on sales of nuclear fuel and reactor components and India will separate its civilian and military nuclear programs, and open the civilian facilities to international inspections.

General Musharraf is facing rising pressure from opposition parties, including Islamic ones, in large part over his support of American policies to root out militants in Pakistan.

While Mr. Bush offered support for Mr. Musharraf, the public remarks on both sides could not disguise evident tensions, particularly after the nuclear deal that Mr. Bush announced this week with India.

Mr. Bush was not expected to endorse a similar nuclear agreement with Pakistan — the country of A. Q. Khan, the founder of Pakistan's nuclear program, who confessed to having run an illegal nuclear proliferation network.

But neither was it expected that Mr. Bush would so obviously place Pakistan on a separate footing from India, as Washington has long taken pains to balance American relations between the rivals.

Mr. Bush, who said only last week in Washington that Pakistan "still has some distance to travel on the road to democracy," made a gentle reference to the need for democratic advances in the country, saying that elections scheduled next year "need to be open and honest."

General Musharraf seized power in 1999 in a bloodless coup. He had since promised to give up his military uniform in 2004, but changed the Constitution so he could hold both his army post and the presidency until 2007.

His opponents in Pakistan charge that the Bush administration has given him wide latitude as it has enlisted Pakistan in the fight against terrorism, while at the same time saying it wants to promote democracy in the Muslim world.

Mr. Bush and Mr. Musharraf made their public remarks on the serene lawn of Aiwan-e-Sadr, with ducks splashing in a flower-filled pool in the background, as the capital around them remained in an effective 24-hour lockdown.

Security was intense for the first visit of an American president in six years, and the first by Mr. Bush, who was in essence traveling to Mr. bin Laden's backyard two days after a suicide bombing attack in Karachi left four people dead, including an American Embassy employee.

General Musharraf said he had expressed Pakistan's "deepest regrets" in his talks with Mr. Bush about the bombing, which he said was "very viciously timed" to spoil Mr. Bush's visit. Mr. Bush said he had sent his condolences to the family of David Foy, the embassy employee killed in the attack, as well as to the families of the Pakistanis who died.

"We're not going to back down in the face of these killers," Mr. Bush said. "We'll fight this war and we will win this war together."

Throughout the day, the streets of Islamabad were peaceful, with the main rally planned for the adjoining city of Rawalpindi curtailed after the political leader Imran Khan was placed under house arrest.

But people in Islamabad showed a lack of excitement over the visit and did not glance at the live coverage of the news conference by the two presidents on TV in a shopping mall.

"I do not think the visit will make much difference," said Naser Abbasy, 37, who runs a clothes store here.

His brother, Rashid Mehmud Abbasy, 35, was wearing a black armband on Saturday in protest of Mr. Bush's visit. "It is a protest, because of all the atrocities against Muslims in Iraq and elsewhere," he said. "It is not about the president, but his policies," he said. The Muslim leaders had called on supporters to wear black armbands, he said.

But Mr. Abbasy said the visit was good if it gave Mr. Bush a better understanding of the views of Pakistanis. "He gave a lot to India, despite knowing that we do not get on well," he said. "So he should support us equally."

Pakistan Attacks a Militant Force

By The New York Times

PESHAWAR, Pakistan, March 4 — Pakistan sent in helicopter gunships Saturday against militants who have virtually taken control of the town of Miramshah, in the North Waziristan tribal areas bordering Afghanistan, following a government raid on Wednesday on a suspected terrorist training camp in the area.

Nearly 50 militants were killed, Pakistani officials said, wire services reported.

The militants on Saturday used rockets to attack government buildings in Miramshah.

Residents fled the town after gun and missile fire that a government official said had caused "very, very high" casualties.