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Devasher, T. (2018) Ruling from the Shadows-The Political Predominance of the Military in Pakistan. *National Security*. (Online) 1 (1), pp. 33-54.

<https://www.vifindia.org/sites/default/files/aug-2018-national-security-vol-1-issue-1-TDevasher.pdf>

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Articles

Ruling from the Shadows: The Political Predominance of the Military in Pakistan

Tilak Devasher*

Abstract

In Pakistan, civil–military relations are the central issue in governance. An overview from the 1950s shows an alternating pattern of civilian and overt military rule and even under civilian rule, the army dominating critical areas like security, foreign and defence policies. At the heart of the distorted civil–military relations has been the failure of the democratic process to take firm roots. For this, both the army and the politicians have to share the blame: the army for frequently disrupting the process itself and the politicians for creating the enabling environment for the army to step in due to their inability to provide good governance. As things stand, the army will continue to dominate politics and especially its core areas of interest.¹

A cardinal principal of democracy is that constitutional provisions govern civil–military relations and the armed forces are subordinate to the elected executive. In Pakistan, however, civil–military relations have been, and are, the central issue in governance. Recent events have once again brought this into sharp focus. Nawaz Sharif, the third-time prime minister of Pakistan was ousted by the Supreme Court on July 28, 2017 following investigations into the Panama Papers.² His narrative and that of his daughter, Maryam Na-

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1. Portions of the article have been adapted from the author's book 'Pakistan: Courting the Abyss', NOIDA: Harper Collins, December 2016.

2. The Panama Papers are over 11 million documents of a Panamanian law firm Mossack Fonseca that were leaked by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) on 3 April 2016. These documents detailed financial information of more than 200,000 offshore entities containing personal financial information about individuals and public officials who had used shell companies for their wealth. The children of Nawaz Sharif and their properties in London were named in the papers.

waz, since then has been that his removal was a conspiracy with direct hints that the army was behind the 'judicial coup'.

An overview of governments in Pakistan, from the 1950s till the present, shows an alternating pattern of civilian and overt military rule and even under civilian rule the army dominates critical areas like security, foreign and defence policies. Pakistan has witnessed four phases of direct military rule up till now: Gen. (later Field Marshal) Ayub Khan (1958-1969); Gen. Yahya Khan (1969-1971); Gen. Zia ul Haq (1977-1988) and Gen. Pervez Musharraf (1999-2007), making a total of 32 years. Though general elections were held in 1970, 1977, 1985 (party-less), 1988, 1993, 1997, 2002, 2008 and 2013, it has had only three phases of democratic rule: 1971-1977; 1988-1999 and 2008 till now, making a total of approximately 27 years.

Voltaire's famous quip, 'Where some states have an army, the Prussian army has a state', has been used frequently and realistically with regard to Pakistan and its army. The Pakistan army is no longer just an organ of the executive, but is identified with the state itself. Its sheer size, its huge business interests and above all, its claim to be the defender of Pakistan's territorial and ideological frontiers as well as the custodian of the 'Nazaria-i-Pakistan or the 'Ideology of Pakistan' has given it a larger-than-life role in Pakistan. Not surprisingly, as has been well put: 'time and time again the army's way has been Pakistan's way' (Cohen, 2012).

Hence, democratic governance in Pakistan instead of being a tripod of the executive, legislature and judiciary looks more like a garden umbrella in which the army is the central pole around which the other organs of the state revolve. Consequently, civilian governments in Pakistan have contributed little in either defining national security objectives or strategies to implement them.

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Two examples illustrate this graphically: one, the continuing ambiguity about whether the then prime minister Nawaz Sharif had been briefed by the army about the 1999 Kargil intrusions; two, the country's nuclear assets and policy being under the control of the army. Both these examples underline the gravity of the issue of civil–military relations.

Such a state of affairs could never have been imagined in 1947 when Pakistan was created. At the reception hosted by Mohammad Ali Jinnah (henceforth Jinnah) on August 14, 1947 when Asghar Khan (later Air Marshal) and Lt Col (later Maj. Gen.) Akbar Khan met Jinnah, Akbar Khan told him that they were disappointed that the higher posts in the armed forces had been given to British officers, who still controlled their destiny. According to Asghar Khan:

‘The Quaid who had been listening patiently raised his finger and said, “Never forget that you are the servants of the state. You do not make policy. It is we, the people’s representatives, who decide how the country is to be run. Your job is only to obey the decision of your civilian masters.”’ (Khan, 2005)

Could any politician have the temerity to say this to the army chief today? The answer has to be a resounding no.

The trend of the army playing a role in politics began almost at the very creation of Pakistan. Gen. Frank Messervy, the first commander-in-chief of the Pakistan Army (1947–48) was quick to recognise the signs when he learned about the attack of the tribal ‘raiders’ on Kashmir. He expressed his frustration with what was going on in Kashmir, the manner in which it was going on, all behind his back and warned about the erosion of the army’s apolitical tradition. He predicted that politically minded young officers would make a mess of things under the garb of patriotism. He added, ‘Politicians using soldiers and soldiers allowing themselves to be used, without proper approval of superiors, were setting a bad example for the future.’ (Pataudi, 1983)

Historically, Pakistan was unable to finalise a Constitution for many years after its creation. The Governors General ruled dictatorially, as a result democracy could not grow roots before the first martial law was imposed in 1958. The first election in Pakistan took place in 1970, 23 years after its creation. The key to the army’s dominance was the advice given by Maj. Gen. Sher Ali Khan Pataudi to Gen. Yahya Khan in 1969 that the army’s ability to rule lay in its being perceived by the people as ‘a mythical entity, a magical force, that

would succour them in times of need when all else failed ... the army was the final guarantor of Pakistan and its well-being.'(Khan, 2001) Every military ruler has made this the cornerstone of his policy. It is when the army's charisma starts to fade that the generals know their time is up.

Why Does the Army Dominate

Several reasons account for the army's dominance. For one, Punjabis dominated the army that Pakistan inherited at its creation, while Punjab is also the dominant province in Pakistan, especially after the breakup of Pakistan in 1971. According to Stephen Cohen, after partition it was determined that over 77 per cent of the war-time recruitment from what became Pakistan had been from the Punjab, 19.5 per cent being from the NWFP, 2.2 per cent from Sindh and just over 0.06 per cent from Balochistan. Today the percentages have not changed dramatically: 75 per cent of all ex-servicemen come from only five districts – three in Punjab (Rawalpindi, Jhelum and Attock) and the two adjoining districts in NWFP (Kohat and Mardan). (Cohen, 1998)

Second, the legacy of partition has been an important catalyst in the army's domination. Two strands are especially important: first, the geographical construct of the new state and the issue of Kashmir. Jinnah's thesis for Pakistan was based on the concentration of Muslim population and not on militarily defensible territories. As a result, the new state of Pakistan had many of its population centres close to the Indo-Pak borders and, except for Balochistan, in easy range of India. This made the territorial defence of Pakistan a top-most priority. The other is Kashmir, which has had a determining impact on the army and is a key reason for its dominance. Pakistan's leaders had presumed that, as a Muslim majority state, Kashmir would accede to Pakistan on the basis of the two-nation theory. When the Maharaja of Kashmir prevaricated, Pakistan broke the Standstill Agreement it had signed with the princely state. It sent in tribal 'raiders' on October 22, 1947 to seize Kashmir by force. The invasion led to the Maharaja acceding to India and the Indian army foiling Pakistan's objective. With Kashmir becoming a part of India, the hatred for India in the army intensified and since then Kashmir is regarded as 'the unfinished agenda of partition', giving the army its *raison d'etre*.

For both these reasons, massive resources were allocated to the army giving it a prominence that it has retained over the decades. However, as will

be seen shortly, more than the allocation of the funds, it was the inability of the politicians to institutionalise democracy that ensured a dominating position for the army. Here, the infirmities of the Muslim League that failed to develop as a political party once Pakistan was created, allowed the army to step in. Once in power, they made sure that the so-called threat from India was projected and internalised as the number one priority for the country. To quote T.V. Paul, 'Elevating national security to the highest salience is in the interests of the military, in order to maximise resources from the national economy.' (Paul, 2014) Having done so, it is not surprising that the army has dominated Pakistan for so long, even when not directly in power.

Third, it is significant that in 1947 the civil leadership of Pakistan came largely from India – Jinnah, Liaquat Ali and the bulk of the cabinet. They did not have roots in the territory that became Pakistan. This was a hark-back to the Pakistan movement. For example, in the Council of the Muslim League for 1942, out of a total membership of 503, there were 245 members from the Muslim-minority provinces and 258 from the Muslim-majority ones, areas that became Pakistan, even though population-wise the latter far outnumbered the former. In its powerful working committee during 1945–47, only 10 members out of 23 were from the Muslim majority provinces (Sayeed, 1968). The army leadership, on the other hand, predominantly consisted of sons of the soil. Generals like Ayub Khan, Muhammad Musa, Yahya Khan, Gul Hassan Khan, Tikka Khan, and other prominent generals, were from the territories that became Pakistan. Without a power base and being unaccustomed to what became Pakistan, the early politicians needed assistance in governance. This was where the weaknesses of the Muslim League, its lack of a second-rung leadership and weak party organisation, became severe liabilities. It became easy for one or two generations of the army leadership to impose their writ on the political leadership and set the bar for their successors.

Fourth, the first martial law was imposed in Lahore on March 6, 1953, due to the failure of the Punjab government to deal with the anti-Ahmadiya riots. The local military commander Maj. Gen. Azam Khan brought the law and order situation in Lahore under control in a few hours and Punjab returned to normal in a few days. Though the army's job was done, it was allowed to remain in control for over two months during which Azam Khan introduced

the 'Cleaner Lahore Campaign', in which the city was given a big facelift – streets were widened, drains were cleaned, public buildings painted and parks spruced up (Cloughley, 1999). Thus, when the army was withdrawn, the *Dawn* on May 16, 1953 commented: '... Memories of the army rule in Lahore will linger for a long time to come and the new look that Lahore has acquired and the sense of discipline among its people inculcated by the army will bear eloquent testimony to the good work done by Maj. Gen. Azam Khan and his men' (1974, Rizvi). This precedent had enduring consequences for Pakistan as it established a public impression that the army could not only restore peace when the civil administration failed but it could provide an effective government too. For the army, there was the realisation that if Punjab could be 'fixed' in a few days so could the whole country, if required.

Infirmities of the Political Class

As a class, politicians in Pakistan opened the door for army's domination by not exhibiting seriousness about democracy. To begin with, Jinnah held the three most important positions of Governor General, President of the Constituent Assembly and President of the Muslim League (later relinquished) at the same time. He, thus, set a precedent of a powerful individual being more important than the institutional distribution of state power. As Adeel Khan observes, 'by becoming the all-powerful first Governor General, Jinnah founded a unitary political system that retarded the growth of the parliamentary system' (Khan, 2005). More recently, out of power politicians have exhibited a far greater commitment to democracy than those in power. Once in power politicians of all shades develop selective memories about democracy. The attitude is that democracy begins and ends with elections. Without appreciating and internalising democratic norms, democratic consolidation has remained a distant goal. Politicians tend to blame the army for not giving democracy a chance. But, they would have to share the blame, since as a class they have repeatedly refused to accept democratic principles.

The politicians can also be blamed for creating an enabling environment for the army to step in, due to their inability to provide good governance. Instead of focusing on improving the quality of life of the people, civilian governments have had a tendency to be involved in corruption, nepotism and misuse of power for personal gains. Politicians at the helm do not seem to believe

in the principles of accountability, transparency, rule of law, justice and good governance. As the International Crisis Group (ICG) puts it, 'Failing to deliver good governance, civilian governments have undermined their domestic legitimacy, rendering themselves vulnerable to military intervention.' (Crisis Group, 2002).

In addition, none of the political parties have developed intellectual inputs on policies, governance or national security. According to Gohar Ayub who was Speaker of the National Assembly, 'The National Assembly library was used by only 3.5 per cent of all MNAs – and that too, mostly for newspapers and magazines' (Khan, 2007, p. 235). Since the political leadership has rarely displayed requisite intellectual skills it has found it difficult to provide direction to the armed forces in matters of national defence and foreign policy, even if the armed forces were to accept civilian control. On the other hand, the army has professionally run think-tanks that provide inputs on strategy and national security that the civilian government lacks.

Take the case of the National Command Authority that controls the nuclear assets of Pakistan. The politicians do not seem to have professional staff that can evaluate policy options for the deployment and development of nuclear assets. Not surprisingly, the military's viewpoint prevails since it is the only viewpoint. The same is the case with threat perception and the responses in the conventional sphere (Janjua, 2017).

Additionally, many self-serving politicians are eager to be co-opted by the army, realising that it is the only route to power. Such politicians have facilitated the continuation of army rule. According to Musharraf, as a corps commander, he saw how:

.. opposition politicians – regularly visited the army chief to encourage him to oppose the sitting government. ...Whenever any government was performing poorly (unfortunately, that was the norm in the "democratic" decade of the 1990s) or was in political trouble, all roads led to the army GHQ' (Musharraf, 2006).

Except on the rare occasion when their future is at stake, politicians have rarely used the power of Parliament to strengthen democracy, thus undermining Parliament's role. Most Prime Ministers, including Nawaz Sharif, have treated parliament with condescension, seldom even attending its sessions. Nawaz Sharif, for example, has been equating his survival with that of democracy after he was ousted as Prime Minister in July 2017 and giving

lectures about the sanctity of the vote. In reality, however, his record as a parliamentarian has been dismal. In the first parliamentary year of his third term, he attended the National Assembly for merely seven days. In 2016, he attended only 10 per cent of the total sittings of the National Assembly. According to a report released by the Free and Fair Elections Network (FAFEN), out of 289 sittings conducted in 32 sessions between June 2013 and May 2016, Nawaz was present a total of 39 times: a paltry 13.5 per cent attendance (Khan, 2017). In 2015–16, Nawaz attended only one of the 103 sittings of the Senate. This was in violation of Rule 61(2A) that had been amended by the Senators in 2014 to make it mandatory for him to attend the zero hour of the sitting at least once a week (Ali, 2016). Taking their cue from the Prime Minister, ruling party legislators too have ignored Parliament. As a result, Parliament has been reduced to being little more than a debating club instead of being an institution that could have put checks on the army.

Compounding the problem is the fact that political parties in Pakistan are weak. The infirmities of the Muslim League mentioned earlier were underlined in a stinging editorial in the *Pakistan Times* in 1953, barely six years after Pakistan's creation:

'Today, more than ever before, it is true to say that the Muslim League, bereft of what little was left of its integrity and idealism after post-Partition scramble for power and pelf, is in office not because it is a healthy, living organization, deriving its strength from genuine public backing; but ... only because it retains a monopoly of power. A complete lack of democracy characterizes the Muslim League's internal functioning.' (Khan, 1996).

Such criticism is as valid today as it was in 1953 and for all political parties.

Present-day political parties are dynastic fiefdoms. Barring the Jamaat-i-Islami (JI), all the other significant mainstream political parties are family enterprises without any inner-party democracy. Thus, the Bhuttos/Zardari dominate the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), the Sharifs have an iron grip on the Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N), Wali Khan's heirs rule the roost in the Awami National Party (ANP), and despite his claims to clean up the system, Imran Khan is Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). None of the parties have a party organisation bottom upwards. While the PPP does have a cadre, it is hampered by the lack of an effective party organisation. The PML-N is in any

case a district-wise, notables-based party that comes together during elections, a model that Imran Khan is trying to copy.

The attitude of political leaders towards internal party democracy was appallingly demonstrated in April 2010 when the constitutional obligation to hold party elections was deleted by the 18th amendment of the Constitution. This spoke volumes about the commitment of the politicians to democracy (Lodhi, 2014). As a result, barring a few exceptions like the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD) against Gen. Zia, political parties have been unable to mobilise the masses against the army for any prolonged period of time.

Role of the United States

The West has not helped civil–military relations in Pakistan either. As Cohen puts it, for the US in particular, a ‘pro-Western Pakistan, a stable Pakistan, a prosperous Pakistan and a democratic Pakistan were all desirable but in that order’.(Cohen 2005, p. 56) Not surprisingly, the army chief has been given far more importance by the US than the cabinet ministers of the Pakistan government, thereby undermining the civilian establishment. The classic example was the first Pak-US strategic dialogue in the US where the star was the then Army Chief Gen. Kayani rather than Shah Mehmood Qureshi, the Foreign Minister who was the leader of the delegation. Gen. Kayani demonstrated his importance again during the third US–Pakistan Strategic Dialogue in October 2010 by meeting both military and civilian leaders, including President Obama (Young, 2010). It was no different for Gen. Kayani’s successor, Gen. Raheel Sharif. His visit to the US in November 2015 got far more attention and was billed as being more important than the October 2015 visit of Prime Minister Sharif during which the PM had met President Obama.

According to David Sanger, when formal meetings with the Pakistanis were held for the cameras, American leaders would sit down with the Pakistani President or Prime Minister and laud the arrival of a democratically elected civilian government. That was almost entirely for show. When they wanted something done, they ignored the civilians and called Kayani. (Sanger, 2012)

This trend had started early in Pakistan’s history. In September 1953, Ayub promised the US State Department, ‘our army can be your army if you

want us.' (Faruqui, 2005) Gen. Ayub told the first meeting of his cabinet, 'As far as you are concerned, there is only one embassy that matters in this country: the American embassy.' (Ali, 2008, p. 58) Richard Nixon's first visit to Pakistan was in December 1953 when he was vice president and he forged a close relationship with Ayub. After returning from this visit, Nixon briefed the US National Security Council saying that, 'Pakistan is a country I would like to do everything for.' (Faruqui, 2005) Nixon would later write in his memoirs that 'Ayub Khan was one Pakistani leader who was more anti-communist than anti-Indian.' (Hussain & Hussain, 1993) With US aid pouring in it was not surprising that an American assessment in a November 1957 despatch stated that 'the only reason why Pakistan is able to keep going is US aid.' (Ibid, 1993, p. 114)

In more recent times, the US policy has hinged on the Pakistan Army, first on Musharraf and then on his successors Gen. Kayani and Raheel Sharif, to make a difference as far as the *jihadis* are concerned. US support has greatly strengthened the army. In contrast, democratic government in Pakistan has suffered and progressively weakened, unable to make a push against the increasing dominant army.

Army and the Media

Finally, the army has developed remarkable expertise in handling the media --print, electronic and digital, both English and the vernacular. The Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), the army's media wing, has developed tremendous capability in deploying journalists to do their bidding. Thus, articles in the print media and TV 'talk shows' create an environment of uncertainty and rumour-mongering, that is then capitalised by eager politicians with a nod from the army. When it comes to social media, the army is miles ahead of the politicians. It was the social media campaign that projected former Army Chief, Gen. Raheel Sharif, as the most popular man in Pakistan, leaving the civilian Sharif far behind. Not surprisingly, the then head of the ISPR Asim Saleem Bajwa was elevated to a three-star general. His Twitter account had more than 1.5 million followers, and the ISPR's Facebook account more than 2.8 million likes. The overall impression that has been created by the slick use of the media, is of a selfless army making sacrifices for the sake of the safety of civilians. This is contrasted with the selfish and corrupt politicians who are

busy lining their pockets, rather than in improving the lives of the people. Unfortunately for the politicians, there is more than a grain of truth in this image.

Army's Commercial Interests

While the political dominance of the army is clearly visible, what is kept under the radar are the army's commercial interests that, according to some analysts, are becoming the *raison-d-etre* for the army's political dominance. During the past several decades, the army has managed to build an extensive network of business enterprises ranging from manufacturing to construction, from logistics to financial services and above all, real estate.

According to a July 2014 report by Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT) titled 'Military's Commercial Interests', the commercial activities of defence forces date back to 1942 when the government of British India established a Military Reconstruction Fund. Today, its successor, the Fauji Foundation, has become the largest industrial conglomerate of Pakistan with assets worth Rs 321 billion. The Pakistan Air Force and Navy have their own Shaheen and Bharia Foundations respectively engaged in a large number of commercial activities. As important as the commercial activities are the massive landholdings, especially in urban areas, that have now come to distinguish the three services. The army owns an estimated 12 million acres, equivalent to 12 per cent of total state-owned land (Rashid, 2008). Real estate owned by the army has grown so fast that a judge of the Lahore High Court, looking at the map of Lahore remarked that 'it seems half of Lahore is going to be Defence Housing Authority (DHA)' (Hussain, 2016).

In a pioneering study, Ayesha Siddiqi coined the term 'Milbus' to refer to '... military capital that is used for the personal benefit of the military fraternity, especially the officer cadre, which is not recorded as part of the defence budget or does not follow the normal accountability procedures of the state, making it an independent genre of capital' (Siddiqi, 2007). She underlined that this created vested interests that did not encourage democratic norms and institutions and discouraged the army from giving up political control (Ibid, p.17). According to her, '...economic and political interests are linked in a cyclic process: political power guarantees economic benefits which, in turn, motivate

the officer cadre to remain powerful and to play an influential role in governance.’ (Ibid, 248)

Army’s Contempt for Politicians

Significantly, the tussle between the civil and military authorities in Pakistan is not merely about power and supremacy. It is also about the contempt that the military has for the politicians: that left to itself, the political class will destroy Pakistan one way or the other, or, at the minimum, compromise its vital security interests.

A few examples would suffice. The then commander-in-chief Ayub Khan instructed Pakistan’s first military attaché in Washington DC, Brigadier Ghulam Jilani, in 1952, barely five years after Pakistan was created, on his role. He was told that his main task was to procure military equipment from the Pentagon, and he need not take either the ambassador or the Foreign Office into confidence because in his view, ‘these civilians cannot be trusted with such sensitive matters of national security’ (Hussain and Hussain, 1993). Later, Ayub Khan wrote in an article in *Foreign Affairs*: ‘...we are content to treat them [politician] as a big joke, just as they turned a perfectly sound country into the laughing stock of the whole world (Khan, 1960).

Lt Gen. Hamid Gul probably expressed the army’s sentiments well when he told Iqbal Akhund:

‘[A] democratic government by its very nature tended to compromise, and political compromise might sometime run counter to the national interest. So ... there must be some means of defining and promoting the national interest, some means of rising above political partisanship and compromise on issues of high policy – such as Afghanistan, Kashmir, or relations with India.’ (Akhund, 2000).

Suspicion of politicians has bred an obsessive need in the army to control every aspect of Pakistan’s national security. On the other hand, any democratically elected government would like to have full spectrum control over policies, and pursue developmental strategies to ensure a re-election. A clash is built into such a dichotomy. So far it has been the civil governments that have blinked first.

The politicians can contain the army’s clout by reducing the defence expenditure. Having better relations with its neighbours – India and Afghanistan – is one way to do it. This, however, is unacceptable to the army that sees

such efforts as an attack on Pakistan's ideology, or Nazaria-i-Pakistan, that implies unending hostility towards India and compromising the objective of 'strategic depth' in Afghanistan. In the ensuing tussle, it is the army that wins simply because the political class in Pakistan is both timid and disunited – politicians will always break ranks to do the army's bidding, while in the army there are no serving dissenters.

Not surprisingly, whenever the civilians have tried to step out of line or have tried to cross the red lines on issues that the army holds dear, they have been chastened or even removed, or at the very least have had to constantly look over their shoulders. National security and patriotism are the usual pretexts used by the establishment to sustain its influence. Thus between 1988 and 1999, with a nod from the army, three civilian governments were dismissed – Benazir Bhutto twice and Nawaz Sharif once – by the then presidents using the infamous Article 58(2) (b) of the Constitution.

Army & Democracy

Contempt for politicians apart, the army, since the inception of Pakistan, has not really believed that democracy is suited to Pakistan. Ayub Khan, for example, stated, 'We must understand that democracy cannot work in a hot climate. To have democracy we must have a cold climate like Britain' (Ali, 2002). Echoing Ayub but using 'Islam' instead of 'climate', Zia at a press conference stated:

'Our present political edifice is based on the secular democratic system of the West, which has no place in Islam ... In Pakistan neither anarchy nor Westernism will work. This country was created in the name of Islam and in Islam there is no provision for Western-type elections.' (Ali, 1983)

Musharraf gave it his own twist by stating

'Our democracy is not mature in the country. I think many politicians do not behave in a mature manner ... I have a belief that democracy has to be modified to an environment; that is the reason of my retaining the power of dismissing an assembly' (International Crisis Group, 2004).

Having donned the mantle of the saviours of Pakistan with the power to determine what is in Pakistan's best interest, the army also claims the right to take charge directly when, as determined by them, the civilians are unable to govern. Thus, the army has intervened periodically to pause democracy in an attempt to 'sort out the bloody civilians'. The problem for the army has

been its lack of understanding of the issues plaguing Pakistan. It has neither the training nor the capability nor the capacity to govern. The only solution to this dilemma has been that they have had to co-opt the 'bloody civilians' and 'civilianise' themselves because every military dictator realised that he could not govern a country as complex as Pakistan without them. Ayub Khan and Yahya co-opted Z.A. Bhutto, Zia co-opted Muhammad Khan Junejo and Musharraf had to get Taj Muhammad Jamali and Shaukat Aziz.

The army has rationalised its 'reluctant' takeover in two ways. First is the 'threat to national security' argument – that Pakistan was under threat due to the activities of the politicians, the army could not allow this to continue, and only the army could secure Pakistan; second is the disinterested democrat argument – the army did not hanker after power, democracy would not be derailed, the army would 'reform' the system and elections would be held soon. Such rationalisations have been evident in the statements made when martial law has been imposed (Devasher, 2016).

Continuation of Army's Dominance

The army has had its share of setbacks and failures despite which it has invariably bounced back and retained its credibility. Occasions when the army's reputation was at its nadir were: after the 1965 and especially the 1971 wars with India, post-Kargil war, at the end of Musharraf's rule, the US raid on Abbottabad, at the end of Gen. Kayani's extended tenure. Yet, it was able to claw back its reputation and dominance largely due to the failure of politicians to cut the army down to size. Given the poor track record of politicians, the army was again able to project itself as the 'saviours', the only functional organisation in the country to which the people could look to in times of dire need – in other words, regain its mystique as 'a mythical entity, a magical force'.

Several recent developments testify to the army's continued domination. These would include: (i) the establishment of military courts to try terror suspects, bypassing the regular judicial system, in the wake of the terrorist attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar in December 2014; (ii) Progress in relations with India being stymied; (iii) Apex committees being set up to monitor the implementation of the National Action Plan that formally gave the army a role in the civilian administrative domain by-passing the federal

and provincial cabinets etc.; (iv) DG ISPR's tweet that 'rejected' an official communication of the Prime Minister's Office regarding 'Dawn leaks', thus publicly humiliating and undermining the supremacy of an elected civilian government. Though later the army 'withdrew' the tweet, the damage had been done; (v) The 'coup' in the Balochistan Assembly whereby almost overnight, the parliamentary majority of the PMLN provincial government dissipated and a non-entity installed as CM; (Hussain, 2018) (vi) The irrelevance of defence ministers with one former incumbent Ghous Ali Shah stating: "I attended office only to sign on the dotted lines and move the files" (Ziauddin, 2018). Another former Defence Minister Khurram Dastgir Khan said in a TV interview that he was only a facilitator, not the boss of Pakistan's defence organisations. (Ibid) (vii) The DG ISPR declared the December 24, 2017 statement of Railway Minister Saad Rafique that subordinate institutions under the Army Chief created occasional mischief, as 'irresponsible' and 'unwarranted' since it targeted the Pakistan Army's chain of command and subordination system (Ibid).

During the past several years, as Pakistan has lurched from crisis to crisis, it is the army that has been seen to have taken charge, with the civilian government ceding space and choosing to sit on the side-lines after abdicating its responsibility. Whether it was Imran Khan's *dharna* in 2014, when the government asked the then Army Chief to intercede, or when the Army Public School (APS) was attacked and the National Action Plan was to be formulated, it was the Army Chief who led the way. Likewise, the Army Chief has been visiting various capitals like Teheran and Kabul in pursuance of Pakistan's interests, something that the foreign minister should have done. Such tasks are clearly in the domain of the government and its ministers, yet in each case space was ceded to the army (Chaudhry, 2017) Just as former chief Gen. Raheel Sharif was seen as acting decisively, something similar is happening to the present chief, bolstered as he has been by the 'Bajwa Doctrine' (Devasher, 2018).

Indicative of the changed equations is the fact that the GHQ has now become an important destination for visiting foreign dignitaries, including the Afghan President, the Iranian Foreign Minister and others. The three chiefs even met the Chinese President in his hotel without the Defence Minister be-

ing present. Even the Chinese Ambassador in Islamabad has taken to meeting the Army Chief to resolve issues relating to the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) rather than rely on the civilians to do so. When he was army Chief, Gen. Kayani presented a 59-page memo to President Obama directly rather than channelling it through Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Kundi, 2018). The army brokered an end to protests by the Islamists at the Faizabad sit-in in November 2017 that had paralysed the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Its intervention showed the government totally buckling down and the army chief getting the credit for ‘saving the country from a big catastrophe’ (The New York Times, 2018) In May 2018, angry Hazaras in Quetta protesting against being frequently targeted by the Lashkar-e- Jhangvi (LeJ), called off the protests after army chief Gen. Bajwa met them. They had earlier refused to do so after the Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal and the provincial chief minister had met them. All this signals the enhanced role of the army.

Where this will end would depend entirely on the ability of the civilian leadership to retake control and provide leadership, and on the appetite of the army chief – how much control would he want to assert. As Ayub Khan told his son Gohar Ayub at a time when he was not well and the army chief, Gen. Yahya Khan, was sniffing at power, ‘You have served in GHQ and should know that if the Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistan Army gets it into his head to take over, then it is only God above who can stop him’ (Khan, 2007, p. 114).

Recent Developments

Many analysts view Nawaz and Maryam’s statements, hinting that the entire Panama case trial was a pretext for the army to take over, as a desperate attempt to provoke it into acting against them. This would enable them to be perceived as political martyrs and thus avoiding the responsibility of their financial crimes and illegal acts. However, the army has studiously avoided falling into the trap. On the contrary, the Army Chief and the ISPR have on several occasions in recent times reiterated their support for democracy. Gen. Bajwa, in his interaction with journalists, that later on came to be cited as the ‘Bajwa Doctrine’ said, ‘I saved democracy in this country, I am the biggest supporter of democracy’ (Daily Times, 2018)³. In a press conference, the ISPR chief asserted that the Constitution and the laws will play out their course. On

another occasion he said, 'Democracy is the way forward,' and 'Elections should take place on time' (Masood, 2018).

Conventional wisdom would be that in a democracy a statement by the army chief and the army spokesperson reassuring the country about its respect for democracy should be redundant. It is something that is taken for granted. However, in this instant, it is probably the army's way of telling Nawaz and his daughter that it would not fall into their trap, despite provocations, and would not disrupt democracy. Despite this, the army also sounded a cautionary note when the ISPR chief stated that democracy in the country faced no threat from the Pakistan Army but from the non-fulfillment of the requirements of democracy and not coming up to the expectations of the people (Ghauri, 2017). Whether Nawaz has got the message is the moot point.

Impact of Army's Dominance

Pakistan has had to pay a high price for the periodic bouts of martial law and the domination of the army, even during periods of civilian rule. For one thing, its propensity to see security primarily in military terms has meant that a huge proportion of funds have had to be allocated for the physical defence of the territorial and ideological frontiers of Pakistan. This has left fewer resources for economic development and investment for issues of long-term security such as water, education, economy and population, collectively termed the WEEP factors (Devasher, 2016, pp. 207-81). Such a skewed model has become a recipe for disaster as today, Pakistan faces an emergency situation in the critical areas of long-term security.

In reality, there can be no security without development. Robert McNamara, former US defence secretary and World Bank president put it well when he noted:

'In a modernising society, security means development, security is not military hardware, though it may include it, security is not military force, though it may involve it, security is not traditional military activity, though it may encompass it. Security is development and without development there can be no security.' (SAIS Review, 1981-82)

3. 'Question of the day' Daily Times, March 13, 2018, <https://dailytimes.com.pk/214125/question-of-the-day/> (accessed May 03, 2018). Analysts were quick to ask why democracy needed a saviour and from whom was the danger? In no other democracy would an army chief say that the army would defend the democratic order. That is really the job of the politicians and the judiciary.

Is the army's viewpoint changing? Addressing a seminar on 'Interplay of Economy and Security' in Karachi in October 2017, Army Chief Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa talked extensively about national security and economy. He went on to express his concerns regarding the country's 'sky high debt' as well as the 'abysmally low' tax-to- GDP ratio. He also called for expanding the tax base, bringing fiscal discipline and ensuring continuity of economic policies in Pakistan. Despite this, there is no effort to reduce the defence budget. Instead the onus has been placed on the civil government to improve the functioning of the economy (Malik, 2017).

Conclusion

Despite the passage of seven decades since its creation, Pakistan has been unable to develop vibrant, mature and credible democratic political institutions that can withstand the manipulations of the army. At the heart of the distorted civil–military relationship has been the failure of the democratic process to deepen and take firm roots. For this, both the army and the politicians have to share the blame: the army for frequently disrupting the process itself and the politicians for strengthening themselves rather than democracy.

There is no doubt that as things stand, the army will continue to dominate politics and especially its core areas of interest – defence, foreign and nuclear policies. As Lt Gen. Gul Hassan put it:

As far as I can foresee, the spectre of Martial Law will be ever-present in Pakistan, unless she produces political leaders who can look beyond provincial horizons, be above-board, possess honesty of purpose, command the solid support of the masses, and be genuinely concerned with their welfare, and last but by no means least, be patriots. This would be a tall order for our political community to fulfil, and it will be equally wishful to console ourselves that one fine day the leadership of the Army may decide to devote themselves wholly to their profession (Khan, 1993).

To this summation, Stephen Cohen adds: '... Since the army thinks it has the only true professional ability to handle national security or the national interest, Pakistan is likely to be in for a long spell of direct and indirect military rule' (Cohen, 2005, p. 129).

While the potential for another bout of martial law will always be there, at present, the possibility seems remote for various reasons. For one, even

though politicians are discredited, public opinion is probably not in favour of the overthrow of the elected government. For another, there is a far more assertive judiciary as also dissenting voices in the media. Finally, the economic and long term security problems of Pakistan are perhaps beyond the competence of the army to tackle. Hence, it would be content with retaining its influence in the selective areas of the decision making process at the national level. So long as the public perception remains that the armed forces are the only saviours of Pakistan there will always be acceptance for their intrusion into politics at a time of their choosing, as well as an acceptance of their influence, on critical internal and external policies.

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