

Original Research Article

Will Pakistan Witness Another Military Takeover?

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Unless we compare we cannot differentiate. Comparing the success of democracy and what it means and brings to the lives of the people living in the developed world is a cause of optimism for the people living in the third world countries. But is democracy and its continuity bringing rewards and benefits in the lives of the people of Pakistan? Is democracy really prospering? Dwarfed by India the largest democracy in the world – Pakistan is yet to overcome its turbulent democratic history and appear on the regional map as truly successful and functional democracy. Poor governance, lack of security, corruption, terrorism, failure to stem ethnic and sectarian conflicts, nepotism, and polarized politics are some of the obstacles and barriers that the politicians in Pakistan have failed to overcome and so a lackluster and sometimes entirely dysfunctional democracy continues to persist. But it's not all bad news for democracy in Pakistan. People still continue to send their choice representatives to the legislative assemblies and even ballot them out when they don't deliver. And as long as the will of the people is allowed to surface there is hope not only for the continuity of democracy but what it promises to deliver to the people of Pakistan. The military in Pakistan has only been politicized when civilian politicians fail to manage the problems of the state when they fail to bring about the much needed social and economic reform and also fail to ensure national integration. The three martial laws in Pakistan were a result of the same problems. Pakistan which has previously been subjected to military intervention is yet again witnessing a civilian government that is losing control and authority and losing its popularity under the allegations of corruption and poor governance. Will Pakistan witness another military takeover?.

Keywords: Military takeover, Coup, Democracy, Civilian, Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

Bruce Riedel, the author of the book *The Search for Al Qaeda* described Pakistan as the most dangerous country in the world where every nightmare of the twenty-first century converged – terrorism, government instability, corruption and nuclear weapons.¹ Democracy in Pakistan today can best be viewed through the prism of civil-military relations and how balance is maintained in managing this relation. Unfortunately, the Nawaz Sharif led civilian government in the office has felt short of making the right moves for initiating the institutionalization of civilian control over the military.

Factors that have contributed to lack of such control include; initiating General Musharraf's trial, the timing of which was not suitable specially when the civil-military relationship was undergoing a transformation and in a state of repair and build up; allowing Imran Khan to build up public pressure through his dharna and the accompanying successful rallies in the major cities of the country; the inability of Nawaz Sharif to tie a personal political chord with the Modi led BJP government

in India and thus failing to improve relations with India; failure of Nawaz Sharif's government's ministry of information to create any impact of civilian supremacy in running the affairs of the government and instead allowing ISPR to emerge as an effective tool of communication in expressing and highlighting the military achievements so much so that a vast majority of people in Pakistan consider that Zarb-e-Azab is a military dictated operation with the civilian government forced to come on board after the military gave it no choice; allowing United States to continue to deal directly with Pakistan's military leadership instead of dealing through the civilian government and lastly doing almost nothing about ISI the promoter and executor of 'the concept of strategic depth' which continues to remain powerful actor that is committed and answerable to the military command first and later to the civilian government.

Nawaz Sharif's failure to reconcile or bring about any major change in these areas has actually led to the tilt of the civil-military balance in the favor of the military. PPP leader Senator Mian Raza Rabbani who is also the leader of opposition in the National Assembly spoke about how the establishment of military courts will lead to 'great miscarriages of justice' and

¹Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars: The Inside Story*, (Simon and Schuster, UK, 2010), p- 89

how they have 'different standards of proof'². The military courts he said 'will not deter terrorism'. Laying the blame of the spread of terrorism in the country on the role that military played in importing mercenaries from abroad to fight against the Soviets during the military dictator General Zia's regime Senator Raza Rabbani was referring to a simple fact – 'where we stand today is a result of bad decision making, the onus of which lies not on the civilian but military shoulders as well'. The politicians like Senator Raza Rabbani that speaks against any 'rush and flash' measures to expedite the military response after the Peshawar tragedy are not villains of the state. They may not represent the current national mood but they surely represent democracy and what it will take for it to survive in this country. If there was ever a time that political institutions in Pakistan were failing to cope with the rapid social mobilization it is now.

The resulting political disorder and chaos is there for all to see. Interestingly welcoming circumstances for military intervention were created by Imran Khan the opposition leader in 2014 but the military at that time did not intervene. Together the 'Imran Khan made political calamity' and the natural calamity- floods at that time caused considerable sufferings for the people of Pakistan³. Since then, the country as a whole hasn't stopped suffering - it is very tired, exhausted and tense. In the very tense days ahead will the enormity of the 'peoples cost' be considered both by the government and Imran Khan who now plans to shut down the capital of the country - Islamabad⁴. Are both Imran Khan and Nawaz Sharif's government prepared to pay the price for not conceding to any crisis resolving political concessions? That price most dread may be in the form of military intervention.

The self-serving narratives of both the PTI (Pakistan-Tehreek-e-Insaf) and the government – the former unrelenting in trying to impose unsustainable costs on the government and the later doing everything in its power to sow divisions in the ranks of PTI to knock out any unity and discipline in PTI as a party – both are unfortunately the narratives that are against Pakistan's national interest. When national interests are not served the militaries find ready excuses to intervene and Pakistan's military is already unhappy with how a reporter leaked a story in the leading newspaper of Pakistan hinting to the world 'who was behind the reluctance to go after terrorists within Pakistan'.⁵ This the military has termed as a breach of security⁶.

MILITARY INTERVENTION – THREE SCHOOL OF THOUGHTS

Militaries around the world have been considering themselves as the guardians of nations. When the politicians fail, military readiness to correct these failings forces the militaries to intervene. Military intervention in politics is governed by three schools of thoughts. Janowitz is the leading scholar of the view that describes 'organizational dynamics within the army' as the contributing factor for intervention rather than any outside

influence necessitating it. According to him 'it is the 'unity in organization, cohesion as a force and control over violent instruments that enables the military to interfere in politics'.⁷ Huntington being of the same school of thought further believes that the political institutions fail to cope with the rapid social mobilization which results in creating disorder and chaos. This produces circumstances for military to intervene. He believes that it is the incompetence and weaknesses of the civilian politicians to manage the problems of the state that forces the militaries to become politicized. He terms any military as 'the advance guard of middle class'⁸ the military he believes continues to pursue social and economic reform as well as ensure national integration. Any political slippages in these areas will force the military to intervene in politics.

The deliberate attempt by the Nawaz Sharif government to feed a story to the press highlighting the Pakistan military's preference for not taking action against the banned extremists organizations in Pakistan and even acting as an obstacle and roadblock when civilian government wants to take such actions has created a wide gulf between the civil and military relationship in the country. This disclosure came at a time when Pakistan was facing an Indian propaganda onslaught. The civilian government narrative in Pakistan overlapped with the Indian propaganda narrative and it is in this context that the civilian government in Pakistan faces not an economic or political choice but a moral choice.⁹ To come clean and explain that it not only represents the national interests but would do everything to protect them as well.

As the crisis drags on the most relevant argument is the strength of public support that Imran Khan as a champion of Pakistan's new-found nationalism draws to orchestrate the downfall of Nawaz Sharif government. Not the 'coup talking' but the 'coup seeking' Imran has like the floods in Pakistan muddied the political water in the country. His 'selective character genocide' of the parliamentarians and the political and clerical elite of the country through his speeches during his first sit-in in Islamabad in 2014 and right through his current political campaign negates the very idea and purpose of one unit federated Pakistan¹⁰. In his negligence today the harm that he has caused to the federation is far greater than giving the opportunity any corrective steps that he may take in future to create the much needed national harmony and unity. This goes against one core interest that Pakistani military subscribes to – the unity and integrity of the country. Would the military allow mass demonstration in the capital which is likely not only to destabilize the government but as well as the country?

Twenty-eight days of mass protests (beginning Dec 2010) and eighteen days (beginning Jan 2011) of mass demonstrations toppled the governments of two dictators in Tunisia and Egypt respectively. However, 300-320 people were killed by security forces in Tunisia and over 900 people died at the hands of security forces in Egypt¹¹. Given the circumstances after the Uri attack in Indian Held Kashmir¹² and

⁷ Janowitz Moris, *Military Institutions and Coercion in Developing Nations* (University of Chicago Press, 1977) p-27

⁸ Samuel P Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Heaven & London, Yale University Press, 1968) p-222

⁹ Bob Woodward, *The Price of Politics*, (Simon and Schuster UK Ltd, 2012) p-337

¹⁰ Zahid Khan, *DAWN*, 'What Next for Imran Khan' 17 Sep 2014

¹¹ *Foreign Affairs*, Drop Your Weapons, Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, jul /Aug 2014

¹² *The Times of India*, Uri terror attack: 17 soldiers killed 19 injured in strike on Army Camp, 30 Sep 2016

² *The NEWS*, Raza Rabbani expresses concern over Military Courts, 30 Dec 2014

³ Najam Sethi, *The Friday Times*, 'Floods, Dharmas and Censors', 12 Sep 2014

⁴ *The Express Tribune*, (Pakistan) PTI changes the date of Islamabad lock down to Nov 2, 17 Oct 2016

⁵ Imtiaz Ahmad, *Hindustan Times*, The Cyril Almeida saga: A glimpse into games played by Pakistan army, govt, 16 Oct 2016

⁶ *DAWN*, Corps Commanders view leak from high-level meeting as breach of national security: ISPR, 14 Oct 2016

the consistent threat thereafter posed by Indian forces on Pakistan's western front, is Imran Khan's PTI-led demonstration not a recipe for the creation of a likely political chaos and internal destabilization in the country? With politicians failing to put their act together, conditions in the country turning from bad to worst, and a military accusing the civilian government of having sidelined national interest and having supported the interest of the enemy the Janowitz and Huntington military intervention in politics theory is ripe for testing in Pakistan in the coming few weeks and months.

The second school of thought puts the blame of military intervention squarely on the shoulders of the society. Finer is the leading scholar of this school of thought who believes that for different societies military intervention takes different forms. He divides the factors for intervention into subjective and objective categories. He spells out the reasons for intervention as 'interests of the nation, self-interest of the corporate, individual self-interest and social self-interest'.¹³ Finer claims that the military will always take into account the objective conditions on ground these actually would be its opportunities to intervene. He highlights three crucial factors that will determine the decision by a military to intervene: the dependency of civilian authority on the military, the suitability of domestic conditions and the status, fame and popularity of the military in the eyes of the public. Unfortunately for the ruling civilian government in Pakistan all the above mentioned crucial factors do not favor it.

Finer's theory so finds the most relevant grounds for it to be tested in the current domestic political circumstances in Pakistan. The societal culture in Pakistan is undergoing a change. Military even when it is not in power continues to follow the national security agenda that it has laid out for the country. Any policy that the civilian government in Pakistan formulates that is predetermined to Pakistan military's interests, the military both overtly and covertly disapproves of that. Nawaz Sharif government's policy of normalizing relations with India is one such aspect.

The third school of thought considers how the military elites are influenced by military as an institution. Eric Nordlinger the scholar in his book, *Soldiers in Politics: Military Coups and Governments* highlights the internal dynamics of the military elite. Military corporatism he defines as the military desire to advance and protect its own interests. This it ensures by managing adequate support from the budget and maintaining autonomy in the management of its internal affairs and protection of its vital interests against encroachments by other institutions of the State. Nordlinger believes that corporatism is the reason why the militaries intervene in politics.

Nordlinger also blames the civilian government's inability to provide good governance and the resultant loss of credibility and legitimacy of the government are also the reasons for the military to intervene. But Nordlinger's theory in the case of Pakistan's current political crisis is today more relevant to the individual preference of the top military commander in Pakistan rather than the lack of good governance by the civilians. This top military commander's individual preference today stands out actually as the most important variable in the current Pakistani political and security environment in which the military leader enjoys huge popularity and public support as he guides the military to fight a battle of its survival both against the internal as well as the external threats. Cross-border raids from Afghanistan and suicide attacks on military officers and targets in the heartland of the country speak of continuity of

this war by the Taliban's against Pakistan¹⁴. Pakistan alleges that it is the Indian financial support through Afghanistan to Maulana Fazlullah and his likes that help them to recruit the Central Asian and local mercenaries to fight against the security forces and sustain the continuity of this war as well¹⁵. The role that Indians play in Afghanistan needs to be seriously analyzed. The Indians have a \$1 billion aid program in Afghanistan that Pakistan thinks pays for intelligence. Each year a thousand agricultural students study in India. Pakistan considers that as thousand spies.¹⁶

Pakistan dreads having a large Afghan Army on its border that might be in alliance with India¹⁷. From the time it made attempts to push the Bush administration to include Pakistan's name in the 'Axis of Evil' State's list to the time its prime minister at the UN forum called Pakistan an 'epicenter of terrorism' nothing much has changed on how India thinks about Pakistan.¹⁸ Both United States and India have played a major role in how they have not allowed the growth and development of civilian control and democracy in Pakistan. The Americans think that the civilians in Pakistan have little or no role to play in the war against terror. They think that the Pakistani Military is like another political constituency that has to be accommodated¹⁹.

For the civilian control to take root in Pakistan an important external variable is India and how it looks to build its relationship with Pakistan.²⁰ If it continues to sideline itself from the process of composite dialogue between the two states it only diminishes the chances of democracy taking root in Pakistan. India will have to act not like a big bully but a bigger brother to initiate and sustain the process of dialogue despite the problems that engulf the relationship between the two countries.

NOT AN INSTITUTIONAL BUT INDIVIDUAL LED ARMY

Since the arrival of General Raheel Sharif as COAS (Chief of Army Staff) all terrorist acts against the military and civilian targets have been militarily responded. The tone for such military responses was set on 18 December 2013 when five jawans from the military lost their lives in a suicide attack. Speaking on the occasion General Raheel said, 'terror attacks by the militants will not be tolerated and effective response will be given to them'²¹. The General had picked up his doctrinal agenda of proceeding with the retaliatory strikes no matter what the status of political negotiations with the Taliban's.

General Raheel Sharif was not renowned for any military achievements on the western front in the borderland with Afghanistan. In fact he performed no military service in the area since 9/11 ushered the army to fight the irregular war on that front. For over a decade his two previous bosses (General Musharaf and General Kayani) only gifted Pakistan a stalemated war. 'Reaction' and not 'pre-emption' remained

¹⁴ *The Nation*, (Lahore), Afghan Militants Launch Cross-Border Raid Again, 2 Aug 2014

¹⁵ *The Express Tribune*, (Karachi), India Supporting Militancy in Baluchistan : Musharaf , 10 Oct 2010

¹⁶ Bob Woodward, '*Obama's Wars*' (New York: Crown Publishers, 2012), p.215

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 216

¹⁸ *The Hindustan Times*, Ahead of Sharif meet PM Prods Pak on Terror, 29 Sep 2013

¹⁹ Yunas Samad, *The Pakistan-US Conundrum*, (C.Hurst & Co Ltd , UK , 2001) p. 338

²⁰ *Ibid*, p- 235

²¹ *The Express Tribune*, (Karachi), Terrorist Attacks Will Not Be Tolerated : Army Chief , 21 Dec 2013

¹³ S.E Finer, *The man on Horseback: The Role of Military in Politics* (Middlesex, Peregrine Books , 1975) p-282

their most favorite tool that they utilized from the 'military tool kit' to counter terrorism and the terrorists. While General Musharaf was too busy 'doing politics' so the most influential work 'The Art of War' by Sun Tzu was not what merited his attention. He was more into reading and understanding 'The Prince' by Nicolo Machiavelli – statecraft was the subject that drew all his attention. So for him to become the 'prudent military leader' - a leader that would plan and lead the military operation to a successful culmination was expecting too much.

General Kayani on the opposite extreme remained too engrossed to justify not only his but army's non-political character. Instead of asking the government to 'facilitate war' he told the government to favor the option of negotiating peace.²² That he stuck with the non-delivering idea of peace and in the meanwhile accepted the unprecedented offer of an extension of his tenure thus occupying the office of COAS for six long years tells us why we remained in a condition of 'no peace-no war' while he stayed in the office²³.

However, General Raheel Sharif on assuming the command of the military initiated the military operation in North Waziristan and unlike his two predecessors has been more focused on a professional military doing its job It's national interests and not the internal dynamics as Nordlinger pointed out that are guiding the military under General Raheels leadership²⁴. The military is delivering on the war front as the technical arm of the civilian government and that reflects in the words of Nordlinger that it is not military as an institution that is influencing its military elites i.e the military commanders but the current national interest in fighting and winning the war on terror. If this military mindset and military mentality of the military elite in Pakistan continues to prevail then corporatism or the influence of military as an institution will not be the reasons for military's intervention in politics.

CONCLUSION

Just two years prior to 9/11 Pakistan military had ventured into Indian Held Kashmir and tried to impose a military solution to the Kashmir problem by initiating the Kargil War.²⁵ It is clear that Kashmir stands out as a core national interest to safeguard which Pakistan army would go to any length. The government of General Pervaiz Musharaf when it signed the ceasefire agreement with India in 2003 it antagonized the Islamic jihadists groups and also threw away the only card it held and used in its Kashmir policy that hurt India.²⁶ After that, India managed to construct a border fence all along LOC and the infiltration by the non-state actors from Pakistani side was reduced to a large extent.

However, after the Uri attack in Indian Held Kashmir and before that attack on the Airforce base in Pathankot India is attempting to put the civilian government in Pakistan both under diplomatic as well as military strain. Its claims of having carried out surgical strikes inside Azad Kashmir in Pakistan directly challenges the integrity and sovereignty of Pakistan. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif who heads a civilian government

in Pakistan tried to establish a friendly relationship with his Indian counterpart but that did not work out. Primarily because Prime Minister Modi of India is not viewed favorably by many Muslims both in India as well as Pakistan²⁷. This has got much to do with how he as the chief minister of the State of Gujarat actually fail to curb and rein in the communal violence that erupted after the burning of the Sabarmati Express in 2002 in which over 2000 people - mostly Muslims died? In his own words, he says 'I feel sad about what happened but no guilt.'²⁸ Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's policy of having good neighbourly relations with India has hit a dead end. He is domestically challenged by the 'Pamnama gate scandal' and an opposition that is all set to besiege the capital. He has also annoyed the military leadership by going against the national interest of the country at a time when the country faced intense diplomatic and military offensive posture from India. All this put together the Nawaz Sharif government has done no good service to itself. Samuel P.

Huntington suggests in his classic 'Political Order in Changing Societies' published in 1968 that before a policy can be democratic it has to provide basic order.²⁹ Repeated military and civilian governments in Pakistan have failed to provide this order. It is extremely doubtful that a likely military intervention in Pakistan in future can provide this order, It necessarily remains a civilian function. That order may well be established in Pakistan when it is no more the military general's abilities to persuade the civilian leadership to accept their decisions but the ability of civilian leadership to have their decisions implemented by the military.

²²Newsweek Pakistan, Army Supports Peace Talks With Taliban's Says Gen Kayani , 12 Oct 2013

²³The News, (Karachi), Ex COAS Kayani's Six – Year Tenure Comes Under Criticism , 2 July 2014

²⁴The News,(Karachi) , Army to Step Up War Against Terror Under Gen Raheel , 29 Nov, 2013

²⁵General V.P Malik, *Kargil War: From Surprise to Victory* (Harper Collins,2006)

²⁶Malleha Lodhi, *Pakistan Beyond the Crisis State*, (Oxford University Press, New York, 2011) p-65

²⁷Marino Andy, *Narendra Modi: A Political Biography*, (Harper Collins, India, 2014), p- 122

²⁸Ibid, p- 141

²⁹Francis Fukuyama, *Political Order and Political Decay* (Profile Books Ltd, London,2014), p-7