

## **Turbulent History of Pakistan’s Civil Military Relations**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Pakistan has been under both military and civilian control with the passage of its political history. In between, there has been various kinds of mishaps and mistrusts occurred between the two regimes. Frequent political instability in the country prompted armed forces to rein the affairs of state for the smooth running of economy which has weakened the democratic process in the country. However, in recent times, the engagement between the two actors has somehow balanced the relations as a result of which there has been consistent transition of the democratic process. Nevertheless, the rubric of civilian supremacy has yet to be experienced for the consistent promotion of democratic principles and prevention of unnecessary role of the establishment. This research covers all the important areas by assessing the history of relations along with roles from both sides to bring political-cum-economic stability to the country and consequently, an assessment of seemingly balanced relations in recent years.

**Keywords:** *Civil, Military, Relations, Pakistan, Democracy*

### **Introduction**

Throughout the political history of Pakistan, the process of smooth and stable democracy has remained a distant dream. The country experienced intermittent phases of martial law within different phases of defective democracy. It is not that retrospective military regimes in the country were a choice; rather, it was more than a compulsion. Intermittent destabilization stages of economy coupled with wrangling among political parties and inability to serve general interests are few reasons that warrant the role of military in the political process of Pakistan (Hassan, 2018).

Pakistan got its independence in an extremely volatile situation where the colonial reminiscent of Britain and external threats were a major inheritance. Besides, the complex environment within the country and external threats convinced the then leaders to invest in the defence sector in a heavy manner. With the gradual advancement of military in addition to foreign support vis-à-vis the prism of capitalist bloc handed the country a strong armed force the general populace had a confidence in as well as was capable of combating both internal and external dangers (Janjua, 2010). The legacy from the British Army is a major ramification of Pakistan Army which has its roots in the pre-partition history, which became one of the reasons that the military was indulged or remained strict to the tradition of civilian supremacy despite having five military leaders as heads of the state. While military played a significance role during the independence as well as in the prolonged political process of the country, many phases have glided past which challenged the credibility of the military role in the administrative and bureaucratic systems (Haq, 2019).

Keeping in view this perspective, many questions arise such as why the role of military has been so dominant in Pakistan, how the relations between civilian and military regimes shaped the democratic process of the country, or how the relations between them will ensure the supremacy of civilian regime in years ahead. These and many others questions make the compendium of this research article.

### **Deciphering the Nature of Civil Military Relations**

The civil military relations, according to the study of, form a significant strand when it comes to national security strategy. During peace, they positively affect the internal situation of a nation state; in war, they directly influence the repercussions. Samuel Huntington, one of the chief American political scientist and the author of a renowned book 'Clash of Civilizations' endeavoured to break down various phases of civil-military relationships that collectively exist in a country's civil system. He is of the view that in order to eliminate any kind of possibility of the military's intrusion in government affairs, civilian supremacy must be fully pervaded in a state (Huntington, 1981). The nexus between the two regimes describes such a relationship where retention of civil authority is the determined objective. He further argued that the communication between twin imperatives of accountability and security is in the essence of the trouble between civil-military relations. "The military entity of any state is shaped particularly by two major forces: a societal imperative emanating from distinct social ideologies and forces that are prevalent within the society, and a functional imperative arising from the menaces of the security of the society (Croissant, Kuhn & Wolf, 2011). The relations depend on these forces that persistently demand the military to be responsive and accountable to the society that it serves.

Another leading thinker namely Janowitz have argued about civil-military relations that the civil control and the essential need to attain an optimal balance between the two regimes must be the sole objective of a democratic state. But the challenge that confronts their hierarchy is indubitably is the acquisition of a pertinent balance when the matter relates to the protection of the society and its values. This kind of balance is indeed the holy grail of an ideal equation of civil-military relationship (Feaver, 1996). From a sociological perspective, the relations between the two does not merely mean the association between the top military hierarchy and government of the day; rather, their role and functions in accordance within their respective domains whose end is the betterment of the society as a whole is the matter that is of more significance (Taylor, 2014). The key argument with regard to nexus between the two institutions is that there is a direct link between civilian control of state affairs on one hand and military efficacy on the other. Huntington stressfully argued that political leadership of a state must avoid any civilian intervention in military affairs for the maximisation of its effectiveness (Janowitz, 1981).

Another important study looked to the adverse effect of political control mechanisms that were opted by authoritarian governments in the Middle East region on the military effectiveness of armed forces. It is contended that a rigid-cum-centralised command structure of few Arab states coupled with mending command chains for political reasons has negatively impacts the potentiality of Arab militaries (Bruneau & Croissant, 2019). However, it is also argued that sans

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civilian involvement, military regimes could become static and reluctant to accept necessary involvement from political parties in response of changes that are required to ameliorate the political situation of states (Mares, 2018). That is why some political theorists emphasises upon intervention of civilian leaders in order to force innovation in the military, because they hold the view that civilian control can promote integration of political-military regimes which will subsequently knit together both military means as well as political ends in a unanimous manner.

However, in the case of Pakistan, civil supremacy over the military is deemed a complicated matter. The wrongness and ambiguities in decision-making and policy implementation have perhaps been the two biggest stumbling blocks in carrying out a strong civil authority due to which the presence of military in political affairs has become inevitable. Since there have been intermittent military takeovers of civilian affairs, a smooth running of civilian affairs has hardly been witnessed (Murtaza, 2015). If it is allowed to function in a smooth run, strong civil-military relations can be evinced.

Irrespective of what version of history one denotes to, the turbulent political past of Pakistan shows that it has not remained fully settled on any specific form of state government and kept on oscillating between short-lived democratic tenures to repetitive military takeovers, either in the form of coup d'état or maligned elections. Taking a popular perception into consideration, a prolonged legacy of irritable relations is still existent, thus, developing a void between both the cadres of the country (Rizvi, 2015). However, the problem at hand ought to be comprehended keeping in view all intricacies of power struggle within the country's societal setup.

Regrettably, the growing predilection among several from political leadership and intelligentsia is to perceive the problematique in the form of how political scientists would see elite civil-military relations, and not in the form of societal relations (Dandekar, 2017). Such a Huntingtonian proposition to see reality is short-sighted, since it condones the significance of dynamic within power relations that particularly shape the society and which draw out from the societal fabric (Siddiq, 2017). For instance, what bestows power to the Pakistani military is not a mere barrel of the gun, but also a social legitimacy to make its role effective and pervasive and, most importantly, the whole-and-sole guarantor of state security in accordance with the enforced constitution (Khan, 2012)

### **A Retrospect of Pakistan's Civil-Military Relations**

Since the birth of the country, it has experienced as many as thirty military rule years. Even at certain stages, the regime has intermittently sought from the government regarding consolidation of political power within which the Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) played a prominent-cum-covert role. The aim of such a control was to rein domestic and foreign affairs to some extent especially given sceptic relations of Pakistan with its neighbouring countries particularly India and Afghanistan. From the turn of 1958 until 1971, there was a reflection of militarised character in the political contours of the country. From the Muslim League of Field Marshal Ayub Khan to that of Pervez Musharraf, the political landscape of the country had congealed military footholds as a result of which civilian governments always regarded the employment of military means with a grain of salt (Bhattacharya, 2016). When it comes to Ayub's acquisition of democratic

control, it was justified with the ineptness of politicians or public office holders. To him, majority of them were incapable of comprehending the rationale of democracy and ensuring provision of basic rights due to which the general populace had seemed to have reluctantly accepted Ayub's position in the political affairs of the country.

Concerning with the era of Yahya Khan, his period is reckoned as a 'General's Revolt' owing to his act of abrogating the 1962 Constitution coupled with putting the country at risk by endeavouring to split political parties into two separate wings (East and West). Moreover, the general elections of 1970 and subsequent fall of East Pakistan derailed the plan of the military regime to retain the helm of affairs (Farooq, 2012). Regrettably, his own cadres and officers forced him to relinquish his powers as he was deemed as a complete disaster both for the military prestige as well as for the country itself.

The separate of the Eastern wing was perhaps the biggest tragedy in the history of the country. This fearful tide did not last until the organisational restructuring of the civil and military bureaucracy under the civilian rule of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. He was the first President of the country was adorned the hat of civilian martial law administrator and later on became the Prime Ministry of the country. His dictatorial and rigid behaviour constantly put him on military leadership's whims. Owing to various political opponents against his regime, the military leadership got the opportunity of thwarting this rule under the pretext of suppressing opposition voices. The country was then abounding with political instability which General Zia ul Haq took the opportunity of (Hussain, 2014). The biggest failure of Bhutto was perhaps his unintelligent and ill-planned execution of civil and military bureaucracy along with his pursuit of having military as an important stakeholder in his regime.

As far as Zia-ul-Haq's period is concerned, it is regarded as the third transitory period of the military rule After Ayub and Yahya. Though at the beginning, he appear to be giving favour for free elections with a view to returning to democracy, his experimented Islamization and pasty-less system earned him scant legitimacy to run the political affairs of the country. Probably his biggest mistake was the forcible-cum-unjustified passage of eighth amendment which gave him the authority to dissolve the Parliament at any point of time (Hussain, 2018). Also, his conducive nature towards his loyal civilian affairs to further and an effort to consolidate his position in the next elections went in perish as his leadership collided with unforeseeable airplane killing. However, the civil-military equation was unceasingly dominated by military, even the country witnessed a decade of democracy between 1988 and 1999 vis-à-vis presidential type of relations between both the regimes (Rizvi, 2015).

It was not until the adoption of a parliamentary democracy and subsequent revocation of presidential power to dissolve the parliament that General Musharraf usurped power for suspending the Constitution and began ruling as a 'Chief Executive' by a decree. Reinstating Article 58 (2) (b) was a blatant effort from the military regime to interfere in civilian affairs under the guise of derailing economy and worse socio-political condition. The Constitution was reinstated in the year 2002 with the incorporation of Legal Framework Order (LFO) for the restoration

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of presidential powers. Unfortunately, Musharraf's witch hunting failed to weaken two mainstream parties (PPP and PLMn) and its veteran leaders (ul Haq, 2012).

The era of Musharraf is perhaps the most interesting phase in the historical struggle for maintaining civil-military balance. In here, the establishment felt little to impose martial law in order to reign the affairs of the state; instead, it kept tabbing over many political aspects of the country where public anxiety was ascertained as well as disgruntled political affairs by manoeuvring their exploitation of military role in the government. It is pertinent to mention here that at this point of history, the establishment left no stone unturned to maintain its relations with political parties of the country especially those which had been conducive to the dictates of the military, such as Muttahida Muslim League (MMA) and Pakistan Muslim League (Q) (Hassan, 2018). It was not before he stepped down as Army Chief at the turn of 2007 that the country began adopting a slow but steady path to democratic evolution by attaining some sort of balance between the establishment and political forces under the doctrine of General Kayani. Musharraf's effort to impose emergency earned by much defamation both from the general populace as well as other countries as a result of which the process of smooth democratic transition began (Gregory, 2015).

This comprehensive constitutional history clearly depicts teeming political anguish to decide upon a pertinent form of government where generals have been regarded as power usurpers and law-givers. But the fact is that the inability of civilian governments coupled with consistent animosity among state animosity were the implicit reasons for which military takeovers became the requisite need, both for upholding the supremacy of the constitution and preventing politico-economic affairs from being completely nosedived. The path to military takeovers is often aligned with a systemic form of manipulation and fragility by the incompetence of quarrelling politicians and the consequent lack of ability to ensure deliverance which handed them a serious mistrust from the establishment. The 'doctrine of necessity can be made a useful reference point here where the judicial body of state has many a time provided the military with full-fledged constitutional cover, thus, to mend disruptive political affairs of the country. There has seemed to be a rationale for military intervention to try to balance between dissemination of state powers and subsequent achievement of harmony between the two regimes (Farooq, 2012). Nevertheless, a larger segment of the Pakistani society still believes that the present polity of the country is chiefly dominated by the military especially when it comes to its formulation of foreign policy, in addition to deciding on how to prevent chaos and confusion purported by anti-state elements.

### **Ramifications of Divergence of Relations**

In contrast to other democratic countries, the depiction of Pakistan's political history manifests how military intervention formed the basis for introduction of an underdevelopment cycle when it comes to strengthening state institutions. It can be observed from the above articulation that while civilian governments failed to transform state administration into a mature political system, military rules prevented the country from adopting the smooth running of a democratic system (Khan, 2010). Scholarly debates have identified umpteen reasons for deprivation of civilian governments to improve political conditions of the country entailing incompetence of political leaders, feeble discourse regarding territorial integrity

and state sovereignty, indulgence of prioritising personal interests over those of the state, to name a few. When there is a glaring lack of political leadership in the country, it is obvious that the saviours of state territory and its security would come to the limelight and prevent the country from experiencing more political chaos (Matei, 2012). These can be justifiable reasons for divergence in civil-military relations and subsequent development of a stable nexus between the two. This can be evinced from the fact that the history has witnessed much economic debacle which political leaders fail to overcome especially that the turn of the last century when the country was grappling with severe economic constraints internally and impositions of sanctions externally (Hussain, 2014).

This necessity though proved to be indispensable in order to prevent the country from experiencing further domestic indebtedness and augmenting unemployment and poverty crisis, the then incoming military leadership placed more perils for the country in the form of radicalisation and continued dominance of militancy. In the post 9/11 period, the military government seemed to be capable of dealing with domestic affairs of the country much potentially, it failed to effectively handle external affairs and consequently put the state's sovereignty at stake, for instance, by sanctioning US forces to monitor border areas of the country which was a blatant compromise of the state without being directly involved in the animosity between the US and Taliban (Janjua, 2010). These regrettably stretched gaps in the convergence of civil-military relations and a wave of mistrust between the two continue to remain intact.

It is argued that Pakistan has always been in the need of developing a nurtured democratic leadership due to consistence absence of ability from the civilian governments' side to improve basic structure of the country and bring stability in its political system. Such a fostered leadership has been a wild goose chase since much of the state affairs were led by aristocratic political leaders that failed to realise the importance of state interests itself. The pervaded feudalism and assiduity in increasing power and maintaining authority compelled military leadership to ensure protection of the country from such impotent leaderships (Hussain, 2010). But this leadership was also not without caring for its position when two dictators (Zia ul Haq & Musharraf) made an effort to strengthen their position by restoring Article 58 (2) (b), with a view to increasing presidential power. Also, blatant attempt by Musharraf to impose state of emergency widened more divergences in relations between the two regimes and sparked much violence particularly between the military and judiciary pertaining to the attempt from the former to abrogate the constitution (Kamran, 2008). Therefore, it can be inferred that holes of political blunders have been found in both the leaderships proper convergence of relations has remained a distant dream.

### **Arguments regarding Civil-Military Imbalance**

There is no denying the fact that the democratic order under which state institutions carried out their endeavours and the indispensability of military to try to dominate its existence manifested unease from the Media, intelligentsias and the general public. Therefore it is essential to analyse some augments regarding such a balance between the two regimes. Balance generally ascribes working from the state institutions in accordance with their vested functions (Armstrong, 2013). Thus, the first argument that erupts is from defining military functions as

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stipulated in the Constitution of Pakistan. For instance, the Article 244 and 245 which aligns with some clauses of the Army Act 1952 restricts military's role in political affairs. Broadly. These stipulations put the Federal Government to direct Armed forces to come to its aid only when called upon to do so. It denotes that though the significant responsibility of Armed Forces is to protect the country against anti-state elements, the civilian government can call upon it for the objective of collaborating with it when it comes to formulating strategies regarding national security of the country (Bhattacharya, 2016). If their activities appear to be covered under the law, the state institutions will then begin functioning as per their prescribed functions.

However, in the case of Pakistan, when considering domestic politics of the country and emanated wrangling among political parties which becomes a source for political instability and economic weakening of the country, they have put military at arm's length while, at the same time, been comprehensively unable to reform strengthen such weaknesses. That is why intermittent interference of military in civilian affairs has not been regarded as a breach of the constitution but the compulsion of trying to keep the institutions on track (Greenwood & Balachandran, 2014). Another rationale argument regarding civil-military imbalance has recently emerged with the establishment of military courts after a heinous attack at Army Public School in Peshawar. If the constitution is deprived of having any provision with regard to the establishment of military court akin to regular civil courts, the imbalance between military and civil seems to favour the former (Haq, 2019). Providentially, the constitution has provided for the establishment of such courts by constitutionalising twenty-first amendment by amending Article 175. Obviously, the transition of trialling persons from civilian to military courts was to speed up the process of convicting terrorists or militants in the aftermath of 2014 attack. It holds that by allowing such a mechanism to proceed, establishing courts can be regarded as not disturbing civil-military balance whatsoever especially after providing four basic rights to the accused persons ranging from producing them before the court within twenty-four hours to permitting them to engage in private defence counsel (Hassan, 2018). Thirdly, it is often argued that the role of military in the foreign policy formulation is prevalent where input from its side is considered as meddling in the affairs of foreign office rather than providing them with profound insight of how to maintain country's external relations.

Unfortunately, little has been heard from the intelligentsia that such an input is indispensable for the interest and security of the country particularly when country's neighbours like India and Afghanistan are obsessed with active engagement of military forces against clandestine militants in these countries (Rizvi, 2015). Thus, in technical terms, there is currently no imbalance between the two entities but a mere struggle for power politics and some sort of mistrust between the two. Even Pentagon remains actively engaged with the President about the matter of security but it does not imply meddling in state affairs from the military side (Piplani & Talmadge, 2016).

### **Role of Civil Society vis-à-vis Civil-Military Relations**

The role of civilians (people without arms) is pivotal when considering the relationship between civil and military regimes. The society at large on one hand

and a separate armed body on the other indubitably bring an order to the society. The phrase 'civil society' is like an umbrella in Pakistan, making the compendium of unions, networks non-state institutions, i.e. non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which operate in extensive social, political and economic areas (Greenwood & Balachandran, 2014). Unlike the civil society of western countries which reflect liberal tendencies that often become a direct challenge to the state, the civil society of Pakistan is considered as a set of different actors. Since the development of civil society in the country, it has hitherto been somehow deprived of witnessing the smooth configuration and consolidation of the state. The reason of the establishment and subsequent development of Civil Society Organisations (CSO), especially in the last decade, is that the Pakistani society is still reeling with umpteen problems ranging from illiteracy to poverty and expecting the state to deliver appropriate and better services to the general populace. If one has a retrospect over the initial years of Ayub's regime, the civil society was abounding with enthusiasm and produced a sense of unanimity (Gregory, 2015). But the rational concept of nation-building fell flat upon the society's face when civil governments marred with country with foiled policies and military regimes kept on consolidating their position.

Few novel dominant factions that consisted of rural feudal conservatives and urban bourgeois preserved a political supremacy in order to wield and hold political authority. Though Ayub's regime provided for a strong ground to the locals, it was a mere farce attempt to reinforce the state control over political and economic decisions. The glaring controversy in the form of 1965 elections resulted in public processes in which emerging interest and pressure groups came to the limelight (Siddiq, 2017). Numerous agitations were also experienced when lawyers, doctors and economists reprimanded the audacious military rule of 1970. The mobility of civil society kept on increasing in 1970s and 1980s where the middle class stratum of the society began reckoning their requisite role in civil military relations. They were able to render their views and opinions about fluctuating politico-economic conditions of the country in almost twelve-year comprehensive rule of civilian governments. Before, the repressive actions of Zia's regime brought more acquaintance to the intelligentsia and millennial of the country when they were witnessing fanatic state actions against sectarian populace which regrettably brought chauvinism among people for their own communities (ul Haq, 2012).

With the passage of time, when the country saw consistent upheavals of its disruptive political and economic situations they became more capable of questioning efforts of the state towards them. In here, the role of NGOs have appeared to be of significance importance which have brought awareness especially among people of far-fetched areas regarding their rights and duties when considering engagement of civilian and military regimes and handling of security, administrative and judicial affairs (Taj, 2016).

These efforts prevailed the notion of bringing political, economic and social stability in the country and became more explicit after the end of last military rule that resulted in the smooth transition of democratic governments. Though the people of Pakistan who are politically unelected but belong to numerous civil society organisations prioritise indispensability of military role in government affairs to put a check on central state leadership, they always prefer electing



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politicians within their own communities who have a direct association with their social circumstances.

### **Recent Trends in Civil-Military Relations**

There is no denying the fact that the role of military in government affairs is requisite for myriad reasons for which governments itself want armed forces to come to its protection whenever required. Be it the conduct of elections, census and relief work, these types of duties form the basis for coordination and compromise between both. Broadly speaking, the recent convergence of civil-military relations especially after the success of two military operations (Zarb e Azb & Radd ul Fassad) brought pervaded security consolidation in the state as well as strengthen of diplomatic functions (Qazi, 2019). Given the present convergence between ruling party and the military, there is consistent opportunity when democratic principles of civil-military relations are nourishing in a positive manner and providentially under the rubric of civilian supremacy that has always been a longing hope for the people. This is entailing progressively some manifest assumptions, such as the military is or ought to be recognised as an independent stakeholder when it comes to governing the country, must remain exempt from overhauling the civilian authority elected by the people and should have a protection both from the media as well as the civil society (Haq, 2019).

Looking these essentials from a relationship spectrum, both the entities currently seem to be on one page in the matters of state interest and external relations of the country. This can further be evinced when the Army is pleasantly surprised over Prime Minister Imran Khan's ability to obtain foreign funding for the country's cash-starved economy and his cooperation with the military over the issues related to Financial Assistance Task Force (FATF) sanctions and money laundering (Hussain, 2018). The credibility of present political leadership will be intact as long as it remains concerned about resolving the perennial problems lie within its relations with the establishment. The condemnable anti-state actions from the country's neighbourhood coupled with eliminating radicalisation within the state has had so far positive repercussions with regard to mutual cooperation between both. Such a cooperation has to be perpetual especially given a plethora of economic and security constraints the country is still grappling with. Issues such as the extension in the existence of military courts and Chief of Army Staff's (COAS) tenure should be seen a beacon light in resolving out the hurdles of security and militancy rather than a compromise on the civilian government's ineffectiveness.

### **Conclusion**

With the above exhaustive articulation, it can be inferred that civil-military relations have at times been problematic throughout the history of Pakistan. The power struggle between the two and endeavours to control state authority has negatively impacted democratic principles of the country upon the basis of which the forefathers established it. The repercussions of military rules that have negatively affected that country are still existential along with mistrusts among the populace in civilian governments due to their past experience of ineptness and wrangling. The overarching authority of military does not bear bounty in any democratic state of the world, nor does lack of trust and deprivation of confidence among people towards political leadership. Both the bodies must realise that prefer larger interests of the people over their own will strengthen the political condition

of the country for which promotion of democratic values, prevention of radical actions against suspicious fanatics, empowerment of the masses, and positive diplomatic image of the country must be higher priorities from both sides. In this manner, the affairs of the state will be handled effectively and eventually bring heydays to the country.

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