

The Military's Role in Pakistan's Polity

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The Military's Role in Pakistan's Polity

The Pakistani military exercises significant influence over the nation's security, foreign policy and domestic affairs. On vital issues pertaining to national security, defence budget, nuclear policy and Indo-Pakistan relations (including Kashmir and the situation in Afghanistan), it exercises considerable control. It also influences the government's economic policy in order to protect its corporate interests. The military has repeatedly demonstrated that it can and will influence the nature and direction of political change in Pakistan, without necessarily assuming power. It has also shown a propensity to intervene whenever its interests are threatened or perceived to be threatened. The military also plays the role of mediator in confrontations among political leaders, parties and state institutions - if such confrontations have the potential to threaten political order and stability.

The Pakistan Army is deeply entrenched in the political, economic and social spheres of society. It looks upon itself as the guardian of the nation's ideological frontiers, in addition to its responsibility to guard its physical boundaries.¹ The multi-dimensional role that it performs includes guarding the nation's borders, defending its ideology and seeking to protect its own interests.² In the army's view, civilians cannot be trusted to safeguard broader national interests and that the military must share power to ensure that these are protected.³

The Pakistan Army has been playing a significant role in the governance of Pakistan since its inception. The outcome of the first India-Pakistan war and its impacts on the country's national security were the most integral factors responsible for strengthening the Pakistani military. Developments in 1947 generated a sense of insecurity in the newly created state. This insecurity and mistrust bred within Pakistan led to reliance on and belief in the military as the ultimate guarantor of national sovereignty.⁴ From the very beginning, the Pakistan Army has always looked upon itself as the guardian of the

nation's ideology and physical boundaries. Nonetheless, civilian governments have enjoyed and continue to enjoy considerable autonomy for political and economic management and the exercise of state authority.

The Military: A Pivot in the Power Structure

The military, particularly the army, has become a pivot in the power structure of Pakistan. The military staged coups in 1958, 1977 and 1999 and ruled over the country. In the absence of coups, it continued to influence civilian governments and their policies pertaining to security and foreign affairs. The military, particularly the army, has entrenched itself in Pakistani society and is deeply involved in domestic affairs. Thus, even today, the military continues to influence policies of civilian governments.

However, the defeat of Pakistan in 1971 demoralised the military and led to a consequent recession in its role. But it was short-lived. President Daud's revival of the issue of Pakhtunistan in the early 1970s and the insurgency in Baluchistan (1973-7) revived the military's role. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto used the army to maintain internal security. The military assumed power in July 1977 after overthrowing Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and directly governed the country till Zia's death in August 1988. While Gen Zia installed a civilian prime minister in 1985, the army continued to be the centre of power, and played a major role in the governance of the country even in the post-Zia period.

The army chief became a pivot in Pakistan's post-1988 power structure. The 'troika' of the president, the prime minister, and the army chief ruled Pakistan in the post-Zia period and made arrangements for civil-military consensus-building on key domestic, foreign policy, and security issues. The troika met periodically and senior military and civilian officials were summoned to give briefings related to the issues under discussion. The army chief also held meetings separately with the president and prime minister on political, foreign policy, and security issues and in this manner, the army continued to influence policies even without directly assuming power.

There was a new development in the military in the post-Zia era. The corps commanders' meetings, presided over by the army chief, gained prominence in this period. The precedent established in that period still continues. The meetings were attended by top commanders, principal staff officers at the army headquarters and other senior officers holding strategic

appointments. The participants discussed not only security, organisational and professional matters, but also deliberated on domestic issues such as law and order, and general political conditions, particularly when the government and the opposition were engaged in intense confrontation. These discussions were intended both to raise the senior officers' political concerns and to develop a broad-based military consensus. The execution of the consensus decisions was left to the army chief, thereby strengthening his position for when he interacted with the president and the prime minister.

It is a fact that a smooth interaction among the members of the troika ensures political stability. If differences develop among the troika members, political uncertainty and instability are likely to follow. The prime minister – the civilian side of the power equation – can find himself/herself in a difficult situation and the military is well placed to put pressure on him/her if differences continue. Moreover, the 1973 Constitution, as amended by Zia in 1985 (the Eighth Constitutional Amendment adopted by the Parliament), greatly strengthened the position of the president vis-à-vis the prime minister, and made it difficult for the latter to emerge as an independent centre of power.

But the prime minister's power and position were enhanced somewhat by the 13th Constitutional Amendment of April 1997. This amendment withdrew the president's power to dismiss the government and dissolve the National Assembly. The amendment also assigned the prime minister a greater role in appointing service chiefs, thereby eliminating the president's discretionary powers. Nawaz Sharif adopted a new strategy during his second term, using his numerical strength in Parliament to secure his hold over power, undermining other troika members and state institutions. Nonetheless, so long as the prime minister presides over divided and hostile political forces, he/she will have to work in harmony with the president and the army.

The military's view is that its interests should be protected. Its organisational structure, resources, institutional strengths, and political experience illustrate that it would remain neutral unless and until its interests are affected. Maligning the military or unilateral decision-making by the civilian leaders, which directly affect them, are issues of civil-military differences. For instance, Nawaz Sharif's attempt to blame the army for the Kargil War 1999 brought the prime minister and the army in direct confrontation.

The military uses its influence to moderate a conflict among politicians and acts as arbiter to either coerce or force them into a settlement when they feel that a confrontation would cause a major constitutional or political breakdown. The president was supported by the military in dismissing civilian governments in August 1990, April 1993, and November 1996, wherein the military was of the view that the civilian governments were ineffective in proving domestic peace and stability. The army chief supported the prime minister in his confrontation with the president and the judiciary in December 1997. The tussle between Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah brought the army into the conflict. As the tussle intensified, Army Chief Gen Jahangir Karamat favoured the prime minister and both the president and chief justice were convinced to resign.

The dismissal of the prime ministers in August 1990, April 1993 and November 1996 by the president were carried out with the backing of the army chief in a manner reminiscent of a coup. In the case of Junejo's dismissal in May 1988, President Zia combined the presidency with the command of the army. The military, particularly the army, is and will continue to be a pivot in the power structure of Pakistan. In recent times, the February-March 2009 political crisis demonstrated the military's influence and place in the power structure of Pakistan.

The Military's Interests

All of Pakistan's military rulers paid substantial attention to strengthening the armed forces. During the Ayub era, Pakistan's military, particularly the army, developed and expanded to a great extent, due, in no small part, to the foreign assistance Pakistan received during this period. Ayub Khan adopted a new approach in addressing Pakistan's national security issues. His approach was to diversify Pakistan's external relations. As a part of this diversification policy, he visited the erstwhile Soviet Union in the early 1960s. India-China border disputes and Chinese aggression against India in 1962 opened an opportunity for Pakistan to foster a close relationship with China. Pakistan strengthened its ties with India's arch-foe and China became a 'chosen partner' and 'all-weather friend'. Despite a strategic partnership with China, Pakistan continued its relationship with the West/United States. In effect, the Pakistani military gives top priority to the maintenance of its relationships with the US and China.

The military was directly involved in the conduct of the Afghan War (1980-8). The role of the Foreign Office and the civilian leadership in formulating and implementing the Afghan policy increased after the withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1988, but senior army commanders and the Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) had been providing significant inputs even previously. The army is still playing a significant role in Pakistan's policies towards Afghanistan. The Afghan Taliban, in fact, is a product of this involvement of the Pakistan Army.

The military also has a deep interest in Pakistan's policy towards India, including Kashmir. While not opposed in principle to Indo-Pak rapprochement, the military remains concerned that the civilian government should not overlook Indian intentions. The military views a credible conventional defence and nuclear-weapons capabilities vital to ward off Indian pressures. In its view, a strong and credible conventional defence and nuclear-weapons capabilities will enable it to pursue an independent foreign policy. Unless the military is satisfied that there are credible guarantees for the country's security, it will resist handing over its nuclear-weapons option. Furthermore, for the Pakistani military, the Kashmir issue will remain a major factor in ties between India and Pakistan.

The military also looks after overseas weapons and equipment procurement, which has far-reaching foreign policy implications. Pakistan's relations with China and the US need to be viewed in light of this reality. The Pakistani military exerts pressure on civilian governments to pursue policies in foreign affairs to facilitate its objectives of weapons and equipment procurement. In this manner, the military plays an important role in determining Pakistan's relations with certain foreign countries such as the US, China, and Saudi Arabia.

The military is opposed to any cuts in defence expenditure by civilian governments. Its view is that a reduced military budget would adversely affect its combat capability. Senior military officers regularly discuss defence budget issues with civilian leaders. They oppose critical public statements by civilian governments regarding defence budget and defence related issues. This aspect illustrates that the military is deeply involved in the preparation of the country's defence budget. In fact, it can be said that the military veritably regulates the defence budget.

The autonomy of the military and non-interference of civilian governments in its internal organisational matters and service affairs are critical components in determining the nature of the civil-military relationship. The military wishes that civilian leaders should not interfere in its organisational matters and wishes to work as an autonomous organisation. The Ministry of Defence's actions relating to personnel recommendations including promotions, transfers, and postings are generally resisted by the military. The military views its autonomy and civilian non-interference as crucial in maintaining professionalism and service discipline.

The military has extensive corporate interests and has acquired large holdings of land and capital. Land is allotted to senior military officers for their personal benefit and they usually run their own businesses after retirement. The military has also established various organisations and foundations to provide benefits to retired military personnel. These foundations function as welfare entities. The military's steady accumulation of economic and political power over a period of time suggests that it will be difficult for civilians to unravel it in Pakistan's prospective evolution towards a stable democratic state.⁵ Repeated military interventions and its deep involvement in politics have enabled military officers to accumulate considerable perquisites and privileges that the military inevitably wishes to protect.

The Military's Control over the Nuclear Programme

Pakistan's nuclear development programme was initiated before Zulfikar Ali Bhutto came to power, but real progress was made in this regard during his premiership. Bhutto personally looked after the nuclear development programme. With the overthrow of the Bhutto government, the nuclear programme came to be directly controlled by Zia, who was the president-cum-army chief. This period marked the shift of the development of the nuclear programme from civilian control to the military. Since then, nuclear policy has remained under the control of the military, particularly the army, even during the reign of civilian governments.

After Zia, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan inherited the mantle of control over nuclear issues. Even Benazir Bhutto, the elected prime minister, was kept in the dark about nuclear issues. However, Bhutto sought to gain control of the nuclear programme as the head of the government. She asked

for briefings but never got them. In September 1991, during her first term, she complained that she was denied information on strategic weapons and highly sensitive aspects of the country's nuclear programme. Finally, she called a meeting with Munir Ahmed Khan of the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) and Dr AQ Khan, the head of the Kahuta enrichment plant. Both individuals were obligated to report the meeting to the army. When Gen Beg came to know about it, he called the prime minister. Sensing an opportunity, Bhutto invited the president and the army chief to speak about nuclear command and control.⁶ Till now, the president was solely in charge of the nuclear programme. Not even the army chief was part of the control mechanism of the nuclear programme.

Zia's relations with Gen Aslam Beg, then Vice Chief of Army Staff, were not cordial. Zia was in the habit of directly consulting corps commanders and junior officers, bypassing Gen Beg, who resented these direct frequent interactions. Zia did not involve Gen Beg on sensitive issues since he did not consider him a close confidant and reliable, and thus, during Zia's tenure, Gen Beg did not have much information regarding the nuclear programme. After Zia's death, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan inherited control of the nuclear programme. But this was the time when the army chief's involvement in nuclear policies started to grow. As army chief, Gen Beg got control of the nuclear control system after Bhutto's initiative.⁷ After Gen Beg, each successive army chief has tightened his grip over nuclear policy.

The National Command Authority (NCA) was created on 02 February 2000, by the National Security Council (NSC). While the NCA continued to function after a fashion, legal cover was given to it by the National Command Authority Ordinance issued by President Musharraf on 13 December 2007, wherein he formalised these authorities and structures.⁸ Significantly, the head of the state (at that time, Musharraf) became the NCA's chief. Thus, Musharraf remained in charge. This ordinance formalised the position of the president as the NCA chairman, and the prime minister as vice chairman.⁹ According to the ordinance, the NCA would include the Federal Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defence, and Interior, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, chiefs of the army, navy and air force, and Director-General of the Strategic Plans Division (SPD),¹⁰ who is from the army and acts as the secretary of the NCA.

Under the NCA, Pakistan has a centralised authority for all decisions relating to policy planning, procurement, deployment and use of nuclear weapons. The NCA will have “complete command and control over research, development, production and use of nuclear and space technologies and other related applications in various fields and to provide for the safety and security of all personnel, facilities, information, installations or organisations and other activities or matters connected therewith...”¹¹ In the NCA, Pakistan has created a unified nuclear command and control system and attempted to provide safety and security to personnel and organisations.

A unified nuclear command and control system is necessary for the safety and security of nuclear weapons. Pakistan’s command and control over its nuclear weapons is compartmentalised and functions under strict operational security.¹² The government’s command and control system is based on command, control, communication, computers, intelligence, information, surveillance and reconnaissance (C4I2SR).¹³ The president is the chairman of the NAC and is responsible for all issues related to the nuclear programme. However, the army continues to remain a significant player.

The composition of the nuclear command and control structure under the NCA demonstrates the army’s leading role in Pakistan’s nuclear policy. The Strategic Plans Division’s role in the NCA clearly reflects the dominant position of the army in nuclear matters and in the management of the nuclear forces. The Pakistan Army dominates the nuclear command and control structure and will continue to do so.¹⁴

The Afghanistan Factor

In Pakistan’s security perception, a friendly government in Afghanistan would provide strategic depth to it and the Pakistani military has consistently held this view for years. There is a dominant view in Pakistan that the country’s security is associated with Afghanistan. The clashes between Pakistan and Afghanistan continue because the two countries do not enjoy a semblance of views on regional security issues. However, the two countries did enjoy cordial relations during the short-lived Taliban regime. The Pakistani military had been consistently arguing for the country to have greater involvement in Afghanistan. It has been seen that Afghanistan was also an important issue that affected civil-military relationships, such as the Zia-Junejo conflict

1988 and tensions between Benazir Bhutto-Gen Aslam Beg in 1990.

In the post-1988 period, Pakistan tried to manipulate political development in Afghanistan. The continued political uncertainty and civil war in Afghanistan provided it the requisite opportunity. The ISI and the army took a stronger stance over Afghanistan,¹⁵ and the Taliban came to power in Kabul in 1996 with Pakistani assistance. With the Taliban's ascendance to power, the Pakistani military had accomplished its objective vis-à-vis Afghanistan. However, this accomplishment was short-lived.

The continued terrorist attacks on US installations and its citizens and their association with the Taliban resulted in Pakistan's disassociation with the Taliban. Relations between the US and Afghanistan began to deteriorate with the terrorist attacks at the US embassies in the East African capital cities of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi, Kenya, on 07 August 1998. In response to the bombings, President Clinton ordered punitive action by launching a series of cruise missiles on terrorist targets in Afghanistan and Sudan on 20 August 1998. Following the 1998 attack, the ISI was asked to separate Mullah Omar from Osama bin Laden. DG ISI Ziauddin, who had replaced Nasim Rana, tried his best to implement this separation, but efforts in this regard slowed down after the October 1999 coup.

The terrorist attacks on the twin towers of the World Trade Centre, and the Pentagon, on 11 September 2001, resulted in a US-led invasion of Afghanistan, consequently leading to the destruction of the Taliban government. A new phase started in US-Pakistan relations and Gen Musharraf occupied a central position in it. Gen Musharraf's key advisor and the new DG ISI Lt Gen Mahmud Ahmed was on a visit to the US at that time, and was able to brief him about developments in the US soon after, on 12 September 2001.

Gen Musharraf had no option except to align with the US in the 'war on terror'. Pakistan abandoned the Taliban government, although it had spent significant resources towards its creation and had been only one of three countries (the other two being Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) to recognise the Taliban government. Before the US attack on Afghanistan on 07 October 2001, DG ISI Lt Gen Mahmud Ahmed visited Afghanistan quite a few times and met Mullah Omar in order to persuade him to hand over Osama bin Laden to the US, but his efforts were in vain. The US suspected

Mahmud Ahmed's loyalty and questioned his credentials, background, and interests. They felt that he was an Islamist. Gen Musharraf removed Ahmed from the post of DG ISI and gave him a civilian job, as head of a military-owned corporation. Mahmud Ahmed retired from this post in 2005.

Some high-ranking officials of the Pakistani military came into contact with religious organisations during the Afghan War (1980-8). These organisations influenced the thinking of senior military officers. These officers favoured an alliance with the Taliban. In this regard, Lt Gen Aziz Khan exercised a powerful influence over thinking regarding the alliances with Taliban and *jihadi* groups fighting in Kashmir.¹⁶ But the activities of the *jihadi* groups and the Taliban embarrassed Gen Musharraf. The US brought tremendous pressure on Pakistan to check the Taliban's activities. Gen Musharraf was under personal pressure, since some high ranking officials had associations with the Taliban and the *jihadi* groups, as mentioned previously. In the military reshuffle of 01 September 2000, Lt Gen Aziz was posted as Corps Commander Lahore, which stopped his involvement in day-to-day policy-making.

The Pakistani military has sought to maintain its influence in Afghanistan despite resistance from various quarters. It has been seeking peace on its western borders since its inception. But successive governments in Pakistan have failed to ensure the same. Boundary disputes and ethnic issues between Pakistan and Afghanistan have contributed to continued tensions between the two countries. In the Pakistani military's perception, continued tensions on its western border will exert pressure on the military. Pakistan cannot afford continued tensions on its both western and eastern borders. The military has been seeking to concentrate on the eastern border since it considers India as a 'principal enemy'. As a result, the army has sought to remain a powerful player in Afghanistan.

The ISI's Political Role

A significant development that took place during the days of Zia was the active involvement of the military-dominated intelligence agencies in political manipulation. This pattern was so firmly established that by the time Zia died in August 1988, the ISI played an important role in bringing together the major political alliance Islamic Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI) that opposed the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in the 1988 general elections. It also contributed funds

to some political leaders before the 1990 general elections. Benazir Bhutto became aware of the ISI's activities in this regard during the 1988 general elections, when it had tried to manipulate the results, but had met with limited success. Consequently, there was resentment between the ISI and Bhutto

Bhutto was not comfortable with Hamid Gul and she removed him from the ISI. After removing Hamid Gul, Benazir Bhutto tried to bring reforms in the ISI. She formed a committee to review the role of the intelligence services in Pakistan – particularly their role in a democratic system of governance. The committee, constituted of four members, was headed by Air Chief Marshal Zulfiqar Ali Khan, to look into the ISI, the Intelligence Bureau (IB), the Airport Security Force (ASF) and the provincial 'special branches' of the police. Significantly, Benazir Bhutto's father Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto had, by decree, ordered the ISI to set up a political wing and to review domestic political developments for the prime minister – a role for which the ISI had not been well-equipped.¹⁷ With the passage of time, the ISI broadened its role and became a pervasive force in Pakistani politics. The wide role that the ISI enjoyed enabled it to force the army chief and prime minister to take its views into consideration on policy issues.

Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto tried to control the ISI, which primarily functioned under the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS). In order to strengthen her control over the ISI, she appointed the retired Lt Gen Shamsur Rahman Kallue as DG ISI. In doing so, she sought to diminish the role of the army chief. But she was unable to do so with much success since being a retired officer, Kallue had lost his clout and did not have contacts among the new senior commanders of the army. The top army officers were unhappy with Kallue's presence in a policy-making role. With Kallue's appointment as the DG, the ISI was suddenly cut off from the Pakistan Army. The Military Intelligence (MI) Directorate at the GHQ, under Maj Gen Asad Durrani, became informers to Gen Beg as well as a counter-force to the ISI in the political arena. Therefore, as DG ISI, Kallue found himself isolated and completely ineffective.

The military-dominated intelligence agencies were actively involved in interacting with political leaders during the military rule of Pervez Musharraf. Some high-ranking intelligence officials acted as intermediaries for the

dialogue between Pervez Musharraf and Benazir Bhutto, which led to the understanding between the two. It also facilitated Benazir Bhutto's return to Pakistan in October 2007. The ISI is deeply entrenched in Pakistani politics and manipulates several issues in this regard. It provides detailed information to the army chief, and limited information to civilian leaders, regarding sensitive issues. Civilian leaders are aware of the role of the ISI and have been trying to reform the organisation. The expanded role of the ISI and its close association with the army has kept civilian leaders under tremendous pressure.

The Military's Role during Political Crises

The military has demonstrated that it has the capability to resolve political crises. It has used its influence to settle political issues that could precipitate crises. It employed its coercive power to control the Ahmadiya riot in Punjab in the early 1950s and language tensions in Sindh in 1970s. The military officers continue to use their influence to moderate conflicts among politicians and act as arbiters to force them into a settlement when they feel that a confrontation would cause a major constitutional or political breakdown. Senior commanders constantly review the government's political and economic management, especially its interaction with political adversaries, and tackling law and order and issues like corruption, the use of state machinery and patronage.

The military supported the president in dismissing the civilian governments in August 1990, April 1993, and November 1996, when it was of the belief that the civilian governments were unable to provide domestic peace, stability, and order. In December 1997, the army supported the prime minister in his confrontation with the president and the judiciary. The conflict between Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and President Farooq Leghari and Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah led to the army's involvement into the conflict. Gen Jahangir Karamat preferred the prime minister and both the president and chief justice were advised to go. Thus, the military played a key role in averting a political crisis in December 1997.

The March 2009 tension between President Asif Ali Zardari and opposition leader Nawaz Sharif was likely to threaten political stability in the country. As in previous instances, the military got involved in the issue

to ensure that it was able to avert the political crisis that the country was likely to plunge into. The army top brass discussed the political and law and order situation, and regional security in a Corps Commanders meeting at the General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi on 05 March 2009. Army chief Gen Ashfaq Kayani chaired the meeting. In a press statement, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said that “the participants were given a comprehensive briefing on the internal security situation and prevailing situation in the region.”¹⁸ The meeting discussed the internal security scenario, which included the political, economic, and law and order situation in the country. The army took stock of the deteriorating law and order situation in the wake of the ongoing political turmoil in the country. It was the first meeting of the Corps Commanders since the beginning of tensions between Zardari and Sharif, and the erstwhile Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) government’s peace deal with the Swat Taliban. Besides the situation in Swat Valley and the tribal areas, they also discussed the situation on the eastern and western borders.

The tussle between the government and the opposition led by Nawaz Sharif in March 2009, had plunged Pakistan into political crises. Relations between President Zardari and Nawaz Sharif had begun to deteriorate a few months previously, but the crisis deepened with the dismissal of the Punjab government. President Zardari dismissed Shahbaz Sharif’s government in Punjab on 25 February 2009, after the Supreme Court delivered the verdict that neither Nawaz Sharif nor Shahbaz Sharif could stand for office.¹⁹ Though there had been undercurrents of tensions between Sharif and Zardari on the issue of the prosecution of former president Musharraf, the dismissal of Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif brought them into open conflict.

Nawaz Sharif launched a nationwide protest against the government over the reinstatement of dismissed judges and the dismissal of the Shahbaz Sharif government in Punjab. Although President Zardari had reinstated 57 judges, the lawyers’ movement was pushing for the reinstatement of more judges, including Supreme Court Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry. Gen Kayani met Prime Minister Gilani on 11 March 2009, while Nawaz Sharif was addressing a rally at Abbottabad in the Punjab province, in defiance of the prohibitory order of the government. The meeting between Prime Minister Gilani and Gen Kayani was held at the prime minister’s residence and the statement

issued by the Prime Minister's Secretariat conveyed that both sides had discussed "matters of national importance."²⁰ Gen Kayani, the president and the prime minister also discussed how they could deal with the opposition.

The continued protests and demonstrations created a serious law and order problem. In the 11 March rally, Nawaz Sharif announced a long march to Islamabad on 16 March 2009. The tussle between the government and opposition led by Nawaz Sharif further increased the involvement of the military in domestic politics.²¹ The frequent meetings between Gen Kayani and Prime Minister Gilani, and Gen Kayani and President Zardari demonstrated the growing involvement of the military in domestic politics.

While Pakistan had been passing through political crises in February-March 2009, the US government had maintained regular contact with the Pakistan Army and encouraged it to play an effective role in defusing tensions between the government and the opposition. The US had conveyed the view to the Pakistan Army that it would welcome the army as a player so long as it was in support of democracy.²² US and Pakistani officials have noted that the US played a key role in defusing tensions between President Asif Ali Zardari and opposition leader Nawaz Sharif in March 2009.²³ Thus, the US has proven itself to be an important player in determining the political destiny of Pakistan.

These developments reflect the civil-military relationship in Pakistan and the military's role during political crises. The military's involvement in politics is deep and whenever the military wishes to, it assumes charge of the governance of the country. But the tacit support of the US is requisite for such military intervention and the continuity of military rule in Pakistan. All military rulers of Pakistan have sought and required US support to continue their rule.

Army chiefs do not hesitate to comment publicly on political development and make recommendations to civilian political leaders to put their respective houses in order. They have also advised civilian governments to settle contentious issues with opposition leaders through political means and negotiations, and to run a corruption-free, transparent, and effective administration. Political turmoil and uncertainties would adversely affect the military's extensive interests and as such, are not viewed favourably.

The Military's Corporate Role and the 'Culture of Entitlement'

Ayub Khan had started the 'culture of entitlement' in the Pakistani military. He began the practice of awarding land to army officers in the newly irrigated colonies of Sindh and the border regions of Punjab. Military awards were also given in terms of land grants. Growing military cantonments also gave military officers the opportunities to secure heavily subsidised plots on easy instalment plans. Later, regional, division and corps commanders acquired the right to autonomously allocate plots in cantonments in their jurisdiction through defence housing societies. The practice of acquiring multiples plots became commonplace and permeated both the military and civil bureaucracies.

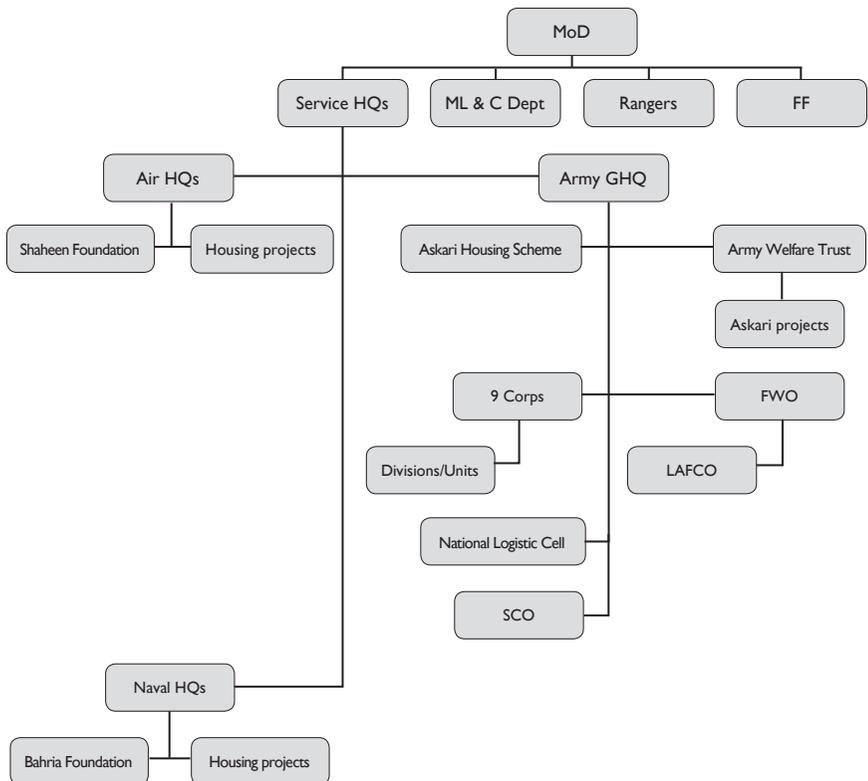
The military established and operated several foundations to help soldiers and retired service personnel. These institutions virtually penetrated all sectors of the economy, competing against the private sector in doing so. They attracted investments as a result of their privileged access to scarce resources. Senior military officers, who had little to no managerial experience, particularly in business matters, were sent to manage these enterprises. The state-run military enterprises began proliferating in the post-Ayub era, and provided lucrative post-retirement employment to senior military officers. Thus, the military began to acquire a corporate identity that contrasted with its public statements about service to the nation and its condemnation of corrupt civilian rulers. Over a period of time, the military built an economic empire that contributed in strengthening it institutionally.

The military operates Pakistan's economy at three distinct levels - direct involvement of the organisation, subsidiaries, and individuals.²⁴ The Ministry of Defence (MoD) is at the apex of the military economic network. The MoD controls four major areas – the service headquarters, the Department of Military Land and Cantonment (MLC), the Fauji Foundation (FF), and the Rangers (a paramilitary force). The MLC acquires land for allocation to the service headquarters, which distributes it among individual members.

The three services – army, navy, and air force – have independent welfare foundations, which are directly controlled by the senior officers of the respective services. The National Logistic Cell (NLC), the Frontier Works Organisation (FWO), and the Special Communications Organisation (SCO) are controlled by the army. Moreover, the nine corps of the army, subdivided into divisions and units, run independent ventures. The Pakistan Rangers, a

paramilitary organisation, is controlled by the MoD. However, the MoD's position at the apex does not mean that economic initiatives are centrally planned. It is simply a reflection of the administrative structure of the MoD, in the overall system of the defence administration of Pakistan. The MoD is used as an instrument to mobilise resources and each of the three services is engaged in the expansion of their commercial and other economic activities. The following diagram depicts the structure of the economic empire of the military:²⁵

Fig 1: The Pakistan Military's Economic Empire



Source: Ayesha Siddiqi, *Military Inc.: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), p. 113.

The military is involved in public sector organisations and cooperatives, with the three major public sector organisations – the NLC, FWO and SCO – under the control of the army. The Water and Power Development

Authority (WAPDA) was placed under military control in 1998. Around 35,000 military personnel are involved in the WAPDA.

In addition, there are four subsidiary organisations that are involved in the economic activities of the military – the Fauji Foundation, Army Welfare Trust, Shaheen Foundation and Bahria Foundation. All subsidiaries are controlled at the top by senior military officers and members of the MoD. The foundations are controlled by the service headquarters and run by retired military personnel. The profits are distributed among the shareholders, who are all retired military personnel. These foundations are involved in various ventures like cement, fertiliser and cereal production. Moreover, some of the foundations are involved in banking, insurance, information technology, and education. The influence of the MoD plays a vital role in securing public-sector business contracts and getting financial and industrial inputs at subsidised rates.

The National Logistics Cell (NLC): The NLC was established by the Quartermaster-General (QMG) of the army in 1978. The NLC began operations during the Afghan War, to carry US supplies from Karachi to the north, and is now responsible for transportation across the country. It is the largest goods transportation company in the country. The NLC is also involved in the constructions of roads, bridges and wheat storage facilities. The army manages the ground operations. The NLC is staffed by serving army officers. While the organisation does employ civilians, they are restricted mainly to administrative and clerical positions. The NLC is headed by a chairman, who is the Federal Minister for Planning and Development. The members of the board comprise the Federal Ministers for Communications, Railways, Food and Agriculture, the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, and the Federal Secretaries for Planning and Development, Finance, Communication and Railways.

Frontier Works Organisation (FWO): The FWO was established in 1965 to construct the 805 km Karakoram Highway.²⁵ It was initially put under the control of the Ministry of Communication, although it was staffed by army personnel. The FWO is the largest construction organisation in the country, which constructs roads and is also engaged in toll collections. The army's Corps of Engineers was involved in the construction of the road link between Pakistan and China. Over a period of time, the FWO has been brought under the control of the MoD.

Special Communications Organisation (SCO): The SCO was originally set up in 1976 to establish a telecommunications network in Pakistan occupied-Jammu and Kashmir and the Northern Areas.²⁶ It is jointly controlled by the Army's Signals Directorate and the Ministry of Information Technology.

The Cooperatives: The cooperative ventures include small and medium-sized profit-making economic activities, which are carried out by the various military commands. The economic activities are diverse in nature and vary in size. They cover various activities and vary from bakeries to cinemas to gas stations and shopping plazas and markets. They are run by army units, divisions or the corps headquarters. They use lower-ranking personnel as free labour.

The Fauji Foundation (FF): The FF was set up in 1954 under the Charitable Endowments Act 1890, for the welfare of retired military personnel. The FF provides welfare to retired personnel of all three services. The FF conducts various industrial operations throughout the country. These industrial operations are primarily in consumer-oriented and non-tradable commodities such as flour, rice, jute and textiles. While the major projects are run by the FF, most of the heavy manufacturing industrial projects are categorised as subsidiaries. It means that these are shareholding projects. The fully-owned ventures mainly comprise agriculture-based projects like farms, motorway projects and educational institutions. The FF is run by a governing board that is predominantly controlled by the army. Its employees consist of around 6,000-7,000 retired military personnel. Despite being a tri-service organisation, it is dominated by the army and about 80-90 percent of staff consists of army personnel, with the remaining strength divided between the navy and air force. All the managing directors of the FF have been retired army officers.

The Committee of Administration is the apex body and the Secretary of Defence is the chairman of the committee. The chairman of the board is the Secretary of Defence and the vice-chairman is the managing director of the FF, who is a retired lieutenant general. The committee comprises the Chief of General Staff (CGS), the Adjutant-General (AG), the Chief of Logistics Staff – Pakistan Army (CLS), the Deputy Chief of Naval Staff (Training and Personnel) – Pakistan Navy, and the Deputy Chief of Air Staff (Administration) – Pakistan Air Force. The FF comprises four divisions – fully-owned projects,

associated companies, affiliated projects, and the Investment Board. It is controlled by the MoD.

Army Welfare Trust (AWT): The AWT was set up in 1971 to create employment and profit-making opportunities for retired army personnel. The army felt that the welfare needs of its personnel were not being met by the FF. It was established under the Societies Registration Act 1860, with the specific purpose of generating funds for widows of martyrs, orphans, disabled soldiers, and providing rehabilitation for retired personnel. The AWT is controlled by the Army GHQ. The managing director of the Committee of Administration is also the MD of the AWT. The members of the committee comprise the CGS, QMG, CLS and the MD of the AWT. The committee, which is chaired by the AG of the army, supervises the work. The MD of the AWT is the vice-chairman. The AWT functions on a different concept from the FF. The AWT aims to generate profits for distribution among its shareholders. The trust invests welfare funds in industrial and other profit-making ventures. The fund is borrowed from the benevolent fund account that is maintained in the GHQ, which basically consists of compulsory deductions from the pay of army personnel for welfare purposes. The FF and AWT pay taxes at concessionary rates because of their identity as welfare institutions. The FF and AWT pay taxes at around 20 percent on their profits while the BF and SF pay a higher rate of 30 percent. Interestingly, there is no uniform tax rate applied to these organisations.

Shaheen Foundation (SF): The SF was established in 1977 under the Charitable Endowments Act 1890. The SF is controlled by the Pakistan Air Force. The Committee of Administration is chaired by the Chief of the Air Staff. The vice-chairman is the Deputy Chief of the Air Staff (Operations). The members comprise the Deputy Chiefs of the Air Staff (Administration, Training, and Engineering), the Director-General of the Air Force Strategic Command, the Inspector-General of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF), and the managing director of the SF. It was established to create greater opportunities for the welfare of the PAF, which was not satisfied with the performance of the FF in this regard. The SF is involved in several projects, including airport services, travel agencies, air cargo, aero trade, commercial complexes, and insurance.

Bahria Foundation (BF): The BF was set up in 1982 by the Pakistan Navy. It was registered under the Charitable Endowments Act 1890. The BF is controlled by the Navy. The foundation runs projects such as shipping, ship construction, harbour services, deep-sea fisheries and real estate. The BF works for the welfare of retired Navy personnel.

These organisations and foundations are involved in numerous activities. The army receives preferential access to state-controlled resources and is not subject to the strict rules and scrutiny that the government imposes on private entities. For example, Pakistan Railways has suffered heavily since the NLC took on the job of transporting items across the country.

The rising numbers of Defence Housing Authority (DHA) schemes in and around the military cantonments across the country illustrates the military's involvement in economic affairs. Gen Zia had created a new way of involving serving officers in commercial ventures by placing the logistics and military lands and cantonments under the respective corps commanders. The army got involved in acquiring lands, ostensibly for military purposes, and then turning them into lucrative housing schemes. The MoD was responsible for releasing state land to the military but gradually lost all control of during the Zia period. The 'culture of entitlement' started in the Ayub period, and took deep root during the Zia era. It became acceptable for senior army officers to take multiple plots of land in cantonments. Moreover, senior army officers had been accommodated in well-paid jobs in army-controlled enterprises and some even entered the Foreign Service as ambassadors.

The economic concessions that army officers received during the Zia period deepened the army's involvement in business activities. As the army involvement in business activities grew, the prospect for corruption increased. The widespread corruption in resource allocations and distributions alarmed the army. For instance, Gen Asif Nawaz directly controlled the appointments of the heads of various entities such as the FWO, the SCO, and the NLC. These appointments gave the army chief the opportunity to influence senior military officers, who competed with each other to get lucrative posts so that they could serve their vested interests. The army chief would be faced with a great deal of resentment if he tried to turn back such policies.

Gen Musharraf followed the same policy as previous military rulers did. He appointed senior military officers in civilian posts. The involvement of

the military in economic activities grew and army officers became the heads of several civilian organisations. Pakistan Army officers were being drawn away from their main occupation and expertise, and involved in managing civilian institutions. This practice became common during military rule. It perpetuated a belief that the army was better equipped to handle civilian and business enterprises than its civilian counterparts. Such a belief will have far-reaching implications for the military as a whole and the army in particular. The involvement of military officials in settling land disputes, local affairs and politics, business activities, and running the country leads to professional inefficiency, and it leads to corruption.²⁷ This permeation of corruption into the Pakistani military will affect its professionalism in an adverse manner.

Conclusion

So, as the military's involvement in domestic affairs grew, its role expanded and it began to perform multi-dimensional functions. Along with performing its primary role, the military was allowed to perform the secondary role of maintaining law and order and internal security. Today, the Pakistani military is deeply involved in the political, economic and social spheres of the state. Consequently, the military, particularly the army, has become a pivot in the power structure of Pakistan, and today, the army decides the nature and direction of Pakistan's polity. It would be difficult to reverse this trend.

The military continues to play a vital role in the governance of the country even during civilian governments. Whenever the military feels threatened, it assumes charge of the governance of the country. The coups in 1958, 1977 and 1999 and various related incidents are demonstrative of the army's clout in the power structure of Pakistan and the formation of the troika reflects the military's influence in Pakistan. The troika of President Zardari, Prime Minister Yousuf Gilani and Chief of the Army Staff Gen Ashfaq Kayani is running the country as the three institutions came together and ran the country in the post-Zia period. It illustrates that the military will continue to play a decisive role and remain a pivot in the power structure of Pakistan.

Notes

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