

CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS AND ITS IMPACT ON STATE BUILDING IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that supremacy of civilian institutions over military harnesses the development of other institutions. But in the case of Pakistan, the military has dominated all the institutions impacting state-building processes resulting in uneven growth and instability. This paper further contextualizes that military predominance in the institutions of Pakistan has resulted in an unstable state focussing on defense rather than on development.

KEYWORDS: *Impacting State-Building Processes, Nature and Direction*

INTRODUCTION

The military is the most predominant and autonomous political actor that has the capability of influencing the nature and direction of political change in Pakistan. During the British rule military served as a shield to the imperial rule and avoided active involvement in politics and accepted the supremacy of civilian government. This changed after the independence as the military started to expand its role in the political arena. There were many external and internal factors that resulted in this change of civil-military relations. Externally, the security threat from India and Afghanistan¹ resulted in army gaining preponderance as a guarantor of security. Internally, the regional uprisings and ethnic assertions² which civilians were unable to contain, tilted the balance of power in the military's favor. The changes in civil-military relations were manifested in different forms: an active role for the military in policy-making in collaboration with the bureaucracy, displacement of civilian government in October 1958, March 1969, July 1977 and October 1999 and the penetration of military in civilian institutions, economy and society. The balance in civil-military relations was tilted towards the military. The military was central to Pakistan's existence as a state and was fundamental to all the processes of state building in Pakistan from the very beginning. These two factors combined made the military much stronger in Civil-military arrangements. The upper position of the military led to the perception that the military is the guarantor of Pakistan's survival, which was reinforced over time as the civilian governments increasingly relied on the military's support for administering the state.³

¹ Afghanistan rejected the legitimacy of Durand line that separates Pashtun areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan. This has created a huge security threat for Pakistan which sees it as a threat to its territorial integrity.

² These included the movements in East Pakistan, Baluchistan, Sind and Pashtun areas.

³ Akmal Hussain, "Pakistan: The crisis of The State." in Mohammad Asghar Khan, (ed.) *Islam, Politics and the State* (Michigan: zed books, 1985) p.211.

Hasan Askari Rizvi, the eminent Pakistani scholar, has listed four factors that explain the processes of the dominance of the military in Pakistan. “First, the societal and political factors that include a perpetual conflict in Pakistan’s polity”, that had its direct effect on governance and economic management by the civilian’s governments, which in turn direct and shape civil-military relations. The Muslim league had utterly failed to transform itself from a nationalist movement to a national party that could have become, like Congress in India, as a political platform for engaging diverse political entities, ideologies, and identities. This led to regional pushes and pulls and fragmented the polity to the core leading to a lack of consensus of issues of critical importance like constitution making. After intense wrestling for eight years, the first constitution was drafted in 1956, but the “politics had degenerated to such an extent that it was scarcely relevant to power management”.⁴ This created an unsealed wound in the polity of Pakistan that is still festering as the worst form of political fragmentation.

Second, “the internal dynamics of the military establishment and its organizational resources and discourse play a critical role in its disposition towards the state’s politics”. These “include the organizational and economic interest of the military”⁵, its institutional discipline and coherence and a particular background of its officer corps. This also explains why the budgetary allocations for defense and security have generally remained the highest priority of both the civilian and the military governments. This unimpeded allocation of national resources for military, as opposed to resource scarcity for developmental purposes, has further strengthened the institutional capacity of the military and weakened the civilian institutions that are oriented along with the developmental issues.

Third, the connections and dealings across the functional boundaries between civil and military are considerable signs of how the two affect each other. Hence, only a strong civilian government with a strong legitimacy in public eyes can contain the power of the military to its specialized domain. This happened in the early years of Bhutto’s rule after the humiliation of military in 1971 war. The civilian government had colossal legitimacy and a strong leader in the form of charismatic Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. He was able to “enact many policies that challenged the preponderance of military, but he couldn’t decisively carry out the complete overhaul of the system due to many internal and external factors.”⁶

Fourth, the structure of the international system has a significant impact on the behavior and political disposition of the military. The connections that the military develops in handling various conflicts at international level exposes it to various strategies of warfare and make it strong. The American connection with Pakistan’s military has been more influential and decisive, though Chinese influence has also been important. The creation of Cold war defense treaties like SEATO and CENTO made the military focus of the American interaction with the state and American training, exposure and equipment further strengthened the military as an institution.⁷

⁴ Hasan Askari Rizvi, *Military, State and Society in Pakistan* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000) p. 4

⁵ For an overview of the military’s corporate interests in Pakistan and political economy of defence, see Ayesha Siddiqi, *The Military Inc.: Inside Pakistan’s Military Economy* (London: Pluto press, 2007) and Ayesha Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule: The origins of Pakistan’s Political Economy of Defence* (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 1991)

⁶ These issues have been discussed in Ayesha Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), especially chapter 3, pp. 66-120

⁷ Hasan Askari Rizvi (2000) pp. 7-8

Nature of Civil-Military Relations in Pakistan Since 1947

After independence military gained an upper hand in maintaining security and survival of Pakistan state. There were many reasons which resulted in the dominance of military which can be attributed to the ways in which partition was done, the rejection of Durand line by Afghanistan government and the perception of “Hindu” “India as a threat” to the “Islamic” state of Pakistan and the cold war politics.

The understanding that Pakistan is an insecure state born from an inherently unfair partition process in 1947 is shared equally by civilians, which strengthens the role of the military. The Army believes that it inherited most of the threat frontiers managed by the British Raj but only a fraction of its resources. The assets were shared in the “proportion of 64:36; Pakistan received six armored regiments to India’s fourteen, eight artillery regiments to India’s forty, and eight infantry regiments to India’s twenty-one. Of the fixed installations, it received the Staff College, situated at Quetta; The Royal Indian army service corps school (at kakul) and other facilities.”⁸

Domestically, Pakistan faces an identity crisis whether it is a homogenous Muslim state or an Islamic state. Further, the ethnic strife’s and sectarian clashes exacerbate this problem. Externally, Pakistanis believe that India has never accepted the concept of Pakistan and India seeks to undermine Pakistan’s security. The army believes that India is implacably opposed to the very existence of Pakistan and seeks to subjugate it if not outright annihilate the state.⁹ Another issue related to external insecurity of Pakistan is Afghanistan, as the Afghan government does not recognize the Durand Line. The Pashtun tribesmen who reside in Pakistan periodically assert their demands to form a greater Pashtunistan nation, which deepens the security dilemma of Pakistan. Intermittent Pak-Afghan border clashes took place during the 1950s and 1960s, and they have reoccurred recently as Afghan and Pakistani troops deployed along the border for counterterrorist missions have occasionally fired on each other.¹⁰

Effects of 1958 Coup

1958 coup had two effects on Pakistan. The first one was the psychological effect on the Army of Pakistan as they gained confidence by handling the political chaos which was welcomed by the people of Pakistan and led them to hold power for a longer period of time. The Army faced no challenge to their power which strengthened their position and they understood the weaknesses of civilian leaders which resulted in army manipulating these weaknesses to prolong their rule. The preminent position of Army led to the change in the nature of the state itself. That is the militarization of Pakistan where defense was given a priority over other sectors like health and education. Most of the budgetary spending was defense oriented rather than development oriented.

Thus 1958 coup was decisive in terms of both the psychological effects on military and the civilian leaders and also a litmus test for the military-bureaucratic complex for Pakistan to work together for their own respective organizational interests and steer the state building process in Pakistan in that direction.

⁸ Stephen P. Cohen, *The Pakistan Army* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998) p.17.

⁹ C.Christine Fair, *Fighting to the end: The Pakistan Army’s way of war* (United Kingdom: Oxford university press, 2014) p.25

¹⁰ Peter R.Lavoy, “Pakistan’s strategic culture” *Comparative Strategic cultures Curriculum*, October 2006.p.9

Process of State Building in Pakistan

Many factors like historical indo-centrism, ideological antagonism between the two states and persistent resistance by Pakistan to India's hegemonic aspirations have led to a preponderance of army as an institution, which in turn led to "institutional imbalance." The lack of balance in institutions especially between a dominant bureaucracy and the military on the one hand and weak and incapable political institutions on the other became severe in Pakistan as a result of impotency of civilian leaders to handle the political crisis themselves. This resulted in the failure of civilian institutions and ascendancy of Military institution in Pakistan.

Military in Pakistan has from the beginning maintained a qualified, well-organized, unified and task-oriented profile. In Pakistan because of the security environment that it had during its creation as a state and the military is considered fundamental to state survival. Furthermore, the role of the military in state and nation building had been decisive in Pakistan. The conflict with India and Afghanistan and the security concerns that arose because of such conflicts united both Civilians and military. Both began to think on same lines and considered irredentist claims of Afghanistan and border issues with India as a threat to national identity and territorial integrity, which resulted in an allocation of a substantial portion of national resources to the military. This is the reason why many scholars describe the economy of Pakistan as 'defense oriented' rather than 'development-oriented'. This belief has been penetrated so deep that it is mentioned that defensive effort might have to be made at the expense of important, essential needs of education, health, and general welfare. The nation has to be prepared, mentally, physically, psychologically and intellectually to back up its defenders.¹¹ Further, the distribution of resources at the time of partition is considered as unfair by both civilians and military.

The Army believes that it inherited most of the threat frontiers managed by the British Raj but only a fraction of its resources. The assets were shared in the proportion of 64:36, Pakistan received six armored regiments to India's fourteen, eight artillery regiments to India's forty, and eight infantry regiments to India's twenty-one. Of the fixed installations, it received the Staff College, situated at Quetta; The Royal Indian army service corps school (at kakul) and other facilities.¹²

The perception that Pakistan was left with meager resources and more frontiers creates the necessity of spending more on defense for the survival of the state. Hence the obvious happened in Pakistan too that is, the budget spending on defense was high than other institutions from the very beginning. This channeling of more and more resources towards defense was supported by all governments be it civilians or military. Structural factors like security environment, connections with allies, accessibility, and training of modern technology deeply affect the outlook of senior commanders. In the 1950's the connection that developed between America and Pakistan fashioned the political orientation and enhanced task efficiency of the military. This connection with America not only emboldened military and enhanced its confidence in dealing with militarily superior India but it added to its strength in a domestic context. The deep institutional imbalance between professional and well-organised military and the weak and less organized political institutions further widened as a result of the modern technology and skills that military acquired due to American exposure. This assistance

¹¹ Fair, *Fighting to the end: The Pakistan Army's way of war*, p.91

¹² Cohen, *The Pakistan Army*, p.17

that America provided led to greater autonomy of the military in service and professional spheres. Thus military became dominant to such an extent that political leaders think before expressing genuine concerns and external interference was a dream that was thought of.¹³ The resistance to any interference outside military institution began to grow to such an extent that the authority over security affairs of civilian governments was resisted by the top brass of the military.

The Political institutions in Pakistan have remained subservient to the military institution in Pakistan. The reasons vary from structural to domestic factors. Structurally, Muslim League which created Pakistan failed to transform itself from a nationalist movement into a national party and could have served as an effective political machine for aggregating diverse interests and identities into a plural and participatory national framework. Further, the crisis in leadership due to the death of Jinnah and Liyaqat's assassination left the party to ruins. These two efficient leaders had less amount of time to legitimize institutions that will establish and flourish processes and procedures of democracy. After Jinnah-Liyaqat period, no political leader had their stature, charm, and mindfulness. The shrewdness and political maturity that Jinnah and Liyaqat possessed, with which they inspired people to withstand economic and political problems, were lacking terribly in leaders that followed them. Personal and parochial considerations replaced national and state interests that weakened the political stability that had began to sprout because of efforts of Jinnah and Liyaqat. Due to this leadership crisis, constituent assemblies began to suffer which in turn weakened the national unity in Pakistan. The issues of federalism, more autonomy to provinces, representation in the legislature, the problem of national language and type of electoral system added fuel to the fire.¹⁴ The supervision of power in 1956, when the first constitution was framed was not relevant because the politics had worsened to such an extent that it was impossible to restore.

Further, the issues of institutionalizing transparent and representative governments had many restraints like lack of popular base and support to leaders belonging to Muslim minority provinces that were holding cabinet positions at the center. This further increased the dilemma of minorities in Muslim majority states of Pakistan.¹⁵ This continued dilemma and the issues that happened with leaders of minority provinces before independence remained in the interaction of Muslim majority and Muslim minority provinces after post-independence period as well. Thus, distrust and skepticism intensified organizational problems and widened the divisions within the party which resulted in resentment towards holding elections.¹⁶ Due to the leadership crisis and unavailability of credible leaders, the Muslim League was not able to develop procedures and mechanisms to deal with internal divisions and conflicts. The parties that were in opposition or were in power other than the Muslim League were not that strong to be seen as an alternative. The situation was worsened further by leaders who irrespective of being in power weakened and manipulated democratic and parliamentary principles which mauled the image of civilian governments in the eyes of public and loss of credibility to assert their leadership. The fragmentation of political forces and decline of political institutions resulted in gaining of the upper hand of bureaucracy and military. The General's step in when they believe that the civilian order has failed disastrously and that it is their service to save nation.

¹³ Rizvi, *Military, State and Society in Pakistan*, p. 7

¹⁴ Ibid. p.3

¹⁵ Ibid. p.4

¹⁶ Rizvi, *Military, State and Society in Pakistan*, p.4

The ascendancy of bureaucracy in politics started by the “appointment of Ghulam Muhammad, a former bureaucrat belonging to Indian Audit and accounts service, as Governor General in October.1951, which was succeeded by another bureaucrat-cum-military man, Iskander Mirza, in August 1955 set the stage for the ascendancy of bureaucracy supported by the military from the background”.¹⁷ The army and bureaucracy constructed a concrete strategy to exploit and manipulate rivalries which exacerbated political fragmentation. In 1954, “the political leaders attempted to take on the bureaucratic-military axis by reducing the powers of the Governor General, the Governor General responded by dissolving the constituent assembly and dismissing the government”¹⁸.The political dissent and ethnic assertions which should have been dealt politically was left to the military which further weakened the political institutions. The ethnic assertions which led to the creation of Bangladesh were a consequence of the inability of the political institution to accommodate the demands of East Pakistan democratically. The military began to gain confidence and experience by dealing with internal problems which resulted in exposing the weaknesses of political leaders and hence strengthening of Army as an institution. The Baluch people were subjected to armed suppression from 1973 to 1977, resulting in the almost alienation of Baluch from Pakistan. The military involvement in Punjab disturbances of 1953, which culminated in the imposition of Martial law in Lahore, further strengthened the army.¹⁹

The involvement in matters that were clearly the responsibility of civilian authorities was an important factor in the eventual takeover of Ayub Khan. The army was of the opinion that they will be continuously used and abused by civilians and their own reputation, integrity and fighting efficiency would eventually suffer.²⁰ The Army was confident that democracy will remain under its thumb because Pakistan’s military dictators have always left constitutional legacies that enable it to continue manipulating political affairs from the barracks. The army was reluctant to allow Benazir Bhutto to become prime minister after Zia assassinated her father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. But the Army was confident that it could keep her and her government in line due to Zia era constitutional measure.²¹

The army decides the defense and foreign policy of Pakistan and their preponderance has resulted in undermining of accountability in the economy as well. The economic empire that armed forces have built because of the autonomy that they have in the economy as well leads to political interests of the army like controlling and retaining political power and processes which is very detrimental to the professionalism of armed forces. This autonomy in financial affairs has been termed as “Milbus”.²² This military capital that is termed as Milbus is detrimental to a political nature of the military because it cultivates ambitions of power, control of political processes and manipulative behavior for personal gains of the military as a fraternity rather than a state. This military capital is hidden from the public as is referred to as “Military’s

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid, p.5

¹⁹ Ibid.p.50

²⁰ ²⁰ Rizvi, *Military, State and Society in Pakistan*, p. 51

²¹ Fair, *Fighting to the end: The Pakistan Army’s way of war*. p 29

²² Milbus refers to military capital that is used for the personal benefit of the military fraternity, especially the officer cadre, but it is neither recorded nor part of the defence budget. For a comprehensive understanding of the concept, see Ayesha Siddiqi, *The Military Inc. Inside Pakistan’s Military Economy* (London: Pluto press, 2007).

internal economy".²³ The autonomy in financial matters to the military has led to the unaccountability of military towards civilians in such an extent that transfer of resources like land, benefits, and privileges to retired armed officers are unaccounted²⁴. This expenditure is not shown in any document or recorded as expenditure in public exchequer nor is part of the defense budget. This all is spent on the military, their requirements even after their retirement. This had resulted in vested interest of military and led to a discourse where the military wants to remain in a dominating position to secure its interests. The military wants to preserve that status quo in Pakistan which favors their interests and welfare. The changes in international security environment or any tremendous change in the country may lead the military to subsume political power.²⁵ The economic independence of the Army has further strengthened its claims of being a guarantor of security and survival of Pakistan.

The effects of financial autonomy on the State economy cannot be measured without stressing on the importance of military as a "fraternity". The military extends its patronage to its former members that are part and parcel of "internal economy of military". The reasons to control and expand economic profit by the military is manifold like providing welfare, social security and economic independence to retired officers which in turn adds to the overall economic development of the state.²⁶ But it has far-reaching consequences on state-building process. The unaccounted money that the military has in its ambit, deteriorates politics, society, effects economy and destroys professionalism. The illegal expenditure of public money distorts the fair and competitive market by giving military undue advantage in getting contracts. The internal economy that the military possesses overburdens public sector as the number of funds that are illegally transferred to private sector without maintaining any records discourage the institutionalization of participatory norms and values. These can be seen in welfare foundations that are run by military-like "The Fauji Foundation, Army Welfare Trust, Shaheen Foundation and Bahria Foundation".²⁷ "Milbus" is very costly for a state both economically and socially. It sprouts greed for power and makes military which is deemed as apolitical more power ambitious leading to inefficient military professionals. Once the professional nature of the military is gone, it is very difficult to make military leave power which makes it dominant. Socially, due to ample resources that army is controlling, social services provided by military create a discourse that military is the savior and cannot do anything against people which then alienates those who are not in good books of the army within the state as well.²⁸ The illegal money that armed does not keep a record is supported and justified by the military on the grounds of contribution to the development of society in general and state institutions in particular. The fact is that it strains defense budget to such an extent that other areas are being squeezed like education and health to divert funds to a defense which in turn leads to underdevelopment of other sectors.

Challenges to State Building

State building depends on the strengthening of institutions. Due to the structural, external and internal factors, institutional imbalance prevails in Pakistan. After partition, Muslim league which created Pakistan was not able to be a

²³ Ayesha Siddiqi, *The Military Inc. Inside Pakistan's Military Economy*. p.5

²⁴ Ibid.p.5

²⁵ Ibid. p.29

²⁶ Ibid.p.10

²⁷ Siddiqi, *The Military Inc. Inside Pakistan's Military Economy*, p.18

²⁸ Ibid.p29

party that had a solid base at the grass root level. It was so because most of the leaders were from Muslim minority provinces and had no roots in Pakistan hence were unable to aggregate diverse interests and identities. The “Muslim League worked at the base level and became a mass party during 1940-7 and a large number of the Muslim majority areas joined the party during the last 2-3 years”.²⁹ Further, the Muslim League relied on the personality of core leaders like Jinnah and Liyaqat Ali Khan and once they were gone there was no one to keep the party together. The insecurity from India as a threat to the identity and existence of Pakistan, the irredentist claims of Afghanistan gave the military an upper hand in maintaining the survival and security of the state. Additionally, the regional and ethnic assertions gave Army a predominant role. These all factors resulted in a predominance of military and undermining of other institutions.

The economic sector is also suffering because of the predominance of the Army. Army has created its own economic empire which has far-reaching consequences on state-building process. Illegal military capital, not included in the overall military budget, sternly distorts the economy, corrupts society, plagues politics and military professionalism.

State building is concerned with the building and consolidation of all institutions. State building and nation-building should go parallel to each other. States are not strong unless they have a coherent ideology that helps in nation building and strong institutions that help in state building. The problem with Third world states is that there is a lack of ‘adequate stateness’, which according to Mohammad Ayoob is the balance of coercive capacity, unconditional legitimacy and infrastructural power of the state.³⁰ In Pakistan the two factors, that is, infrastructural power and unconditional legitimacy are lacking. Pakistan has competing locations of authority which are usually weaker than the state in terms of coercive capacity but equal to or stronger than the state in terms of political legitimacy. This is reflected when Parveez Musharraf ordered actions against the militants in Lal Masjid. The battle was drawn out and took a political turn that challenged the state’s monopoly of the use of force. The militants reinforced themselves and gained support in larger sections of society which further weakened the consolidation of his rule. This is an example of how the rival and competing ideologies can weaken the legitimacy of the state in more than one way.

CONCLUSIONS

The external and internal security problems have resulted in a predominance of Military over all institutions. The security threat from a conventionally superior India, the rejection of Durand line by Afghanistan and the internal regional and ethnic assertions have also given military an upper hand. Moreover, the discourse that the army has constructed about India as a “Hindu” state that wants to undermine and annihilate the “Islamic” identity of Pakistan gives the command in the hands of the army. The control of Military over economic resources has further consolidated their position which has resulted in undermining of other institutions. The weaknesses of political parties to resolve their differences expose their incapability of controlling power which gave the military an additional option to control power. Defense and Foreign policy of Pakistan is the prerogative of Military, hence Military influences and directs political change. The penetration of military in sectors like economy, society and polity creates an institutional imbalance where each sector is not autonomous

²⁹ Rizvi, *Military, State and Society in Pakistan*. p. 4

³⁰ Infrastructural power is the capacity of the state actually to penetrate civil society and to implement logistically political decisions throughout the realm. See Mohammad Ayoob, *Third World Security Predicament: State making Regional conflict and International Conflict* (Colorado: Lynne Rienner publishers, 1995)

but dominated by the Military. The perception of Army as the guarantor of security of the state is itself problematic and a block to the state building process.

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17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid, p.5*
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