

PILDAT

**International Conference
Civil-Military Relations**

October 21-22, 2008
Hotel Avari, Lahore, Pakistan

**Cataloguing of Issues in
Civil-Military Relations
in Pakistan**
A Civilian Perspective



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Printed in Pakistan

First Published: December 2008

ISBN: 978-969-558-112-4

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Published by



Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency
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Preface

Cataloguing of Issues in Civil-Military Relations in Pakistan: A Civilian Perspective is a paper presented by **Mr. Tasneem Noorani**, Former Federal Secretary, at the **PILDAT International Conference on Civil-Military Relations**: October 21-22, 2008, Lahore, Pakistan.

PILDAT International Conference on Civil-Military Relations was held from October 21-22, 2008, at Lahore, Pakistan. The objective of the Conference was to showcase international and regional experiences and best practices in improving civil-military relations. Experts on civil-military relations from India, Turkey, Indonesia & Europe were part of the conference to present case studies and best practices on how to maintain and manage civil-military relations within an established constitutional and legal framework and move towards democratic consolidation. Pakistani Experts and academics, representatives of political parties and a large number of young professionals and students also participated in the two-day conference to discuss and brainstorm issues affecting civil-military relations in Pakistan and to reiterate the parameters of exclusive domains, as well as the overlapping and shared areas, of the civil and the military in Pakistan as a way forward for the country.

The paper is published as part of the PILDAT Publications Series on Civil-Military Relations.

Acknowledgement

We wish to acknowledge the support provided by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) for organising PILDAT International Conference on Civil-Military Relations. The paper has been prepared and published as part of the Conference.

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The views expressed in this paper belong to the author and are not necessarily shared by PILDAT. Furthermore, the opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES).

Islamabad
December 2008

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Profile of the Author

Mr. Tasneem Noorani

Mr. Tasneem Noorani obtained a Masters Degree in Business Administration from ICMS Tehran, in coordination with Harvard Business School, USA, in addition to the Masters Degree in Geology from the University of the Punjab. During his long career in the civil services of Pakistan, Mr. Noorani has received professional training in the field management and administration. Mr. Noorani was appointed as the Secretary to the Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Interior from 2001 to 2004. He has also served as Secretary to the Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Commerce from 2004 to 2005. Currently, he is the chief Executive of TN Associates (Pvt) Ltd. He also writes commentaries & columns and appears as analyst in the news media.

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Key Issues Impacting Civil Military Relations in Pakistan

Military training and its culture makes its officers the most gregarious, focused, disciplined, enthusiastic and dependable group of people, who make great friends, if you happen to meet them in the right environs or have worked with them at any stage in life. Camaraderie and standing by friends and former colleagues is like second nature to them. Other ranks of the military are the most loyal and dependable workers you will find and thus in great demand, post retirement, by the civilians.

Military versus Civilian

It is the military as an organisation that civilians have an issue with. Military in Pakistan is synonymous with the "establishment" of the country. This has been reasserted and affirmed over the years, starting from the 1950s, at least. Gen Ayub, even when he was only the Chief of the Army, kept an eye on the shenanigans of the politicians, although he was not required to, under the constitution of the country. That tradition has been converted into almost a formal role; the military has taken upon itself the onerous task of keeping an eye on the civilian affairs of the country.

The military stayed in the wings between 1971-1977, because their public image had been badly marred, because of the debacle in East Pakistan and loss of significant territory on the western border with India and the 90,000 plus prisoner of war (POW). However, as the incumbency factor took the charm out the civilian rule by 1977, military promptly came back, according to some account, under circumstances, which had been managed.

The military again stayed away for the period between 1988 and 1999, under the compulsion that they had earned the ire of the public for their performance during eleven years of Gen. Zia-ul-Haq' rule, and also because a civilian Prime Minister Mr. M. K. Junejo, who was respected widely in the country, was dismissed by Gen. Zia, unceremoniously.

Between 1988 - 1999, four civilian governments of Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto, two each, changed. At the time there was a perception that Pakistan had seen the back of its military rulers for good. This perception was endorsed by the theory that 50 years after the 2nd World War, this was

the era of democracies around the world, rather than dictatorships. Except for Burma and some African countries, there were hardly any military dictators left in the world.

Little did the public know that the dictatorship of the military ruler that would follow from 1999 to 2007, would see one of the most intrusive military regimes in civilian affairs that the country had ever seen. In order to ensure loyalty amongst the officer cadre, Gen. Musharraf gave responsibility even to the junior officers to supervise civilian officers by constituting monitoring teams.

Gen. Musharraf's regime took it upon itself, as one of the first tasks, to completely revamp the civilian method of governance in the country and replace a time tested system with an untried system, which was supposed to be a hybrid of the Japanese and a number of Western European countries system. Since the need of the change in the system of administration was neither demanded by the public nor the politicians, and it was given first priority by the Gen. Musharraf regime, in its early years, the theory often floated by analysts, that it was done to destabilise the civilian bureaucracy, destroy the institutions associated with it, so that the no institution should be left in the country which could match the army, in delivery.

A quote from document by the National Reconstruction Bureau (NRB) as reproduced in the ICG Asia Report No. 77 dated March, 22, 2007 would indicate the thought process of the Generals, who were in command in 1999:

The civil service is effectively controlled by the District Management Group (DMG). The group has close relations with international donors....Other groups in the public administration chafe under the control of one group and would welcome a democratisation of civil service structure as a basic element of civil service reform. The end of the domination of the bureaucracy by one group is a necessary precondition for the attainment of administrative power by the Army and the creation of conditions for national reconstruction. (Structural Analysis of National Reconstruction" National Reconstruction Bureau, 27 May 2000.)"

Factors impacting civil military relations need to be seen in the context that often both civil and military officers and men come from the same families. With training and exposure of a few years in the two respective streams, two brothers of the same family develop entirely different personalities.

Military: the Ruling Class

The factor that military has ruled for more than 30 out of the 62 years history of the country, gives the personnel of the army, an aura of belonging to the ruling class. This is manifest in the villages and in small towns, where a serving or a retired army officers/NCO would have far greater clout than his civilian brother, and concomitantly arrogance that comes with belonging to the ruling class.

Institutional Psyche of the Military

For understanding the genesis of the civil military relations in Pakistan, it is vitally important to keep two factors in mind. One the long rule of the army of Pakistan in the country and its impact on the personality, psyche of the men and officers of the force and the other, rigorous training that the army imparts to its personnel, amongst other things, in instilling a sense of superiority and also in some ways a sense of alienation towards the civilians.

To elucidate the point, a joke that was doing the round and told to me by a civilian son of retired army General may be relevant. The General left his dog in the care of the orderly in his bungalow, located in the cantonment, while the whole family went out. When they returned, the general was angered to find that his dog was injured. When he scolded his orderly for his negligence, the orderly said, sir, he is sorry for what has happened but he was helpless because a 'civilian' dog had suddenly come from somewhere and fought with our dog.

Military's Proclivity to Assess Civilian Efficiency

Some of the factors that impact civil military relations, as seen in the context of the above discourse are firstly the military's proclivity to assess civilian efficiency from their own perspective or training. An example of this would be that for the military establishment, office timings for 8 am to 02.30 pm is very sacrosanct and reflective of discipline and efficiency while the output in that period is not so important.

Similarly staying on your desk/post is reflective of good discipline and efficiency. So a civilian who may role into his office at 09.30 am and may not be available on his desk all the time, even though he may be going home at 06.00 pm is perceived in military culture to be an inefficient and undisciplined worker. Form is more important than substance.

In normal army units during peace time, there are a number of officer and not much to do, so for one assignment, a number of officer and men are involved. On the other hand in the civilian set up, with numerous members of the public, with multifarious problems thronging their offices daily, most civilian officers have to resort to multi tasking, to keep the load of visitors moving. Resultantly the output of the hundreds of tasks done by a civilian officer may not be of the same quality as a single task achieved by half a dozen officer in an army unit. This in army personnel's assessment is inefficiency and malingering on the part of the civilian worker.

Since the army normally has nothing to do, during peace time, they involve the officers and men in constant training, supplemented by frequent courses in their own formal training institutions. The civilian set up is handicapped, because owing to constant demand on their time, they get no opportunity to train. Resultantly they per force have to learn on the job, resulting in shoddy output. This is perceived to be civilian inefficiency and no margin is allowed for it. Similar is the vast difference of looking after that a soldier gets, compared to policemen who has to commute from his house and his place of duty on his own steam and even arrange his own refreshments and food while on duty. The obvious resultant difference in the output is held as civilian inefficiency.

Military as the "Defender" of the Country

Military perceives itself as the defender of the last resort of the country. This involves threat from outside force/other countries as well as threat from the citizens of Pakistan i.e. the politicians and a vague category called the enemies of the state. In this context the patience level of the military is limited. In the case of Ayub Khan, he tolerated it for as long as his term as C-in-C lasted. As Defence Minister, he planned the coup to avowedly put an end to the mismanagement of the politicians. In the case of the ouster of Bhutto by Zia-ul-Haq, a few weeks of agitation was

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enough justification to oust a genuinely elected leader, whose enthusiastic supporters had gone further than necessary to ensure his absolute victory in election, that he would have won in any case.

In the case of Musharraf, analyst believes that had to grab power, because for a botched war he conceived and started he was going to be held responsible by the Prime Minister. He saw his removal coming and like a good tactician, pre-empted it. In all these cases, the oath of commission of upholding the constitution at the time of becoming an officer of the Pakistan army was conveniently forgotten.

In all these cases the argument given by the generals was that it was absolutely essential to take over the country, a role for which they were neither recruited nor had taken on oath, because the army considers itself, contrary to the constitution of country, as the defender of the last resort of Pakistan.

“Big Brother” Role over Civilians

The third issue that needs to be highlighted is that in line with this perception about them, they consider it their right to snoop on all civilians, whether the military is in power or not. They are enabled in this snooping by the resourceful and intelligence agencies at their disposal - intelligence agencies, which had been further empowered by civilian rulers, by creation of political wings. This ability and propensity of the army to use this power of theirs, keeps all and sundry in line, whether the army is in power or not.

The down side of this role of the military is that they do not have enough resources left to keep an eye on such groups of people, who have now become extremists and are now holding the whole nation, including the army, hostage. The perception amongst the civilians is that the monster that the army created has turned on them and the country, which has to pay for strategies of the army, which they drafted behind closed doors and which has gone awry.

Military Soliciting Civilian Jobs

The fourth issue is the tendency of the military to solicit civilian jobs in the government much more than the ratios stipulated in the rules, when the army is in control, leading to resentment amongst the civilian. Under the civil rules, army officers are entitled to 10 per cent of civil government

jobs in stipulated cadres. In actual fact the intrusion of the army is far greater than the laid down quota. From the army's point of view this is perfectly legitimate, as they have given the best years of their lives to the country but have to retire in their prime, especially and when seen in the context of enhanced life spans in Pakistan. This leads to resentment amongst civilians, who can not say much in the days of martial law, but are relatively more successful in having their posts vacated in civilian rules. Because of this resentment, the civilian segment of the organisation also exaggerate the issues created by the different style of management of the army officers, who are on deputations/recruit, in his organisation, bringing a bad name to the army. In order to pre-empt this resentment, the present COAS issued an order for all army officer posted against civilian posts, beyond the quota, to revert back to the army.

Military's “Simplistic” Solutions

The sixth key issue impacting civil/military relationship is the perception amongst the civilians that army commanders, when they are given charge of a civil organization, have a tendency to apply simplistic, and superficial solutions for complex problem. Solutions which bear quick results but may cause long term damage to the system.

A case in point is the solution found by the general, who was a powerful minister in Zia's regime. The problem was that for reasons of the inability of railways to carry cargo from Karachi upcountry in adequate quantity, there was acute port congestion. The general recommended to the President, to buy 600 Mercedes long wheel trucks, rather than enhance the capacity of railways, which would have taken long. The suggestion was accepted and implemented with ruthless speed, winning kudos for the general. The long term impact of the decision was that railway continued its downward journey, having been deprived of the fund. Additionally the huge trucks imported caused havoc to the roads, causing them irreparable damage. While the roads have been repaired, the railway of this country never recovered from the neglect and lack of funds caused by a simplistic and motivated decision.

Another example of a general's performance in civilian organisation is the performance of Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) under an all powerful

general in Gen. Musharraf's tenure. He not only pestered the existing power generation companies and shook their confidence in Pakistan's record of keeping its word with foreigner investor, he also could not reduce the line losses regarding which tall claims were made, and despite ample military personnel sent on deputation to assist the Chairman. His behaviours with the Independent Power Producers (IPPs) dissuaded them from further investment to expand their plants in time, which became one of the factors of the current power shortage causing irreparable damage to the country's industry.

Designing of Local Government System by the Military

The most damaging of all decision of Gen. Musharraf, based on lack of understanding of the grass roots, in entrusting the task of designing the local government system, to a general, who had neither formal training in the area nor had spent a day in a village of Pakistan. Resultantly eight years of the nation's history were wasted along with billions, in following the fantasy of a general, who perhaps had no other motive than to enable his boss to strengthen his hold on the government and destroy certain established institutions.

Now after a decade of experimentation, all the provincial governments are clamouring for the old system, so arbitrarily abandoned with catastrophic losses.

The "Saviour" Syndrome

The military's perception, however, will continue to be that there is no one better than one of them to run the civil institutions efficiently. In most case, as soon as a military officer takes over command of a civil organisation, the staff starts to come to work in time, the office premises is given a coat of paint, the signs become better. So while the immediate impact is that of improvement, it is so superficial that the main issues get swept under the carpet, to re-emerge in far acuter shape after the tenure of the army office is over.

Cyclical Power-Grabbing

Another key issue impacting civil military relations is the cyclic reversion of the army to taking over the government. In this pattern, which is repeating itself with regulatory, at 10-15 years interval, the civilian population is equally to

blame. They in the form of politician and bureaucrat are the ones who encourage and repeatedly beseech the military leadership to take over, for the sake of Pakistan. Their main objective however is to demolish their opponents, who they cannot neutralize politically. They achieve their objective through the army, whose generals than make it look like an unpleasant task, which they have to undertake to save the country.

Unfortunately the repeated use of this medicine has made the system immune, with the result a stage has been reached when even martial laws do not offer the kind of relief that they guaranteed, is the earlier part of our history.

The other downside of this repeated take over by the army is that some political leaders, who have outlived their utility, spring back into life and convert their temporary set back into a opportunity of making a bigger political come back.

Military in the Policy-Making

Military by nature and training is secretive. While the civilian think tanks debate sensitive issues in their open meeting and share their debate on national issue with media the military makes policy, impacting civil affairs, behind closed doors. Intelligence agency in house brainstorming, or high level interaction at the Corp Commander level, are some of the institutions where decision, impacting the future well being of the country, are taken. To mention some examples, strategies to keep the Kashmir issue alive and the reversal of policy in case of Taliban, were both taken without due consultation with civilians, although their blow back was likely to impact the whole country.

Foreign Office, the authorized civilian institution under the rules of business to take such decisions, is neither considered competent nor trustworthy to be associated with the formulation of major foreign policies which are made in the army headquarters, in consultation with the internal "think tanks" because the issues are too sensitive to be left to the civilian.

If these closed door formulated policies were successful, their method of formulation may have been ignored by the public. But the blowback of such policies has brought the country to the brink of disaster. The irony is that the defence of these policies also falls on the lot of the civilian functionaries of the government.

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Conclusion

Factors impacting civil military relations in Pakistan have remained more or less constant over the years. The difference that has crept in that the awe of the army take over has considerably diminished, over the years. In 1958, when the martial law was imposed, the change into an orderly society on the streets of Pakistan was visible overnight. Gold smugglers dumped their gold into the sea to escape punishment. Now the crooks and swindlers take the military in their stride and have devised procedures to overcome their difficulties, in the advent of a martial law.

The civil governments, when in power, still keeps looking over their shoulders to see the body language of the senior army command and hear every statement they make regarding their government. Firstly the civilian government can not believe their luck that they are in power and also wonder how the army high command is feeling, having gotten so used to being in power. The past experience of civilian government asserting their legitimate powers over the army, has not met a pleasant end.

The criterion for assessing the performance of a civil government is far harsher than those assessing a military government. While the honeymoon period allowed to a military government to show results is around 3 years, civilian governments come under serious scrutiny of the media and the powers that be, in 1/12th the time. The insecurity of civilian governments therefore starts from day one and continues till the last day, depriving them of the luxury of planning for things with confidence.

In a country like Pakistan, whose army is large, well funded and comprising well trained officer, who believe in traditions, whether they are handed down to them through colonial battalion customs or through their seniors, who have occupied prestigious civil positions, chances of the army taking a back seat any time soon, like in our neighbourly country, appear bleak.

Crushing the civilian institutions and not letting them regain their balance and confidence will result in the complete atrophy of all other institutions, except the army. When that happens, the country than becomes a complete security state, which is not the right atmosphere for economic progress and prosperity. An army of a poor country can not

get the resources to prosper and maintain itself. It is, therefore, imperative both for the benefit of the country and its army that all institutions are encouraged to thrive and grow (a serious blow has already been struck by a civilian government at the judiciary; a central pillar of any successful state), or else there may be no need for civil military relationship, in the absence of a country to defend.



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