



# MONITOR

## Civil-Military Relations in Pakistan

April 2016



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## A New Twist to An Old Wives' Tale: Panama Papers, Corruption and Civil-Military Relations in Pakistan



The Panama Papers are 11.5 million leaked documents—their release coordinated by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists—which detail the offshore financial holdings of wealthy individuals across the globe, including public officials. Although offshore companies are not illegal, there are fears that they may have been created to avoid local tax regimes, and the wealth stashed may have been accumulated through illegal means.

Of the many imports that have come to affect the trajectory of Pakistan's politics, none appears to be more consequential recently as the Panama Papers, which came to light on April 03, 2016. The centre of the resultant controversy has been the family of the Honourable Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, MNA. His children's offshore holdings, which came to light in the Panama Papers, re-ignited allegations of corruption allegedly undertaken by the Sharif family, through their stints in power.

The subsequent political maelstrom saw a flurry of politicking by the opposition parties, coalescing around calls for the Prime Minister's resignation and formation of an independent Inquiry Commission under the Chief Justice of Supreme Court. The theatrics included an endless barrage of press conferences, two addresses by the Premier to the nation, holding of political rallies across the country, and the usual and endless media commentaries on the issue.

Outside of the political sphere, however, what was perceived as possible posturing on the issue came through the statement issued by the Chief of Army Staff, Gen. Raheel Sharif on April 19, 2016 as he visited the Signal Regimental Centre in Kohat. According to the press release issued by the ISPR on the occasion, the Army Chief stated that the *'on going war against terrorism and extremism being fought with the backing of entire nation cannot bring enduring peace and stability unless the menace of corruption is not uprooted. Therefore, across the board accountability is necessary for the solidarity, integrity and prosperity of Pakistan. Pakistan Armed Forces will fully support every meaningful effort in that direction, which would ensure a better future for our next generations.'*<sup>1</sup>

1. The complete text of the Press Release can be accessed at: [https://www.ispr.gov.pk/front/main.asp?o=t-press\\_release&date=2016/4/19](https://www.ispr.gov.pk/front/main.asp?o=t-press_release&date=2016/4/19)

In what could appear to be quite a meaningful coincidence, media reports emerged on April 21, 2016 that the COAS had sent six high-ranking officials of the Pakistan Army on forced retirement due to proof of corruption charges against them. Although the reports remained unconfirmed for many days, the DG ISPR, Lt. Gen. Asim Saleem Bajwa, confirmed the forced retirement of the Army officials during a television Talk Show a few days later. The officers sent on forced retirement are high-ranking officials including Lt. Gen. Obaidullah Khattak, Maj. Gen. Ejaz Shahid, Brigadier Asif Shahzada, Brigadier Amir, Brigadier Saif and Colonel Haider. According to media reports, inquiries had been instituted against them for more than a year and action had been taken on the basis of a report made available to the COAS by the Adjutant General Lt. Gen. Syed Zamir-ul-Hassan.<sup>2</sup>

Although media commentators have had a field day with the above developments, emphasizing that the Military leadership is exerting pressure on the elected leadership to carry out '*across the board accountability*', there are two possible explanations to the development.

Firstly, since the release of the Panama Papers, there has been much deliberation regarding how the issue can be resolved. Even though the Papers do not prove any corrupt practices in and of themselves, these have generated significant commotion globally, and various countries have dealt with it such that the political leadership has been taken to account. The COAS, through his statements and actions, could have possibly wanted to establish the concept of across the board accountability.

A second, more charitable view is that the COAS' statement and actions may not be related to the Panama Papers at all. He could have wanted to address the question of corruption within the Armed Forces, by publically sending the concerned officers on forced retirement. With the statement of April 19, 2016, he could possibly be preparing his constituency, that is the Armed Forces, that he was about to take such an action by setting the context for it.

Regardless of whatever the motivations may be, there is one particular part of the COAS' statement that may be highlighted, i.e. '*Pakistan Armed Forces will fully support every meaningful effort in that direction, which would ensure a better future for our next generations.*'

We believe that there is no doubt about the commitment of our Armed Forces to various national causes. They have come to the rescue on various occasions such as in disaster relief efforts, curbing electrical power theft, rounding up ghost schools, carrying out census duties, etc. We believe that stating this at this particular occasion and the exact message it conveys is probably something difficult to decipher.

### **Tailpiece: Corruption within the Armed Forces**

Although the forced retirement of serving Army Officers on corruption charges by the COAS is a step that should be lauded by all, the debatable question is whether greater transparency is needed in the manner Armed Forces deal with corruption in their own ranks. Probably greater transparency will further enhance the image of the Armed Forces and not the other way round

It is hoped that the Military leadership moves quickly to answer these queries, so that any harmful and false rumours in this regard can be put to rest. It is hoped that the opacity displayed in the NLC scam (in which the case files have still not been shared with the NAB and an inquiry is pending) will not be repeated in this case as well.

2. For details, please see Two Generals, three brigadiers, colonel removed for corruption, The News, April 22, 2016, as accessed on May 10, 2016 at: <http://www.thenews.com.pk/print/114522-Two-generals-three-brigadiers-colonel-removed-for-corruption>

## Policing Woes in Punjab: Pakistan Army takes over the Operation Against the *Chottu* Gang

Although the infamous dacoit and gangster *Chottu*, along with his gang of 13 members surrendered on April 20, 2016, the matter was resolved only after the Pakistan Army was called in to take over the operation. Following a meeting between the Inspector General of the Police, Punjab, Mr. Mushtaq Ahmed Sukhera, and the Commander, 2 Corps, Multan, Lt. Gen. Ishfaq Nadeem Ahmed, on April 14, 2016, and the approval accorded by the Federal Ministry of Interior on April 15, 2016, the DG ISPR issued a tweet on April 16, 2016 stating '*Army troops deployed. Take over charge of op [Operation]. Cordon reinforced; Police & Rangers already in op [Operation] will continue to participate under Army*'.<sup>3</sup>



The infamous dacoit and gangster Chottu, surrendering along with the members of his gang on April 20, 2016

Punjab has seen the continuity of the same civilian Government for the past eight years. This is continuity of not just the same political party (PML-N), but of the same person (Honourable Chief Minister of the Punjab, Mr. Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif, MPA). He is also regarded by many, due to the apparently strong governance, favourable public opinion, and close proximity to the Federal Government, to be the most effective amongst the four Chief Ministers. However, just the existence of the *Chottu* gang over the years is a sad indictment on the inability of the Punjab Government on upholding the rule of law across the province. How the *Chottu* gang was eventually taken care of is yet another reflection of the utter failure of effective governance by the elected Government in this case.

As a case study, the existence of *Chottu* gang reflects so many fissures and failures in the system. Failure of the Police and of civil administration, absence of effective and empowered local governance and failure of the Provincial Government. The case brings to light the critical necessity of rule of law reforms, the role of not just executive control and oversight but also the lapse by the elected representatives from the region to raise the issue on the floor of the Assembly and in relevant committees until it blew up in their face.

Given that Punjab is a large province, and Rajanpur lies at the peripheries of it, it has become obvious that an over-centralized system of governance has many disadvantages. For such a long time these dacoits had entrenched themselves in the area, but the Government in Lahore failed to realize the gravity of the situation and allowed them to fortify their position. This not only shows the ineffectiveness of the Provincial Government to be aware of what is happening in the extremities of the province, but also the inability of the Police to run such operations, where they had to retreat on multiple occasions after suffering heavy losses.

However, the real question citizens are entitled to ask now is that, given the serious security challenges Pakistan faces, has the Punjab Government and elected representatives drawn any lessons for the future?

3. The tweet can be accessed at: <https://twitter.com/AsimBajwaISPR/status/721240788936613888>

## Updates on the Punjab Operation: April 2016

As noted in the Monitor for Civil-Military Relations, March 2016,<sup>4</sup> the separate consultations held by the Prime Minister and COAS after the Lahore Attack on March 27, 2016 created impression of a disjointed response by the elected Government and the Military leadership to the tragedy. Many believed that apparently the elected Government is not really in-charge and the subsequent operation in Punjab, ordered by the COAS against the terrorists, was not under a unified system led by the elected leadership.

The month of April 2016, however, saw several initiatives being undertaken to overcome the apparent cleavage with regards to the Punjab operation. The first formal contact between the Military and the elected leadership, after operation in Punjab was ordered by the COAS on May 27, 2016, was when the Chief Minister of the Punjab, Mr. Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif, MPA, and the Federal Minister for Interior, Chaudhary Nisar Ali Khan, MNA, met the COAS on March 31, 2016. According to a media reports, it was decided that the Punjab Government would be informed both before and after the military conducts such an operation in the province.<sup>5</sup>



Meeting between the Chief Minister of the Punjab, Mr. Shahbaz Sharif, MPA and Commander, IV Corps, Lahore, Lt. Gen. Sadiq Ali was held in Lahore on April 05, 2016



Meeting of the Joint Operations Coordination Committee Punjab was held in Lahore on April 09, 2016

4. The PILDAT publication can be accessed at: [http://www.pildat.org/Publications/publication/CMR/MonitoronCivil-MilitaryRelationsinPakistan\\_SpecialIssue\\_Mar2016.pdf](http://www.pildat.org/Publications/publication/CMR/MonitoronCivil-MilitaryRelationsinPakistan_SpecialIssue_Mar2016.pdf)
5. For details, please see: [http://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/109603-Shahbaz-Nisar-meet-Gen-Raheel-to-discuss-Punjab-operationutm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+com%2FYEor+\(Latest+News+%7C+thenews.com.pk](http://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/109603-Shahbaz-Nisar-meet-Gen-Raheel-to-discuss-Punjab-operationutm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+com%2FYEor+(Latest+News+%7C+thenews.com.pk)

The second consultation saw the Federal Minister for Finance, Senator Ishaq Dar, 'calling on' the COAS at the GHQ on April 01, 2016 'to discuss matters related to the Army budget'.<sup>6</sup> Meeting between the Prime Minister and the COAS on April 04, 2016, followed in which 'matters related to national and internal security were discussed'.<sup>7</sup> The National Security Committee of the Cabinet also met on April 06, 2016 under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister.

Perhaps with regards to the Punjab Operation, the most significant consultation was held between the Chief Minister of the Province, Mr. Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif, MPA, and Commander, IV Corps, Lahore, Lt. Gen. Sadiq Ali, on April 05, 2016. According to media reports, both officials agreed 'to continue joint action of the Pakistan Army, Rangers, Police and Counter Terrorism Department (CTD)' against terrorists in the Province. A formal announcement by the ISPR followed on April 06, 2016 stating that 'Coordinated operations are underway against terrorists, hardened criminals, Ferraris (fujitives) by Law Enforcement Agencies including Rangers, Punjab police, CTD, assisted by Pakistan Army in Southern Punjab. '

In follow up action, a meeting of what is dubbed as the Joint Operations Coordination Committee for Punjab was held on April 09, 2016. Although the terms of reference, periodicity of meetings, and membership of the forum remain unclear, it apparently comprises '*senior civil and military officials of Punjab*'.<sup>8</sup> Various media reports have quoted a presser issued by the ISPR in this regard, although it remains unavailable on its website. The relevant section quotes that '*the forum agreed to revitalize the committee to carryout intelligence assessment, joint development of security mosaic and direct all operations in Punjab. It was decided to vigorously undertake coordinated actions across the board against all terrorist outfits and their facilitators.*'<sup>9</sup>

### Meeting of the National Security Committee held after 18 Months

In a welcome development, a long overdue meeting of the National Security Committee was held after a long span of 18 months, on April 06, 2016. PILDAT has already issued a Press Release in this regard, with its detailed views and comments on the development, which may be accessed at: ***PILDAT welcomes holding of the NSC meeting after 18 months.***<sup>10</sup>

Regardless, a few observations regarding the build up to the meeting, and the revised nomenclature of the forum, are worthy of reproduction over here. One particular observation in this regard is that the presser issued by the Prime Minister's Office stating that the Premier chaired the '*5th meeting of the National Security Committee of the Cabinet*', raises certain serious questions.

Terming the forum a Committee of the Cabinet is confusing, given that Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCS) and the three Services Chiefs are members of the NSC but are not members of the Federal Cabinet. Does the name attributed in the press release reflect a careless approach by the Government or it shows Government's changed thinking?

It is worth noting here that the Federal Government has already changed the nomenclature of the Committee twice already. The forum, which was initially launched and named as Cabinet Committee on National Security (CCNS) in August 2013, was renamed as the National Security Committee on April 11, 2014. It was understood that the name of the forum was changed due to the very reason that membership of the Committee was not based only on

6. For details, please see: [https://www.ispr.gov.pk/front/main.asp?o=t-press\\_release&id=3254](https://www.ispr.gov.pk/front/main.asp?o=t-press_release&id=3254)

7. For details, please see the Press Release issued by the Prime Minister Office on April 04, 2016, which may be accessed at:

[http://pmo.gov.pk/press\\_release\\_details.php?pr\\_id=1409](http://pmo.gov.pk/press_release_details.php?pr_id=1409).

[The meeting was also attended by](#) the Federal Minister for Interior, Chaudhary Nisar Ali Khan, MNA, the Federal Minister for Finance, Senator Ishaq Dar and the DG ISI, Lt. Gen. Rizwan Akhtar, discussed

8. For details, please see: [http://epaper.dawn.com/print-textview.php?StoryImage=10\\_04\\_2016\\_001\\_007](http://epaper.dawn.com/print-textview.php?StoryImage=10_04_2016_001_007)

9. For details, please see: <http://lahoreworld.com/2016/04/10/jocc-meeting-held-lahore>

10. The Press Release issued by the PILDAT on April 07, 2016 at: <http://www.pildat.org/eventsdel.asp?detid=875>

Federal Cabinet Members. If this is a case of an oversight by the leadership, it only communicates the lack of seriousness that is associated particularly with regards to this forum, and generally with regards to institutionalization in matters of national security. If it reflects a change in thinking, it is indeed equally problematic and technically flawed to name the forum as a Cabinet Committee.

Additionally, given that the NSC *of the Cabinet* is the '*principal decision-making body on matters of national security*', its current status may encroach upon the powers of the Federal Cabinet. If Pakistan indeed wishes to give the NSC decision-making powers, whether or not it is recommended, its existence should be backed by legislation, and not just an executive order, as is the case at the moment.

### **Premier-COAS Interactions**

During the month of April 2016, the Prime Minister and the COAS met twice. The details are as follows:

1. The first meeting was held when the Prime Minister chaired a meeting in the Prime Minister House on April 04, 2016 to '*discuss matters related to national and internal security*'. The meeting was also attended by the Federal Minister for Interior, Chaudhary Nisar Ali Khan, MNA; Federal Minister for Finance, Senator Ishaq Dar and the DG ISI, Lt. Gen. Rizwan Akhtar.
2. The second meeting took place as the National Security Committee of the Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister, met on April 06, 2016. The meeting was also attended by Federal Minister for Finance, Senator Ishaq Dar; Federal Minister for Defence, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, MNA; Federal Minister for Interior, Chaudhary Nisar Ali Khan, MNA; Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and National Heritage, Senator Pervaiz Rasheed; Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, Gen. Rashad Mahmood; Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Mohammad Zakaullah; Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sohail Aman; DG ISI, Lt. Gen. Rizwan Akhtar and the National Security Advisor Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Nasser Khan Janjua amongst senior officials.<sup>11</sup>

The Federal Minister for Defence, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, MNA, was only present in one of these two meetings.

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11. For details, please see: [http://pmo.gov.pk/press\\_release\\_details.php?pr\\_id=1411](http://pmo.gov.pk/press_release_details.php?pr_id=1411)



**Islamabad Office:** P. O. Box 278, F-8, Postal Code: 44220, Islamabad, Pakistan

**Lahore Office:** P. O. Box 11098, L.C.C.H.S, Postal Code: 54792, Lahore, Pakistan

E-mail: [info@pildat.org](mailto:info@pildat.org) | Website: [www.pildat.org](http://www.pildat.org)