Pakistan Military: Sustaining Hegemony and Constructing Democracy?

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Introduction

In the past two decades considerable research has appeared, which provides perspectives on Pakistan's military is impacts politics and socio-economic development in the country. The military's role and relationship with the civilian leadership remains tenuous. Most of these studies provide insightful analysis of Pakistan's political history but generally reinforce

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The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Ms. Saba Shahid, Research Associate, Centre for Public Policy and Governance (CPPG) in conducting research for the paper. I am equally indebted to Dr. Ali Saleem Raja, Assistant Professor, CPPG for valuable comments on an earlier version of this paper.
existing perceptions about the military’s overwhelming presence and meddling in aggravating the country’s problems.¹ The arguments of these studies can be divided into three categories. First, the military has been obfuscating democracy and party politics;² second, the military is obsessed with animosity for India and considers it as an ‘existentialist threat’ and this, perception is driven by the strategic culture of the military elites, who are motivated more by ‘ideological’ than ‘security’ considerations.³ The third category of studies exposes the dubious connections of the military with Jihadi groups, links Kashmir with Jihad and Taliban with Afghan conflict.⁴ Finally, there is a common recurring theme in these writings that all the ills that prevail in Pakistan are attributed to persistent military intervention and prolonged military rule.⁵ These arguments carry weight however do not explain two critical aspects: how does the military continue to build its professional skills and expand and protect its institutional interests? Second, why has the civilian leadership been unable to provide a credible alternative to the military’s hegemony? While addressing these questions, this paper will shed light on the changing composition of the military elites, their attitudinal orientation and their diverging views. Additionally it will analyze how the military and the civilian leaders comprehend the complex regional environment that influences their decision-making agenda. Civilian and military leaders also have dissimilar outlooks on managing security, defense and foreign relations. Different alternative perspectives are offered; the military is hegemonic in Pakistani politics not for domestic reasons alone, but more importantly because of external super powers that lend legitimacy to its continued supremacy.

This article examines the changes in the nature and direction of civil-military relations over the past two decades, particularly since 2007 to 2017. This paper makes three arguments. First, despite a transition to democracy and a considerably improved level of trust between the civil and the

²Aqil Shah, pp 215-253, Christophe Jaffrelot, pp 197-297
³Christine Fair pp 136-173
⁴Ibid pp 119-129, pp 278-281, Fair conclusively asserts: that Pakistan Army will continue to “manipulate events in Afghanistan” and that it views “India as existential threat”. P281.
military elites, the military remains a hegemony in Pakistani politics and policymaking. Second, in the past two decades the composition, outlook and orientation of military elites has undergone significant change and their interaction with the civilian leadership has gained greater frequency and that is likely to impact how the military responds to the challenge of sustaining democracy in Pakistan. Third, the political leadership has also become skillful in dealing with the military but has made little effort to understand how the military works as an organization. The incompetence, divisiveness and inability of political leadership to strengthen party systems and build faith in democracy and, their failure to establish the supremacy of the parliament has opened up opportunities for the military to infiltrate the policy arena further. Under these conditions, the military continues to meddle and entrench itself in state matters including defense, security and foreign policy. This selective consultation and occasional partnership with the civilian leadership creates an impression of what some scholars have labeled a 'hybrid system'. The proponents of the 'hybrid system' claim that Pakistan’s political system is neither ‘fully autocratic’, nor is it ‘democratic’, rather a combination of the two. However, the author argues that this explanation or labeling is inadequate. The evolving dynamics clearly show that while retaining hegemony, the military is reshaping a more congenial partnership with the political party led civilian leadership. The military has adopted a policy of showing tolerance for procedural democracy and deference for the political leadership, while consolidating its hold over strategic policy areas. On the other side, the democratization process appears to have given impetus to a significant change, whereby despite differences, the political leadership is unanimously showing resolve to contain the political role of the military. Therefore, the signposts of a competing civilian power center (comprising of the civilian bureaucracy, political parties, judiciary and media) are emerging. This could pave the way for a nuanced and ostensibly co-equal partnership between the civilian and military leadership, thus mitigating military hegemony.

Context: Pakistan Post 1971

For almost forty-seven years (post 1971), Pakistan has oscillated between military-hegemonic and dominant party political systems. A combination of persistent and prolonged military rule and incompetent, divisive and
anti-democracy dispensation of the political leadership has lead to the entrenchment of the military into politics, businesses and more importantly in the social sphere, leading to a militarization of the Pakistani society. At the societal level, the culture of militarization of society is mirrored through religious extremism and increasing vigilante justice. Despite this entrenchment, military rule has never gained legitimacy among Pakistani citizens; however, compared to political parties, the military as an institution continues to enjoy greater respect among the people.

The critical issue is, what is military hegemony and how does it work? Two decades ago, it was argued that in a military-hegemonic system, the military has a monopoly over strategic policy issues and the state’s decision-making institutions. It can manipulate and steer the behavior of political leaders and interest groups in a chosen direction. In the social and cultural sense, the public also shows greater trust and confidence in the military as compared to political parties. This lends legitimacy to the military’s hegemony. The military hegemonic system functions via three identifiable processes: first, political control through executive orders/ordinances; second, political exclusion through the deactivation of political parties and active groups and restriction on participation of urban professional groups; and third, the building of a strategic partnership with the United States. By building strategic alliances, the military enhances its position in domestic politics. Despite, the ‘roller-coaster’ nature of US policies, the alliance has been an important contributor in promoting, expanding and sustaining the military’s hegemony. At critical junctures in Pakistan’s history, the US military aid, strategic support, trainings and political ‘brokering’ bolstered military domination. For example, in the 1950s through membership of CENTO and SEATO, the military built its strategic alliance with the US and despite the breakup of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) from West Pakistan in 1971, the alliance endured. During the period between 1971-77 its salience diminished somewhat; however, Soviet intervention in Afghanistan gave the alliance a new boost and it gained further strength during the first Afghan war (1979-1988) and then during the Global War on Terrorism (GWT) (2002 to ongoing). This

Saeed Shafqat, Civil-Military Relations in Pakistan (Boulder/ Lahore: Westview Press and Pak Book Corporation, 1997)

Ibid, pp 7-10

strategic alliance gave Pakistan labels such as ‘most allied ally,’ ‘frontline state’ and ‘eye of the storm’ and marked the emergence of Pakistan as a security state–socio-economic development and welfare of citizens became compliant to state security. Ideology and security thus became convolutedly intertwined. Islamic education gradually became an important part of soldiers and officers’ training programs after Independence. In the case of Pakistan, the role of religion as an identity marker needs to be understood in the broader context of state-society relationship. The military’s multifaceted connection with religious groups stems from this reality and continues to manifest phases of religious extremism and militancy. In 1976, when General Zia-ul Haq was appointed chief of army staff (COAS), he brought a paradigm shift in the orientation of military’s training programs and reshaped the society-state relationship as he declared introduction of ‘Islamic system as an essential pre-requisite for the country’. He changed the motto of Pakistan’s army from ‘unity, faith and discipline’ to ‘Iman, Taqwa, Jihad’ (‘Faith, Piety and Jihad). Pakistan’s involvement in the 1980s Afghan War gave religion new meanings. It is no coincidence that the Generals, who command positions of authority today, were inducted in the armed forces during the decade of the 1970s. The Afghan War (1979-88), in collaboration with the US, shaped the ideological and professional orientation of the Pakistan military, since the US had declared the Soviet Union an ‘evil empire’ and used religion to unify the diverse Afghan tribes to combat the Soviet ‘infidels’. Saudi Arabia too became a pivotal partner, along with the US, in providing financial support and ideological motivation for the war effort. For the Pakistani military, Islamic belief and practice became an integral part of troops’ training and motivation. The invocation of religion by the US, in concert with Saudi Arabia, to mobilize the diverse Afghan tribes, gave the Pakistani military both space and rationale to motivate the Mujahedeen (insurgents)

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on ideological bases. In the 1980s, it went under further transformation as Pakistan’s military gained experience in conducting, covert and overt operations; combating and managing insurgency in Afghanistan against the Soviets again in collaboration with the US and NATO countries. During this phase, Pakistan’s military acquired the skills to combat insurgency and also benefited from latest US weapons (Stinger Missiles, F-16 etc). Later, in the post 2001 period, the GWT and globalization both enhanced the military’s professional capabilities as it refreshed the alliance with the US. In 2008, as Pakistan made a transition to civilian rule through electoral process, the dynamics of the US- Pakistan and the civil- military relations began to change. The GWT had reinvigorated the strength and hegemony of the military but also promoted a perception among the Pakistani public that the military regime was too closely allied with the US. This along with a series of missteps General Musharraf took (getting himself elected as president for the second time while unconstitutionally remaining the COAS, firing the chief justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan twice and large scale dismissal of superior court judges) ignited lawyers’ protests, which paved the way for mass mobilization and regime confrontation by political parties. Demand for elections and a restoration of democracy gained momentum with popular support, eventually leading to Musharraf’s ouster.

Pakistan’s history shows that a military hegemonic system evokes resistance: the longer the period of military rule, the stronger the resistance movements become in their pursuit of free and fair elections. Upsurges of resistance and demands for the restoration of democracy by civil society groups and political parties have followed each period of military rule (General Ayub Khan, 1958-69; General Yahya Khan, 1969-71; General Zia ul-Haq, 1977-88; and General Pervez Musharraf, 1999-2008). The recurring pattern has been that the collapse or weakening of the military regime paves way for elections, which then facilitate a transition to civilian-led party governments. It is equally important to recognize that the Afghan

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War (1979-88), internal strife and the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan (1989-2001) and the GWT (2001 through today) have contributed towards not only enhancing Pakistan military's professional capacity in countering insurgency and terrorism, but also strengthening the bond with the NATO Forces in Afghanistan and Central Command (CENTCOM) of the U.S. These factors contributed towards reshaping the ideological orientation of the military and other segments of the society.

Changing Composition of the Military Elites, Orientation and Strategic Culture

Since the breakup of Pakistan in 1971, the social base of the military elite has also undergone considerable change. The pre-Independence born generation is being replaced; Generals Jehangir Karamat and Pervez Musharraf and their cohorts were the last of pre-Independence born military elites. The year 2007, in addition to lawyers' protests, the erosion of presidential power and promise of elections, also marked the ascendancy of an indigenous Pakistani, post-Independence generation at the helm of military decision-making. Until 1971, the size of military elites (Brigadiers to General) was relatively small, totaling around 120 officers. Today there is a five-fold increase in that number with over 600 officers of Brigadier to General level. However, strategic decision-making is confined to 10 Corps Commanders and an additional 30-40 top staff officers (that includes Air Force and Navy chiefs, if and when needed for strategic consultation or operational matters). Their ethnic origin, social class and educational achievements have also become noticeably diffused. During the 1960s and until the mid 70s, the generals from rural areas of current northern India (Mohajir) and Punjab’s Pothwar, and parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)—the so-called ‘martial’ races’ were dominant. While Pothwar still continues to be a vital source for the soldiers and also for the officer corps, recruitment from the area has declined somewhat because of migration and a rise in work opportunities in the Gulf and Saudi Arabia. The new group of the officer corps is more urban and has a humbler social

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1 For an informative analysis on this point, see Christine Fair and Peter Chalk (2006), For formative phase on this point, see Saeed Shafqat, Pakistan and the United States: A Future Unlike the Past (Occasional Paper Series, Center for the Study of Pakistan, SIPA, Columbia University, New York, 2005) pp 1-30, In addition US-Pakistani Military Consultative Committee (MCC) is forum that meets annually to review military to military relations, which aims at strengthening these bonds, despite serious differences.
A shift towards urban base also implies a complex network of educational institutional and social connections that indicates that the military elites are no more inaccessible and have to tolerate societal pressures. The urban areas are Rawalpindi, Lahore, Karachi, Nowshera, Peshawar, Multan, Quetta and the surrounding smaller towns. The last two COAS, namely Generals Pervez Ashraf Kayani (2007-13), Raheel Sharif (2013-16) and the current COAS Qamar Javed Bajwa (2016 until 2019) and their cohorts fall in this social grouping. There is a clear shift from the 'Huntingtonian model of military professionalism' to a 'Janowitzian model'—indicating that the military has moved beyond the soldierly profession and assumed constabulary functions as well. This transition has been characterized by the military's growing experience in combating terrorism and fighting insurgency. In the post 1979 period, with the exception of the Kargil conflict (1999), the military has increasingly been involved in combating internal disorder, particularly in Karachi and Quetta. The armed forces have thus acquired policing responsibilities and have over time expanded their scope as their involvement in the country's law and order situation has expanded, this includes paramilitary forces, such as the Rangers, Frontier Force and other border patrolling agencies. As a result they have gained more room to move into civilian institutions.

In addition to counter insurgency and counter-terrorism functions, the military has been extensively performing U.N. peacekeeping functions and has entrenched itself in managing industrial, businesses, commercial and real estate ventures. The estimates of Military businesses vary from 10 to 15 billion US dollars.

These changes have led to considerable speculation on the ideological orientation of military elites. However, religious symbolism and use of caste labels (Kiyani, Janjua, Bajawa, Butt, Wariach, Wayeen etc.) is a visible trend, which indicates the need to indicate caste loyalty or regional affiliations. To understand the dynamics of this change it is pertinent to recognize the

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16 In an interview to Imtiaz Gul, the then ISPR chief, Major General Athar Abbas, stated that, 30% of the officer corps hails from the sons of the NCOs, see Imtiaz Gul, "Reinventing the Army", NewsLine, July 2011, pp.15-19. P.18, Shuja Nawaz (2008), op cit, provides a detailed analysis on this, see pp 570-572

17 General Sharif hailed from a family who had strong martial tradition...his elder brother was martyred in the 1971 Indo- Pakistan war, similarly General Bajwa belongs to traditional military family.

18 Ayesha Siddiqa, Military Inc. Inside Pakistan's Military Economy (London: Pluto Pres, 2007), She provides an estimate of 10 billion US dollars, however, my recent conversations with retired civil servants, military officers and real estate developers estimate it to 15 billion dollars.
transformation of officers’ professional skills, levels of competence and ideological orientation at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel (from Major to Colonel, passing the Staff College—which is still important for crossing the ‘Rubicon’). Thus, the noticeable trend is that the military has become an entity with deep societal roots, its role and relationship in Pakistani society, has undergone transformation—it has acquired a new sense of confidence, derived from societal support and external legitimacy, while the civilian leadership remains embattled, burdened with allegations of corruption, unenthused about democratizing political parties and building party systems—all of which are pre-requisites for sustaining democracy.

How is this transformation of the military’s role manifesting itself? Evaluating the key turning points during the period between 2008-2017 can help. The indications are that since the restoration of democracy in 2008, the military has adopted a policy of publically supporting the democratic process and showing ‘deference’ to political leadership. Under General Musharraf (1999-2007), particularly post 2001, the military’s policies had become too closely identified with the US led GWT. This dispensation was seriously jolted in 2011, when the US Special Forces ‘invaded’ Pakistan and took out Osama Bin Laden from Abottabad19 amongst outcry of a breach of Pakistan’s territorial sovereignty and seeming obliviousness of the military leadership. The political and professional costs became too heavy; and the military elites needed to regain the trust and confidence of the public. In the post Musharraf era, military elites re-assessed and re-strategized their role and relationship with the civilian leadership. They have begun to show ‘deference’ towards the political leadership and lend public support in recognizing the supremacy of the parliament. This practice was initiated under General Kayani and continues under the current army chief General Javed Qamar Bajwa. While combating the religious militants in KP and FATA, the military has also realized that militants are driven by the same faith as the military itself but the practice

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of the two is opposed to each other. The militants operationalize religion as a tool of violence to create terror and chaos, while the military motivates troops to fight and defeat the 'irregular enemy combatants' and protect the citizens. For conducting such operations, public support is imperative.

Here it would be useful to have some understanding on the socialization process of military elites. An outstanding feature of the Pakistan military is that despite having a large army, it has been able to maintain unity of command and a considerable degree of coherence in its top echelons. That lends credibility to military professionalism at the global level. There have been coup attempts (1973, 1995, 2003) carried out by lower tiers of the military, but none succeeded as the top army commanders gave total support to the army chief thereby avoiding any form of disunity within the military. However, given the Pakistani military's deepening involvement in the Afghan War (1979-88) and the GWT, three types of groupings are discernible in the top echelons of the armed forces of Pakistan: (1) the Ideologicals, (2) the Professionals, and (3) Praetorians.

These classifications are determined largely by the curricula and the professional experience of military officers received during their training. There are three main training institutions of the Pakistani military, the Pakistan Military Academy (PMA), the Command and Staff College, Quetta and the National Defence University (NDU). The introductory training program at the PMA emphasizes physical endurance, honor, loyalty to platoon and brotherhood—attributes of character building. The focus of the mid-level training institution, the Command and Staff College, is on leadership, professional skills and leading the unit as a commander. At the most senior level, the NDU, concentrates on professional and operational plans, preparing war strategies and understanding domestic and international policy making processes. The NDU conducts the War Course, in which more than 40 officers from developing and developed countries participate. At all these levels of training there is hardly any exposure to democratic norms, tolerance for difference in opinion, respect for publically elected offices or the parliament. Although at the NDU, increased interaction with parliamentarians has been encouraged since 2002, this does not necessarily promote respect for publically elected

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20 Muhammad Feyyaz, "Winning Hearts and Minds in Pakistan's Tribal Areas: A Personal Recollection of a Peace-Building Effort with the Taliban" Perspectives on Terrorism, Vol 10, Issue 3, June 2016, pp 53-58. This is a personal narrative of the Brigadier who was conducting an operation in the area.

21 Aqil Shah, op.cit. and Shuja Nawaz, op.cit.
officials. Conversely it exposes their weaknesses and overawes them with military superiority and its professionalism. Suffice to say that training institutions do contribute towards the socialization process and attitude formation of the military elites and in that spirit, ideology, professionalism and praetorian tendencies remain intricately interwoven. Here is a brief summary of these three classifications:

1. The Ideologicals

The antecedents of this group’s outlook, orientation and worldview can be traced back to former Generals like Zia-ul- Haq, Akhtar Abdul Rehman, Gul Hamid and Nasir Javed who were ideologically driven and believed in cultivating and mobilizing religious groups to wage Afghan and Kashmir Jihad. The Ideologicals consider India as an existentialist threat and therefore advocate Kashmir Jihad as an appropriate tool to rattle India. They were opposed to the Communist ideology of the Soviet Union and also opposed the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. Given these two considerations they were willing to collaborate with the US in countering and containing the Soviet invasion. They reluctantly supported the Geneva Peace Process (1988), and equated the culmination of Afghan Jihad as a ‘callous neglect’ of Afghanistan and ‘abandonment’ of Pakistan by the US. Eventually they became disillusioned with the US and in subsequent years officers belonging to this school of thinking became vociferously anti-American. In 1998 as Pakistan carried out its nuclear bomb tests, they became further convinced that the US and Israel aimed to disrupt, dismantle and destroy Pakistan’s nuclear program and nuclear weapons. Even today, there is a small group of officers in the armed forces of Pakistan, who agrees with this thinking. What their size and strength is, however remains unclear. Under President Donald Trump, the US policy towards Pakistan has acquired adversarial overtones, while under Prime Minister Modi, India’s policy towards Pakistan has become belligerent. This has given boost to a sentiment of religious militancy and religious populism at the societal level and the Ideological types within the military find it morale enhancing to identify and cultivate such sentiments. This


Indo-American driven pugnaciousness could energize and strengthen a relatively feeble Ideological group within the military.

2. The Professionals

The antecedents of this group can be traced from Generals like Asif Nawaz Janjua, Waheed Kakar, Jehangir Karamat and Ali Quli Khan who placed high premium on military professionalism, showed respect for civilian supremacy (in the sense of keeping the military distant from politics), concentrated on building the capacity and modernization of the military and in this regard showed preference for acquiring weapons from diverse and technologically superior sources. Unlike the Ideologicals, the professionals view India as a ‘challenger and adversary’. Since political leadership in both India and Pakistan has not been able to forge a consensual framework on how to seek peace, despite Kashmir, therefore this group relies on enhancing the professional capabilities of the military. In subsequent years, Generals Kayani and his cohorts, Raheel Shareef and his contemporaries followed the same tradition. This group of officers have sought balanced relations with the US and China and shown a strong tendency to maintain the ‘autonomy’ of the military in its professional and operational work. This group of officers is the lifeline of Pakistan’s military and gives credence to its professionalism and preparedness in situations of adversity.

3. Praetorians

Among the military there continues to be a group of officers who view any political process with disdain and abhor the idea of politicians governing the Pakistani state. So, they remain potential interveners although their size may not be significant. The background of this outlook and orientation among the officers of the Pakistani military gets inspiration from Generals like Ayub Khan, Fazl-e-Haq, Faiz Ali Chisti and Pervez Musharraf. Among this cohort, Ayub Khan is the only pre-1971 General mentioned, he was the one who eliminated any prospects of democracy by staging a coup in 1958. In the military Ayub Khan remains one of the most respected Generals, yet he was ‘contemptuous’ about politicians and any democratic process and both Zia-ul-Haq and Pervez Musharraf followed that path.

It is important to note that there is considerable overlap among this typology, partly because in the training institutions of the military the curriculum pays scant attention in exposing them to democratic norms or of
the democratically elected leadership’s supremacy over the military. On the other hand the reality is that Pakistani political parties and political leaderships have done little to promote the sanctity of the parliament or respect for democracy and rule of law. Thus, in the military institutions the respect for the civilian leadership and functioning of democracy remains low.

Changing Dynamics of Civil-Military Relations: From Hegemony to Co-Equals?

While making a transition from a military-hegemonic system to a party based representative system, elections are an important procedural element to measure democratic aspirations in a society. In Pakistan’s case, inauspiciously this is extensively influenced by the military-hegemonic system. Therefore, while holding elections and transitioning to democracy are important, attention also needs to be paid to strengthening the substantive components of democracy: the rule of law, respect and tolerance of dissent and minority rights, religious freedom, cultural pluralism, and freedom of association.

Given these changing dynamics the critical question is how the military is adopting to a party led government? There are several indications that despite serious crises, civil-military relations are undergoing an important transformation. This is borne out by several developments. General Kayani was appointed Vice-Chief of Army on October 2007 and a month later on November 18, 2007 became Chief of Army as Musharraf abdicated his uniform. In July 2010 Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani ended rising speculation about COAS General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, by granting him a three-year extension. Did that mean an improved level of trust between the civil and military leadership? That aside, the reality has been that since 2010, chiefs of the armed forces have been appointed by the Prime Minister. In theory and constitutionally, this established the norm of the supremacy of civilian leadership. The second term extension re-established the principle of civilian leadership, particularly the Prime Minister, appointing the chiefs. However, the criteria of Pakistan’s PMs while choosing a COAS has fundamentally been to appoint someone who is apolitical and docile, and someone who readily indicates a sense of loyalty. Professional competency or capability to lead in the operational context, are seldom taken as determining factors. This superficial mode of selection has compromised civilian leaders’ ability to fully comprehend the organizational culture of the military or predict the nature of civil-military interaction that is likely to ensue as each COAS takes office. In extending General Kayani’s tenure, the civilian government was perhaps moved by
two considerations; first, improved level of comfort in working with the military under Kayani, second, at that point the U.S also seemed inclined to support the continuity of command under him. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that the U.S Secretary of State was on a visit to Pakistan, when the decision of extension General Kayani was announced.24

During the period 2010-13, the military came under pressure from the US and from political parties. General Kayani’s extension led to supersession of his cohorts and immediate contemporaries and paved the way for a relatively younger generation of officers who joined the military in the late 1970s and served as captains and majors when the Afghan war was at its peak in the early and mid 1980s. The next army chief, General Raheel Sharif, (2013-16), graduated from the Pakistan Military Academy (PMA) in 1976 and the current chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa in 1978.

Once the COAS is selected, he assumes three roles: he emerges as the key interlocutor on security and defense arena, while the civilian leaders show lack of will and knowledge to assert (external powers increasingly lend legitimacy to this role); second, he must act as the ultimate grantor of internal stability and order; third, of course is that he is perceived as a potential praetor in the country’s political process. What role the COAS chooses to play depends on three factors: his personal orientation, political circumstances and the institutional interests of the military.

General Kayani graduated from PMA in 1971 and was careful and discrete so as to reveal little about his political or ideological beliefs with the exception of his views on national security issues. He went public in stating that the Pakistan military is ‘India centric’ in its orientation and approach.25 Nationally and internationally he was recognized as a ‘professional soldier’.26 In 2009 *Time* magazine declared General Kayani as the “most influential

24 "Kayani to stay on as COAS till 2013: The night of the quiet general" *Dawn*, 23 July 2010. [https://www.dawn.com/news/852503](https://www.dawn.com/news/852503). The extension actually showed military hegemony is still intact. The extension announcement was done at 2am in the morning. The corp commanders apparently backed the decision of extension as they met a week before the extension on the day Kayani met President and Prime Minister. And Clinton was in Pakistan on the night of extension.


General in the world”. \(^{27}\) Officials who have worked with General Kayani convey that he is calm, calculating and prudent and keeps his cards close to his chest. Kayani tried to extricate the military from politics however, for him the challenge was dealing with a small number of vocal retired generals who sought greater involvement of the military in the country’s governance. On the extension of General Kayani, political parties showed considerable restraint and in a muted way went along with the decision, whereas some retired generals were vociferous in arguing that Kayani should not have accepted it. \(^{28}\) By and large, the decision was welcomed and seen as the right of an elected government to make such an appointment. Upon the completion of General Kayani’s second term, General Raheel Sharif was appointed the COAS in 2013. He and General Waheed Kakar remain the two-army chiefs who did not seek a second term. Like Kayani, General Sharif had equally strong professional credentials but more importantly, he showed greater vigor, determination and commitment in uprooting, dismantling and destroying terrorist networks.

The election of 2018 in Pakistan exhibits a fractured political system, where political parties are pitted against each other and show little respect for the parliament, rule of law and democratic processes. Recently, the army chief made another gesture of deference and appeared before the Senate to demonstrate that the military considers the parliament supreme and accepts the primacy of civilian leadership and political institutions. \(^{29}\) Yet, it is disturbing to note that with each election, opportunities for consolidating civilian-led party governments have been misspent by Pakistan’s political parties. Nor have they been able to cement the superiority of civilian governments over the role the military plays in the country’s policy-making. The PML-N has followed a similar pattern, after assuming power in 2013, as it has been struggling to establish its dominance. The

\(^{27}\) Time Magazine, May 1, 2009, listed General Kayani among the top 100 most influential leaders of the year.


\(^{29}\) General Qamar Javed Bajwa, current Chief of Army Staff appeared before the Senate, he was invited by the Chairman of the Senate to give briefing on the security situation prevailing in the country. General Bajwa assured the parliamentarians that the military is supportive of the democratic process and believes in the supremacy of the parliament. See for instance Irfan Ghauri, “You make policy, we follow it, Gen Qamar tells parliament” The Express Tribune, 19 December 2017, https://tribune.com.pk/story/1587001/1-army-chief-arrives-parliament-brief-lawmakers-security-situation/ (accessed on 10 February 2018).
Prime Minister was decisive in selecting the army chief and showed exuberance in reviving the dominant party system but had done little or no homework in subordinating the military to civilian supremacy. The political leaders’ tendency to establish a dominant party system appeared following the 1970 elections and the pattern continues to persist. The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), led by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1971 to 1977) established the practice of a dominant party system; the Pakistan Muslim League (PML), led by Muhammad Khan Junejo (1985 to 1988); and both the Benazir Bhutto-led PPP and Nawaz Sharif-led Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N), from 1988 to 1999, all attempted to establish political dominance by either suppressing or excluding opposition political parties. As a result, credible government opposition relationship could not evolve, it is only the PPP government under Asif Ali Zardari (2008-2013) that the symbolism of opposition party in the parliament was resuscitated and in the post 2013 period, the PPP as the opposition party in the parliament is striving to conserve it.

Civilian-led party rule in Pakistan has not always raised confidence that the rule of law, good governance and the values of constitutional liberalism would be promoted and sustained. Each time the military withdrew, political leaders neither paid adequate attention to governance reform, nor could they democratize their political parties. Personalities drove the parties instead of organization or developmental goals or policy manifestos. Both the party in power and opposition parties pursued confrontation instead of consensus on how to restrict the role of the military in politics. The military in turn, took advantage of divisive tendencies among parties and indirectly may have encouraged confrontation rather than cooperation between them. The party in power focused on establishing dominance and excluding political opponents instead of devising ways to restrain the military. Consequently, the party system and representative government could not be institutionalized. Thus, both the military and the political parties have remained unsuccessful in building pluralist norms and values necessary for a democratic society.

During the end of the 1980s the collapse of the Soviet Union and satellite communist states in Eastern Europe and Central Asia marked the triumph of the neo-liberal order, whereby democracy and free market economy began to define the global order. During this phase, like a number of other

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30 Saeed Shafqat (1997) op.cit
developing countries, Pakistan also witnessed the emergence and growth of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Many of these championed human rights, gender equity, poverty alleviation, community development and promotion of peace and harmony in Pakistani society. However, most of these NGOs remained focused on their narrow agendas and could not build a coalition of NGOs that would educate, inform and mobilize social groups, fostering faith in civic virtues and representative government. They also could not re-shape the socio-economic programs of the political parties. Dependence on donor funding also constrained their influence and sustainability. On the other hand, religious groups and organizations also saw a window of opportunity in this collapse of Communism, where political parties and NGO’s had faltered. Therefore, they ventured into Madrassa education, providing financial support for the poor and needy, eventually penetrating into rural, vulnerable and terrorism-affected areas. A large segment of Pakistani population began to see and accept religious groups as being more supportive of the poor and needy as compared to NGOs. This societal cleavage in Pakistan has dampened the enthusiasm for the support of democracy, human rights and representative government. The onus is on the elites and informed citizens to take cognizance of this grim reality and draw attention of the political parties to citizen alienation and faithlessness about democracy. Given this trajectory, why should one expect political parties to behave differently now? Before addressing this question, Pakistan’s history during the past decade under various military leaders must be examined.

**General Pervez Musharraf: Twisting the Regulatory Framework**

General Pervez Musharraf assumed power in October 1999, overthrowing the civilian government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. From 2002 to 2007, Musharraf enhanced presidential powers via constitutional amendments and ordinances and ruled by decree, constricting the role of the legislature to that of a decree-stamping institution. Until 2006 he maintained a political order that created a semblance of stability, but 2007 was perhaps the worst year in Pakistan’s legal and political history as the President misused his powers through a series of unlawful acts. On 9 March 2007 Musharraf dismissed the Chief Justice of Pakistan and on 9 November 2007, he issued a decree firing over sixty judges of the superior judiciary. Musharraf then managed to get re-elected as President while remaining
both the chief of the army and a serving general. Lawyer’s protests were ruthlessly suppressed, violating the 1973 Constitution.32

Under domestic and international pressure, Musharraf announced that the elections would be held on 7 January 2008. Earlier in May 2006, political parties led by exiled leaders Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif signed a Charter of Democracy. Through this charter, political parties agreed to work together to restore democracy, ensure independence of the judiciary and curb the political role of the military. Musharraf issued on October 5th 2007 the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO), which exonerated political leaders from charges in cases of corruption and paved the way for the return of these leaders, particularly Bhutto. In popular parlance, this was known as the ‘Musharraf-Bhutto Deal.’33 As the election campaign progressed, key electoral issues included: restoration of judges, the curtailment of presidential powers, the transfer of power to elected representatives and supremacy of the legislature, the disengagement of the military from politics, the recognition of terrorism as a national issue, the use of political engagement rather than force with religious extremists/terrorists. This policy later came to haunt the country as the GWT escalated in scale and complexity.

**Benazir Bhutto: Her Assassination and the Rise of Zardari**

On 18 October 2007, Bhutto returned to Karachi to be greeted by a rousing reception. She narrowly survived a suicide bomb attack at the procession, but the bomb killed over 100 participants. Bhutto continued to campaign under life-threatening conditions. On 27 December 2007, Bhutto met her tragic death—killed by a suicide attack, her passing has become a defining moment in Pakistan’s history. It roused anger, passion and a wave of sympathy not only for her party the PPP, but also for other political leaders.44 Bhutto’s death jolted Pakistan and intensified the revolt of urban professionals, which had been simmering since the removal of the Chief Justice in March 2007. Lawyers’ protests gave new meaning to the electoral process.35 Elections were delayed by a full month. Yet that did not diminish the PPP support base. The party secured a decisive victory and Bhutto’s husband, Asif Ali Zardari, inadvertently emerged as the strongman of the

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44Ibid
party. Zardari showed considerable maturity and political acumen in the time following Bhutto’s death, despite his tainted past and allegations of corruption. He consolidated control over the party and sought reconciliation with the other major political parties, particularly the Awami National Party (ANP), the PML-N, the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) and even the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), which joined the provincial government in Sindh for almost a year.

After the elections of February 18th, 2008, the manner in which the PPP, the PML-N and the ANP leadership conducted politics of consultation and consensus-building made many believe that political leaders were conscious of their responsibilities for maintaining order and could build a sustainable coalition. For a short while it appeared that Asif Zardari, Nawaz Sharif, Asfandyar Wali and Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman were pragmatic, shrewd and deft politicians and would be willing to sustain a multi-party coalition and that the political leadership may be moving away from the dominant party system. It was remarkable that despite serious jolts to the coalition that Zardari and the PPP built, it succeeded in completing its five-year term. However the coalition parties revealed three disturbing trends. First, leadership is increasingly dynastic (i.e., awarding key positions to one’s own kith and kin). Second, these parties are a coalition of landed elites, business groups, tribal elders and religious groups, which have some popular support base. Third, these leaders are driven by considerations of personal gain and power rather than public good and institution building. The leaders are reluctant to change the status quo despite, their apparent recognition that their supporters expect them to work together to improve security and governance, provide justice and reduce poverty. The multi-party coalition led by the PPP remained tenuous but created history by completing the five year term of a civilian government and paved the way for the 2013 elections and peaceful transfer of power from one civilian government to another.

Re-shaping of Civil-Military Relations: (2008-2013)

How and why was the PPP under Zardari able to sustain coalition politics and complete the term? The transition was bumpy but it ventured to recast civil-military relations through four processes. First, the civilian leadership strove hard to build consensus to restrict the political role of the military. The political parties remained focused in ensuring the removal of Musharraf, who resigned in August 2008. His departure helped define power sharing with the military rather than merely establishing the
supremacy of civilian leaders. The COAS, General Ashfaq Pervez Kiyani took a number of steps as well; for example, serving military officers withdrew from civilian positions indicating the military’s willingness to re-engage with the civilian government in light of the electoral outcome.36

Second, the leaders of the political parties refrained from repeating the mistakes of the 1990s, when confrontation between the PPP and the PML-N paved the way for military intervention. Therefore, despite confrontational politics and brinksmanship during the height of the lawyers’ protest in 2008, the PPP and PML-N leaders kept the window of communication open. The political leadership of the parliamentary parties seemed eager to sustain the dialogue process in order to dispel any mistrust. This spirit was best reflected in the passing and signing of the 18th Constitutional Amendment.37 It is pertinent to note that in letting the PPP complete its five-year term (2008-13), the PML-N adopted a policy of restraint, selective consultation and accommodation. It refrained from adopting any extra-constitutional measures to dislodge the party in power. The media labeled it as a ‘friendly opposition’. The PPP as the leading opposition party in the parliament returned the favor by acting as ‘friendly opposition’ in the parliament. It is only after the removal of Nawaz Sharif (July 2013- July 2017) on charges of corruption that the PPP has become critical of the PML-N. On his removal the New York Times, perceptively observed that, Pakistan’s military, “has seldom been able to wield as potent a mix of policy control and popular acclaim as it does today”38. This spirit had eroded as PML-N assumed power back in 2013. Part of the difficulty was the attitude of Nawaz Sharif, who immediately revived the dominant party system by excluding opposition parties from fragile consultation processes, which were shrewdly built by the Zardari government.

The third reason behind the smooth transition was that the leadership of the ANP, PPP, PML-N and JUI, despite serious differences in their approaches, built consensus in recognizing terrorism as Pakistan’s own problem. This issue must be resolved through negotiation and dialogue with the terrorists, in particular the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) who


provided sanctuary to Al Qaeda and other militants. This policy was chosen in comparison to applying military force only. Such a strategy implied that the various leaders were slowly coming around, and through consultation and mutual ‘give-and-take’ had repositioned themselves on how to handle the menace of extremism. Gradually and painfully this resulted in revisiting Pakistan’s anti-terrorism policy in March 2008. While still evolving, the retention of a balance between engagement with the militants and the application of force was of critical importance.

Finally, the strategic alliance with the US, while providing dividends for sustaining military hegemony, also helped aid Pakistan’s democratic transition in 2013. Since mid-2006, the United States and Pakistan have been reviewing and reassessing their anti-terrorism policies in the tribal areas of Pakistan. In addition to pressing Pakistan to intensify military operations in these areas, the United States also initiated dialogue with ANP leader Asfandyar Wali, who was invited to meet with the State Department and the CENTCOM. During 2007, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte visited Pakistan three times and as a follow up the congressional leaders supplemented these visits. Besides conducting regular meetings with Pakistani government officials, the Deputy Secretary and congressional leaders also met the heads of almost all the major political parties. In 2008, the United States embarked on a three-pronged approach to reset its policy towards Pakistan. The Pentagon, Department of State and House and Senate leadership acted in concert to engage Pakistani civil and military leadership on wide-ranging domestic and bilateral concerns.

With the installation of a civilian government in Pakistan, the United States showed new vigor and resolve in supporting the outcome of elections and democratic transition. In late March 2008, the U.S. deputy secretary of state again visited Pakistan and publicly stated that the United States was re-evaluating and energizing its anti-terrorism/religious extremism policy. Additionally, the United States would also assist the coalition government in facilitating Pakistan’s transition to democracy and

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Saeed Shafqat (2009), op.cit

Ibid


a sustainable multi-party system. The rest of the year saw an intensification of personal and institutional interactions, with a notable shift away from those of a military-to-military nature to a broadening of relations with civilian leadership and institutions. It is pertinent to note that in 2008, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen, paid five visits to Pakistan, meeting civilian and military leaders alike and holding various discussions ranging from sustaining coalitions to combating terrorism.\(^3\)

After six House delegations, four Senate delegations, three visits by the head of CENTCOM and four visits by State Department officials, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visited Pakistan in December 2008, making it clear that the United States was ready to overcome the trust deficit between the two nations and convey its interest in a long-term relationship. In July 2008, President Bush invited Prime Minister Gilani to the United States, and in November, President Zardari attended a UN forum on the “Culture of Peace.”\(^4\) Gilani and Zardari both made efforts to assure U.S. policymakers and the global community that the civilian leadership in Pakistan was persevering in its fight against terrorism and needed sympathy along with financial support. In 2009, President Zardari paid an official visit to the U.S. to negotiate issues ranging from support for democracy to socioeconomic reform to combating terrorism, a promising sign for the transition to democracy and evolution of a multi-party system.\(^5\)

The PPP led coalition government created a record, as it became the first civilian elected government that completed its five-year term. Yet on the onset of assuming power, it quickly met with a variety of events that challenged its true influence as a representative form of government. The Mumbai attack (2008) was cataclysmic in shaping the direction of civil-military relations. The civilian government had just been less than six months in power. India was vociferous in denouncing Pakistan and claimed that the Pakistani state sponsored these terrorist attacks.\(^6\)

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\(^3\) Admiral Mullen met military and civilian leaders and demanded that Pakistan must curb all forms of terrorism and also applauded the efforts of military in combating Al-Qaeda militants in its tribal belt. “Admiral Mullen demands action against Pak-based extremists”. Asia News International, December 4, 2008.

\(^4\) Saeed Shafqat (2009) p.97

\(^5\) Ibid

government in its naivety agreed to send Pakistan's Intelligence chief to India but the military asserted and rebuffed the civil government from taking such a step. Recognizing its fragile nature the political leadership quickly conceded space to the military to take the lead on security and defense matters. The PPP led regime made three important decisions: it gave a three-year extension to the Army Chief; second, it passed the 18th Constitutional Amendment as mentioned before; and third, resuscitated the parliament as the legislative body. Despite significant political achievements including: the passage of the 18th Amendment, the seventh National Finance Commission Award (which governs the distribution of resources between the federal government and the four provinces) and a Balochistan package (economic and other measures to address provincial sentiment after Musharraf's use of force there) the political government's public stock has been low on account of its weak governance and its inability to solve the deepening energy crisis, rising inflation and persistent joblessness. Simultaneously, corruption, violence and sectarian strife continued to deepen the crisis of governance. All of this has eroded public confidence in party governments and democracy. Moreover, its poor and insensitive handling of the worst floods in Pakistan's history in the summer of 2010 could have turned out to be a watershed for the resurgence of the military and even the demise of party rule.

Nawaz Sharif: Resurrecting Dominant Party System

As highlighted above, from Zia-ul Haq to General Qamar Javed Bajwa, the civilian leaders have made the selection of the army chief. Additionally, the political leadership has also appointed the air and naval chiefs. The exception has been General Musharraf's tenure 1999-2008, which as mentioned previously appointed General Kayani as the COAS (2007-2010 and extension was given by the civilian government). The civilian leadership either did not fully comprehend the institutional culture of the military or the professional attributes of the army chief. At the higher

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6 Omar Wariaich, op.cit
7 On 18th Amendment has brought fundamental changes in the 1973 Constitution. to mention a few, it took away the power of the President to dismiss the Parliament, it has empowered the Provinces both for legislation and financial resource allocation. It has made Prime Minister the appointing authority for the selection of all Services Chiefs, the President is to only retify it.
8 Policy analysts and Op-Eds were extremely critical how the civilian government handled the flood situation in the country; see for example, S. Akbar Zaidi, "A Drowning State", Dawn, August, 20, 2010 and Mushtaq Gaadi, "Engineering Failures", Dawn, 16 August, 2010.
command level, the Pakistan’s military encourages open discussion and consultative process at the Chairman Joint Services Committee and Corps Commanders meetings. Due deliberation and divergence of views is allowed and tolerated but once a decision is made the ownership for execution of the decision is collective and that is what distinguishes the military from the civilian leadership. The tradition of collective responsibility and cabinet consensus is weak and the prime ministers have been hesitant to routinize cabinet meetings and collective decision-making. The PML-N under Nawaz Sharif in particular has been notorious for this. What is of equal significance is that those who rose to the rank of Lieutenant General also had strong professional credentials. Kayani, Raheel and Bajwa have commanded corps, done instructional and operational duties and have held staff positions. Therefore, on assuming the position, the seeming docility and apolitical attributes become meaningless because the position of army chief by its very nature is political—a role that was expected and assigned to Chairman Joint Chief of Staff, (CJCS) never became significant because the command of the army has always been with the COAS and not the CJCS. The armed forces have been cognizant of this reality, that the position of the CJCS was ceremonial and catered for seniority and not command and authority.

After the 2013 elections, the PML-N under Nawaz Sharif, assumed power with a stronger electoral mandate (won 45% of the NA Seats and secured 35% of the National votes, highest in the country) as compared to the PPP’s coalition. From the outset Nawaz Sharif gave indications of reviving the dominant party system and securing the subordination of the military. Upon the completion of General Kayani’s tenure in November 2013, Nawaz Shairf appointed General Raheel Sharif as COAS. The PML-N government showed little interest in initiating a consultative process within the parliament or ensuring the sanctity of parliament as the key forum for deliberating and resolving national issues. Overestimating its parliamentary strength, it allowed Imran Khan and his party, Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaf (PTI), to launch extra-parliamentary protests—the Dharna (sit in and street protests, December 2013)—sidelining the parliament. On the other hand the military, cognizant of Nawaz Sharif’s intent and dispensation, were cautious in dealing with the government. This led some to argue in the media that the military was providing covert support to Imran

5During 2015, the PM held only three Cabinet meetings.
Khan's Dharnas. The effect was an escalation of distrust between the military and the PML-N government. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif adopted a cavalier attitude instead of diffusing Daharnas and engaging the parliament or Imran Khan, he indulged in foreign tours and made overtures to seek reapprochment with India. In this regard, he showed little interest in either taking the parliament in confidence or consulting with the military. This approach further alienated the military which was struggling to curb the GWT by preparing for operations and getting increasingly suspicious of proxy wars with India.

General Raheel Sharif: 2013-16

In November 2013, General Raheel Sharif was appointed Pakistan’s 15th Chief of Army Staff, succeeding General Kiyani. The military under Raheel Sharif continued their strategy of supporting the civilian government but also maintaining and defending its role in the governance sphere of the country. General Sharif streamlined policy management within the military by institutionalizing corps commander meetings for instance, and ensuring their regularity. In fact, around 30 such meetings were held in a period of three years, approximately on a monthly basis. He adopted a four-pronged strategy, first, he showed determination in disrupting extremist and terrorist networks, second, he effectively used the ISPR to portray the military leadership as being co-equal to the civilian. An example of this was posting pictures of the COAS with the Prime Minister at high profile events and mannerism of public display of such meetings. Third, he refurbished the meaning of the term ‘strategic alliance’ by center-staging the military on security and defense by engaging with foreign defense delegations. For example, in 2014, he received 33 delegations at the GHQ, including U.S Congressional leaders to Russia, China, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, South Africa and Australia—to name a few; thus legitimizing the hegemonic position of the military in Pakistani politics. Fourth, he expanded the constabulary functions of the military; making it responsive for disaster and terrorist attacks management. On assuming the charge of COAS, he fully capitalized on the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), projecting an image of co-equality between the military and the civilian leadership.

5Launch of Dharna.
5In 2013, the PM made eight visits abroad, including US and China, in 2014, twelve, including US and China and in 2015, Nineteen.
5Calculated by the author along with dates
It is ironic that Nawaz Sharif has appointed the highest number of COAS in Pakistan's history, yet the military has maintained independence from the civilian government and been autonomous in its own agenda-setting. Thus under General Raheel Sharif, the military's tactic was to expand its area of influence in strategic matters related to policy making.

In January 2017, media group Dawn's magazine *Herald* named General Raheel Sharif the “person of the year” for 2016. The magazine called him a “predictable” winner, describing the title as one bestowed on “the most talked about or the most influential or the most powerful or all three rolled into one.”³⁵

In the same magazine, lawyer Saroop Ijaz recalls the disturbing death of labor leader Lutf Amim Shibli, who committed suicide when General Sharif retired as COAS. Ijaz suggests that the event symbolized Raheel Sharif's public popularity, his image of being a “savior” and people's dependency on the armed forces to bring order and security to the country.³⁶

Two occasions during his tenure caught people’s attention; one, his surprising ‘inactivity’ during the second half of 2014, when large-scale sit-ins brought the country to a stand-still and lead many to expect another military coup. And two, his launch of operation Zarb-e-Azb, a much awaited military offensive strategized to uproot terrorists across the board, finally rejecting the possibility of ‘good terrorists’.³⁷

Raheel Sharif’s patience during the sit-ins at a time when most people expected extreme military action revealed the very crux of the military’s position in Pakistan. That it has the power to mold and channel public sentiment into a pre-determined end result, is not shocking to many who understand and see the military as the country’s ultimate power. The sit-ins eventually ended amongst a storm of conspiracy theories, alleging military’s involvement in destabilizing the civilian government.³⁸

The military under General Raheel Sharif showed responsiveness in situations of crisis, more so compared to the civilian government. For example, in the wake of the Taliban attack on Karachi airport, in June 2014, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had reacted by promising the people of

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³⁵ Ali Haider Habib, “Person of the Year 2016”, *Herald*, 50(1), January 2017, 71. Also see Omar Wariaich, op.cit
Pakistan peace and by creating a committee that would engage and talk with militants. On the other hand, the military's strategy under Raheel Sharif was aimed at action and delivering results in the form of launching counterattacks on terrorists and their hideouts.59

Operations and Their Impact on State and Society

Three recent operations; Swat Operation (2009), Operation Zarb-e Azab (2014), and Operation Rad-ul Fasad (2016), each have proportionately expanded the role and salience of military in internal and external security and foreign affairs. These operations have also expanded the constabulary functions of the military as operations in Karachi, posting of Rangers and paramilitary forces in KP, FATA and Balochistan clearly demonstrate. The military launched Zarb-e-Azab in May 2014 and was skillful in disrupting terrorist networks; foreign countries and military experts globally lauded the operation's success. Later in November 2014, General Sharif paid successful visits to the US, where top officials of the State Department and Pentagon received him and even Vice-President Joe Biden met him. These visits not only applauded the efforts of the Pakistani military to combat the GWT but also lent legitimacy to the military's hegemonic position, boosting its morale and recognizing its professional capabilities. While the military was passing through celebratory months of disrupting the terrorists, on 16th December 2014, Pakistan witnessed its worst terrorist attack in Peshawar, where more than 100 children and teenage students, along with their teachers and school staff, were brutally murdered in an Army Public School. The incident was catastrophic and shook the conscience of the entire nation—it galvanized both society and the state to show resolve and uproot terrorist groups. The Tehrik Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility and the nation rallied behind the military to eliminate these groups.60 Following the Peshawar incident, the COAS visited the UK in January 2015, besides meetings with the defense officials; he was given a rare treatment of being received by the British Prime Minister at 10 Downing Street. The Peshawar tragedy prompted a wave of global sympathy for Pakistan's military and also led to a rare moment of

unity between the civilian and military leadership. The two, along with national support, banded together to formulate a National Action Plan (NAP). It identified an ambitious 20-point agenda to eliminate terrorism of all forms and shapes, build peace, promote harmony, curb extremism and infuse tolerance in society. However, unfortunately, its promise has remained largely unfulfilled.61

The socio-psychological impact of Pakistan military’s involvement on the Global War on Terrorism remains understudied, particularly how this has impacted the military itself. The same can be said about its impact on society. With reference to, the military in the post 2014 period, five trends are visible; first a rise in the death of young officers (from lieutenant to colonel) has lead to both greater vigor and participation of the young officer and valorization of their success.62 Second, they have become vocal about their concerns on the nature of the war and how it is being conducted. Third, it clearly shows that the recruitment pattern of the armed forces is changing and those joining the army hail from humbler backgrounds.63 Fourth, since the transition to democracy in 2008, but particularly after 2013, routinization and publicity of Corps Commanders meetings have become conspicuous; sometimes these meetings either precede or are followed by political events/cabinet meetings and a rise in their frequency coincides with the prevailing political conditions in the country. Thus the Corps Commanders meetings have acquired the image and status like a meeting of the Politbureau of a Communist Party. After each corps commander’s meeting, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) issues a statement about what was discussed in these meetings, which hides more than reveals the nature of discussion and what actions will be taken. Fifth, the military has become savvy in using electronic media including tweets and posts about press conferences by the ISPR. Thus the military is active in influencing citizen behavior and societal conduct and is striving to build trust.64

61 National Action Plan, established National and Provincial Apex Committees, which were headed by the PM and Chief Ministers in the provinces—where Corps Commanders and DG Rangers, Frontier Force routinely met but action on the ground remained limited in respect to the promised 20 points.

62 Number of officers killed from Okara, Multan, Swabi.

63 See Shuja Nawaz, op. cit

While the military appears to be winning public trust, however, political parties have shown little interest in comprehending these trends. Terrorism and border security threats/violations, particularly in the ‘Indian held Kashmir’ continue to keep the military ‘India centric’ and thus perpetuate hegemony. On the other hand political parties, particularly the PML-N, have been more open about improving relations with India, while the PPP has shown reluctance and ambiguity.65 On becoming Prime Minister in August 2018, Imran Khan also revealed his intent and gestured towards seeking peace with India. However, political parties have done little or no consultation on relations with India either with the military or within themselves. It is equally important to recognize that the civilian leadership has shown little interest on building minimal consensus on the nature and direction of democracy, party system and upholding the rule of law and democratic values. Resultantly, good governance through democratic government remains illusionary. And yet, despite political uncertainty, the restoration of party based representative government is a positive development as it aids in nation-building and helps in creating consensus on issues of national significance.

Re-Building Public Trust: Winning Hearts and Minds

Under Musharraf, the military’s professional reputation was damaged on three counts: first allegations of ‘abduction’ of suspected militants by Intelligence Agencies (read ISI, MI) and illegally handing over to the US—the case of ‘missing persons’ became quite controversial; second, during operations in FATA and NWFP (2004-2007) allegations grew that the army violated ethical principles and practices of warfare and this tarnished its image and reputation among Pakistani citizens; third, it was argued that the military cultivates, protects and supports certain ‘Jehadi networks’ implying that a military that relies on a dubious civilian force to pursue its professional objectives is tolerating mercenaries in the battlefield—the very anti-thesis of professionalism. However, this must be seen in the global context of ‘out-sourcing’ security functions to none-state actors, as the US did in Iraq. People lost confidence and trust in the army, therefore restoring this trust became a major challenge in the post 2008 period.

The return to normalcy in Swat where the military operation in 2009 drove out the Pakistani Taliban did considerably restore public trust.66 The July-August 2010 floods, which claimed 1600 lives, displaced 10 million

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55Ibid
56Mohammad Feyyaz
people in the country and caused extensive infrastructure and crop damage; saw the military take a lead role in relief and rescue operations and in reconstruction. 67 Similarly, the military’s resolve in Zarb-e-Azab and later in Rad-ul-Fasad but more importantly following the Peshawar incident, has given fresh legitimacy to the military. This contrasted with the weak response from political leaders and political parties in managing such catastrophes. This means that it is too soon to tell whether the ‘deference’ the military has shown for the political leadership is a tactical shift or more deeply-rooted. It is visible that both are showing forbearance and caution not to violate the trust and at the highest level the military leadership appears to be giving advice to civilian leaders, albeit privately but firmly. Yet another less recognized trait of Pakistani military elites is that for almost two decades they have been deeply involved in insurgency, counter terrorism and clandestine warfare along with the US. Therefore there is a segment of Pakistani military officers, who are seasoned, proficient and have acquired skills to confidently communicate with the domestic and international political leaders. The war in Afghanistan, tensions with India, deepening involvement in the strategic dialogue with the US and military operations in the KP and FATA, have given them a new professional skills to negotiate—traits that are perhaps lacking within the civilian government. Thus, the current generation of military leaders appears to be showing greater forbearance towards political leadership as compared to their predecessors—it is still too soon to tell what the future holds. Under, General Kayani (2007-2013) civil-military relations in Pakistan showed a level of trust that facilitated smooth transition from one civilian government to another. Under General Raheel Sharif (2013-16) the military’s graph on public trust further rose. The military also gained global recognition and legitimacy as they indicated support for democratic processes, professional competence and determination to uproot and destroy terrorist networks.

Despite the Dawn Leaks fiasco, General Qamar Bajawa has shown considerable acumen in managing the civilian leadership and also continuing with anti-terrorism operations. 68 Under his watch, 2018 elections have been held

67 For an informative analysis, see, Saloni Salil, "Role of Pakistan’s Armed Forces in 2010 Floods", https://www.academia.edu/2000105/Role_of_Pakistan_s_Armed_Forces_in_2010_Floods, accessed on 25 February, 2018

68 The report alleged that the civilian leaders were critical of the military and its intelligence agencies role in politics and reprimanded military leaders of the consequences. This was supposedly a secret meeting and the military took exception as to who leaked it to the media.
and third successive peaceful transfer of power from one civilian to another party led government has occurred. He has been equally shrewd in managing relations with China, Iran, the US, Saudi Arabia and Russia—in the sense of both military and foreign relations. Although all U.S officials/diplomats visiting Pakistan have met General Bajawa in the GHQ, it is unusual that he remains the only COAS, who has not visited the U.S, as yet. Under his command the placing and position of a new set of commanders has already begun, which will shape the orientation and outlook of the Pakistani army in the coming decade, it is likely that the Professionals will retain their dominance. It is also pertinent to recognize that the army is the largest among three services and the Army Chief does have an impact in facilitating the selection of air force and naval chiefs. General Bajawa’s tenure would be crucial in sustaining or disrupting democracy.

Summary Conclusion

As noted above the paradox of Pakistan’s turbulent political history is that the military has demonstrated institutional resilience, while the parliamentary institutions remain feeble and the civilian leaders continue to fumble. As an organization, the military has built its image as the countervailing force capable of challenging ‘Belligerent India’; providing relief during natural disasters, intervening in times of political anarchy and playing an undeniably crucial role in the fight against terrorism. This has helped the armed forces to earn a tangible place within Pakistani society. Yet the paradox is that Pakistani society continues to show immense capability to participate in a rapidly evolving and internationally connected economic structure. In this context, the military’s role is one that will naturally be scrutinized and assessed by the people of Pakistan. The challenge for the armed forces today is that on one side it is carefully cultivating a co-equal relationship with the dithering civilian leadership and on the other hand continues to strive maintaining its hegemony and influence over a population that is increasingly politically aware, expressive and recognizes the values of democracy, accountable governance and participatory and representative leadership.

In this context, the nature of civil-military relations has changed, yet the military continues to exert its strength and remains a strategic, alternative point of contact for foreign powers, non-state actors and political leaders of diverging dispensations. This effective portrayal of ‘unity of command’ and politbureau style, allows the military to convey a sense of strength and resilience as an institution in Pakistan’s political setting. As discussed
above, there are two overarching factors on which there is broad consensus among all the three groups of officers (Ideological, Professional and Praetorian)—one that India is a serious and potent threat and Pakistan’s military must be ready to counter this threat on any and all forums. Second, nuclear assets and the nuclear power status of Pakistan must be preserved and protected. It is disturbing to observe that during 2017-18, Pakistan has witnessed an upsurge in religious militancy. What worries international observers and domestic policy analysts is that there may be chances of the Ideological and the Praetor types of officers banding together. Nonetheless, the chances of such collusion among the military brass remain remote and minimal. For the military and the civil society the critical challenge in the 2018 is that the electoral contestation and its outcome in the country is putting pressure on the higher command structure of the military as the emerging countervailing civilian power center is also Punjab-driven and that is testing the power base of the military elites. Which path the military chooses will echo its professionalism and institutional strength or lack of it. Ironically, the onus of rescuing, recasting and sustaining the democratic process hinges on the military. Its continuity and sustainability demands civic engagement, democratized political parties, professional and citizen friendly bureaucracy, an independent judiciary, free and responsible media, religious groups that are willing to tolerate minorities and religious freedoms; and business groups that are willing to adopt principles of free market and foreign direct investment in concert with national and international rules. Fixing Pakistan’s governance problems and realigning institutional roles is a daunting task as the military re-positions itself as co-equals with the civilian leadership. Military’s co-equality dispensation indicates that military is struggling to sustain its hegemony, it offers the civilian leadership an opportunity to resurrect the party system and establish the supremacy of the parliament as an institution that is the embodiment of Pakistani federation and also the real custodian of its citizen’s voice, interests and rights. Will the civilian leaders grab this opportunity? Or, will Pakistan’s slide into political disorder and chaos prompting another Praetor to jolt any prospects of democratic consolidation? At 71, the future of democracy and representative government in Pakistan remains precarious.
Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies

PAKISTAN

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