



## RESEARCH PAPER

### Civil-Military Relations in Pakistan: Reasons of Imran Khan's Downfall

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## ABSTRACT

During last three decades Civil-Military Relations debate intensified and has received renewed interest. Unfortunately Pakistan had long history of troubled relations; military intervened directly on three occasions. While not being in government, military still manage to control and remain the most hegemonic institution of the state. The objective of this article is to understand the causes of imbalanced civil-military relations in Pakistan and reasons of Imran Khan differences with army. This article discusses civil-military relations, army's direct and indirect involvement in politics, political anomalies and its implication on Pakistan. The key variables and military's political behaviour are explained through various empirical examples from Pakistani historical and contemporary politics. Researchers have used qualitative content analysis to explain various phenomena's and realities of civil-military relations in Pakistan. This article has tried to describe civil-military relations in Pakistan, reasons and role of army in Khan's downfall and provides a theoretical solution.

## KEYWORDS

Civil, Democracy, Government, Military, Politicians, Politics

## Introduction

For Military plays key role in nation building maintaining internal stability and state security. The term civil-military relations goes against the historical foundation as traditionally these were two completely distinguishing different sphere as it was used in America and western literature in twentieth century. Traditionally there are three main types of any state's democratic and political structure

- **Military State:** where military provides administrative and political leadership and responsible for running the state. Military is powerful enough to control decision making, foreign policy, defence policy and also deeply involved in economic matters. Historically, majority of states falls in his category.
- **Civilian-Led State:** military does not openly concede any administrative and political role. Military is vital to underwrite political order, national security and territorial integrity. Military is reserved to curtail internal and external challenges. Although not politically active but whenever and wherever civilian governments deploy them they perform their duties.
- **Civilian State:** civilian governments do not need military to establish or maintain political order or handle emergency. The civilian institutions are strong enough to protect civilian supremacy but still military has the key role in decision making, defence policy, foreign policy and intelligence (Niaz, 2015).

If second type is carefully nourished it could lead to the third type which is the ideal of any liberal democratic state. In some cases the second type can also lead back to the first type. Pakistan and India are classic examples of these scenarios where trajectories separated rapidly. Both countries got independence in 1947 and their militaries had colonial background but Indian Military and civilian governments gradually strengthen their institutions which helped them to establish civilian supremacy. In Pakistani instance the overdeveloped military followed viceregal traditions (Alavi, 1972). Initially followed civilians orders but since 1958 this balance had been steadily evolved in the favour of military either they were in power or not.

Every Civilian prime minister faced the same consequences, not a single one was able to complete his term in the office. Imran Khan a national hero turned into politician but could not achieve any notable success in political landscape but after alleged support from the establishment it gain tremendous popularity and became prime minister of the country. But this euphoria did not last long as difference between both started to increase. Khan's popularity and mass support could not help him to stay in the office and finally he had to leave office after vote of no confidence in parliament. This article explains Military's role in Pakistani politics generally and in Imran Khan's period and what factors led to his downfall.

### **Literature Review**

Huntington's debate on civil-military relations is considered the most important one in this field. His book *The Soldier and the State* in 1957 focuses on officer corps, professionalism, military ethics and military mind. Huntington's theory based on three imperatives (functional, societal and normative) which determines civil-military relations in any state. The first one is based on state security, the more external challenges or security threats the more chances of unbalanced civil-military relations. Second imperative is based on two components, the ideological and constitutional. There are various types of ideologies like Conservative, Liberal, Marxist and Fascist are constant component of any society. While the other component is constitutional this enforces the legal restrains and legal structure to maintain the institutional balance. It provides institutional framework which offers institutional equity to work harmoniously in state.

The third one is Normative or Perspective imperative is about the civilian control which he further classified into subjective and objective Control. Subjective Control is about civilizing the military and maximizing civilian control. This kind of control is problematic because various civilian groups' struggles and fights to establish their authority and no unanimous guideline would be followed. On the other hand objective control is about creating a balance between both institutions. This distribution and balance of power between military and civil institution helps to achieve desired professionalism, military ethics in the military (Huntington S. P., 1957/2000).

Janowitz (1960) believes that it is not possible to separate civilian and military institutions especially in developing countries and Huntington's model of objective cannot be applied. He explains the sociological perspective to achieve ideal Civil-military relations (Yousafzai, 2022). Rebecca Schiff (1990) Concordance theory explains that classic civil-military theories are suitable for western or mature democracies while in countries where democratic values are not mature, it is not possible to achieve desired goals. She argues that professionalism, military mind and military ethics are very important to balance civil-military relations but historical background, cultural and regional characteristics are equally significant in this regard. Her concordance theory explains that it is crucial that all three partner military, political elite and citizenry must agree on four indicators (Military

officer's social composition, decision making process, recruitment method, decision and military style). Apart from these scholars a lot of others like Vagts, Samuel Finer, Nordlinger and Kohn have presented different perspectives to achieve balanced institutional power structure.

Pakistan's experience suggests that the most crucial variable is national unity especially in the early days on its creation external threat was a unifying cohesion as Huntington explains in his formative imperative. Huntington's societal imperative explains society's ideological foundation as conservative societies are pro-military and liberal societies are pro democratic. Pakistani society is conservative in its formation which allows military to use religion which we have seen on various occasions like (Zia's Islamization, Faizabad sit-in) to manipulate the situation for their own benefit. Schiff's theoretical explanation helps to understand Pakistani army's historical background. These theories are very useful to explore civil-military relations in Pakistan.

Imran Khan's rise and downfall is perfect explanation of these theories. Janowitz's theoretical account is helpful in Khan's case because it explained the factors (sociological context) which helped military to adopt certain attitude. Huntington's functional and normative imperatives help to understand Khan's era.

### **Historical Background**

Military authoritarian, involvement and intervention in political and civilian matters firstly reared in the first decade after independence. In these crucial years they developed the understanding of peculiar circumstances and interpreted its self-assumed organizational role to resolve political glitches. Military applied militaristic methods and skills to fix political problems. Jinnah inherited grave economic, administrative and security threats to newly born state where all institutions have colonial infrastructure. It was a mammoth task to develop a coherent political unit because all institutions had colonial structure, and leadership along with masses had little experience of democratic values and norms (Shah, 2014).

Pakistan inherited apolitical professional military with strict hierarchy, discipline and obedience to constitutionally legal authorities. But military was imbued with the colonial perspective of distrust for politicians and strongly prefer vice regal system to ensure national security (Cohen, 1984). As military gradually overcome all early challenges and became more organized and equipped so they started to compare their achievements with the political disparities and bad governance which further deepen the internal divisions. Military's success and pessimistic political view sharpened the differences between both institutions (O'Donnell, 1986).

Although Pakistani military became professional but this professionalism did not help to depoliticize them instead it increased their interests in civilian matters. It encouraged senior officers under commander in chief General Ayub Khan to voluntarily assume the role of organizing state and society. Initially, military was satisfied with their role of stabilizing authority remaining behind the curtains but their self-righteousness and political circus made it direct. They believed that multi ethnicities and demand for regional representation would cause national disintegration and only solution is the centralized form of government. Modernized economy and uniform political institution would deprive politicians from exploiting regional differences (Wilcox, 1965)

### **First Military Rule**

After determining that parliamentary government would not be suitable for solving national problems rather it would bring more chaos, military finally decided to take control in October 1958 by abrogating 1956's constitution. By seizing power they came into the position of direct control which cemented many political distortions of the first ten years (Jalal, 1995). After they completely took control it was clear that this coup had no intentions of ringing back sanity and stability (Khan, 1972) though the institution was quick to target the culprits who were responsible of disturbing peace, misusing resources.

Ayub Khan strengthened his rule through immensely increasing commercial interests, controlling media and excluding certain politicians and political parties and including bureaucracy, landlords and financial groups in the government. To get the public support and provide an alternative of existing political parties Ayub Khan introduced Basic democracies. His experience was not successful because it further widens the gap between the wings of the Pakistan. His centralized form of government alienated Bengalis who already had less representation in almost all institutions. After 1965's war he could not really hold on the situation. On immense public pressure he resigned in 1969 and handed over the government to Yahya Khan. To meet the public demand he announced Pakistan's first general elections. Without looking the ground realities and increasing differences between both parts his step proved even more deadly for the frigidly united nation. 1970's election results shocked the military because the Awami party's big win was beyond their imagination. Military was reluctant to hand over the power to their counterparts. Yahya's inefficiency to handle post election situation turned out disastrous for country. Military action failed to prevent the inevitable and on 16th Dec, 1971 East Pakistan became Bangladesh.

### **Bhutto Quest for Dominance**

Post-military state is like newly born state where both institutions are marginally institutionalized (Heeger, 1977). Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had huge task of redefining roles, reconstruct the political institution and made sure to keep military in barracks. He tried to establish civilian supremacy through various steps like establishing strong hold on bureaucracy, bourgeois revolution by restricting financial groups (Robert, 1975). Bhutto wanted to control military and bureaucracy in subordinate position; it was hard for him to maintain a balance between a reformer and a rule but he ended up being a ruler (Sayeed, 1980). He purged bureaucracy, interfered in the internal institutional affairs and changed the command structure of military. Although military was at the back foot because of humiliating defeat but his actions were disliked at large scale. He tried to establish a parallel institution FSF (Federal Security Force).

Despite his all efforts to keep military away from political and administrative matters he himself bound to call military on various occasions. Bhutto mainly focused on keep military away from political arena but did not pay any attention to build democratic institution which could help him in a long run. Whenever military's power, authority or interests are challenges they keep grudges (Nordlinger, 1977). Economic and social conditions of the country were in tatters but PPP government did not care except their rule. They Bhutto and his cabinet wanted to strengthen their government by suppressing opposition and they used force and military to deal with PNA agitation. Bhutto called early elections to win two third majority and transform parliamentary system into presidential system. Weakness of political institutions incites military to interfere (Welch, 1976). Same happened in the case of Bhutto; his authoritative style of government led him to his

downfall. On public and political party's movement against Bhutto, military decided to take control (Shah, 2014).

### **Second Military Rule**

After coming into power on 5th July, 1977, Zia tried to legitimize his rule on the name of Islam. He endorsed PNA's demand of Islamic system and started the Islamization of the country. He kept politicians under check and flourish a new breed of politicians who were young, loyal and obedient to military. Under Zia regime the military's corporate interests increased enormously. Military's role enhanced in civilian departments and all key civilian positions were held by military officers. His rule is perfect description of Huntington's societal imperative, where conservative pro-military texture of Pakistani society allowed him to cultivate the religious sentiments of the masses and exploit them for his own purpose. Bad governance along with bad economic conditions collided with religious extremism destroyed the fabric of Pakistani society (Haqqani, 2005). In 1985 on domestic and international pressure, he allowed limited participation to politicians and party less election were held in the country. Power sharing was difficult even with his own hand-picked government and forced Junejo to resign (Arif, 1995). Although USA funding and economic aid provided him strong support but gradually need of an alliance in Afghan war reduced and a military rule was not much needed. Ojari camp mishap further amplified the distance between the both allies. 17th August 1988 his assassination left a sectarian and divided society.

### **Democratic Era under the Shadow of Military**

Governments of Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif replaced shortly after coming into power. This decade marked as the worst form of parliamentary democracy where no constitution was followed and respected. After Zia's rule military became more confident and determined to keep a check on political developments. They had complete hold on politicians, civilian institutions and bureaucracy. Apart from military's hegemonic and traditional mindset, bad governance, poor economy, lack of democratic values provided the way for another martial law (Shafiqat, 1997).

### **Musharraf Era**

After coming into power Musharraf tremendously defended and promoted military's corporate interests. Retired military officers were hired on the important positions in civilian institutions. With military's increasing influence in all type of civilian institutions like educational, bureaucratic and semi-governmental, it became more politicized than ever (Shaikh, 2009). Modernization was another important feature of Musharraf era. War on terror, terrorism and *Lal Masjid* incident decreased his popularity to a great extent. Main Political parties signed a charter of democracy against Musharraf and started struggle for democracy in Pakistan. Benazir Bhutto got support for west and pressurized Musharraf for letting them contest general election 2008. After her assassination PPP won election and once again another democratic era started in Pakistan with a hope that this time there might be a change.

### **Decade of Democracy**

PPP came into power in 2008 and completed its term in 2013 and handed over the government to next civilian government. PML (N) came into power in 2013 and after completing its five years, peacefully transferred power to PTI government in 2018. It was a biggest achievement for democracy in Pakistan because for the first time in the history

two civilian governments completed their tenures. But it was not as easy as it seems as there were great challenges which made it obvious that you have to follow military to stay in power. Memo gate scandal was a serious damage for PPP government but other factors which contributed was the bad governance, poor economy, corruption; terrorism and load shedding badly damaged the reputation of the democracy in the country.

PML (N) after coming into power focused on good governance. During their tenure GDP increased, Karachi peace was restored, load shedding was decreased as compare to previous government but still it was not enough. Military is an institution of grudge and works for its institutional respect. Musharraf trial became a source of concern for military leadership because it was kind of humiliating for them that an army General will be trailed in civil court and set a bad precedent. Musharraf was allowed to fly from country on medical ground with the help of senior military leadership as he admitted that Army Chief General Raheel helped him (Jahangir, 2018). Musharraf trial became test case for civilian government and became a bone of contention between civil-military relations. Dawn leaks further fueled the fire and with one year Nawaz Sharif along with her daughter Maryam Nawaz was disqualified.

### **Rise of Imran Khan**

Imran Khan was elected in general election 2018 and became 22<sup>nd</sup> prime minister of Pakistan. Everything was in his favor. A national hero, after years of struggle turned into a charismatic politician who ousts two mainstream political parties. He appeared as a better replacement for the energetic vibrant youth who were disappointed from existing political order. Rallies and processions conducted all over the Pakistan, catchy songs, strong social media influence and emotional anti-corruption speeches attracted the many. Promises of change, *Naya* Pakistan and one million jobs were so mesmerizing for common people. His position was so secure, it seemed that Imran Khan might be first prime minister to complete his five years. Apart from immense public support it is established fact that he came into power with the help of Pakistani military. Imran Khan came into limelight in 2011 as an alternate option to conventional political parties like PPP and PML (N). In 2014, Islamabad sit-in against the sitting government was backed by military officers (Anis, 2018). Army directly and indirectly had a role in politics and in general elections 2018. Although Imran Khan had a strong vote bank but the fact is in Pakistan that no one can come into power without the help of establishment. Opposition called his government "hybrid" named him "selected" and he proudly named it "one page" (Kermani, 2011).

### **Poor Economy**

Imran Khan's government remained unable to provide any solid roadmap to improve economic conditions of the country. Khan government inherited a bad economy and even during four years of his government he faced various issues like political polarization, impacts of Covid-19, and economic breakdown. To meet the challenges PTI government started "Ehsaas" program to provide monthly cash payment to 15 million needy people. Controlled Corona & evaded lockdown despite all pressure compelled WHO (World Health Organization) to say "Learn from Pakistan". But these steps were not enough to encounter the gigantic challenges and to the promises he made before coming into power.

PTI government failed to fulfill most of its promises like one million jobs, good governance, 90 days plan and better economy. Worst inflation, devaluation of the rupee and rising price of petrol, gas and electricity tremendously decreased the graph of his popularity (Salikuddin, 2022). Repeating changing finance minister caused discontinuity

in the policies when economy was in dire need of stability. PTI's biggest mistake was to delay to ask IMF for economic assistance because country needed funds to meet the rising financing gap in the country's current account. This had predictable deleterious consequences, eroding foreign exchange reserves, putting pressure on the rupee and undermining investor confidence.

### **Bad Governance**

Imran Khan came into power to change and transform Pakistan into a *Naya* Pakistan. He promised an ideal social welfare system and improving governance. He tried to fulfill his promise by taking various initiatives like "Ehsaas Health Card", more than 150 shelters initiated, and Billion Tree Tsunami program. To improve educational system and bridge the gap between private and public institutions Single National Curriculum (SNC) was started by his government to uniform the educational system in curriculum, medium of instruction and assessment.

PTI government remained unable to manage properly the province of Punjab. Chief Minister of Punjab did not have any proper administrative experience so he could not perform as per expectations of people of Punjab. Imran Khan was asked on number of occasion about the merit of this appointment but he was failed to provide any logical explanation. But CM Punjab was used as a puppet, all important decisions, appointments and all matters of the province were seen and handled by his family and friends. CM Punjab was used as a pawn for their corruption (Kermani, 2011).

### **Problems in Civil-Military Relations**

Once again history did repeat itself as another prime minister had to face problems in managing state affairs by different institutions including Army. He tried to pursue an independent foreign policy and tried to play an effective role in military's institutional appointment process. In October, rumbling civil-military relations stirred when Imran Khan went public with his keen interest in the appointment of new ISI chief and refused to be a rubber stump. Army chief nominated Lieutenant-General Nadeem Anjum but Khan wanted to retain someone else as director general ISI. (Almeida, 2022). Imran Khan's self-imposed disaster tattered the one page (Sareen, 2021). Tension escalated between prime minister and army chief. After two weeks of escalated tension between both institutions finally Imran Khan issued a formal notification appointing Lieutenant-General Nadeem Anjum as new ISI chief (Kermani, 2011).

Imran Khan's governance was in problems, economic conditions of the country were not good, Chines were alienated and Americans were not happy. But all this could be tolerated if he had not crossed the Rubicon. It was interference in the internal institutional matter politicizing the already politicized officers such disobedience is neither forgiven nor forgotten by Pakistani military (Sareen, 2021). Imran Khan came into power with the help of establishment but he tried to do things on his own. He was a populist, people's favorite, have mass support but still one cannot cross the Rubicon and power lies in the hand of real power holders. Military is the real power holder in the country and one can't deny the fact and Khan paid the heavy price of this defiance.

### **Vote of No-Confidence**

It is important for a politician to have generous mind and heart to accommodate his political opponents and give them due respect and weight. It is important for politicians to know the art of dialogue. But Imran Khan publically refused to have any communication

with any political rival on any issue either political or national. His undemocratic nature and calling names to his opponents was very immature behaviour (Chaudhry, 2022). His Polarizing politics united all political parties and they found it easy to remove him from his office.

All parties formed a united alliance against him named PDM (Pakistan Democratic Movement) and filed a no-confidence motion against him. Initially, military guided Khan's party members what to do but it could not continue for a longer span of time. Kamran Yousaf (Journalist) mentioned that Military used to manage and manhandle Imran's allies and made sure him to be in government but this time Army decided to stay neutral so once the support was lost, Khan's downfall was inevitable (Kermani, 2011).

### **Foreign Influence**

USA has always been an important ally and partner of Pakistan and maintaining good ties has always been the key principal of Pakistan's foreign policy. Imran Khan tried to recast these relations too. In February 2022, Khan visited Russia on the eve of Ukraine invasion, for pursuing some trade deals following what he said earlier a neutral foreign policy. Pakistan army supported his visit but differences increased after his return from Moscow. Vote of no-confidence removed him from the office in response he alleged US-led conspiracy. He claimed that he was removed from the office because he tried to seek a neutral foreign policy. To strengthen his claim, on 27th March Imran Khan waved a letter claimed it cypher from USA government warning to remove him from the office. The vote of no-confidence, an alleged American conspiracy and purported diplomatic letter stirred civil-military relations (Almeida, 2022). Imran Khan asserted that because of anti-west stance he became victim of American "regime change" conspiracy in Pakistan. Most analysts have disregarded his claim and consider it a deliberate exaggeration of a diplomatic letter (Kermani, 2011). After a year of his departure contradictory stories are revealed. Contrary to previous claim he himself admitted that cypher has never been taken out of foreign office. His Principal Secretary Azam Khan has said that Imran Khan made this conspiracy to use it as a narrative to counter military and opposition (The Tribune, 2023).

### **Conclusion**

In fragile or new democracies it is important to distinguish either it is to remove military from politics or politics from military (Shah, 2014). It emphasizes the negative importance to military's tutelage tradition which is to undermine or interrupt democratization process. Apart from other factors like bad governance, corruption, insincere leadership and lack of democratic culture in political parties the undemocratic beliefs and values of military poses a serious threat to democracy in Pakistan.

Complete civilian control is not possible without complete depoliticization of the military. Civilian control needs military's complete political neutrality, loyalty to constitution and obedience to elected government (Kohn, 1997). It is important that military must obey their civilian elected government not because of resources or arms but for a simple reason that they are the legitimate ruler of the state by constitutionally and by the will of the people and will of the people is considered supreme in a democratic set up. A civilian government can promote political participation and a space for people to express their views regarding policy making process. Regardless whatever happens, however they are treated they are bound to submit their complete compliance to civilian democratic governments. Kohn, Dahl and Barany assert that military's willingness is the real mechanism of democratic control.



All theories, scholarly work and debates provide the very basic principles of Civil-Military Relations which proposes a mechanism of cooperation and coordination between two institutions of the state. In developing countries, more especially in Pakistan, it is possible for military to completely detach itself from the political sphere. In Pakistani case it is not about the coordination or influence, it is about the domination and not giving space to other institution to breath. Pakistan has face three decades of direct military interventions and during these interventions they increased their influence to the extent that no political party or leader can take a single step or decision without their approval. It is necessary to have a better civil-military coordination to avoid military coups for democracy and the betterment of the country. The political chaos should be handled through dialogue and negotiation. Best option is to learn to co-exist. National dialogue is necessary where domains, boundaries and limits of every institution could be explained and true implementation of constitution should be insured for role fixation of all concerned.

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