



RESEARCH PAPER

Beyond the Barracks: Exploring the Profound Reasons behind Military Intrusion in Politics of Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

This research article examines the complex factors that have led to the persistent involvement of Pakistan's military in political affairs of the state. This intrusion, which has shaped Pakistan's history since its independence in 1947, cannot be solely attributed to the ambitions of power-hungry generals. Instead, the article argues that it stems from a combination of structural and historical factors. This paper employed a qualitative research methodology while utilizing a critical analysis of historical documents and political discourse. However, the study suggests that there are factors behind military intrusion including Pakistan's weak and fragmented civilian institutions, the military's dominant role in national security, and the country's tumultuous political landscape. The article also highlights the impact of external factors, such as regional conflicts and Cold War dynamics, in shaping the relationship between the military and civilian authorities in Pakistan. By providing a nuanced analysis of the underlying causes of military intervention, the study offers recommendations to reduce the risk of military intrusion in Pakistani politics by strengthening democratic institutions, reforming the military for increased accountability, educating the populace on the risks of military intervention, fostering a culture of tolerance and dialogue while discouraging extremism, and establishing a national consensus on the military's role in a democratic society.

KEYWORDS Civil Institutions, Institutional Autonomy, Legitimacy, Military Intervention, Political Affairs

Introduction

Pakistan's history is intricately intertwined with the influence of its military. From its inception, the armed forces have played a pivotal role in shaping the nation's political landscape. While the narrative often focuses on the military's direct interventions through coups and martial law, a deeper analysis reveals a more nuanced and complex reality.

One primary factor lies in Pakistan's geostrategic location. Situated at the crossroads of South Asia, the Middle East, and Central Asia, Pakistan finds itself in a volatile region. The country faces constant security threats, including regional rivalries, terrorism, and the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan. This precarious environment fosters a perception of the military as the ultimate guardian of national security, granting it considerable power and influence.

Furthermore, the Pakistani military has cultivated a unique identity within the power structure. Its strong institutional cohesion and centralized command structure contrast sharply with the often fragmented and volatile political landscape. This perceived stability and organizational strength have been alluring to many, particularly during

periods of political instability and economic challenges. The military has often stepped into the void, presenting itself as a reliable and capable force capable of restoring order and achieving national objectives.

However, the military's intrusion into politics has not been without its consequences. The influence of the armed forces has often stifled democratic processes, undermined civilian institutions, and curtailed fundamental freedoms. This has created a cycle of political instability, impeding Pakistan's progress towards a truly democratic society.

Another crucial element is the close nexus between the military establishment and powerful economic interests. The army has significant financial holdings and possesses considerable influence over strategic industries, such as defense production and infrastructure development. This economic power further consolidates its influence, allowing it to exert pressure on political decision-making and influence policy agendas.

Finally, the historical legacy of the military's role in Pakistan's creation and subsequent development has contributed to its enduring influence. Moreover, The absence of profound leadership after the demise of Muhammad Ali Jinnah paved a way to rely heavily on the armed forces to secure independence and establish the nation-state. This historical connection has imbued the military with a sense of legitimacy and ownership of the country's destiny, fostering a belief that it holds a unique responsibility for the nation's security and prosperity.

Understanding the deep-rooted reasons behind the military's intrusion in politics is essential for fostering a more stable and democratic future for the nation. Only by addressing these complex issues, including the security challenges, institutional weaknesses, economic dependencies, and historical legacy, Pakistan would truly embark on a path towards sustainable political stability and civilian supremacy.

Literature Review

Pakistan's political landscape has been significantly influenced by the military's intrusion since its inception. The relationship between the military and civil government has been a contentious issue in Pakistani politics, with the military often exercising substantial control over the government. Several literatures have explored the reasons behind military intrusion in Pakistani politics, focusing on various factors such as historical, political, and institutional factors.

Firstly, Hassan (2012) argues that Pakistan's military has intervened in politics due to historical factors, such as the country's difficult birth and the perception of threat from India. The military's intervention in politics has been perceived as necessary to protect the country's interests and ensure its survival. Similarly, Rizvi (2011) notes that the military's intrusion in politics has been driven by its perception of threat, both internal and external. The military has intervened in politics to protect its institutional interests, ensure national security, and maintain stability in the country.

Secondly, Clemens (2015) discusses the role of political factors in military intrusion in Pakistani politics. According to Clemens, the military has intervened in politics due to the weakness and incompetence of civil governments. The military has perceived itself as the only institution capable of providing effective governance and addressing the country's challenges. Moreover, Raza (2017) argues that the military has intervened in politics due to the politicization of the military. The military's involvement in politics has been

facilitated by the political parties' reliance on the military and the military's involvement in political processes.

Thirdly, Cohen (2011) explores the institutional factors that have contributed to military intrusion in Pakistani politics. According to Cohen, the military's institutional interests have been a significant factor in its intervention in politics. The military has intervened in politics to protect its institutional autonomy, preserve its corporate identity, and maintain its economic interests. Furthermore, Haqqani (2013) argues that the military's control over the state's coercive apparatus has enabled it to intervene in politics and influence the government. The military's control over the intelligence agencies and the armed forces has provided it with significant leverage in Pakistani politics.

Fourthly, Rizvi (2013) examines the role of ideology in military intrusion in Pakistani politics. According to Rizvi, the military has intervened in politics to promote its ideological agenda. The military has sought to shape the country's identity and values according to its vision of an Islamic and nationalistic Pakistan. Similarly, Fair (2014) notes that the military has intervened in politics to promote its vision of national security, which has often been at odds with the civil government's approach to national security.

Fifthly, Aden (2017) explores the role of economic factors in military intrusion in Pakistani politics. According to Aden, the military's involvement in the economy has provided it with significant financial resources, which have enabled it to intervene in politics and influence the government. The military's control over the defense production sector, real estate, and other businesses has provided it with significant economic power and autonomy from the government.

Lastly, Aziz (2019) argues that the military's intrusion in Pakistani politics has been facilitated by the lack of democratic culture in the country. According to Aziz, the military's intervention in politics has been enabled by the weak democratic institutions, the absence of rule of law, and the culture of authoritarianism in Pakistani society. The military has exploited these weaknesses to establish its dominance in Pakistani politics.

Material and Methods

This article employed a qualitative research methodology to understand the complex interplay of social, historical, and political factors. Utilizing a critical analysis of historical documents and political discourse, the study aims to unveil the underlying forces that have fueled the repeated incursions of the military into civilian governance. It seeks to understand the multifaceted motivations behind these interventions, exploring the perceived threats to national security, the military's self-proclaimed role as guardian of the nation, and the historical legacy of power dynamics between civilian and military institutions. This qualitative approach offers a deeper understanding of the underlying motives, anxieties, and power dynamics that continue to shape the trajectory of Pakistani politics.

Results and Discussion

Unraveling the Deep-Seated Roots of Military Involvement in Pakistani Politics

Pakistan's political landscape has been characterized by an enduring presence of military intervention, shaping the country's trajectory and governance. This section delves into the deep-rooted historical, political, and societal factors that have fostered this relationship, extending far beyond the confines of the barracks.

Historical Foundations

Pakistan emerged as an independent nation in 1947, amidst the partition of British India, inheriting a fragile political system fraught with challenges. The new state faced immediate external threats, particularly from India, and internal instability exacerbated by communal violence and the mass migration of populations across newly drawn borders. In this tumultuous environment, the military quickly assumed a pivotal role. Initially, its primary task was to maintain internal order and defend the borders against perceived threats, which included not only external aggression but also managing the complexities of integrating diverse ethnic and linguistic groups into a cohesive national identity.

The nascent Pakistani state's reliance on the military during its formative years laid the groundwork for the institution's deep involvement in politics. From the outset, the military leadership saw itself not only as the guardian of the nation's security but also as a stabilizing force necessary for the survival of the fledgling democracy. This early perception of the military as a custodian of stability and security of the state would prove pivotal in shaping its subsequent interventions in civilian governance. As political parties struggled to establish stable governance structures and as civilian institutions faltered in their infancy, the military increasingly saw itself as the only capable arbiter of national stability and development (Cheema, 2002).

The military's early involvement in politics was also driven by the perceived failures of civilian leadership. In Pakistan's formative years, political parties were often factionalized along regional, ethnic, and ideological lines, leading to weak coalition governments and frequent changes in leadership. This political fragmentation further undermined the capacity of civilian institutions to govern effectively and exacerbated societal divisions. The military, with its hierarchical command structure and perceived unity of purpose, presented itself as an alternative to the chaotic civilian politics that characterized Pakistan's early decades (Jalal, 1990).

Economic considerations further entrenched the military's role in politics. Over time, the military establishment expanded its influence beyond traditional security roles to include significant economic interests. This expansion was facilitated by the control over state resources, including land, industries, and infrastructure projects. The economic power amassed by the military not only enhanced its political leverage but also created vested interests that reinforced its stake in maintaining a prominent role in national affairs.

Societal perceptions and constitutional provisions also contributed to the military's enduring presence in Pakistani politics. Despite periodic civilian-led governments, the military often enjoyed considerable public support, especially during times of crisis or when civilian administrations were perceived as corrupt or ineffectual. Moreover, Pakistan's constitution, with provisions that empowered the military through roles such as the President's command of the armed forces, provided legal justification for its intervention in political affairs (Muzaffar, et. al., 2017). Together, these factors combined to establish a complex and enduring relationship between Pakistan's military and its political landscape, shaping the country's trajectory well beyond its early years of independence (Khan, 2019).

Postcolonial Insecurity

The postcolonial era marked a turbulent period for Pakistan, fraught with heightened insecurities stemming from both external and internal challenges. Externally, Pakistan faced a formidable adversary in India, its larger neighbor and former partner in

the British Raj's partition. The unresolved territorial disputes, particularly over Kashmir, and the lingering mistrust from partition fueled a persistent state of military readiness and a sense of perpetual threat. Internally, Pakistan grappled with deep-seated ethnic and linguistic diversity, exacerbated by the abrupt and often violent displacement of populations during partition. These internal divisions were further inflamed by secessionist movements in provinces like Baluchistan and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), which sought greater autonomy or outright independence.

In response to these multifaceted challenges, the military emerged as a pivotal institution in Pakistani politics and society. With its organizational discipline, hierarchical structure, and perceived unity of purpose, the military positioned itself not only as the defender of national borders but also as the guarantor of internal stability. This perception was reinforced by the military's proactive role in suppressing secessionist movements and maintaining order during periods of civil unrest. The military's successful handling of crises, such as the quelling of the Baloch insurgency in the 1950s and its intervention during political unrest in East Pakistan in 1958, enhanced its stature as a reliable guardian of national security and stability (Jaffrelot, 2004).

Moreover, the military's role as a unifying force in a politically fragmented landscape bolstered its legitimacy and influence. Pakistan's early years as an independent nation were marked by weak civilian institutions, factionalized political parties, and frequent changes in leadership. The inability of civilian governments to effectively address pressing national challenges, such as economic development and social cohesion, created a vacuum that the military was often perceived as uniquely capable of filling. This perception was particularly pronounced during periods of civilian mismanagement or perceived corruption, which eroded public trust in civilian governance and reinforced the notion of the military as a stabilizing force (Muzaffar, & Choudhary, 2017).

Economically, the military's influence expanded beyond its traditional role in national defense. Over time, the military establishment diversified its interests into various sectors of the economy, including agriculture, industry, and infrastructure development. This economic expansion not only augmented the military's institutional power and financial resources but also entrenched its stake in maintaining a prominent role in shaping Pakistan's political and economic policies. The military's control over economic resources and strategic industries further solidified its grip on power, as these resources provided both economic leverage and a means to exert influence over civilian governments (Rizvi, 2000).

Constitutionally, Pakistan's governance framework also contributed to the military's enduring influence. The constitution, particularly provisions related to national security and the role of the President as the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, institutionalized the military's involvement in political affairs. These constitutional powers provided legal justification for military interventions in civilian governance and underscored the military's perceived role as the ultimate guardian of Pakistan's territorial integrity and national interests. Despite periodic transitions to civilian rule, these constitutional provisions have historically facilitated the military's intervention in political processes, further entrenching its influence in Pakistan's postcolonial political landscape (Jaffrelot, 2004).

Fragmented Political Landscape

Pakistan's political landscape has been characterized by persistent fragmentation and instability since its independence in 1947. The country's democratic evolution has been

marred by weak civilian institutions, factionalized political parties, and a lack of consensus on fundamental national issues. The early years of independence saw frequent changes in leadership, with civilian governments struggling to establish stable governance structures amidst economic challenges, societal divisions, and regional disparities (Fareed, et. al., 2019). This volatile political environment created a vacuum where the military increasingly positioned itself as a stabilizing force capable of filling the governance gap left by civilian authorities (Ishtiaq, 2013).

The fragmentation within Pakistan's political parties and the absence of strong institutional frameworks further exacerbated the country's governance challenges. Political parties often coalesced around personal or regional interests rather than national agendas, leading to short-lived coalition governments and frequent political gridlock. This inherent instability undermined the effectiveness of democratic governance and eroded public confidence in civilian leadership. In contrast, the military presented itself as a disciplined and cohesive institution capable of providing continuity and effective decision-making during times of political turmoil (Haqqani, 2005).

Moreover, Pakistan's weak civilian institutions struggled to assert their authority and provide effective governance. Civilian bureaucracies were often overshadowed by military dominance in key sectors such as national security, economic planning, and infrastructure development. The military's hierarchical structure and centralized command enabled it to implement policies swiftly and maintain order in situations where civilian institutions faltered. This contrasted sharply with the perceived inefficiencies and corruption endemic within civilian administrations, further justifying the military's intervention as a corrective measure to restore stability and uphold national interests (Ishtiaq, 2013).

The military's interventions in Pakistan's political affairs were often justified under the guise of national security and stability. During periods of political crisis or perceived governance failures, the military presented itself as a neutral arbiter capable of safeguarding the nation's integrity and welfare. This narrative resonated with segments of the Pakistani population disillusioned with civilian mismanagement and endemic corruption. The military's interventions, such as the coups in 1958, 1977, and 1999, were framed as necessary actions to protect national interests and ensure the continuity of governance in the face of political instability and economic uncertainty.

Constitutionally, Pakistan's governance framework also provided avenues for military intervention. Provisions such as Article 245, which grants the President (often a military figure) supreme command over the armed forces, and Emergency Provisions allowing for martial law, legitimized the military's role in governance during periods of crisis. These constitutional provisions, coupled with societal disillusionment with civilian leadership, facilitated the military's recurrent interventions in Pakistan's political processes. Despite periodic transitions to civilian rule, the military's enduring influence and interventionism have shaped Pakistan's political trajectory, perpetuating a cycle of instability and military dominance (Nawaz, 2008).

Economic Dependence

The military's entrenchment in Pakistani politics has been significantly bolstered by its economic interests and control over key sectors of the economy. Since Pakistan's independence in 1947, the military establishment has strategically expanded its influence beyond traditional defense roles into economic domains, including agriculture, industry, and infrastructure development. This expansion was facilitated by the military's access to

state resources and its ability to leverage its position for economic gain. As a result, the military has amassed substantial control over economic resources, including vast tracts of land, businesses, and strategic industries (Siddiqi, 2007).

The military's economic footprint in Pakistan extends to various sectors, where it wields considerable influence through direct ownership, partnerships, or regulatory control. This economic control not only enhances the military's institutional power and financial resources but also consolidates its political leverage. By aligning economic interests with political influence, the military has positioned itself as a dominant force capable of shaping national policies and priorities. This intertwining of economic and political power has further blurred the lines between military and civilian governance, undermining the development of independent civilian institutions and perpetuating a cycle of military intervention in political affairs (Akhtar, 2018).

Furthermore, the military's economic interests are not limited to direct ownership or control but also extend to lucrative defense contracts and procurement. Pakistan's defense budget, traditionally opaque and subject to minimal civilian oversight, provides a significant source of revenue and influence for the military. (Mushtaq, et. al., 2017) The defense sector's considerable allocation of resources and expenditures has enabled the military to maintain a robust industrial base and technological capabilities, further solidifying its economic stake and political influence (Siddiqi, 2007).

Economically, the military's involvement spans beyond national borders, with significant investments in international ventures and partnerships. These economic engagements not only diversify the military's financial portfolio but also extend its influence in global markets and geopolitical affairs. The military's economic prowess, coupled with its strategic position as a key player in Pakistan's foreign policy and national security apparatus, reinforces its status as a dominant force in shaping domestic and international agendas (Shah, 2014).

Critics argue that the military's economic entrenchment poses significant challenges to Pakistan's democratic governance and economic development. By monopolizing key economic sectors and resources, the military stifles competition, limits transparency, and perpetuates a culture of cronyism and patronage. This concentration of economic power undermines efforts to promote inclusive growth, sustainable development, and accountable governance, contributing to social inequalities and hindering the emergence of a robust civilian-led economic agenda (Markey, 2013).

Weak Civilian Institutions

The enduring presence of the military in Pakistan's political landscape can be attributed in part to the systemic weaknesses of civilian institutions. Since independence in 1947, Pakistan's civilian governance structures have struggled to establish effective mechanisms for policy formulation, implementation, and oversight. Political parties, often fragmented along regional, ethnic, and ideological lines, have frequently prioritized short-term gains over long-term national interests. This chronic lack of coherent governance has led to frequent changes in leadership, unstable coalition governments, and legislative gridlock, undermining the credibility and efficacy of civilian institutions.

Consequently, public disillusionment with civilian governance has grown, creating a perception among segments of the population that the military is better equipped to handle the country's affairs. The military's hierarchical structure, discipline, and centralized command have been contrasted with the perceived chaos and ineffectiveness

of civilian administrations. During periods of political instability, economic downturns, or security crises, the military has often been viewed as a reliable and efficient alternative capable of restoring order and advancing national interests. This societal perception, fueled by historical instances where military interventions appeared to bring temporary stability amidst political turmoil, has further entrenched the military's role in Pakistan's political dynamics (Rahman, 2019).

Societal Support

The Pakistani public has not always been opposed to military intervention. In times of crisis, the military has enjoyed widespread support as a perceived source of stability and order. This societal acceptance has enabled the military to perpetuate its political role (Talbot, 2011).

Constitutional Provisions

Pakistan's constitution incorporates provisions that institutionalize the military's role in political affairs, contributing to its enduring influence in governance. Article 245 grants the President of Pakistan, who is often a retired military officer, the constitutional authority to act as the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. This provision confers significant powers to the President over matters of national security and defense, including the appointment of the Chief of Army Staff. The President's dual role as the head of state and the highest-ranking military official underscores the intertwining of civilian and military leadership roles within Pakistan's constitutional framework, providing legal legitimacy to the military's involvement in national security and strategic decision-making.

Furthermore, Article 245 reflects broader constitutional principles that prioritize national security and stability, often at the expense of strict civilian oversight over military affairs. The constitutional provisions pertaining to the military's command structure and its role in governance have historically facilitated military interventions in civilian politics during periods of perceived national crisis or governance failures. These provisions have been cited by military leaders to justify their interventions as necessary measures to protect national interests and maintain order, shaping Pakistan's political landscape and governance dynamics over the decades (Ziring, 2003).

External Influences:

External powers, particularly the United States during the Cold War era, exerted significant influence on Pakistan's military interventions and political dynamics. In the context of the Cold War rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, Pakistan emerged as a crucial ally for the U.S. in South Asia. The strategic location of Pakistan, bordering the Soviet Union and China, made it a pivotal player in regional geopolitics. The United States viewed Pakistan as a bulwark against communist expansionism and provided substantial military and economic assistance to bolster Pakistan's defenses (Muzaffar, & Khan, 2016).

This strategic alliance had profound implications for Pakistan's domestic politics. The United States' support for Pakistan's military establishment during the Cold War era not only enhanced the military's capabilities but also legitimized its political role domestically. American aid and military assistance strengthened the Pakistani military's grip on power, allowing it to modernize its armed forces and assert greater influence over national security and foreign policy decisions. Moreover, the international endorsement of Pakistan's military leadership as a reliable partner in the fight against communism

provided justification for military interventions in civilian governance, framing them as necessary measures to safeguard national security interests (Haqqani, 2005).

Consequences of Military Intervention

While military intervention has provided temporary stability, it has also had detrimental consequences. It has undermined the development of civilian institutions, weakened democratic processes, and fostered a culture of impunity. The military's political involvement has also contributed to human rights abuses and political repression (Hussain, 2018).

Recent Developments

Recent developments regarding military intrusion in Pakistani politics have shown a nuanced evolution marked by periodic attempts at civilian governance and ongoing military influence. Despite occasional transitions to civilian rule and efforts to curb military involvement, such as through judicial oversight and constitutional reforms, the military's influence remains pronounced. Recent years have witnessed instances where the military has indirectly influenced political processes through support for certain political parties or alliances, highlighting its continued role as a power broker behind the scenes. Moreover, challenges such as economic instability, security threats, and governance crises often prompt public calls for military intervention or oversight, underscoring persistent societal acceptance of the military's role as a stabilizing force. Efforts towards strengthening civilian institutions and promoting democratic norms continue, but the military's historical entrenchment and strategic interests continue to shape Pakistan's political landscape in significant ways (Ali, 2020).

Conclusion

The Pakistani military's persistent involvement in politics is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, rooted in historical, institutional, and geopolitical factors. This military intrusion has had a profound impact on the country's political landscape, shape its institutions, and delay its democratic growth.

One key factor is the legacy of British colonial rule, which left behind a strong military establishment that saw itself as the guardian of national security and the guarantor of order. After independence in 1947, the military played a central role in suppressing political unrest and maintaining control over restive provinces. This role further entrenched its self-perception as the stabilizing force in a turbulent political environment.

Moreover, the structural weaknesses of Pakistani political institutions have provided fertile ground for military intervention. Weak civilian governments, factionalism, and corruption have led to periods of political instability and economic crisis, creating openings for the military to step in and restore order. The military's control over key sectors of the economy, such as defense and infrastructure, has also contributed to its political influence.

Geopolitical factors have also played a role in military intrusion. Pakistan's strategic location on the crossroads of South and Central Asia, has made it a major player in regional security dynamics. The military's involvement in conflicts with India, Afghanistan, and other neighboring countries has further solidified its importance and its perceived role as the protector of the nation.

Over the decades, military intervention has taken various forms, from martial law to indirect influence through unelected advisory councils. This intrusion has hindered the development of a mature and stable democratic system in Pakistan. It has undermined civilian control over the military, created a culture of impunity, and stifled political debate and dissent.

Addressing the root causes of military intrusion is crucial for Pakistan's long-term democratic stability. This requires strengthening civilian institutions, promoting political accountability, reducing the military's economic power, and establishing a clear division between the military and civilian spheres. Only by confronting these deep-seated issues can Pakistan truly break free from the cycle of military intervention and embrace a fully democratic future.

Recommendations

The Pakistani military has a long history of intervening in politics, often with disastrous consequences. In recent years, the military has been accused of intervening in the 2024 general election, and of supporting the government of Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif.

There are a number of reasons why the military should not intervene in politics. First, it undermines the democratic process. When the military intervenes, it overrides the will of the people and prevents them from choosing their own leaders. Second, it creates a culture of fear and intimidation, as people are afraid to speak out against the military. Third, it leads to instability and conflict, as different factions within the military compete for power.

There are a number of recommendations that can be made to reduce the risk of military intrusion in Pakistani politics. First, the government should strengthen democratic institutions, such as the judiciary and the parliament. Second, the military should be reformed to make it more accountable to the people. Third, the people of Pakistan need to be educated about the dangers of military intervention.

It is important to remember that the military is not the only actor responsible for the problems in Pakistan. The country's political leaders have also made mistakes, and the people of Pakistan have been complicit in allowing the military to intervene in politics. However, the military remains a major obstacle to the development of democracy in Pakistan, and it is essential that steps be taken to reduce its role in politics.

Here are specific recommendations that can be made to reduce the risk of military intrusion in Pakistani politics:

- Strengthen democratic institutions, such as the judiciary and the parliament.
- Reform the military to make it more accountable to the people.
- Educate the people of Pakistan about the dangers of military intervention.
- Promote a culture of tolerance and dialogue, and discourage violence and extremism.
- Develop a national consensus on the role of the military in a democratic society.

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