

PILDAT

**International Conference
Civil-Military Relations**

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

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



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Preface

Cataloguing of Issues in Civil-Military Relations in Pakistan: A Military Perspective is a paper presented by **Brig. (Retd.) Shaukat Qadir**, Former Vice President IPRI, at the **PILDAT International Conference on Civil-Military Relations**: October 21-22, 2008, Lahore, Pakistan.

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

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Profile of the Author

Brig. (Retd.) Shaukat Qadir

Starting as a pilot in the PAF, he joined the army in an infantry unit. Served in erstwhile East Pakistan in 1971, but was fortunate enough to return weeks before the surrender to rejoin his unit at Sulemanki. He also saw action during the Balochistan insurgency in the 1970s and in Kashmir. He commanded three brigades, served on the staff of a brigade, division, and corps; and has been on the faculty of the infantry school, Command and Staff College, and the War Wing at the National Defence University. He sought an early retirement in 1998 and, in 1999 became the founder Vice President and, for a while, President of the Islamabad Policy Research Institute, IPRI; from which he sought early retirement in 2001, before he could be sacked; but his stint there nurtured his pretensions to being able to think occasionally. He is now occasional visiting faculty at the Fatima Jinnah University, writes a weekly column every Saturday for the Daily Times as well as other dailies, and journals in other countries.

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A Brief Historical Perspective

Almost the world over, the profession of arms has always been held in respect and the soldier symbolises the courageous individual who, on the command of his superior plunges into battle and, where necessary, lay down his life for 'the cause'- one he often does not know; so much so that even some of their crass idiocies, like the ridiculous charge of the light brigade has been extolled by Longfellow! Even Ghalib, almost certainly the best poet of the Urdu language and perhaps the best that this language might ever produce was moved to ridicule his poetic achievements to say:

سوسال سے ہے شعبہء آباپاہ گری
کچھ شاعری زریعہء شہرت نہیں مجھے

*For centuries my forefathers have been soldiering
I have no need for poetry to build my reputation*

In this part of the world, soldiering enjoys perhaps more respect than others; a fact that the British capitalised on by creating the myth of 'martial races.' During the riots that broke out at the partition of India, handful of soldiers escorted convoys to safety, occasionally engaging in a running battle. Thus Pakistan inherited a revered army, respected by all citizens.

Technically, the first coup in Pakistan, albeit a civilian coup, occurred at partition, when the Quaid, Muhammed Ali Jinnah took over as the Governor General of Pakistan, assuming all political powers, with Liaqat Ali Khan as a puppet prime minister. In fairness to Mr Jinnah, he had a reason to do so; Mountbatten wanted to concurrently become Governor General of both India and Pakistan, which would have been disastrous.

The unfortunate death of Muhammed Ali Jinnah soon after partition, closely followed by the assassination of Liaqat Ali Khan, left a political vacuum and chaos followed. Gen Ayub Khan's appointment as the defence minister in 1956, while he was the serving C-in-C of the army was the first instance of the political government voluntarily ceding political authority to the army and a tacit recognition of the army's potential for a greater political role in the future of Pakistan.

It was inevitable, therefore, that he should take over in a

bloodless coup in 1958. Ayub epitomised everybody's view of the soldier; tall, handsome, exuding confidence: the people readily took him to their heart. His initial period from 1958 to 1964 is still referred to by many as our 'Golden era'. In 1965 everything started to fall apart; from rigging the elections to the unnecessary 1965 war with India. It took another three years for him to step down, but the writing was on the wall in 1965.

Yahya's brief period is significant only due to his determined effort to provide every possible assistance to the separatist movement in East Pakistan; ensuring our defeat at the hands of Indian forces and, finally resulting in the creation of Bangladesh.

During Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's reign from 1972 to 1977 the army stayed firmly out of politics. However, Bhutto's determination to win the 1977 elections, through rigging, with an overwhelming majority, instead of the simple majority that a fair election would have returned him to office with, backfired on him.

There are many different perspectives on offer regarding Zia ul Haq's take over on July 5th 1977, but my considered view is that Zia was forced into taking over---three brigadiers had resigned in Lahore, it was strongly rumoured that a couple of two star and even a three star had threatened to do so, if their forces were ordered to open fire on civilian demonstrations against the rigged elections. It is also my considered opinion that he had every intention of holding an election within three months until Bhutto promised to have him tried for treason if he was returned to office; which was the most likely outcome of the next election.

This ill-considered remark of Bhutto's, not only sealed his personal fate, but also gave Pakistan eleven years of the so-called 'Zia era.' Of course Zia grew into his office, from the stuttering, uncertain speaker that he started with; he acquired confidence and became a suave, sleazy manipulator. He had a good teacher in Bhutto and nobody realized just how much he had picked up from his mentor. He moulded his lessons to suit his personality, adopting a humble, almost unctuous, exterior, but he could be totally ruthless in his dealings. His legacy was left to his successors to deal with and, in many ways our current problems originated in his tenure.

The period from 1988 to 1999 in which Benazir and Nawaz Sharif played musical chairs for the prime minister's chair, saw five Chiefs of Army Staff (COAS): Gens Beg, Asif Nawaz, Waheed Kakar, Jehangir Keramat, and finally, Musharaf. Of the first four, the first two were pulling string to make politicians dance to their tunes, while the latter two were, in my opinion, totally apolitical. Musharaf, of course put an end to the game of musical chairs by taking over.

There are a number of similarities between the Ayub period, the Zia era and that of Musharaf and, while it might be difficult to decide who did the greater damage to the nation from amongst the latter two, there is virtually no comparison between the two when it comes to the question of who did more damage to the army: Musharaf is head and shoulders above any other.

If I was to search for Musharaf's positive contributions, I would conclude with his reversal of the established policy on supporting militancy in IHK, tacit acceptance of the LOC as the international boundary, and his determination to make peace with India. The damage that he has done will take pages to cover; suffice it to say that his tenure compounded the problems inherited from the Zia era manifold and it witnessed an unprecedented increase in the induction of soldiers to civilian assignments. He perfected the art of ensuring loyalty of senior officers, not only by the rewards they would reap during service, but also post retirement rehabilitation-virtually every single general officer retired to a lucrative civilian assignment.

The chasm, and the resultant animosity that he created between the civilian population of this country and those in uniform was unimaginable. Gen Kayani, the current COAS inherited an unviable task, but he has performed admirably so far to repair a considerable amount of the damage done by Musharaf-the soldier is again respected. Though not relevant to the subject at hand, but I am reminded of another of Longfellow's couplets:

God and the soldier, we adore
In times of danger, not before,
The danger past and all things righted,
God is forgotten and the soldier slighted

Defining Civil-Military Relations

It is important for me to spell out what is my understanding of civil-military relations, before proceeding to discuss them; particularly since I think the term is a misleading misnomer. Civil-military relations as we have been, and continue discussing them do not really focus on the relationship of the military with the entire gamut of civil society in the country-though their feelings contribute to the substance of our discussion; nor even does it focus on the military's relations with the 'civil society,' a term referring to citizens who should be aware of their civic rights and duties.

When we discuss what we refer to as 'civil-military relations', our focus is on the political role of the military, their relations with politics and therefore, politicians, within what is supposed to be a democratic polity.

Consequently, this will form the focus of my discussion as it relates to Pakistan. If there are those amongst the audience who disagree, please feel free to attack me with questions.

Why Military Takeovers Occur

Let me begin with a few statements that might be considered provocative by some of the audience:

1. Taken as a composite whole, no military would voluntarily like to assume the political leadership and become involved in politics. This decision is taken by a smaller coterie of senior officers, usually the corps commanders. Once the decision is taken, the rest of the military; which by nature is trained to be undemocratic and obey orders, falls into line. There are individual instances amongst senior officers of disputing such a decision, and even taking exception to issues that follow, but there are few instances of their resigning in protest.
2. My next contention is that for coups of any kind to occur, there are some prerequisites. The foremost prerequisite is that the incumbent political leadership must have lost the confidence and support of the people-a popular leader is impossible to oust; witness Castro's survival of

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so many attempts by the CIA. On the other hand, our only genuinely popular political leader since Jinnah, Z A Bhutto, created a situation where he lost the support of the people, even if it was, as some contend, for a brief duration-but it was only when he lost it that he was ousted. This contention is given credence by the fact that each military takeover in Pakistan has been feted by public distribution of sweets in the streets.

3. My next contention is that a military takeover occurs only when the opportunity is offered at a time when the army is headed by an individual with political ambitions and often, even delusions of grandeur. There are at least two individuals in the recent past who, during their tenures as COAS, found circumstances conducive for them to have taken over, but did not do so, obviously because they were democrats without political ambitions; Gens Waheed Kakar and Jehangir Keramat.
4. And finally, I suggest that because of the nature of the individual who has taken over and his belief that he alone is right; that he is a man chosen by destiny, military takeovers are doomed to fail. It is ironic that e.g. Musharaf could frequently quote the principle of unity of command, he has never been known to accept that 'the buck stops with him' and therefore all errors of his tenure are his and his alone-for these errors, these men of destiny can always find scapegoats. However benignly and successfully they might begin, their belief in their infallibility inevitably forces them to continue clinging to power, even as they are visibly leading the nation towards destruction.

Civil-Military Relations in Pakistan

The pattern of civil-military relations in Pakistan was set by Ayub Khan being concurrently appointed the Defence Minister, while he was the C-in-C of the Pakistan army. This act of voluntarily opening the door to the political field for the army was a tacit recognition that the army was now considered a political force to contend with and, henceforth would always be one.

Ayub's initial success in all political fields firmly placed Pakistan on the map; economically, diplomatically,

domestically; mega projects were successfully pursued during his tenure and the world began to quote Pakistan as a model. Once again, his desire for self perpetuation was to bring him down.

However, his initial successes, which owed as much to the competent bureaucracy and judiciary at the time, coupled with his ability to pick the right people for the right job, as they did to his personal vision, foresight and dedicated nationalism---which were considerable and deserve appreciation; have set a precedent for the military leadership's belief that they can set things right in the country, when politicians fail to do so.

Regretfully, during the period of the 'musical chairs,' no political leader was able to stamp his/her ability on the nation's record and each one seemed to learn the wrong lesson from their ousters. Only to return each time with renewed vigour to repeat old errors and discover new ones. Our current president is our elected head of state, but he, along with many other of his appointees carry the baggage of a very questionable past; he may have been given another chance, but memories aren't that short.

Not only did the army feel increasingly disillusioned with the performance of the politicians, even the people began to express their disillusionment, a state of hopelessness, and apathy prevailed. The result was that in the last pre-Musharaf elections, when Nawaz Sharif was returned with an overwhelming majority, only 36% of the people had actually turned out to vote.

Since Ayub's period there had been a growing feeling within some of the top brass of the army that our politicians are not only incompetent, but also untrustworthy. Benazir, while PM in her first tenure was not allowed to visit our nuclear facilities. There was a strong rumour afloat that Benazir had shared a list of training camps and the names of those Sikhs being trained there, during the period of the Sikh insurrection, with Rajiv Gandhi.

Both, Benazir and Aitzaz Ahsan, then interior minister, have vehemently denied this accusation; and I have no reason to disbelieve them. However, a very large number of my colleagues believed this to be true-and we know that often perceptions are more important than realities.

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Regretfully, the bureaucracy also got involved in this political turmoil, due to the loss of 'meritocracy.' Many of them became politically aligned, others compromised for the sake of survival; most of them fell from the pedestal of high moral and performance standards that their predecessors had set. Let me clarify here that I level this accusation with no intent to impugn them, since there were and still are many causes---at least some are justifiable ones, for them to have lowered their standards; and there were and probably still are, many among them who continue to stand tall.

Consequently, while many among the bureaucrats may, in fact have silently welcomed military takeovers, the army had begun to lose confidence in them, which is one reason for Musharaf hogging as many senior posts and filling them with his henchmen.

The politicians on the other hand, had begun to increasingly accept the Pakistan army's political role. Even when we had totally apolitical COASs, political leaders would take every opportunity to meet with them and, in subtle ways indicate their 'GHQ connection,' only to ensure their retention of politically important assignments.

The end result, while some politicians thrived on their GHQ connections, all of them lived under the constant threat of a military takeover. This apprehension contributed to their under performance and, resultantly, reconfirming the military's view of their incompetence.

Our civil military relations could be stated briefly as, 'an apprehensive mistrust and fear of the army on the part of the politicians, while the army continues to view them as incompetent and, often, a threat to national security.'

The ISI Factor

I will not do justice to this subject if I do not, even if only briefly, say something of the ISI's role. The ISI has, what is called a 'domestic wing' which is meant for counter intelligence. Ironically, it was Z A Bhutto who initiated their interference in domestic politics.

However, it was during the Zia era that the ISI grew into the formidable organization that people really feared. Not only were billions of dollars flowing through the ISI to fund the

Afghan Jihad during the Soviet occupation, all conceivable kinds of weapons, including Stinger missiles were being smuggled through them. Quite obviously, the ISI was retaining its share of both---the Ojhri Camp disaster spilled the beans on them.

During this period, since the policy on Afghanistan was our lead policy, the ISI had a say in all matters of foreign policy, since these might impact on the Afghan policy. Some friends in the foreign office used to comment sarcastically that, 'the foreign office has shifted to the ISI.'

Simultaneously, its domestic role also increased; apart from counter intelligence it set up training camps for Mujahideen and, what is more, it began to 'clear' and even 'select' politicians for political assignments.

This role continued well into the Musharaf period until post 9/11 when Pakistan was coerced into taking a U-turn on its Afghan policy in support of the Taliban; which necessitated a purge of the pro-Jihad elements in the ISI. When Musharaf decided to take a U-turn on Pakistan's Kashmir policy, supporting the insurgency in Indian Kashmir, the necessity of the purge became paramount.

Thus it was that Gen Ehsanul Haq began the purge and Gen Ashfaq Kayani completed it. However, this did not mean that Musharaf did not employ the military to influence even the most recent elections early this year, though I gather that he employed the Military Intelligence, MI for it. However, this time round the electorate surprised all Pundits, by turning out in surprisingly large numbers to ensure the defeat of the Musharaf adherents.

A peep into the future

Fortunately, we have in Gen Kayani a COAS who seems determined to establish the principle of political supremacy of the elected government. He appears to be more than willing to subordinate himself, hold himself accountable to the elected representatives of the people, and work with them. However, this does not mean that there will not be contentious issues. Some issues are listed below:

The operations in our tribal areas, Swat and Balochistan

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1. The first operation in Swat was aborted on the demands of the provincial government, at a juncture when Maulana Fazlullah and his handful of supporters were surrounded in the Peochar valley and in a matter of a day or two would have been wiped out. Now when they have recommenced on the request of the same provincial government, not only have Fazlullah's supporters multiplied and acquired more sophisticated weapons, the local populace has lost confidence in the army because of their previous abort. Obviously, therefore, it will take much longer to complete.
2. The PM's announcement that all matters relating to terrorism, the most critical issue for the foreseeable future, have been made the exclusive domain of the army; the COAS will decide when, what, and with whom to negotiate, and he will decide on the use of force, its quantity and quality; this announcement was not only the most brazen act of political cowardice, but is once again a voluntary ceding of political power to the COAS, as was done with Ayub. The in camera briefing on ongoing operations given to the parliament is a very welcome sign. Let the parliament question the military, then debate the issue and let the parliament assume collective responsibility for its decision on this war, instead of voluntarily handing themselves to Caesar.
3. The operations in the tribal belt will also need more deft political handling. It is important to reiterate the golden principle of the use of force against political insurgencies: force can only buy time for a political solution to be found and put into effect.
4. Balochistan is a purely political matter and the political leadership must redress it at the earliest possible so as to cease military operations at the earliest, lest it also gets out of control.

Good Governance and the Economy

'National Security Issues' are no longer viewed in the traditional paradigm of the use of force; they encompass, food security, economic security, security from bodily harm from terrorists, security of justice; and one can go on with

an endless list.

In the eight month or so that this government has been in power, we have witnessed Zardari's successful manipulations in getting rid of Musharaf, effectively indemnifying the NRO, the selective restoration of the judiciary, which has more or less killed the judicial movement; but, apart from the decision to liberalise trade with India, the government gives the impression of a rudderless ship heading no where.

I would be amongst the unhappiest people in the country, if this government also fails the people. If it does, I would like to see the parliament make its own political corrections democratically and just let the military do its own job: having said that, I can sympathise with those who still fear the consequences of a failure of this government.

Those of you who have read this through, I thank from the bottom of my heart since you instil me with confidence for having held your attention right through; those who were wise enough to glance through and read selectively, my thanks and admiration for your perspicacity in wasting minimum time; and those wise enough not to read it at all, will surely find some use for the pages consumed.

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