



MONITOR

Civil-Military Relations in Pakistan

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Optics of Civil-Military Relations: 'Extraordinary Huddle' at the GHQ

In the case of Pakistan, of the few means available to form a judgment on the state of civil-military relations, the optics of civil-military interaction remains a crucial tool; perception can also be formed on the basis of the push and pull exerted by either the civil or the military in the domains that have traditionally remained a shared space. For example, the elected Government focuses exclusively on service delivery, management of political affairs, etc., whereas management of organisational affairs of the rank and file, utilization of the Defence budget (and often its size) remain exclusive preserves of the Military. The shared space, and this is often grey and indistinguishable, includes matters of foreign policy vis-à-vis India, Afghanistan, the United States, China, etc.

Both these windows of optics and decision-making on security and foreign policy management seemed to be activated during June 2016.

In what was aptly described by the daily *Dawn* as an 'extraordinary' huddle,¹ selected Ministers of the elected Government met with Military leadership at the GHQ on June 07, 2016. This was attended by the Federal Minister for Defence, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, MNA; Federal Minister for Finance, Senator Ishaq Dar; Advisor to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs, Mr. Sartaj Aziz; Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs, Mr. Tariq Fatemi; Foreign Secretary, Mr. Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry; COAS, Gen. Raheel Sharif; Director General, Inter-Services Intelligence, Lt. Gen. Rizwan Akhtar and Director General Inter-Services Public Relations, Lt. Gen. Asim Bajwa amongst other officials. If the meeting, as the ISPR press release said was to discuss “*issues related to national security*” the Federal Minister for Interior, Chaudhary Nisar Ali Khan, MNA and National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister, Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Nasser Khan Janjua, seemed conspicuous by their absence.

The unusual choice of the venue for the meeting highlighted the consistently ad-hoc approach to institutionalization in national security consultation exhibited by both the civil and the military leadership. The meeting to discuss “*issues related to national security*” should have been held under the rubric of the National Security Committee (NSC) at the NSC Secretariat rather than at the GHQ. Similarly, the Federal Ministry of Defence or the Federal Ministry of Information rather than the ISPR should have issued the Press Release for the meeting.

This was the first high-level interaction between the civil-military leadership since the Prime Minister left for London on April 13, 2016 for his medical treatment.

1. For details, please see: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1263511>
2. For details, please see the Press Release issued by the ISPR on June 07, 2016, which may be accessed at: https://www.ispr.gov.pk/front/main.asp?o=t-press_release&date=2016/6/7

Apparently, the meeting was called by the Army to discuss various issues related to external and internal security situation of the country including CPEC, which is another sad indication on the state of affairs. With the initiative by the military, this seemed to lead credence to the somewhat firmly-held perception in the military that civilian elected governments/politicians generally create a vacuum/abdicate responsibilities on national issues where military has to fill the gap.

As a consequence of the inappropriate choice of place and forum, the optics generated almost made it seem as if the

civilian leadership had been shepherded to the GHQ, or was calling upon the Military leadership. Additionally, the seating arrangement also presented an interesting window into the civil-military and civil-civil relations at play. Amongst the representatives of the elected Government, the Federal Minister for Finance, Senator Ishaq Dar was seated centrally, perhaps denoting the apparent role of the de-facto Premier he had attained in the absence of the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. The Federal Minister for Defence, Khawaja Muhammad Asif MNA, the civilian boss of the Army Chief was seen seated at the end of the table.²



Representatives of the PML-N led Federal Government at the civil-military huddle held in the GHQ on June 07, 2016



Representatives of the Military leadership at the civil-military huddle at the GHQ on June 07, 2016

The COAS went on to hold an exclusive meeting with Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan, Mr. Sun Weidong, at the GHQ following the civil-military huddle's deliberations on '*issues related to external and internal security situation of the country including CPEC*'. The COAS had already visited Beijing on May 16, 2016, holding interactions with Chinese political leadership at the same time when the Afghan Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Abdullah Abdullah had been in Beijing on his first official visit to China.

Pakistan-India Relations and Civil-Military Relations in Pakistan

Recent remarks made by the Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi, echo the sentiments brewing in India on what we see as our civil-military relations in Pakistan and their effect on Pakistan-India relations.

On a question of Pakistan-India relations in an interview, Mr. Modi's words were: '*look there are different types of forces operating in Pakistan. But the [Indian] Government only engages with a democratically elected system ... The first thing is that with Pakistan, to whom do we talk to decide about the 'Lakshman Rekha' [Red Lines]. Will it be with the elected government or with other actors?'*³ His remarks came against the backdrop of the Indian Minister for External Affairs, Ms. Sushma Swaraj stating during a Press Conference on June 19, 2016 that '*the warmth and ease in relationship between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif can help resolve complex issues... [But] there are forces, which do not want good relations between the two prime ministers and better ties between the two neighbours*'.⁴ The remark drew a sharp retort from Pakistan's Federal Minister for Interior, Chaudhary Nisar Ali Khan, MNA who stated that '*if the Indian foreign minister is serious and determined to having [better] ties with Pakistan, then she should not talk through riddles or try for political point scoring*'.⁵

Within India, there is a predominant perception not only within the BJP but also across the political spectrum, that the Pakistan Military holds the veto on relationship between Pakistan and India and therefore holding talks with the Pakistani civilian leadership are not expected to yield results. They indicate that this is perhaps best exemplified by the visit of the former Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, to Lahore in February 1999, the subsequent signing of the Lahore Declaration, and the impetus lost with the controversial Kargil debacle of May 1999, which the elected Government denied any knowledge of, leading to international humiliation for Pakistan. Similarly, in Pakistan as well, a strong perception exists that the Indian military also exercises veto over certain national security issues such as the Siachen which at one point was agreed for resolution between the two governments but the Indian military exerted pressure at the last minute to maintain the status quo.

Mr. Sartaj Aziz was right in saying that across the world, the Military leadership is always consulted over matters of foreign policy.⁶ However, this 'consultation' is done by civilian elected governments through institutionalized mechanisms while elected Governments are firmly incharge on decision-making. Mr. Sartaj Aziz's own first initiative after the PML-N Government took over in 2013 to create a NSC with a permanent secretariat which is undeniably the most-crucial policy step and much-needed, has been dormant on institutionalization in national security management in Pakistan.

With the Prime Minister and the COAS meeting 76 times since the latter's appointment in November 2013, equating to an average of 25 meetings per year, whereas the average of the meetings of the NSC stands at 1.67 per year, this reflects the unfortunate reality of lack of seriousness by the Government in taking charge of institutionalization of national security strategies and actions. Not only the dormancy of the NSC, but also of the Federal Cabinet, the Council of Common Interests, and other forums also

3. The complete transcript of the interview may be accessed at: <http://www.narendramodi.in/pm-modi-s-exclusive-interview-with-times-now-full-transcript-arnab-goswami-497175>

4. For details, please see: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1126739/nisar-reacts-sushmas-surprising-remarks>

5. Ibid.

6. For details, please see: <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/06/29/national/pakistan-not-shying-away-from-dialogue-with-india-sartaj-aziz>

reflects Government's lack of priority for institutionalized decision-making. While the PML-N Government is displaying a particular penchant for making these institutions dormant, apparently the trend is more or less shared across the political spectrum where political parties represented inside the Parliament do not question, raise or debate the issue of lack of institutionalization of decision-making on security and other policies, do not offer policy options and often do not engage effectively in the Parliament and its Committees to effectively oversee the trend and advise the elected Governments prudently. At individual level, though, there are some brilliant exceptions.

While no simplistic statement can convey the complexity of civil-military relations in Pakistan, it is true that most, if not all, gaps in perceptions and actions of the civil and the military leading to 4 coup d'états and numerous instances of ascendancy of military in political domain could and should have been avoided in the past, and in the future, with effective institutionalization of consultation on national security issues in Pakistan that of course have a bearing on foreign policy domains as well. While no civilized society

could or should ever tolerate any military overseeing the 'capability' of any elected Government, it is the job of the citizens, the electorate; but it is also intrinsically crucial that elected Governments remain effectively in-charge deliver effective leadership and ably steer and utilize institutionalized forums of consultation and decision making for developing and implementing sound policies.

PILDAT believes that consultation should not only take place but should also be seen to be taking place. Take the case of the Military leadership, where after every meeting of the Corp Commanders, the ISPR makes it a point to release a picture and a press release although military is not required to act as a democratic institution. This not only contributes positively towards the public's trust in national security management, but also denotes the requisite institutionalized consultation on matters of national security. Why can't the civil and political leadership make sure to promote institutional consultation and decision-making?

Setback in the Law and Order Situation of Karachi

It remains undeniable that the killing of Mr. Amjad Sabri, a



Meeting of the Civil-Military leadership at the Corp V Headquarter on June 26, 2016

renowned and popular singer and *Qawwal*, on June 22, 2016 and the abduction of the son of the Chief Justice of the Sindh High Court on June 21, 2016 were significant dents in the claims of the success of the Karachi Operation. The COAS' visit to the headquarter of the Pakistan Rangers (Sindh) on June 26, 2016 and the subsequent civil-military meeting held at the Corp V Headquarter in Karachi the same day, are seen in that context.

The latter was also attended by the Federal Interior Minister, Chaudhary Nisar Ali Khan, MNA; the National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister, Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Nasser Khan Janjua; Governor Sindh, Mr. Ishrat-ul-Ibab; the Chief Minister of Sindh, Syed Qaim Ali Shah, MPA; the Provincial Home Minister, Government of Sindh, Mr. Sohail Anwar Sial, MPA; the Director General of the ISI, Lt. Gen. Rizwan Akhtar and the Corp V Commander, Lt. Gen. Naved Mukhtar.⁷

Once again, it is unclear as to who really is in-charge of the operation in Karachi with a roadmap, objectives and timelines, whether any attention, at all, is paid by the Parliament and Provincial Assembly of Sindh, the two forums constitutionally responsible for overseeing the Government in this domain and whether a periodic progress report is indeed sought or presented. Then the all important question is whether the Government of Sindh is working on a plan to build the capacity of the Sindh Police to a point that it is able to conduct policing duties on its own without continuing indefinitely to depend on Sindh Rangers and the armed forces for this purpose.

Tailpiece: Policing Woes in Sindh

More than anything, the precarious law and order situation in Karachi is deeply symptomatic of the required reforms in the policing structure of the province. It has been seen on numerous occasions that whenever a wave of violence hits the city, the successive Provincial Governments have made decisions to further empower the Pakistan Rangers

(Sindh), rather than affecting any systematic reform in the Police. Nothing could be more illustrative of this than the Operation Clean-up in 1992, Operation Blue Fox from 1994-1996, the spate of violence in July 2011, the operation launched by the PML-N Government in September 2013, etc., which saw Rangers spearheading the crackdown, with the Police assisting.

Experts believe that politically motivated postings and transfers by the Provincial Government have decapitated the Police force. The result has been years of neglect of the law and order situation in Karachi, with the Pakistan Rangers (Sindh) being called in to clean the mess, and becoming a permanent feature of the law enforcement dynamics of the province for the past 25 years.

Perhaps it was because of the very same reason that the Honourable Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Mr. Anwar Zaheer Jamali, took *suo moto* notice of a news report regarding alleged political interference in the Sindh Police by the provincial authorities on June 29, 2016.⁸ Similarly, the Federal Minister for Interior, Chaudhary Nisar Ali Khan, MNA, also announced on June 27, 2016 that 2,000 retired army officials will be appointed in the Sindh police to improve the institution's capacity. He stated that the Pakistan Army will only facilitate Sindh police in its training, not recruitment.^{9,10}

The bulk of the rule of law reforms required across the country relate to building the capacities and depoliticisation of the Police, which is arguably at its worst in Sindh. However, with little more than lip service to this area in Sindh, perhaps the law and order responsibilities have de jure become that of Rangers.

Engagements of the COAS with Foreign Civilian Leadership

The month of June 2016 was yet another chapter to the

7. For details, please see the Press Release issued by the ISPR on June 26, 2016, which may be accessed at: https://www.ispr.gov.pk/front/main.asp?o=t-press_release&id=3372

8. For details, please see: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1268207>

9. For details, please see: <http://dunyanews.tv/en/Pakistan/342955-2000-exarmy-men-to-be-appointed-in-Sindh-police>

10. PILDAT has also commissioned a paper titled Policy Recommendations for Reforms in the Police System of Pakistan, which may be accessed at: <http://www.pildat.org/Publications/publication/ROLR/PolicyRecommendationsforReformsinPoliceSystemofPakistan.pdf>



The COAS calling on the German Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs on June 22, 2016

increasing international profile of the COAS as he held consultations with the following foreign civilian leadership:

1. In a two-day visit to Germany from June 21-22, 2016, the COAS met the German Minister of Defence, Ms. Ursula Gertrud von der Leyen, on June 21, 2016 who appreciated the COAS' *'will and consistency in fighting terrorism'*.¹¹
2. On June 22, 2016, the COAS called on the German Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, where their discussion focused on *'bilateralism, regional security and peace in the region'*.¹² Although the composition of the COAS' delegation for these call-ons is not abundantly clear, it is hoped that representatives of Pakistan's Foreign Mission in Germany were also part of these consultations

11. For details, please see the Press Release issued by the ISPR on June 21, 2016, which may be accessed at: https://www.ispr.gov.pk/front/main.asp?o=t-press_release&id=3365

3. On June 24, 2016, the High Commissioner of the United Kingdom to Pakistan, Mr. Thomas Drew, also called on the COAS at the GHQ.¹³

No Meeting of the National Security Committee

With the absence of the Premier from the country for over a month due to his open-heart surgery in London, the National Security Committee, the country's '*principal decision-making body on matters of national security*' failed to meet yet again during the month of June 2016. The latest meeting of the Committee was held on April 06, 2016 after a gap of 18 months.

It is worth noting that the crucially-important Committee has only met 5 times since its formation in August 2013, signaling its near dormancy.

PILDAT believes that given the anomalous decision-making powers of the forum, and the permanent membership of the Services Chiefs in it, an Act of Parliament must be passed to sanctify workings of the NSC and to strengthen it. Currently, the institution has been formed under an Executive Order. We firmly believe that the apparently disjointed civil-military approach to matters of internal security and certain domains of our foreign policy can best be resolved through institutionalization in matters of national security, and strengthening of the NSC.

12. For details, please see the Press Release issued by the ISPR on June 22, 2016, which may be accessed at: https://www.ispr.gov.pk/front/main.asp?o=t-press_release&id=3367

13. For details, please see: https://www.ispr.gov.pk/front/main.asp?o=t-press_release&id=3370