

Mistakes on Repeat Mode Pakistan's Civil–Military Debacle

*Karnika Jain**

The military has been an integral part of Pakistan's survival since the formation of that nation state. The idea of the country was based on a united Islamic religion, but series of events dampened the nation's integrity. In the absence of robust political institutions to promote democracy, the bureaucratic and military apparatus made inroads into polity and expanded their role as dominant powerful elite in the initial years after independence. However, the military could not restore peace and stability required to uphold a nation state and in turn became the cause for the division of Pakistan in 1971. Using a multi-dimensional approach from the economic, political, cultural and societal backgrounds, this article delves into the analysis of the predominant role of the Pakistani military that formed the corresponding civil-military relations of the country up to 1971. The article also presents a case study of Balochistan province of Pakistan as an end observation that the country hasn't learnt lessons from the partition of 1971 and still chooses to confront the crisis within the civil-military relations.

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The grim landscape of the political affairs in post-partition Pakistan impelled the institution of military to take the leading role in national politics instead of emergence of a democratic civilian state. The Pakistan

* Ms Karnika Jain is PhD Research Scholar at Centre for South Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and Fellow, Ryoichi Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship Programme (SYLFF) by the Tokyo Foundation.



Army has been playing a significant role in the governance of Pakistan since its inception. In the path of new state building, the absence of strong governance and democratic leaders led to the grappling of political power by the military rule, as no other alternative was left. Ever since independence, the military has continued to influence and display its presence directly or indirectly in the policymaking process of the country. From the beginning, the military presented itself as the guardian of the state and penetrated into the political system to an extent of influencing almost all political decisions.

To understand the civil-military relations of Pakistan, one must revisit the historical foundation of the country on which it was created. The outburst of the strong sense of religious identity resulted in the division of British India into two states in 1947. The animosity between Hindus and Muslims resulted in the brutal fragmentation of the Indian subcontinent into a separate state for Muslim majority population (Pakistan) and for a Hindu majority (India). Unlike India, which adopted democratic foundation, Pakistan embraced the opposite. The country was ruled by bureaucrats along with the military as a junior partner till the late 1950s.¹ While the Indian military chose to abide by the principle of civilian supremacy, the Pakistan military gradually expanded its role in the political decision-making apart from defence and security matters. Inadequacy of political culture, weak administrative infrastructure and internal aggression within communities made military the powerful elite. In addition, Pakistan's internal contradictions and geographical distance between its two parts (West and East Pakistan) separated by more than 1000 miles of Indian territory in the middle made the task of nation building a troublesome exercise.² Law and order disruptions combined with Pakistan's external threat perception of India justified military to assume power in the domestic politics. The tendency of civilian authorities to rely in particular on military for nation-building increased after the death of Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan in 1951. Clearly, the civil bureaucracy misinterpreted the intentions of the military to influence the path of national politics and control the state completely.

The year 1958 witnessed major transformations as the military brazenly intruded and assumed primary position in the politics, economics and society of the state. The absence of a stable political environment in the country made space for military rule to intervene not just in 1958 but also in 1969, 1977 and 1999. The military assumed its right to rule while

blaming parliamentary system and government mismanagement. The independence of East Pakistan in 1971 is a prime example of Pakistan's inapt civil-military relations that elevated the feeling of alienation and frustration to such an extent that the state which was integrated on Islamic solidarity got bifurcated into two countries. Therefore, the very military establishment created to protect the nationality and polity became itself a cause for the division of the unified state. Unfortunately, even after 50 years, the only lesson Pakistan seems to have learnt is that military strength is necessary to prevent itself from losing another battle. In pursuance of promoting a flawed unified national identity, it persists on the strategy to dominate other ethno nationalist identities. The country continues to follow the path of greater centralisation and military intervention in politics. The contended Baloch identity is an apparent example of the dominance of the military and a culture of undemocratic politics. The military's atrocities, brutal ethnic suppression and extrajudicial killings against the Baloch people reflect the complexities of civil-military relations in Pakistan. Thus, lack of comprehensive political leadership and unregulated control of military over civilians offer an interesting case study.

In this context, the objective of the article is to assess the evolution of civil-military relations during the initial years of Pakistan till the time imbalance in the institutions led to the spilt of the country. Using a multi-dimensional approach from the economics, political, cultural and societal background, the article delves into the analysis of the predominant role of the military. It examines the factors that have contributed towards making the institution of military respected widely within the country. Further, the article attempts to offer a brief theoretical background on the understanding of civil-military relations. Lastly, the article looks into the case study of Balochistan in which it is observed that the country hasn't learnt from the partition of 1971 and still chooses to confront the crisis within the civil-military relations. Altogether, the findings aim to highlight how an inclination towards the military rule has impacted the state-building process. The study has taken the period up to 1971 as these years (1947–71) laid the foundation of military supremacy over civilian institutions. Also, 1971 witnessed a watershed change as the imbalanced relations between the East Pakistanis and military rule altered the political landscape of South Asia by causing circumstances that gave birth to a new nation-state of Bangladesh.

THEORETICAL UNDERSTANDING

This section deals with the theoretical framework of civil-military relations and analyses factors (internal political crisis, regional security dynamics and military's strategic interest) that formed the subsequent civil-military relations in Pakistan.

As the name suggests, the term civil-military relations is an interaction between the military and civilian institutions of the state. It encompasses a whole range of different typologies of the control and regulation of the military by the civilian governments. The subject is quite complicated as the imbalance between the negotiated parties (political civilian authorities and military) could result in tensions and change the course of domestic and foreign affairs of the nation-state. Huntington has argued that there are subjective and objective types of civil-military relations.³ He advances objective civilian control, which believes in sheer separation between the functioning of the military, state and the bureaucracy; permitting military to have an independent autonomous space.⁴ He believes professionalism and absenteeism from politics would enhance capabilities of military as an institution and lead it to better focus on external enemies. However, in these types of setup, the overt threat or fear of the military to use coercive power to displace civilian rule is always hanging upon states. James Madison argues that 'the means of defence against foreign danger have always been the instruments of tyranny at home'.⁵ It could be assessed as internal insecurity that opens avenues for greater involvement of the military in societal affairs. Therefore, political pluralism remains necessary to check and curb the power of military frequently.

Military intrusion is mostly perceived as associated with countries characterised by weak political leadership and ineptness of the institutional structure to resolve internal conflicts.⁶ In these states, the inability of political institutions and civilian system to manage state affairs gives way for military intervention. Similarly, Keith Hopkins links the military intervention with weak political institutions. He explains that 'where social and political institutions are weak, and the levels of social mobilisation and professionalisation of politicians are low, a gesture of self-interested or public-spirited despair' might trigger coups.⁷ Huntington also argues that 'institutional decay has become a common phenomenon of the modernising countries. Coups d'état and military interventions in politics are one index of low levels of political institutionalisation: they occur where political institutions lack autonomy and coherence'.⁸ Pakistan represents one of the countries that confronted

the blight of political crisis, ultimately leading to the supremacy of military over civilian institutions. The factors that led the military to dominate civilian institutions and be a power bloc are:

Internal Political Crisis

One of the major reasons for military to emerge as a dominant institution was the internal political conditions of the country. Some factors like the legitimacy crisis, absence of effective leadership and weak democratic practices discredited civilian regime and provided tremendous power to military to dominate over civil institutions. For example, the failure of Muslim League to transform itself from a nationalist movement to a nationalist party or the death of prominent political leaders resulted in the political degeneration and contributed to the military intervening in non-military affairs. In addition, at the time of independence, the Pakistan Army was one of the most established institutions in the country. Its roots can be traced back to the British Indian Army that had the experience of extensive training and skills. It was no surprise that the army started colonising its own country in the name of safeguarding it from internal instability and external threat.

Pakistan represents a unique case study of continuous reliance of civilian institutions on military to restore law and order situation and address the religious-sectarian divide. In other words, the military curbed the insurgencies to 'preserve national integrity'⁹. The first time the army was called upon to oversee civilian functions and perform non-military action was in the 1950s in the wake of anti-Ahmadi riots in Punjab. It exemplifies how the army is perceived to be a defender of Islam and how its actions involving violence are considered legitimate. Till present, being the strongest of all the state institutions, military doesn't hesitate in imposing martial law at the cost of democracy when a political rule seems to be weakening. Hasan Askari Rizvi, a prominent analyst, writes: 'Pakistan can be described as a praetorian state where the military has acquired the capability, will, and sufficient experience to dominate the core political institutions and processes. As the political forces are disparate and weak, the military's disposition has a strong impact on the course of political change, including the transfer of power from one set of the elite to another'.¹⁰

Another main reason for military's strong presence appeared to be the regional security dynamics, marked by Pakistan's insecurity syndrome from India, which affected its domestic and foreign policies. Protecting

the state from external and internal threat made army's position as an institution even stronger in the country, in turn, aggravating the imbalance in institutional establishments. The external threat to sovereignty made civilian government rely on the military to manage the affairs. It was no surprise that the military did not face any opposition when it overtly displaced civilian governments in 1958, 1969, 1977 or 1999. Stephen P. Cohen defines the role of Pakistan's army: 'There are armies which guard their nation's borders, there are armies that are concerned with protecting their own position in society, and there are armies that defend a cause or an idea. The Pakistan Army does all three.'¹¹

Military's Strategic Interest

The extent of military dominance over civilian institutions also needs to be evaluated from the point of view of military's ulterior motives. It posits its coercive power in politics under the veil of corporate economic interests that suppresses all the other ethnicities and classes that come in its way of governance. The onset of diminishing political power incites insecurity related to benefits, leisure and income within soldiers, for which the survival of the state is necessary; hence it leads to military intervention.¹² The same rationale also explains the skewed allocation of resources towards military rather than the requirements for development purpose of the state. This led to overall growth in the organisational capacity of military while the civilian institutions continued to remain weak. Hence, political autonomy has been directly proportional to fulfilling their financial interests.

Likewise, prominent Pakistani historian Ayesha Jalal finds the army manipulative and speculates that the military's deliberate strategies to hold multiple roles and in turn projecting the state as weak, is for their ulterior motives. Jalal further argues that the alignment of Pakistani Army with Britain and the US was also done to acquire warfare strategies and become more influential in comparison to national political forces and civil institutions.¹³ The defence treaties like South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) and Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) strengthened the influence of military in domestic politics of the country. Thus, the connections developed at the international level assisted the institution in acquiring training, skills and new equipment, which naturally presented the image of the military institution as superior to other institutions of the state. Ejaz Hussain describes Pakistan as a 'praetorian state which structurally inherited the pre-partition

“praetorian oligarchy”. This praetorian oligarchy constructed “Hindu India” as enemy to pursue politico-economic interests. The military, a part of praetorian oligarchy, emerges as a powerful political actor due to its coercive power. It seeks political power to pursue economic objectives independently.¹⁴

Given the history of Pakistan, the rule over state has fluctuated between the civilian party in power and the military. This resulting disequilibrium between civil institutions and military system has often been seen in post-colonial societies, especially in South Asian countries, where it has been difficult for them to build nation-state and consequently military has pervaded in the political spheres. Although India and Pakistan inherited almost the same British parliamentary political system, political institutions and civil bureaucracy, Pakistan represents how weak democracies combined with military’s corporate interest could eventually lead to the military taking a primary position in the civilian matters of the country. Hence, it could be best understood that many internal factors (political crisis, inherent colonial politics, ideological conflict, strategies doctrines, India’s insecurity syndrome, etc.) have shaped the civil-military relations of Pakistan.

CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS DURING 1947–1971

Political Disenfranchisement

Pakistan is a country that proves the ineffectiveness of secular forces and political leadership to counterbalance the military and practice democracy. The reasons for the subordinate position of political institutions to military institutions lie in Pakistan’s structural and domestic dynamics. After the death of charismatic Jinnah (the then Governor-General and President of the Constituent Assembly) and later assassination of his lieutenant and the country’s first Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan in 1951, the country was in shambles with no political leader to lead and strengthen democratic forces.¹⁵ The new emerging state faced the leadership crisis needed to legitimise institutions to practice and implement democratic principles. In this fragile state, bureaucratic-military interest made inroads into power politics to such an extent that it altered the very foundation of parliamentary system on which it began.

It wasn’t shocking, though, because even when the country was under parliamentary governance, it saw the shift of power between seven prime ministers between 1950–1958.¹⁶ Not a single general election could be

conducted during 11 years of the so-called parliamentary system (1947–1958), and provincial elections were termed as ‘a farce, mockery and a fraud upon the electorate’.¹⁷ Political chaos, internal uncertainty and unstable leadership were the reasons that led to the partial involvement of army during those years. For instance, Ayub Khan’s noteworthy role in restoring orders during the ‘persistent clashes with the tribal and parliamentary forces on the North West Frontier’ was one of his involvements in decision making.¹⁸

Because of the legitimacy crisis and ineffective leadership, factors like linguistic challenge, delay in constitution making and ethnic imbalance paved the military regime to come in power. After independence, it took nine years for Pakistan to produce its first constitution in 1956. The issue of power-sharing at the inter-regional and inter-institutional levels, the country’s geographical outline and the presence of diverse ethnic identities hobbled the process of the constitution making. One of the many challenges in framing the constitution was to produce a document that would satisfy both secularists and sectarians. Ulemas wanted the constitution that would not provide full citizenship rights to non-Muslims, including no rights for them to have voice in law-making or to uphold public offices. This was not accepted by the Pakistani intelligentsia that believed in providing equal rights irrespective of religion or creed.¹⁹ Another major reason for the delay laid in the representation between both the wings in the federal legislature.²⁰

In 1954, after grappling with the problem of constitution making, when the constituent assembly nearly completed the draft, the then head of the state Governor-General Ghulam Mohammad Ali dissolved the constituent assembly itself.²¹ The amendments compelled the Governor General to act only on the advice of his ministers. Indeed, the country’s present state of affairs would have been different if the executive authorities did not constantly control and supervise the actions of the legislature. More so, the sad state of judiciary and inability to perform its role independently resulted in the state power to be more in the hands of executive. In this case, Mohammad Ali’s action was backed by the federal judiciary, in particular by Chief Justice Munir, who declared that the constituent assembly was not a sovereign body.²² Hence, the dynamics of institutional power and nine years of constitutional deliberations could not restore the politics needed for stable governance.

In the case of East Pakistan, the impact of militarised politics and its abusive strategies on Eastern wing widened the cultural, economic

and political divide between the two parts of the country. At the time of independence, territorially, East Pakistan constituted 54 per cent of the total population of Pakistan, which meant majority over West Pakistan and other ethnic groups.²³ However, despite being in the majority, the Bengalis of East Pakistan were continuously suppressed and denied rights within the state bureaucracy and in army recruitment. For instance, the army with Punjabi majority always beheld the Bengalis as pseudo Pakistani citizens.²⁴ The privileged groups of West Pakistan—Punjabi and Muhajir political elites—ensured that East Pakistan did not benefit from the populous advantage to dominate the politics of the new state.²⁵ Equally significant was the economic discrimination. During 1947–1971, the per capita income gap between East-West widened by 400 per cent, from 50 rupees to 200 rupees.²⁶ These disparities were deliberately used to establish the domination over Bengalis.

The Challenge of Bengali Language

Following the independence, the language resentment was the first challenge for Pakistan's leaders and emerged as the first threat to the unity of the state. The Punjab-based praetorian oligarchy foresaw a threat in majority Bengalis due to their demand for a constitution and general election. To subdue this challenge, Jinnah declared Urdu a national language in March 1948, in East Bengal, ignoring the fact that people of East Pakistan cherished Bengali as their language.²⁷ As stated by Michel Foucault, a profound French postmodernist philosopher, 'Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere'.²⁸ Language oppression was also a tool of maintaining power supremacy by West Pakistan over East Pakistan citizens as it implied not only cultural suppression but also economic deprivation. Consequently, it resulted in the eruption of protest in East Pakistan, especially by students, as language barrier meant fewer employment opportunities via competitive entrance exams, which would imply an inferior life for Bengalis.²⁹ This enduring five-year-long Bangla Language Movement to instate Bengali as an official language took a horrifying turn when the police exterminated innocent students during a bloody battle on 21 February 1952.³⁰ Though later in May 1954, Bengali was declared as one of the state languages, but the incident forever marked the bitterness and hatred against the army and police. Therefore, the language movement altered the political scenario of Pakistan permanently, later to be turned into a large scale Bengali nationalism and separatist movement.

Ethnic Imbalance

Pakistan was formed on the unifying factor of Islamic religion, but soon after its independence, several ethnic and regional factions emerged, demanding recognition for their separate identities. In the process of keeping the state intact, the state blatantly disregarded ethnic heterogeneity and started deploying the principle of 'one nation (Pakistan), one language (Urdu) and one people (Muslims)'.³¹ Islam became the driving force in the nation building and a tool to manipulate and perpetuate power by West Pakistani elites. The country could not create a common national-identity and whenever ethnic groups asserted their identities, the army was called to suppress insurgencies to protect national integrity.³² It was ironic that the nation which was created on the basis of religion started using it negatively to integrate the country. It was these schemes and attitudes of bureaucratic and military elites that again led to the rise of the sentiments of colonisation among Bengalis. West Pakistanis never treated the Muslims of East Pakistan with equal respect and honour. There was a belief that the Islamic values practiced in Bengal was 'contaminated' because of its continued proximity to Hindu culture.³³ West Pakistan considered themselves superior to East Pakistan citizens and elites often labelled Bengalis as 'black bastards'.³⁴

Even the military composition and recruitment was infested with biases and discrimination against other ethnic identities. Historically, Punjabis comprised around 71–75 per cent of military's strength, Pushtoon around 15–21 per cent, Mohajir and Sindhis about 3–5 per cent and Baluch about 0.3 per cent.³⁵ The military institution continued to remain dominated by Punjabis and Pathans. Islam was the criteria of recruiting people in the army. For instance, Zia's idea of a professional army as he mentioned was 'the professional soldier in a Muslim army, pursuing the goals of a Muslim state, cannot become "professional" if in all his activities he does not take on "the colour of Allah"'.³⁶ Undoubtedly, such ethnic homogeneity is considered a threat to democracy and one of the causes of civil-military debacle in Pakistan. Also, other material benefits enabled the penetration of military into the civilian sectors. For example, during the Zia regime (1977–1988), 10 per cent quota of civil jobs was reserved for military personnel.³⁷ This resulted in the expansion of military influence in the society and to what Finer describes as the 'military colonisation of other institutions'.³⁸

In the East Pakistan context, the British had considered Bengalis a non-martial race and hence, at the time of independence, the representation of

Eastern wing's soldiers amounted to only a per cent of the total strength of Pakistan's armed forces.³⁹ Following the independence, the trend didn't unfold the way the Bengalis expected it. As per the statistics, of the total government administrative jobs, Bengalis represented only 15 per cent, whereas in army, their representation was even lower, accounting for 10 per cent.⁴⁰ Hence, the failure of political leadership to assess and understand the significance of ethnic identity and diversity of East Bengal resulted in the increased political role of the military in post-colonial Pakistan. The institution started being perceived as a guardian and ultimate arbiter but, at the same time, they manipulated social, economic and political policies for their own objectives.

Ayub Khan's Regime (October 1958–March 1969)

Unfortunately, until the time the 1956 Constitution was framed, it was too late as the politics had already worsened and caused the imbalance between civil and military institutions. Within two years of the adoption of the constitution, the country witnessed its first military coup by pro-American Major General Ayub Khan. The year 1958 proved to be the watershed moment as the army took complete control over the state; abrogated the constitution and imposed martial law. Political parties were banned to participate in the 1962 elections and politicians of East Pakistan were imposed under the ideas of West wing.⁴¹ Policies during Ayub era exacerbated the issue of exclusion and non-participation. Bengalis were hardly given any equal participation in the decision-making process.

Apart from political suppression, economically too, they were deprived. His economic strategies were well appreciated and the period of his reign was considered a 'decade of development'.⁴² However, these developments came at the cost of socio-economic exploitation of the majority people of the country. The decade of his rule had sown the seeds of inherent conflicts and income divide between the two wings of Pakistan. His policies were sheer biased towards West Pakistan, affecting the Bengalis to greatest possible extent. In 1968, the Chief Economist of the Planning Commission stated that 'only twenty families control 66 per cent of the entire industrial capital, 80 per cent of the banking and 97 per cent of insurance capital'.⁴³ East Pakistan was economically deprived, despite being the exporter of two-third of the total export of the country. It was evident with its inadequate share in the distribution of foreign aid resources and development funds.⁴⁴ One of the major reasons for

these disparities was the direct control of the central government over provincial revenue; it was entirely subservient to the centre.

Eastern wing was appalled at these arrangements as it felt West Pakistan was colonising them. Soon after the 1965 war between India-Pakistan, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman proposed the six-point programme⁴⁵ in 1966 to attain substantial autonomy for the East Wing and establish Pakistan as a federal state in true spirit. It was an attempt to demand economic progress for the Bengalis. Certainly, it was a demand to put to an end the prolonged abusive strategies against East Pakistan and so it was rejected by West Pakistan leaders. Instead of negotiating with Mujib, the Ayub Khan government preferred to use 'the language of weapons', which turned to be a fatal mistake during that period.⁴⁶ But even a graver mistake was committed by involving Mujib in the 'Agartala Conspiracy Case'. The government framed and arrested Mujibur Rahman along with 34 other Bengali army personnel and government officers on charges of conspiracy with the Indian government against Pakistan, to form a separate country, Bangladesh, in Agartala (Tripura).⁴⁷ However, the failure to assess Mujib's popularity and the successive widespread mass movement compelled the government to withdraw the case and release Mujib along with other officers. It is believed that these events turned out to be the victory component for Mujib in the elections of 1970.

General Yahya Khan's Regime (1969–71)

Following the resignation by Ayub Khan, General Yahya Khan governed the second military regime. He tried to rectify the problems created by Ayub Khan's government and brought in various socio-economic and political reforms. But the soured relations between the two parts of Pakistan coupled with political crisis could not curb the disintegration of Pakistan.

He announced free and fair elections to be held on the basis of one man, one vote.⁴⁸ However, by December, when the elections were held, one more event fractured the trust of Bengalis over West Pakistan military and bureaucracy. The 1970 Bhola cyclone hit the East Pakistan along with India's West Bengal in November 1970 and it is believed that the government mishandled the natural calamity by delaying sending in adequate relief materials and assistance.⁴⁹ This was highly criticised by East Pakistani leaders. Tensions further arose between both the wings in December 1970 elections; the West Pakistan ruling generals suffered a

devastating blow as the Awami League led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman gained a landslide victory and won the national elections. Awami League won 167 seats in East Pakistan; whereas Bhutto's Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) won 81 seats in Punjab and Sind in West Pakistan.⁵⁰ The West Pakistan ruling generals were not happy with the Awami League's victory in the National Assembly, as it clearly meant that they could frame a separate constitution as well as it would induce the shifting of power from military rule to civilian government. Because none of the parties in the election could win seats in the other's region, political negotiations started between Bhutto, Mujib and Yahya Khan. Two reasons during this time deepened the trust deficit between the Awami League and Pakistani leaders. First was the fear of possible partnership between military and Bhutto's PPP, which might not be willing to transfer power to Awami League. Second was the hijack of an Indian Airlines flight to Lahore by two Kashmiris, who released the passengers ultimately but destroyed the aircraft. These actions were highly condemned by Mujibur Rahman and held Pakistan military responsible for the destruction.⁵¹

As the negotiations could not produce a consensus, the army under Yahya Khan kicked in brutal 'Operation Searchlight' to suppress the freedom movement of Bengalis, which commenced the Bangladesh Liberation War and expanded into the 1971 Indo-Pak War. During the operation, the army committed widespread atrocities against the unarmed people: homeless street people were killed; students, teachers and non-teaching staff were shot at; unarmed civilians comprising women and children were killed.⁵² The sole objective behind this operation was to reduce the number of people in the nationalist freedom struggle so that the Army could gain control over East Pakistan province. During the period of war, it is estimated that the Pakistan army approximately killed three million Bengalis, particularly targeting Hindus, academicians and freedom fighters.⁵³ Moreover, to produce loyal off springs of their race, the obnoxious strategy of rape was used and around 200,000–400,000 Bengali women were raped by the Pakistani Army.⁵⁴ Eventually India intervened in the war and by December 16, East Pakistan got liberated from Pakistan. The prolonged unrest between both the wings came to an end with the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. It can, thus, be argued that the army failed to recognise that the Bengali identity and ethnicity was not a secessionist movement from the beginning; it was a political turmoil which got intensified by the imbalanced military structure of the state.

The next section deals with the case study of Balochistan by showing how despite the partition of Pakistan in 1971, the state continues to choose to confront the crisis within the civil-military domain.

THE CASE OF BALOCHISTAN: IMBALANCED MILITARY CRISIS

Unfortunately, even after the tragic divide of Pakistan, the country could not escape being a praetorian state. The complicated pattern of civil-military relation has suppressed the interests of other units (previously East Pakistan) and presently Balochistan. The nature of Pakistani state has always been oppressive towards the ethno-nationalities, a practice continued till present. Pakistani establishment views ethnic heterogeneity, demand for provincial autonomy and cultural pluralism as a threat to its national unity. Balochistan is the most persecuted province in Pakistan, which has witnessed innumerable violation of human rights since 1948. The first military operation began with the forceful invasion of the district of Kalat in April 1948. Since then, the province has been fighting for its independence and to protect human rights. The invasion was followed by another two military operations where Balochistan's resentment against one unit scheme was suppressed in 1958 and Pakistan army attacked Balochistan to fight against left wing nationalists in 1962.⁵⁵

Balochistan covers the largest percentage of Pakistan's territory (approx. 44 per cent), with mere less than 5 per cent of Pakistan's total population.⁵⁶ According to the 2017 census, Pakistan's population accounts for 207, 774, 520 as compared to Balochistan's only 12, 344,408.⁵⁷ The most resource-rich province with 40 per cent of Pakistan's energy needs and 36 per cent of its gas production is least developed with 46.6 per cent of households having no electricity.⁵⁸ The country has systematically militarised the entire province while depriving the community from its own natural resources. It has been observed that despite the discovery of natural gas at Sui in 1952, 70 per cent population of the province remains deprived of access to these resources.⁵⁹

Post-1971, when Zulfikar Ali Bhutto rose to power, he raised hopes of civilian supremacy in the country. But, this could not materialise as the fourth brutal military operation was launched in Balochistan that continued for five years from 1973 to 1977. The centre sent some 80,000 troops, backed by combat helicopters, to crush the Baloch movement, followed by the ban on National Awami Party (NAP) and the arrest of Baloch prominent leaders.⁶⁰ Since the local police had to seek help from

the army in Balochistan to handle political crisis, it gave a chance to the army to again prove its supremacy over civilian establishments.

Even the composition of Pakistan Army has not changed in its homogeneity of Punjabi domination and in exclusion of other ethnicities. Balochs are still underrepresented and it is confirmed by the fact that 'ex-servicemen from Balochistan for the period from 1995–2003 numbered 3,753 men only while the numbers for the North Punjab and the NWFP for the same period were 1,335,339 and 229,856, respectively'.⁶¹ True democracy is the one that always upholds ethnic heterogeneity and provides an atmosphere that allows minorities to flourish. No wonder, Pakistan does not fall under this category, as despite the presence of democratic government, the domestic politics of the state has always strategically and structurally favoured certain communities only.

However, it is interesting to note that the situation of Baloch opposition was still manageable under Pakistan's government during that period, Baloch nationalists remained open to compromise. The reason behind this was the serious attempts by civilian leadership to address the grievances of the Baloch people. One of them included the 18th amendment to the constitution, which granted greater autonomy to smaller provinces like Balochistan. Also, throughout the democratic decade of the 1990s, nationalist parties such as Balochistan National Party (BNP) and Jamhoori Watan Party (JWP) emerged as prominent political forces.⁶² Baloch leaders were also represented in the main political parties, PPP and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N).⁶³ Although this period witnessed differences between the central government and Baloch nationalists, the relations did not turn into conflict. It was only because of the military's oppressive tactics in Balochistan that the tensions aggravated and relations degenerated.

Revival of Military Crackdown

Today, Balochistan is witnessing its fifth military operation that started during Pervez Musharraf's time. During the Musharraf period, Baloch nationalists showed reluctance and disagreement with the gradual expansion of military coup in the province. But, what deteriorated the situation markedly was the rape of a female doctor, Shazia Khalid, by army personnel. Later, the government's decision to release the accused triggered the masses, followed by huge protests, which eventually led to the idea of separatism.⁶⁴ The tension rose further in 2006 with the killing of a senior political leader and Baloch tribal leader, Nawab Akbar

Khan Bugti, along with 35 of his followers by the Pakistan military.⁶⁵ Ever since the assassination, Pakistani security forces have been blamed for innumerable human rights violations, inclusive of extrajudicial killings, torture, enforced disappearances, and excessive use of force against protestors.⁶⁶ Since 2010, 'around 400 (and by some accounts over 500) bullet-riddled bodies with marks of brutal torture have been found "dumped" on the roadsides in Balochistan'.⁶⁷ Moreover, as per the government data, by 2016, some 936 'kill and dump cases' were recorded. However, the independent human rights body, Voice for Baloch Missing Persons (VBMP) recorded more than 1200 such cases.⁶⁸ Evidently, since the early 2000s, there is a prominent increase in the atrocities by Pakistan's military over Baloch civilians. The province is in a dire situation by the state-sponsored forced disappearances and killings.

Worryingly, the problems have got magnified with Pakistan opening its gates to China for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Balochi people fear that they would be pushed out of their own province and be more alienated. In addition, Pakistan Army is facing flank for forceful evacuations of people in the areas of Gilgit-Baltistan and Balochistan so that land can be made available for CPEC.⁶⁹ As per one report, in October 2019, some 28 military operations were conducted in the province that have resulted in forced disappearance of some 30 people and deaths of 25 others.⁷⁰ These killings and enforced disappearances include activists, journalists, human rights defenders, students and intellectuals who raised voices against the atrocities committed by security forces. According to Amnesty International, at the end of 2019, UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID) had 731 unresolved allegations of enforced disappearances from Pakistan Amnesty.⁷¹ Certainly, the country has failed in securing the lives of its citizens. The case of deaths and abduction in military raids has also been reported in the times of COVID-19 induced lockdown. According to the Hakkpan organisation, a Baloch human rights organisation, in April 2020, 16 Baloch were killed and as many as 73 people were picked by the military forces, including students, women, children and infants. Though, later 28 of them were released.⁷²

Unfortunately, the education sector is also under surveillance, as stated by Dil Murad Baloch, the information secretary of Baloch National Movement. Frontier Corps has been accused of breaching the privacy of hundreds of Baloch students by recording their candid videos with the help of hidden cameras to later blackmail students.⁷³ Thus, Balochistan's

deteriorating human rights situation at present reflects the imbalance of the civil-military relations in Pakistan. The military has emerged as the ultimate arbiter in the politics and the state. Several reasons such as political intrigues, cultural suppression, economic marginalisation, social incoherence, dispossession and brutal attacks have generated antagonism amongst the civilians against the state.

CONCLUSION

The long years of presence in the state and society has strongly secured the military its place in civilian institutions in Pakistan. It's been 50 years since Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) separated from Pakistan, yet the army has not been restrained from playing its multiple roles. Several factors have contributed to the military's persistent dominance in the state; first, the absence of stable civilian government at the central and provincial levels pushed civilian institutions to repeatedly rely on the military to maintain law and order, and national security. These actions escalated the significance of military in the polity. Also, the judiciary failed miserably in protecting the rights and enforcement of the constitution against imposed martial laws. Pakistan represents the case that if it had effective governance, organisational capacity, sparing supervision of military actions and a strong well-organised infrastructure, the country could have been saved from the current crisis within civil-military affairs.

The re-application of colonial tactics by military bureaucratic elites over other ethnic groups raises concerns regarding the shrinking role of political institutions in the state. Hence, the country still hasn't learned lessons from its past; Pakistan needs to understand that the military has to be more vital in protecting the state from external enemies; for internal matters, the institution needs to support political system governed by parliamentary and democratic forces. The sooner it realises this, the better it would be for Balochistan and the entire country.

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