

# ROLE OR RULE?

## THE EVOLUTION OF CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN PAKISTAN 2014-2015

*Zafar Nawaz Jaspal*

### INTRODUCTION

The Pakistanis celebrated the 67<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their country's independence amidst immense political bewilderment. The power appeared to be draining away from elected Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif. The celebration marking the anniversary of independence at the mid-night in front of the Parliament building on 14 August 2014 seemed a regime saving tactic. Notwithstanding, the smart political move to demonstrate that the Prime Minister enjoys complete trust and support of the military, the processes for political polarisation has been unleashed in the insecurity-ridden country by both Azadi March (freedom movement) led by cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan and Inqlab March (revolution movement) led by Canada-based Sunni cleric Tahir-ul-Qadri in Lahore on 14 August 2014. The demonstrators demanded the resignation of an elected Premier Sharif and fresh elections in the country. Imran Khan, chairman of Tehreek-i-Insaf,<sup>1</sup> questioned the legitimacy of the government by claiming that the 2013 general elections were rigged.<sup>2</sup> Khan's critics opined that he was being manipulated by the Military to try to bring down Premier Sharif or at least check him by questioning his political legitimacy. The accusation of rigging in general elections not only dented the legitimacy of elected government of Premier Nawaz Sharif, but also increased the role of the military in the Pakistani polity. Though a military coup was prevented, the aspirations for



Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal is the Director of the School of Politics and International Relations at the Quaid-I-Azam University Islamabad, Pakistan.

1 | Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf is the third largest party in the National Assembly (lower house of the Parliament of Pakistan), but with only 34 members in a house of 342.

2 | See the proceedings of Pakistan Parliament Joint Session held on 2 Sep 2014: "Don't lecture me about democracy, Imran tells parliamentarians", *Dawn*, <http://dawn.com/news/1129243> (accessed 7 Oct 2015).

the civilian control of the military in the civil-military relations in the Pakistani polity have been quashed.

The Premier Nawaz government has survived during the 2014 political crisis due to the “political fraternity”, which emerged in the wake of the “Charter of Democracy” signed by Nawaz Sharif and the late Benazir Bhutto on 14 May 2006 in London. The Pakistan People Party (PPP), the leading opposition party in both the National Assembly and Senate, instead of supporting protesting Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI), extended its unconditional support to the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) in the parliament. Although the support of the opposition played a critical role in thwarting the protester’s agenda, it exposed the political amateurish attitude of the political parties in the joint session of the Parliament. The political leaders’ speeches during the joint session of the parliament in August/September 2014 not only dented the credibility of the government, but also has degenerated the stature of the politicians in the society. Importantly, the reversion of political leaders’ credibility had always been intelligently utilised by the military junta to justify its military coup in Pakistan.

**Governance incompetence does endanger national security. The issues and problems relating to national security directly influence the civil-military relations in Pakistan.**

The degeneration of civilian state institutions,<sup>3</sup> global war on terrorism, economic mismanagement and absence of democratic customs/traditions in society have a negative impact on the governance of an elected government.<sup>4</sup> The governance incompetence does endanger national security. The issues and problems relating to national security directly influence the civil-military relations in Pakistan. The political gridlock in August 2014 caused by Azadi and Inqlab movements, once again, accentuated the significance of Military in the political system of the country. For instance, the deployment of rangers and army under the Article 245 of the Constitution of Pakistan in Islamabad manifested the political incapacity of the elected government of Premier Sharif to resolve the political crisis in a timely manner, and the civilian law enforcement agencies powerlessness to handle a mob in the red-zone of Islamabad. These disadvantages of an elected government have created a space for the Chief of Army

3 | Cf. Abdul Manan, “Senior bureaucrats lack competence and initiative: PM”, *The Express Tribune*, 9 Feb 2015, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/835479/senior-bureaucrats-lack-competence-and-initiative-pm> (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

4 | Cf. Faiz Muhammad, “Asfandyar sad at the sorry state of political affairs”, *Dawn*, 5 Sep 2014, <http://dawn.com/news/1129939> (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

Staff General Raheel Sharif to intervene in the political affairs of the state.<sup>5</sup>



Violent protest in Islamabad: The clashes between anti-government protesters and police were a serious blowback to the elected Sharif government. | Source: © Muhammad Reza, picture alliance/AA.

The terrorist massacre in Peshawar school on 16 December 2014<sup>6</sup> has further exposed the inability and incapacity of both the political elite and civilian institutions of Pakistan. A hasty amendment (21<sup>st</sup> amendment) to the 1973 Constitution on 7 January 2015 and changes to the Pakistan Army Act 1952 on 6 January 2015 resulted in the setting up of special trial courts under the military officers (military courts) in the major cities of Pakistan. The rational for the creation of military courts is "to avoid criminals evading punishment due to weaknesses in the legal system".<sup>7</sup> The leader of the opposition in the National Assembly Syed Khursheed Shah opined: "The aim of setting up military courts is to ensure the speedy trial of terrorists, there are so many loopholes in our judicial system and it has failed to deliver."<sup>8</sup> This reflects judicial

5 | Cf. "From a czar-like prime minister to a deputy commissioner-type character", *Dawn*, 20 Aug 2014, <http://dawn.com/news/1126545> (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

6 | The terrorists killed 149, including eight school teachers in their attack in Peshawar on an Army public school on 16 Dec 2014.

7 | On 24 Dec the Prime Minister announced to the nation in a televised address the National Action Plan (NAP) to deal with terrorism.

8 | "PM Nawaz Sharif Announces Anti-Terrorism Action Plan", *Dailymail*, 24 Dec 2015.

incompetence and questionable performance.<sup>9</sup> Precisely, the increased civilian dependence on the military creates an enabling environment for the military role in politics.

The Civil-Military relations subject in the politics of Pakistan has been immensely debated since the mid 1950s. Many analysts referred to Pakistan as a "garrison state" or "praetorian state". According to Daniel S. Markey, "Pakistan is a garrison state. The military has grown to control not only its own budgets and authorities but also to dictate national politics and a big slice of the economy as well".<sup>10</sup> Chaitram Singh and Michael Bailey argued that "Pakistan has been a praetorian state in the sense that the military has played a prominent role in the system."<sup>11</sup> Hasan-Askari Rizvi also opined: "Pakistan can be described

**In a "Praetorian State", the military hinders the evolution of the democratic political system in a state to check the civilian domination in civil-military relations.**

as a praetorian state where the military has acquired the capability, will, and sufficient experience to dominate the core political institutions and processes."<sup>12</sup> Indeed, in a

"Praetorian State",<sup>13</sup> the military hinders the evolution of the democratic political system in a state to check the civilian domination in civil-military relations.<sup>14</sup> The analysts who consider Pakistan to be a praetorian state seem convinced of a nexus between Imran Khan/Tahirul Qadri and the military during the August 2014 political crisis. Conversely, many concluded that political parties, civil society and non-military state actors have also let down the country by acting brashly and creating mayhem that gave the army an open invitation to intervene. This controversial debate

9 | Cf. Farrukh Saleem, "Military Courts", *The News International*, 11 Jan 2015, <https://shar.es/1uKsCv> (accessed 22 Oct 2015); Arif Nizami, "The Missing Narrative", *Pakistan Today*, 10 Jan 2015, <http://pakistanstoday.com.pk/?p=384685> (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

10 | Daniel S. Markey, *No Exit from Pakistan: America's Tortured Relationship with Islamabad*, New Delhi, 2013, p. 30.

11 | Chaitram Singh/Michael Bailey, "Praetorian Democracy, Illiberal but Enduring: Pakistan as Exemplar", *Southeast Review of Asian Studies* 35/2013, pp. 103-126, here: p. 112.

12 | Hasan-Askari Rizvi, *Pakistan: Civil-Military Relations in a Praetorian State*, Australian National University E Press, 2004, p. 88.

13 | Cf. Paul Staniland, "Explaining Civil-Military Relations in Complex Political Environments: India and Pakistan in Comparative Perspective", *Security Studies* 17, Feb 2008, p. 325; Khaled Abou el Fadl, "The Praetorian State in the Arab Spring", *University of Pennsylvania Journal of International Law*, Mar-Apr 2013, p. 306.

14 | Nordlinger has described praetorianism as the antithesis of civilian control and has argued that it arises when there is conflict between soldiers and civilian governors that leads to a breakdown of civilian supremacy. Quoted in David E. Albright, "Comparative Conceptualization of Civil-Military Relations", *World Politics*, Vol. 32, No. 4, Jul 1980, pp. 553-576, here: p. 555.

and prevalent pessimistic domestic political situation have raised two interlinked questions, i.e. why have the elected political elite failed to establish civil-dominance in the civil-military relations in Pakistan? Does Pakistan continue as a praetorian state? Though it seems a mere government's inefficacy or a political immaturity of the political elite resulted in 2014 political crisis, this may not be the entire anecdote. Perhaps PTI and PAT had tried to cash PML-N government's political vulnerabilities for narrow political ends in return for compromising on the gradual evolution of the civilian supremacy in the politics of Pakistan.

The primary objective of this study is to critically examine the constructs of civil-military relations and profess the role of Military in the politics of Pakistan in 2015. The following discussion, therefore, also includes both empirical and normative arguments about the civil-military relations in Pakistan. The following study is divided into five sections. The first section contains the theoretical analysis of the civil-military relations to identify the fundamental causes of the political elite's failure and military coups in Pakistan. It is followed by a brief overview of the civilian dominance in Pakistan. The third section contains the discussion on resurgence of the military-dominance. The fourth section precisely spells out the 2014 political crisis. The final section describes the prevalent trends in the political system of Pakistan.

### **CONSTRUCTS OF CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS**

The state maintaining strong military muscle for the sake of defense requires a rightful interplay between both the civilian and military institutions for the smooth functioning of polity. The disturbance in civil-military relations, especially in a developing state, could result in the direct military intervention in politics entailing military dictatorship or coup in the country. The military coup not only hinders the modern democratic political institutions development but also obstructs the gradual transformation of subjective and parochial political cultures into a participatory political culture. Nonetheless, constructive modification in traditional political culture is essential for the modern democratic political system's evolution and stable functioning. Different kinds of political culture lead to different levels of civilian control. The sequential military intervention in polity establishes a military dominant model of policy-making at the cost of democratic (political) institutional development. Notably,

**The disturbance in civil-military relations, especially in a developing state, could result in the direct military intervention in politics entailing military dictatorship or coup in the country.**

lack of political institutionalisation facilitates the military's role in politics or the emergence of the military-dominance model of the policy in a state.

The military dominance in polity is always challenged by the civilian political elite in the developing states. The latter's struggle for supremacy in the decision-making processes of the state entails political movements and demonstrations. Indeed, the continuity of the cycle of such political activities and tussle for supremacy in civil-military relations is perilous for both political stability and economic prosperity. What is this relationship? Civil-military relations are comprised of a continuum between civilian controls on the one hand and military role or rule on the other.<sup>15</sup> In simple terms, the civil-military relationship deals with "issues like a broad-based consensus on the operational norms of the polity, a general acceptance of a political formula for sharing and transfer of power, a widespread acceptance of the political institutions and processes, and public attachment to, and involvement in, political institutions are highlighted as the pre-requisites to a stable pattern of civil-military relations, with emphasis on civilian supremacy",<sup>16</sup> or civilian control of the military.<sup>17</sup> It means the military acceptance of the elected government's authority over a variety of political-decision making areas, rather than just the absence of military *coup d'états*. Aurel Croissant argued that: "[C]ivilian control in democracies means that only democratically legitimised civilian authorities and institutions possess the authority to make and implement policies."<sup>18</sup> Thus, it is the civilian prerogative to determine which aspects of a particular policy the military could implement.

The supremacy of civilians in civil-military relations is viewed as an important factor for the political stability in the democratic developed world. The supremacy of civilians is directly linked with the legitimacy of the political system.<sup>19</sup> G. Kennedy opined

15 | Cf. Aurel Croissant, "Civilian Control of the Military in Emerging Democracies: Theory and Empirical Evidence from Asia", *Journal of European Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2, Jul 2014, pp. 23-45, here: p. 24.

16 | Hasan-Askari Rizvi, "Civil-Military Relations and National Stability in South Asia", *Pakistan Horizon* 42, Feb 1989, pp. 47-78, here: p. 47.

17 | According to Huntington, "civilian control exists when there is [...] subordination of an autonomous profession to the ends of policy". On the one hand, the statesman acknowledges "the integrity of the [military] profession and its subject matter"; on the other, the military officer remains "neutral politically" and accepts "political guidance from the statesman". Quoted in Albright, n. 14, p. 554.

18 | Croissant, n. 15, p. 24.

19 | Rizvi, n. 16, p. 48.

that “[p]olitical systems suffering from a crisis of political legitimacy are vulnerable to successful or unsuccessful coups”. Paul Staniland also pointed out that strong institutions and civilian legitimacy could only discourage military intervention. He wrote, “the civilian control of the military can be both maintained and threatened in all threat environments, with strong institutions and civilian legitimacy constraining military intervention even when the military is internally oriented, and weak institutions and low legitimacy encouraging intervention even when the military is focused on external threats”.<sup>20</sup> Larry Diamond and Marc Plattner concurred the legitimacy of the argument, “[m]ilitary establishments do not seize power from successful and legitimate civilian regimes. They intervene in politics (whether by coup or by a more gradual expansion of power and prerogatives) when civilian politicians and parties are weak and divided, and when their divisions and manifest failures of governance have generated a vacuum of authority.”<sup>21</sup> Aqil Shah opined that “[a]lthough different regimes have different levels of legitimacy, whether the military accepts a regime as legitimate can be crucial in its decision to intervene”.<sup>22</sup> Hence, political legitimacy of the civilian ruling elite is imperative for instituting its supremacy in the policy-making or steering the state affairs.

The political history of Pakistan also substantiates the preceding discussion. For instance, during the second general elections (March 1977) Pakistan People’s Party victory raised strong doubts about the credibility of the election results. Consequently, despite having over two-thirds seats in the National Assembly, Premier Z. A. Bhutto did not sustain his government

in the wake of the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) mass movement.<sup>23</sup> The 1977 coup by General Zia ul-Haq “occurred after it became clear that the party of Premier Z. A. Bhutto had engaged in electoral fraud, against a backdrop of mass mobilising protest against the regime led by both secular and Islamist parties”.<sup>24</sup> Thus, the credibility of the elections that bestow legitimacy to an elected government is imperative for the survival of

**The credibility of the elections that bestow legitimacy to an elected government is imperative for the survival of civilian government.**

20 | Cf. Staniland, n. 13, p. 322 f.

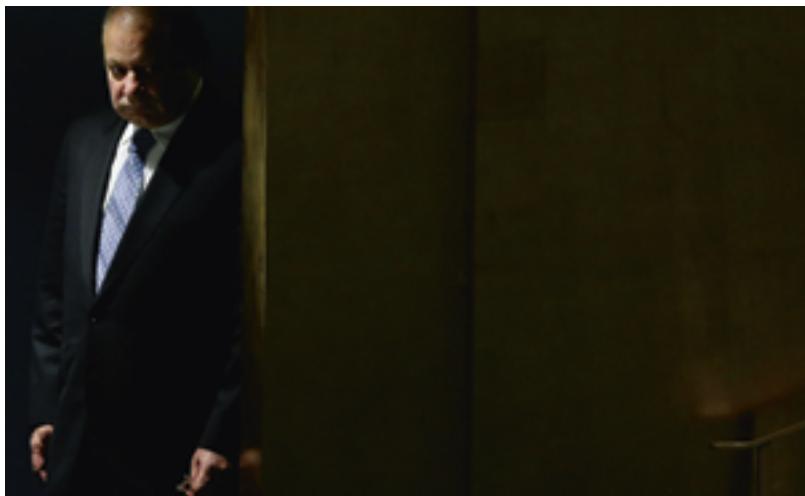
21 | Ibid., p. 328.

22 | The legitimacy deflations have provided the military an opportunity to intervene in many countries, including Brazil (1964), Chile (1973), and Turkey (1980). Cf. Aqil Shah, *The Army and Democracy: Military Politics in Pakistan*, Cambridge, 2014, p. 145.

23 | Ibid., p. 145.

24 | Staniland, n. 13, p. 353 f.

civilian government. Moreover, if an elected government is able to build consensus in a society, ensure political participation, guard the legitimacy of the political system through the institutionalisation of the electoral process, it can promote a constructive pattern of civil-military relations. Conversely, the inability of the elected ruling elite to cope with problems pertaining to consensus building, political participation and legitimacy give rise to primacy of the military over the civilians in civil-military relations.



Nawaz Sharif (l.) taking the oath in 2013: The Prime Minister faces the challenge to balance civilian and military influence in the country. | Source: © Justin Lane, picture alliance/dpa.

### **ENDEAVOR FOR CIVILIAN DOMINANCE**

The 18<sup>th</sup> amendment to the 1973 Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan had germinated optimism about the institutionalisation of the Westminster-style and truly Federal Parliamentary System of government in the country, which will increase manifold the responsibilities and powers of the Parliamentarians in general and the Prime Minister in particular.<sup>25</sup> The amendment also revamped Article 6 of the Constitution to “include suspension of the Constitution and putting it in abeyance among acts of high treason which no court will validate”. This amendment is important because it would include strictures against anyone justifying a military takeover, including the judiciary. It was an attempt to prevent the military coup and its subsequent legitimisation by

25 | The 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment repealed Article 58(2)(b) that empowered the president to dissolve the National Assembly.

the apex court of the country.<sup>26</sup> However, one cannot ignore the political parties and civilian institutions underdevelopment, which hinders the sustainability of civilian dominance in Pakistani polity. Hence, "Pakistan proved to be a most unexpected home for democracy, lacking nearly every favorable structural condition established in the democratisation literature".<sup>27</sup>

This transfer of power in the aftermath of 2013 general elections marked the first peaceful transition from one civilian leader to another in Pakistan's 67-year history. The peaceful transfer of power and political fraternity between the leading political parties encourages the Premier Sharif to assert his constitutional stature and establish civilian dominance in civil-military relations. Importantly, the discretionary practice rather than the seniority principle prevailed in Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's appointment of General Sharif, third in line, as the new army chief.<sup>28</sup> The appointment of a new Chief of Army Staff and Chairman Joint Chief Staff Committee on 12 December 2013 generated an impression that the political elite had succeeded in establishing its dominance in political decision-making and was gradually expanding its influence in domestic politics and foreign policy. The Premier Nawaz Sharif government's decision to prosecute former Army Chief and President of Pakistan Pervez Musharraf manifested that political leadership was endeavouring to set a precedent that would discourage military intervention in the politics of Pakistan in the future.

**The peaceful transfer of power and political fraternity between the leading political parties encourages the Premier Sharif to assert his constitutional stature and establish civilian paramount in the civil-military relations.**

Premier Sharif recognised the significance of the engagement of the services chiefs in the formulation of national security policy. Therefore, he created a forum – Cabinet Committee on National Security (CCNS) – for civil-military consultation on 22 August 2013. The CCNS was constituted by redesigning the Defence Committee of the Cabinet and establishment of a secretariat of the Committee. The CCNS is chaired by Prime Minister and includes the ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defence, Interior and Finance,

26 | Article 6 of the Constitution was violated twice by the two military generals – General Zia-ul-Haq in 1977 and General Pervez Musharraf in 1999 and their cohorts. Neither the previous successive democratic governments (1988 to 1999), nor the PPP government (2008 to 2013) had shown courage to execute Article 6.

27 | Michael Hoffman, "Military extrication and temporary democracy: the case of Pakistan", *Democratization* 18, 1/2011, pp. 75-99, here: p. 75.

28 | Cf. Najam Sethi, "A new beginning", *The Friday Times*, 29 Nov 2013, <http://thefridaytimes.com/tft/a-new-beginning> (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

and the top military leadership including the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee and Chiefs of Staff of the Pakistan Army, Navy and Air Force. According to the statement issued from the PM House: "The Committee will focus on the national security agenda with the aim to formulate a national security policy that will become the guiding framework for its subsidiary policies – defence policy, foreign policy, internal security policy, and other policies affecting national security."<sup>29</sup> The constitution of CCNS was viewed by many analysts to be an important initiative to combat the menace of terrorism. If the CCNS forum is utilised intelligently, it can certainly facilitate the synchronisation of the perceptions of both civilian political leadership and military elite regarding the National Security Policy. It seems a workable proposition so that both the decision makers and executors cooperate and work in harmony to quash the ambiguities about Pakistan's National Security Policy. Nevertheless, it has also provided more space to the military in national security policy formulations. The creation of CCNS was a constructive step to harmonise civil-military perspectives on the national security of Pakistan.

### **MILITARY DOMINANCE RESURGENCE IN 2014**

The political confrontation between the political parties in August 2014 and worsening of internal security due to religiously radicalised extremists and terrorist groups have revived concerns about the conventional issue in the Pakistani politics i.e. competition for power between the military top brass and civilian political elite. Many analysts opine that the August 2014 political crisis had been started immediately after the 2013 general elections.

**Premier Sharif's governance style disappointed and alienated political forces in the country.**

Every political party expressed its serious reservations on the 2013 general election's credibility. In addition to PTI, the PPP had first revealed that the 2013 general elections were massively rigged and fingers pointed to the role of returning officers (ROs).<sup>30</sup> Thus, the peaceful transfer of power on the basis of the 2013 general election failed to exhibit the efficacy of the ballot-box. Moreover, Premier Sharif's governance style disappointed and alienated political forces in the country. He did not attend National Assembly sessions for long periods and was also inaccessible to even his own party leaders, at times remaining

29 | "DCC to be reconstituted as Committee on National Security", *Dawn*, 22 Aug 2013, <http://dawn.com/news/1037613> (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

30 | Zulqernain Tahir, "PPP sees 'third umpire' if crisis persists", *Dawn*, 16 Dec 2014, <http://dawn.com/news/1151136> (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

incommunicado to even some of his kitchen cabinet members.<sup>31</sup> Premier Nawaz failure to respect the parliamentary system of government's norms undermined his legitimacy and gave the military an opportunity to increase its influence in civil-military relations.

Importantly, the conflict between the civil and military leadership is viewed by analysts as a major source of a political fiasco in 2014.<sup>32</sup> They point to the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif government's handling of five issues: the former President Pervez Musharraf's treason trial, registration of criminal cases against serving military personal,<sup>33</sup> anti-military rhetoric,<sup>34</sup> Geo TV channel & ISI standoff over the former's senior anchor Hamid Mir firing accident,<sup>35</sup> and that relations with Afghanistan and India<sup>36</sup> have germinated immense mistrust between the ruling political elite and military leadership. The opponents of the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif sought to use this animosity to pursue their own political objectives and destabilise the elected government. Moreover, the PTI sustained protest in Islamabad for nearly four months and occasional political rallies in the other big cities of the country; and deterioration of the writ of the state, worsening the law and order situation have increased the role of military in political decision making, especially after the terrorist massacre

31 | Cf. M. Ziauddin, "A political tailspin?", *Express Tribune*, 20 Aug 2014, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/750800/a-political-tailspin> (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

32 | Cf. Zahid Hussain, "The real battle", *Dawn*, 3 Sep 2014, <http://dawn.com/news/1129484> (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

33 | "Civil-Military Relations in Pakistan", *PILDAT Monitor*, Apr 2014, p. 2; "President Mamnoon signs Protection of Pakistan Bill into law", *The Express Tribune*, 11 Jul 2014, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/734099/president-mamnoon-signs-protection-of-pakistan-bill-into-law> (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

34 | Ibid.; Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), press release, PR75/2014-ISPR, 7 Apr 2014, [https://ispr.gov.pk/front/main.asp?o=t-press\\_release&date=2014/4/7](https://ispr.gov.pk/front/main.asp?o=t-press_release&date=2014/4/7) (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

35 | "Civil-Military Relations in Pakistan", n. 33, p. 3; Hussain, n. 32; Ali Sidiki, "Geo's licenses suspended till May 28: PEMRA", *The Express Tribune*, 20 May 2014, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/710817/geos-licenses-suspended-till-may-28th-pehra> (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

36 | Hasan-Askari Rizvi, "Foreign policy dilemmas", *The Express Tribune*, 30 Nov 2014, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/799815/foreign-policy-dilemmas-2> (accessed 22 Oct 2015); Aqil Shah, "Constraining consolidation: military politics and democracy in Pakistan (2007-2013)", *Democratization* 21, Jun 2014; "Nawaz's Delhi trip: At courtesy, India gives PM show cause", *The Express Tribune*, 28 May 2014, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/714184/nawazs-delhi-trip-at-courtesy-call-india-gives-pm-show-cause> (accessed 22 Oct 2015); Farrukh Saleem, "Power Politics", *The News International*, 25 Jan 2015, <http://thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-9-298029-Power-politics> (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

in the Army Public School at Peshawar on 16 December 2014. Theoretically speaking, "degraded civilian control is likely when both external and internal threats are high, and full-blown praetorianism occurs when internal threats are high but external threats low, since under these circumstances the military becomes 'a serious contender for control of society'".<sup>37</sup> During 2014/2015 both internal and external threats of Pakistan were high and both civilian leadership and civil-law enforcement institutions failed to address internal and external challenges effectively. Consequently the role of the military immensely increased in the political decision-making.

#### **2014 POLITICAL CRISIS: INCREASING MILITARY ROLE**

The ruling political elite's failure to resolve the political crisis through the dialogue and civilian law enforcement institutions incapability to control the PTI and PAT mobilised crowd in Islamabad increased government's dependency on Military to protect the state institutions under Article 245. The military troops were deployed in Islamabad for the assistance of Police to protect government buildings. Although General Sharif and the Prime Minister held many meetings, the General did not seek any role for himself.<sup>38</sup> On 28 August 2014, the government asked General Raheel to facilitate government negotiations with Mr. Imran Khan and Mr. Tahir ul Qadri to resolve the political crisis. Subsequently, both leaders were invited, separately, by General Raheel at the Army House in Rawalpindi for deliberations on the ongoing crisis. After the meeting, both leaders informed their supporters that "the army had promised to act as a guarantor and a mediator." This development received a mixed response from the people of Pakistan. Many opined that Premier Sharif has conceded to the military role in the formation of domestic and foreign policy. This development, however, disappointed pro-democracy forces. Perhaps it further confirmed the argument that both parties protest was engineered by the military establishment, which was concerned with the gradual transformation in civil-military relations. The critics declared these meetings to be part of the "script" and a "soft coup".<sup>39</sup> Conversely, Maj-Gen Asim Saleem Bajwa (DG ISPR)

37 | Staniland, n. 13, p. 327.

38 | Cf. Khawar Ghuman, "Army as 'facilitator' was Nisar's brainwave", *Dawn*, 30 Aug 2014, <http://dawn.com/news/1128719> (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

39 | Cf. Ejaz Hussain, "Has the military agency been constrained?", *Daily Times*, 12 Sep 2014, <http://dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/12-Sep-2014/has-the-military-agency-been-constrained> (accessed 22 Oct 2015); ▶

strongly rejected the rumors that the Pakistan Army was a script-writer of political crisis in the country on 12 September 2014.<sup>40</sup>



Vigil in London for the victims of the Peshawar school attack: The terrorist act shocked Pakistan and exposed the incapability of the civilian law enforcement agencies to maintain law and order. | Source: Kashif Haque, flickr .

The invitation of General Raheel to resolve the political crisis had dejected many members of the National Assembly. Senator, Raza Rabbani, while commenting on the meetings of Mr. Khan and Dr Qadri with COAS Gen Raheel Sharif said: "My head is down with shame after last night's development."<sup>41</sup> The political leaders seem worried about the outcome, i.e. the involvement of the military would not only shift the balance of power in favor of the military in the nation's polity, but also shrink their political maneuvering space and dent the democratic political system. Senator Farhatullah Babar noted: "Indeed it is a moment of collective disgrace for the nation and more so for the parliament. It opens the possibility of permanent military intervention at the behest of a few thousand armed men and women made to gather mysteriously at the

Ayesha Siddiq, "To Coup or not to Coup", *The Express Tribune*, 28 August 2014, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/754389/to-coup-or-not-to-coup> (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

40 | Cf. Maqbool Malik, "No part in political crisis, says army", *The Nation*, 13 Sep 2014, <http://nation.com.pk/national/13-Sep-2014/no-part-in-political-crisis-says-army> (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

41 | Amir Waseem, "PPP to move cautiously after controversy over SOS to army", *Dawn*, 30 Aug 2014, <http://dawn.com/news/1128755> (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

gates of the federal capital.<sup>42</sup> Precisely this once again exhibited the incapability of the political elite to resolve the political crisis without the assistance of the Army Chief.

Premier Sharif denied the reports that he invited the military for mediation. On 29 August 2014, he stated: "Neither the army chief nor the Army were requested to act as a facilitator in the prevailing political situation."<sup>43</sup> He claimed that Mr. Khan and Dr Qadri requested the Army Chief for an audience. He said, "General Raheel sought his permission to meet Imran, Qadri which was granted; can sacrifice his government 10 times; there can be no compromise on supremacy of parliament".<sup>44</sup> Conversely, Khan said that neither Dr Tahirul Qadri nor he had asked the army to become a mediator to solve the political crisis.<sup>45</sup> The debate on the floor of the National Assembly had further multiplied the political confusion and ambiguity in the country and also raised a question as to whether the army could play the role of an honest broker or whether it was also a party to the conflict. Nevertheless, this controversy, once again, reinforced the decisive role of the Army Chief in the political affairs of the state.

Premier Sharif's tactic to prevent political damage control in the National Assembly provoked the military to clarify the issue. ISPR press release maintained that the government had asked General Raheel to facilitate negotiations with the protesting parties.<sup>46</sup> The confusion and ambiguity further increased mistrust between the PM Sharif and Military junta. The eruption of fierce clashes between law-enforcers and protesters in Islamabad necessitated that the General Raheel convene an emergency meeting of the Corps Commanders to deliberate on the political situation in the country and to take the commanders into confidence over his meetings with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, PTI Chief Imran Khan and PAT Chief Tahirul Qadri on 31 August 2014. The Corps Commanders while reaffirming support to democracy remarked that

42 | Ibid.

43 | Muhammad Anis, "Govt didn't ask army to mediate in crisis: Nawaz", *The News International*, 30 Aug 2014, <https://shar.es/1uKGfq> (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

44 | Ibid.

45 | Cf. "90pc MPs are tax evaders and killers, claims Imran", *The News International*, 30 Aug 2014, <https://shar.es/1uKcq5> (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

46 | Cf. Baqir Sajjad Syed/Iftikhar A. Khan, "Govt on back foot as army looks to continue 'mediation'", *Dawn*, 30 Aug 2014, <http://dawn.com/news/1128729> (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

the use of force would only aggravate the problem.<sup>47</sup> The corps commanders support to the democratic system helped in allaying fears of military intervention in the crisis. Nevertheless, the 2014 political crisis resulted in the advantage of the Military within the context of the civil-military relationship. It exposed the political parties' leadership incapability to resolve the political fiasco through political tactics. The military once again gained ground at the expense of the Chief Executive and Parliament.<sup>48</sup>



Pakistani troops on their way to North Waziristan in June 2014: Many political analysts argued that this operation was on the military's own initiative. | Source: © Rehan Khan, picture alliance/dpa.

## MILITARY IN THE LEAD

The military launched Zarb-i-Azb to restore the writ of the state in the North Waziristan on 15 June 2014.<sup>49</sup> Many political analysts concluded that this operation was the military's own initiative because at that time the civilian leadership was optimistic about the dialogue.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, Premier Sharif claimed full

47 | ISPR, press release, PR184/2014-ISPR, 31 Aug 2014, [https://ispr.gov.pk/front/main.asp?o=t-press\\_release&date=2014/8/31](https://ispr.gov.pk/front/main.asp?o=t-press_release&date=2014/8/31) (accessed 7 Oct 2015).

48 | Cf. "Siraj warns of 'third force' intervention", *Dawn*, 24 Aug 2014, <http://dawn.com/news/1127351> (accessed 22 Oct 2015); Tahir, n. 30.

49 | Cf. Ishtiaq Ahmed, "The Pakistan Military: Change and Continuity under General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani", *ISAS Working Paper*, No. 90, 2009, p. 9.

50 | Cf. Hasan-Askari Rizvi, "Our faltering counterterrorism strategy", *The Express Tribune*, 8 Feb 2015, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/835110/our-faltering-counterterrorism-strategy> (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

**Though the military operation weakened the Tehrik-i-Taliban, the government has failed to completely eradicate the menace of terrorism.**

responsibility for the military operation. The Armed forces had successfully destroyed the Tehrik-i-Taliban's operational sanctuaries located in North Waziristan. Consequently, the Taliban and their associates shifted in the neighboring provinces of Afghanistan. In short, the terrorists lost their hideouts, arms caches, stores, vehicles and above all their freedom of movement. Though the military operation weakened the Tehrik-i-Taliban, the government has failed to completely eradicate the menace of terrorism from the country.

The terrorist groups incapability to strike and destroy hard targets, such as law enforcement agencies, government installations, etc., resulted in the immense vulnerability of soft targets such as public and private educational institutions, common man processions,<sup>51</sup> etc. On 16 December 2014, terrorists attacked the Army Public School in Peshawar and killed 132 children (students at the school in grades 1 to 10) and nine adults.<sup>52</sup> This shocked the entire nation. Political and military leadership rushed to Peshawar. Three-day mourning was announced by the Federal Government. The Army Chief, instead of the Defense Minister or the National Security Advisor, visited Kabul on 17 December 2014.<sup>53</sup> He held separate meetings with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and General John F Campbell, ISAF commander.<sup>54</sup> Matters that came under discussion related to the security situation along the Pak-Afghan border region.

Realising the inability or the powerlessness of the police and judiciary, the entire political elite of the country agreed to the setting up of special military courts under the military officers for tackling terrorism cases in the country during the meeting of parliamentary leaders at the Prime Minister's House on 24 December 2014.<sup>55</sup> Although the military courts are not compatible with a

51 | Cf. Umer Farooq et al., "TTP splinter groups claim Wagah attack; 60 dead", *Dawn*, 3 Nov 2014, <http://dawn.com/news/1142006> (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

52 | Cf. Zahir Shah Sherazi et al., "Militants Siege of Peshawar School ends, 141 killed", *Dawn*, 16 Dec 2014, <http://dawn.com/news/1151203> (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

53 | ISPR, press release, PR277/2014-ISPR, 17 Dec 2014, [https://ispr.gov.pk/front/main.asp?o=t-press\\_release&date=2014/12/17](https://ispr.gov.pk/front/main.asp?o=t-press_release&date=2014/12/17) (accessed 7 Oct 2015).

54 | Ibid.

55 | Cf. Mateen Haider, "Political leaders reach consensus on military courts", *Dawn*, 25 Dec 2014, <http://dawn.com/news/1152909> (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

constitutional democracy,<sup>56</sup> they were considered appropriate to respond the terrorist threats. The reasoning behind opting for military courts was two-fold, i.e. ensuring a quicker, more streamlined process for anti-terrorism trials, and lowering the threshold of evidence needed to secure convictions. The establishment of military courts exposed the incapability of the civilian judicial and legal system to adjudicate the arrested terrorists' cases.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, the inability and incapacity of the police force to combat the terrorists forced Interior Minister Nisar Ali Khan to recommend that all the provincial governments extend the cover of Article 245 to army operations inside the provinces. This did not only underscore the military role in combatting the menace of terrorism, but also exposed the civilian law enforcement agencies powerlessness.<sup>58</sup> These developments manifest the larger military role or military primacy in the internal and external affairs of Pakistan. Hence, the 2013/2014 civilian dominance order was completely compromised.

#### AN EVALUATION: DETERMINISTIC TRENDS IN 2015

Critical examination of the trends in the politics of Pakistan underscores that neither the military trust in the elected political ruling elite, nor are civilians confident about the subordinate role of military in the affairs of the state. Both sides, rhetorically, give an impression that the constitution is supreme and that every institution would work within its constitutionally defined framework. Ironically, every political leader talks about constitutionalism and democracy, but once a leader assumes power through an electoral victory, he/she wants to run the state like a personal fiefdom and does not accommodate those questioning his/her governance. Similarly, the military also, instead of influencing, seeks to chalk out the foreign and strategic policy of the state. This seems not abnormal due to the unsettled two borders of the country and imperativeness of maintaining strong armed forces to solidify Pakistan's defensive fence in the volatile and complex strategic environment of the region.

**Every political leader talks about constitutionalism and democracy, but once a leader assumes power through an electoral victory, he/she wants to run the state like a personal fiefdom and does not accommodate**

56 | "No other courts can be formed in presence of independent judiciary, says former CJP", *The News International*, 30 Dec 2014, <https://shar.es/1uKhuf> (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

57 | Cf. Babar Sattar, "Time to introspect", *Dawn*, 19 Jan 2015, <http://dawn.com/news/1157894> (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

58 | Cf. Ayesha Siddiqa, "Return of Nationalism", *The Express Tribune*, 25 Dec 2014, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/811741/return-of-nationalism> (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

Second, India-Pakistan strategic competition makes the military a legitimate stakeholder in Islamabad's India policy. Similarly, the state of affairs at the Afghanistan-Pakistan border since December 1979, has increased the military role in the making of the country's Afghanistan policy.<sup>59</sup> Thus, the military's dominant role in Pakistan's India and Afghanistan policy would continue until the settlement of the Kashmir issue as well as pacification of the civil war-like situation in Afghanistan.

**The weakness of civilian institutions and governance has increased the military role in both national interest's conceptualisation and pursuit.**

Third, the steady degeneration of the Civilian Bureaucracy and Civilian Administrative institutions facilitates the sustainability of the military's pre-eminence in the polity of Pakistan, especially in maintaining the writ of the state. Instead of these institutions' regeneration, the elected political elite's governance style has furthered this negative process.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, the gradual deterioration of the civilian institutions' performance and governance weakness has increased the military role in both national interest's conceptualisation and pursuit.

Fourth, since the mid-1950s, the contest for supremacy between the civilian and military elite within Pakistan has been taxing the political stability of the country. This contest continues even in 2014 and 2015 due to the weak Pakistani political institutions and immature democratic political culture.

Fifth, since August 2014, the political ruling elite have been considerably weakened at home and have also lost face abroad. The establishment of apex committees in all provinces to coordinate security matters to implement the National Action Plan on 3 January 2015,<sup>61</sup> has made subservient the civilian elected political elite in its relations with the military in the domain of law enforcement. On 30 November 2014, U.S. Secretary Kerry opined that the

59 | Cf. Ikram Sehgal, "The making of history", *Daily Times*, 20 Nov 2014, <http://dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/20-Nov-2014/the-making-of-history> (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

60 | Cf. Ilhan Niaz, *Understanding and Addressing the Administrative Aspect of Pakistan's Civil-Military Imbalance*, New Delhi, 2015, p. 10; Anatol Lieven, "Military Exceptionalism in Pakistan", *Survival* 53, Apr 2011, pp. 53-68, here: pp. 55-56.

61 | Cf. "Apex committees formed in all provinces to implement NAP", *Pakistan Today*, 3 Jan 2015, <http://pakistantoday.com.pk/?p=38325> (accessed 22 Oct 2015); "Apex committees formed in all provinces to implement NAP", *The Express Tribune*, 3 Jan 2015, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/816591/army-chief-attends-meeting-on-formation-of-nap-committees> (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

Pakistan Army is a real force keeping the country united.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, General Sharif's foreign visits and meetings with foreign dignitaries marked the increasing role of Military in the external affairs of Pakistan.<sup>63</sup>

Sixth, during the third quarter of 2014 and the first half of 2015, the pessimistic impression of the civilian political leadership has been used to boost the military stature in the Pakistani society.<sup>64</sup> The deplorable situation and cynical governance reflection in the media was used to the advantage of those who endeavor to establish military dominance in the civil-military relations of the country. Realistically, today, politicians are viewed as highly partisan, non-professional and corrupt, and unable to take firm decisions on critical issues. The negative image of the capabilities of the civilian elite to govern the country could further weaken elected leaders position in their relations with military elite to decide on the strategic matters in 2015/2016.

**The deplorable situation and cynical governance reflection in the media was in the advantage of those who endeavor to establish the military dominance in the civil-military relations of the country.**

Seventh, presently, Pakistan is facing a serious governance crisis. The political leaders have failed to establish and legitimise participatory institutions and processes since 2008. Instead of encouraging participatory political culture, the Political elite have been sustaining subjective culture within the political parties. This attitude of the political elite is to the advantage of the military because it generates apathy toward the alienation of the common man from the democratic political system.

Finally, Pakistan continues to be a "Praetorian State" in 2015. Perhaps the military possesses and is going to sustain capability, resolve, and sufficient experience to dominate the core political institutions and processes. Therefore, Premier Sharif needs the support and the blessings of the military during his remaining years in office. The dependency of the Prime Minister on the military for his continuity in office and restoration of the writ of the state guarantee the military's preponderant role in the polity. More precisely, Pakistan, today, fits within exactly the description,

62 | Cf. Wajid Ali Syed, "Pak Army a real force keeping country united: Kerry", *The New International*, 2 Dec 2014, <https://shar.es/1uK4Kc> (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

63 | Cf. Saleem, n. 36.

64 | Cf. Humayun Gauhar, "Political + Judicial Failure = Military Courts", *Pakistan Today*, 24 Jan 2015, <http://pakistantoday.com.pk/?p=387871> (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

"where the military is like an octopus that has its tentacles in various aspects" and thereby the military is not going to limit itself to the barracks in the near future. Thus, today, the military seems comfortable with its decisive role instead of rule.

## CONCLUSION

The Political elite in Pakistan have been endeavoring to institutionalise military subordination to the civilian elected ruling elite and the Army's non-involvement in active politics. The Pakistani political system and political culture do not seem mature enough for the emergence of the civilian-dominance model of the policy due to the vulnerability of the political system to military coup. The dichotomy between political elite rhetoric and practice reveals their incapability to establish the true supremacy of the elected elite. Importantly, Premier Nawaz expressed his commitment to establish civilian supremacy over the military, but he was dependent on the military for its assistance during the August 2014 political crisis and also needs its support in maintaining the law order in the state due to the deteriorating situation of civilian administrative institutions. The enforcement of Article 245 and formation of provincial apex committees for executing the National Action Plan manifest that the government conceded political space to military, which shifted the balance of power from Islamabad to Rawalpindi. The rampant political alienation and the accentuation of the crisis of legitimacy compromised Premier Sharif's political supremacy. To conclude, the political vulnerability and incapability of the civilian law enforcement agencies to maintain law and order have improved the bargaining power of the top brass of the military that found it convenient to expand its role in the polity, especially after the terrorist attack at the Peshawar Army Public School on 16 December 2014.

The opinions, findings and conclusion or recommendations expressed in this article belong to the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.