

Civil-Military Relations: A Comparative Study of India and Pakistan

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Abstract : India and Pakistan were ideologically different states but shared same military heritage at the time of independence from British colonial rule in 1947. The military in British India served as its strong shield, but avoided an active involvement in politics and largely accepted the principle of supremacy of civilian elites. The Indian military retained this tradition but Pakistan reflected a major shift. This paper deals largely with the theories of various scholars like Huntington, Fitch, Larry Diamond, and Douglas. C. North for the purpose of generalizing the reasons behind this difference in approach adopted by two neighboring states in terms of various socio-political and religious factors. Further on, this research aims at providing the list of checks and balances required for preventing unwarranted military intervention in domestic politics.

Keywords: Civil-Military Relations, Democracy, Military Coups, Authoritarianism, Pakistan Army, Indian Army, Military Intervention, Political Legitimacy, Civilian Control, Military Dictatorship, Garrison State, Military Governance, Democratic Transition, Military Economy, Nationalism, State-Building, Military's Role in Development Civilian Authority.

Introduction - Democratic theory does not admit the possibility that any group possesses greater legitimacy than the will of the people, determined through free and inclusive elections and tempered by the interplay of constitutionally established institutions.¹ The acceptance of a civilian supremacy over the military elites, whereby the latter willingly execute the policies of the former and only influence policy making in relevant areas through normative, group, or institutional, processes, is crucial to the idea of democracy. Military interventions appear to stem from problems in civilian-military relations which, as Amos Perlmutter notes,² is gravely exacerbated in many developing and underdeveloped areas by the absence of a consensus on what the proper civilian-military relationship is, unlike in the West, where a Sandhurst tradition of defending civilian authority prevails. Due to this absence of consensus, the dynamics of civil-military relations significantly vary in various developing states. Some of these have completely adopted the Western model of civilian supremacy. But, at the same time, in few of these societies, the military exercises independent political power, thus turning the "classical" civil-military arrangement "upside down."³

This difference is best represented in the study of military's role in the politics of India and Pakistan, two neighbouring, nuclear weapon capable states of South Asia. These states were part of one country before independence from British colonial rule in 1947. Pakistan was carved out

of India when Mahatma Gandhi failed to convince Muhammad Ali Jinnah that both Hindus and Muslims could live together in an independent India. The armed forces of India and Pakistan shared common culture, ethos, and traditions, including the acceptance of the principle of civilian supremacy. However, the total subordination of the Indian military by the civilian entity is in direct contrast to the primacy that the Pakistani counterpart has appropriated. Indian Military is an outstanding example of an 'apolitical and professional force, almost a bureaucratic instrument of state policy'. India's democratic system is a model for other developing countries. On the contrary, the dynamics of civil-military relations in Pakistan have created an ongoing negotiation for power in which the military, civilian politicians and Islamist forces have individually and in alliance with one another vied for control of Pakistan's politics.⁴

Patterns of Government in Pakistan

Civilian Bureaucratic Rule	1947-58
Civilian Authoritarianism	1971-77
Direct Military Rule	1958-62, 1969-71, 1977-85, 1999-2002
Elected Civilian Governments Under Civilian Presidents	1988-99, 2008-
Elected Governments Under Military Presidents	1962-69, 1985-88, 2002-08

Frequent military interventions in politics of Pakistan and their absence in India has initiated a political debate which attempts to explain this difference of approach

towards civil-military relations in terms of various socio-political and religious factors.

In his book 'Political order in changing societies', Huntington has linked the likelihood of a military coup to levels of institutionalization and political participation. He suggested that in a "civil society," where there are high levels of institutionalization but low levels of political participation, civil-military relations were absorbed within a wider, stable political system. In contrast, he argued that in "praetorian societies" with low levels of institutionalization and high levels of participation, the coup becomes the primary way by which the military exerts its institutional influence.⁵ Civil society is also considered to play a key role in the consolidation of democracy, in checking abuses of state power, preventing the resumption of power by authoritarian governments and encouraging wider citizen participation and public scrutiny of the state. Such actions enhance state legitimacy; 'a vibrant civil society is probably more essential for consolidating and maintaining democracy than for initiating it' ⁶

In India there was undoubtedly the existence of a sizeable 'civil society' which was a product of its politically liberalized society and a general level of religious tolerance in a traditionally historic multi-racial society. It also emerged from a well educated middle class and an enlarging one fuelled by its high rate of economic growth. In the countries where such a middle class does exist, there will always be a call for more personal freedom and democracy. Education and economic progress automatically undermine any autocratic or elitist form of government.⁷ Pakistan has not yet developed a large, educated and fairly well to do middle class-a class of people who have overcome traditional clan and tribal loyalties, and have become genuinely interested in personal liberty, independent information media and scope for participation in the political decision making process.

Political culture of two states has also been instrumental in determining the nature and kind of military's role in politics. Finer argues that national political cultures can be assessed and ranked in levels, according to following criteria.⁸

1. Does there exist a wide public approval of the procedure for transferring (political) power, and a corresponding belief that no exercise of power in breach of these procedures is legitimate?
2. Does there exist a wide public recognition as to who or what constitutes the sovereign authority, and a corresponding belief that no other person or centre of power is legitimate or duty worthy?
3. Is the public proportionally large and well mobilized into private associates? Do we find cohesive churches, industrial associations, and political parties (that are capable of acting independently of the state)?

The higher a nation ranks on the first two criteria, the more likely it is that a military coup would be seen as

illegitimate. The higher a nation ranks on the third criteria- that is presence of civil society-the more society can mobilize itself in defense of the legitimate holders of power.⁹ In comparison to Pakistan, India was more fortunate in having sound political institutions that functioned in a democratic manner, a strong political party with a mass base, and a team of seasoned political leaders. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was India's first Prime Minister for 17 years, from 1947 to 1964 until his death. The respect he enjoyed from general public and his commitment to liberal democratic values laid the foundation of India's political culture which had no role for military in politics. Nehru encouraged parliamentary debate, maintained internal democracy within the Congress party, continued the British tradition of a politically neutral civil service, fostered judicial independence, encouraged press freedom, boosted secularism, and firmly entrenched civilian control of the military.¹⁰ On the contrary, Pakistan lost its two premier leaders Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan within a few years after independence. This proved to be the decisive factor in determining the future of civil and military relationship in Pakistan, as after them, there was no one left on the political scene of Pakistan who could generate mass support for democratic values. Muslim league relied heavily on the towering personality of Jinnah and afterwards up to some extent on Liaquat Ali Khan. Soon after their death, it began to become disunited and lose direction. Other political parties, established mostly by those depicting from the Muslim league, suffered from similar discord, indiscipline and weak organization. They were neither able to bring forward a national alternative to the Muslim League or evolve a broad based consensus on the operational norms of the polity, and thus failed to produce a coherent government.¹¹

Indian National Congress was able to provide stability and better administration to Indian people because of training that it specifically and the Hindus got during the independent struggle - right from the formation of Congress under Dadabhai Naoroji. That training was ingrained in Congress psyche - however inept its brains may have been. This thinking of Indian civilian elites can be well understood in the words of present Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, when he says, "If there is an 'idea of India' by which India should be defined, it is the idea of an inclusive, open, multi cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual society. ... We have an obligation to history and mankind to show that pluralism works. ... Liberal democracy is the natural order of political organization in today's world. All alternate systems, authoritarian and majoritarian in varying degrees, are an aberration."¹² On the other hand, Pakistan falls into the category of what Clifford Greetz calls 'old societies and new states.'¹³ It didn't exist prior to independence in discrete form but rather was always part of larger systems. Therefore there was serious lack of elite and experienced civilian politicians, who could guarantee steady development of

civilian political institutions to safeguard democratic civil and military elite relations. Many of the able civilian elites were not that much influential as they belonged originally to the states that were left behind in India and they were not able to attract the popular support in independent Pakistan. Lack of administrative ability in civilian leaders and common man's disrespect towards them and faith in military led the military officers to revise their understanding of the military's proper role.

Pakistan did not have an indigenous bourgeoisie that was rooted to the Pakistani soil. The nascent bourgeoisie that emerged after partition comprised migrants from Bombay, Gujarat and Bengal. The leading members of the Muslim League and the founding fathers were also mostly Indian migrants. Similarly, the bureaucracy, industrial and commercial class were also mostly from the migrant community. In the 1950s, the migrants dominated the government policies. The ruling elites were led by the migrant elites. The army's officer cadre consisting of mostly Punjabis was the local elite. But Muhajirs (the Urdu-speaking migrants) and the Punjabis constituted the bureaucracy. Therefore, Pakistan was known as a Muhajir-Punjabi state, which was criticised by Bengalis, Sindhis and others. For years after independence, this state of affairs continued. The civil-military bureaucracy structurally emerged as 'overdeveloped' institution which in alliance with landed-feudal projected and institutionalised 'Hindu India' to pursue politico economic interests. The military being part of the praetorian oligarchy planned and fought war against India over Kashmir in 1947-48. This exercise helped the oligarchy to rule authoritatively in the 1950s. The civil bureaucracy led the praetorian oligarchy in this period. However from 1958 onward, the military has, from within the praetorian oligarchy, emerged as a powerful political actor due to its coercive power and became leader of the oligarchy.¹⁴ India was also historically the nation of landlords but the power of landlords has been broken over there by the successive Indian governments. As a result, it is now recognized as the largest democracy in the world, while Pakistan, until recently, was defined as a rogue state.

For civilian institution building, it is necessary to have effective constitutive rules of politics. These rules have fundamental impact on how the philosophic vision embodied in political culture of a country is translated into the reality of politics. By establishing precedents and constitutional guarantees, these rules lend legitimacy to certain themes while denying it to others. They also affect, directly or indirectly, who can participate in the domestic political game as well as how.¹⁵ India was able to provide a constitution as early as in 1950 which laid constitutive rules of politics clearly in favour of democratic government headed by civilian elites. This Constitution vests "the supreme command of defence forces of the Union" in the President but he is obliged to be "regulated by law" and actual control is vested in the council of ministers led by the Prime Minister. Conventions

established over the years ensured that "aid and advice" given by the council is authoritative and no President has ever attempted to exercise independent command over armed forces. On the other hand, faced with the task of governing a new nation with considerable linguistic, sectarian, and regional diversity, the civilian leaders in Pakistan proved to be ill equipped for the task. They lacked the skills of negotiation, compromise, and debate that their counterparts in India under the leadership of Pundit Nehru had virtually institutionalized. As a consequence, Pakistan's Constituent Assembly quickly became bogged down, and could not produce a basic law till 1956.¹⁶

The constitutionally determined role for Indian Army is quite narrow and it provides a check on attempts to politicise the military. The Indian political system is an inspiration for rest of the world. Unlike Pakistan, the Opposition in India plays a vital role and commands respect. Everyone is expected to abide by the law, including the politicians. Military elites in India know that the final power of decision making is always going to remain in the hands of civilian elites. Indian civilian elites were able to provide a political culture where the respect for the civilian institutions like judiciary was unchallengeable but on the contrary, in Pakistan, military elites and even civilian ones, when in power misused institutions like judiciary and press for providing strength to their autocratic rules. Pakistan has so far seen three constitutions—created in 1956, 1962, and 1973—and in 1985 military ruler Zia ul-Haq fundamentally altered the constitution with his introduction of the Eighth Amendment establishing a President-dominated executive so that military could enjoy control over government even when civilians were in power.

Military establishment that deals with many non military functions is likely to be more autonomous and freer from civilian control. Pakistan faced food crisis in many of its parts during 1952 and 1953. Hard pressed civilian government was forced to call for military's assistance in this situation. Army launched operation Jute (1952-53) to solve food problem in country and started many anti smuggling operations too. The anti-Ahmadi riots turned Lahore into a nightmarish inferno in March 1953 and crippled the administrative machinery of the state. This led to the imposition of martial law in Lahore and gave the military its first taste of power in state. There were many other instances where military was called upon for help. All this made impression in general people's mind that military was their only savior and civilian elites lacked the ability to govern. Military elites also started believing that they were more able to govern the state. Field Marshal Ayub Khan has stated in his biography *Friends Not Masters*, "Pakistan's survival was vitally linked to the establishment of a well-trained, well-equipped and well-led army." The army was entrusted with wide and varied duties in 1947. Initially, "it had to assist the depleted ranks of the civil administration in maintaining law and order"; secondly, "there were gigantic

problems of extrication, protection, movement and administration of millions of refugees from India"; thirdly, "it was entrusted with the task of protecting "the Hindus and Sikhs migrating to India"; lastly, it had to protect the new, ill-defined, lengthy and sensitive borders.¹⁷

After Pakistan formally became a republic in 1956 under President Mirza, it faced an array of serious threats to its stability. Its conflict with India over Kashmir remained unresolved, relations with Afghanistan were poor, and the country suffered continuing economic difficulties, frequent cabinet crises, and widespread political corruption. It was the period of grave crisis for Pakistan. The inability of civilian elites to provide a stable government at centre and their continuously increasing reliance on bureaucracy paved the way for first military regime of General Ayub in 1958. Since then, military has played the most important role in decision making process of Pakistan and has never allowed civilian institutions to flourish. On the other hand India has long been host to free and fair elections leading to peaceful changeovers of power; has a vibrant, spirited press and independent judiciary; has spawned political parties all over the ideological spectrum; and has been defended by a military establishment that has remained firmly under civilian control. Civil supremacy-of-rule in India came under its gravest threat when defeat in the 1962 Sino-Indian War for the first time called into question the competence of the civilian government. However military elites did not try to make use of these circumstances mainly because the Nehru administration took pains to address field officers' grievances with the country's top civil-military personnel, decision-making procedures and resource allocation. Apart from a 21-month interlude of authoritarian "emergency" rule from 1975 to 1977 under a civilian Prime Minister India has never formally suspended democratic procedures.

Religion has played perhaps the most important role in determining the nature of civilian control in two countries. Liberal values of Hinduism have been instrumental in the establishment of democracy with civilian dominance in India. Notwithstanding the caste system in Hinduism, Indian democracy has an inbuilt trend of acceptance for the principle of civilian supremacy. Whereas military is the great reality in the Muslim states and civilian government have existed either with the support of the military or may be if it is indifferent or neutral but never in opposition to it.¹⁸ Huntington has asserted in the Clash of Civilizations that Muslim countries will have the most trouble establishing and consolidating democracy as opposed to Protestant countries. They historically belonged to the Ottoman or Tsarist empires and were only lightly touched by the shaping events in the rest of Europe; they are generally less advanced economically; they seem much less likely to develop stable democratic political systems.¹⁹

There is an extensive body of literature arguing that many key aspects of democracy are lacking in the Islamic tradition. The lack of separation between religion and the

state is seen as stemming from the Prophet Mohammed's fusion of military and spiritual authority. The lack of space for democratic public opinion in making laws is seen as deriving from the *Koran*, in which God dictated to the Prophet Mohammed the content of fixed laws that a good Islamic polity must follow. The lack of inclusive citizenship is seen as originating in interpretations of the *Koran* that argue that the only true polity in Islam is the fused religious-political community of the *Ummah*, in which there is no legitimate space for other religions. Certainly, with the rise of Islamic fundamentalism these claims have been frequently asserted by some Islamic activists. Especially in the context of the Algerian crisis of 1991–92, this gave rise to scholarly assertions that Islam and democracy are incompatible.²⁰

Religious cleavages in a state founded on religion have a limited role to play in the context of mass mobilisation but slogans like "threat to the religion" are often exploited by the elites to mobilise the masses. This is true in the case of Pakistan. At various points of time in its political history, religion has been exploited to gain cheap popularity and fight political opponents. In Pakistan, religion has not only provided a political foundation to the country but has provided legitimacy to the military rulers.²¹ The decade-long rule of General Zia was a giant step backward for the development of secular norms and civilian institutions in Pakistan. Zia was a shrewd politician and a religious zealot who believed that Western democracy was inappropriate for Pakistan and who sought to make Islam the dominant national force.²²

Education also plays important part in determining the nature of civil-military relations in a state. Lipset refers to education predicting that a better educated population entails better chances for democracy and democratic practices. The positive relationship may be because education may teach individuals towards having a higher value of staying politically involved.²³

In a country with high level of education, one can expect a considerable interest of the population in participating in the process of political decision making. There is a definite desire to be free from political suppression and exploitation, here people want democratic civil-military relations and are prepared to fight for it.²⁴ In order to follow and perform the democratic norms to its true meaning, there is a need of population that can not only understand but also has the capacity to follow it. After independence when majority of educated non-Muslim migrated to India and influx of uneducated Muslims from India started, there was little hope that the masses of newly born Pakistan would be well equipped to understand and follow the democratic system that would be imposed on them. Muslims also refrained from acquiring Western education as it was considered to be a deviance from the religion. Hindus and Sikhs on the other hand were more integrated into the British system and were already well incorporated into it. So after partition,

there was not much deviance from their usual self and India was able to settle down more easily than its neighbour.

The adult literacy rate, female literacy rate, gross enrollment ratios at all levels, and education index of India have moved way ahead of Pakistan. Health access to the population and infant mortality rates are also better in India and thus the overall picture of social indicators, although not very impressive by international standards, emerges more favorable. The two most important determinants of Pakistan's dismal performance in social development are its inability to control population growth and the lack of willingness to educate girls in the rural areas.

Factors or developments beyond the borders of a nation state can also contribute either to military intervention or to the maintenance of civilian rule. Great powers....citing ideological, geographic and other vital interests....have intervened (directly or indirectly) in the affairs of smaller states to prop up unpopular regimes, help suppress popular revolutions, or bring down "undesirable government." Harold Lasswell suggested that high level of external threat creates a "Garrison state" where the willingness and ability of the military to intervene in politics, as well as the popular acceptability of such actions is very high.²⁵ From the very beginning Pakistan has faced several external threats. Some of these threats were assumed, some were real, but they all proved source of legitimacy for the ruling military. Over the past 61 years since independence, Pakistan has fought several wars with India, two of them major, primarily over Kashmir. After India and Pakistan effectively became nuclear weapons states in 1998, the localized war over Kashmir, fought at Kargil raised even the fear of nuclear war among world community. Military elites in Pakistan were able to convince general public that they were better than their civilian counterparts to deal with such crisis situations. On the contrary, Indian civilian elites were able to safeguard territorial integrity of nation and after the defeat from China in 1962, were able to emerge victorious against Pakistan on all the occasions. Indian military was ready to work only as a tool in the hand of civilian government for guarding the borders of nation.

Currently, the most dominant theory of coups d'état posits that militaries perform much like interest groups. When the interests of militaries are negatively affected, military officers have a potent rationale to intervene. The Pakistan military not only defines policy - it is entrenched in the corporate sector and controls the country's largest companies. So Pakistan's economic base, its companies and its main assets, are in the hands of a tiny minority of senior army officials. On the contrary, Indian military's corporate interests are limited to salaries and wages of the officers and soldiers. As Pakistan military remains heavily involved in economic activities, it is likely to remain more concerned about their safeguard and this has been sometimes the main reason behind their excessive involvement and even intervention in the politics of the state.

On the contrary, fewer opportunities exist for the Indian military to engage in business undertakings, and thus fewer are the chances for Indian Military to intervene. While political power is prerequisite for the military's exploitation of national resources, the armed forces financial autonomy deepens its interest in retaining control of the state. However, Pakistan's military disagrees with this analysis. Ayesha Siddiqi²⁶ interviewed 40 senior Pakistani military officers for her study, some of whom had sewed, or were sewing in responsible civilian positions in the Musharraf regime and almost all denied that economic interests had caused the military to intervene, or had any link with its political power. But, no one can deny that the Pakistan Army is not just involved in defense but it also has quite a complex conglomerate. It has direct control over many corporate entities. Most of these small scale and large scale corporate enterprises range the gamete from private security firms and bakeries, farms, schools, to insurance companies, cement and cereal manufacturing plants. Pakistan's generals, Ayesha Siddiqi states, control empires that would put to shame those of many despots worldwide. On average, senior commanders of the Pakistan armed forces retire with legally acquired assets of between \$2.5 and 6.9 million, depending on their rank.²⁷

The rule of law, civil liberty or stable methods for peaceful succession in power, educated middle class, military professionalism, workable practices for electing officials and a government and governing process that are legitimate in the eyes of both key elites and the general public are the main indicators of civil-military reforms and signs of civilian control over decision making process in India. The integrated ministry of defense is a crucial locus of civilian control. On the other hand, inefficiency of civilian elites, frequent coups, suspensions and rewriting of the constitution has been the feature of 'praetorianism' in Pakistan. One of the major obstacles in democratization of civil and military elite relations in Pakistan has been the negative role of the ruling elites. Civil-military reforms cannot be affected if elites in power do not want it to happen for. Central European elites were more open to reforming their civil-military relations in democratic shape than were the elites in the former Soviet Union. Pakistan is also such a case where we do not generally see elites in power making strong attempt towards democratization of civil-military relations. The ruling elites in Pakistan enunciated and implemented a conservative domestic policy and an expedient foreign policy. They always supported the strength of 'controlled democracy', with severe limitations on popular participation.²⁸

Pakistan has presented a semblance of democracy for the last few months under the pressure of the U.S, but the crucial question is whether the civilian politicians of Pakistan have wrested the political control of Pakistan's governance from the Pakistan Army?²⁹ If Pakistan does not transcend the dynamic created by an ideology defined

by an overly dominant military, it runs the risk of becoming a failed state with nuclear weapons. It is hoped now that the present democratic transition will lead to a period of peace, stability and sustained development in Pakistan. It is the responsibility of all social and political groups to sustain the present gifted democracy by ridding from the vested interests so as to correct the evils and misdoing of earlier political forces.

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