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## Governance and Recurrent Military Takeover Prospects: A Case Study of Pakistan

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**Abstract** *Civil-military relations in developing countries are at the heart of a central concern of democracy. In Pakistan, the same has not only been turbulent throughout our history; it has also been an uneasy relationship with frequent military interventions. However, in Pakistan military has come to identify itself with the state rather than just one of the key components of a constitutional state. The Agency Theory, based on Principal-Agent relation, has been applied by many to explain the 1999 Musharraf takeover in Pakistan. The intervention is justified on many grounds. But what is more interesting is the fact it is welcomed in a country where people at large long for democracy and cherish democratic ideals.*

**Key Words:** Civil-military relations, Democracy, Interventions, Agency theory

### Introduction

The military takeover in Pakistan in 1999, the 2006 coup in Thailand, the military interventions in Bangladesh in 2006-8, and multiple military mutinies in the Philippines indicate that democracy in many Asian countries is under deep strain from military interventionism and adventurism (Chamber & Croisant, 2010).

Interestingly most of the countries where military takeovers have taken place fall in the category of the poor and the developing nations (Rizvi, *The Military and Politics in Pakistan 1947-1997*, 2013). The army and the armed forces, in general, remain a key element in Pakistan's polity. They are well entrenched and powerful and have moved to fill whatever power vacuum or gap that they see (Nawaz, 2008). Unfortunately, the institutionalization of military involvement in civilian affairs has led to a greater likelihood of a full-blown military coup (Aziz, 2008). Agency Theory specifies the conditions under which the military will work or shirk (Feaver, 2003). With the army's charisma fading, it was decided to operate from the shadows by giving an impression of civilian rule.

The army of Pakistan shared with the bureaucracy its distrust and disbelief of the politicians of the country who were seen and declare as a cause and source of the disorder and chaos in the state. (Nawaz, 2008) Thus, Pakistan, since its independence, inherited very strong and powerful apolitical institutions and departments such as the powerful, the mighty and as well well as the disciplined and orderly army and other forces and a very haughty and arrogant bureaucracy which always developed and established a very strange contempt and disrespect for the political leadership and community of the newly born state. Moreover, these two institutions, the Army and the Bureaucracy, provoked deep and nasty tie and mostly created problems and hurdles for the smooth and perfect run and transition to democracy. (Aziz, 2008)

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Thereafter, the power imbalance and inequity among the very strong and powerful bureaucratic institutions and the other had a very weak and frail representative, and democratic institutions have always been one of the most important and also greatest causes and reason of political instability and uncertainty in the state of Pakistan since its freedom. (Aziz, 2008). The concentration and accumulation of power and control in the executive branch, usually controlled and managed both directly or indirectly by the civil and as well as the military bureaucracies and administration and has considerably and intentionally deteriorated the legislature along with the judiciary of the state. These institutional inequities frequently caused by various government vicissitudes such as the bureaucratic oligarchy, the military dictatorship and also the elected political totalitarianism. The main change that has taken place over time is that the control and effect of the civilian bureaucracy have progressively been substituted by the military of the country. In the short history and past of Pakistan; sixty-three years life span, it has experienced and seen some four martial coups which extremely rooted the armed forces in the political system of the state-run. In these long years of armed adventurism, the arrangements and controls of state institutions were harshly troubled. On the other hand, the military has become organizationally and institutionally stronger, especially in terms of their governance skills. The military now gets much better governance and administrative training than the civilian bureaucracy. This had changed the power balance from the colonial era and the first two decades after freedom when the civilian bureaucracy was the stoutest institution. Though factually, the bureaucracy measured the military as their associates, but the past drastic changes wrought by Pervez Musharraf in the structure and purpose of bureaucracy were strongly begrudged by them. On 12 October 1999, the then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif tried to discharge Pervez Musharraf and replace him with the family partisan, ISI Director Lt-General Khwaja Ziauddin as the COAS, but other corps commanders did not allow him to take charge of his new position. The national television went off the air for a few hours. After a few hours, it was announced that the Nawaz Sharif government had been dismissed. Musharraf, with the help of other generals, staged the fourth coup in Pakistan. Later on, it was decided by the military leadership that martial law would not be imposed, and the new set-up would soon be announced.

Pakistan is a case study of political instability with a politician's never developing consensus over national issues. They gave priorities to their personal, regional and ethnic interests, pushing the general and national interests into the background. Soon regionalism, sectarianism, and so many other social and political evils emerged to threaten the very existence of the newly born country. After Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan, no leader of the national calibre could emerge to reunify the nation that had fallen victim to the evils of regional politics. Compared to India, Pakistan clearly suffered from competent and capable leadership during this period. The vacuum created by the weak and self-interested political leadership was soon filled by the army, which was the only institution that was considered to be capable, cohesive and powerful (Nawaz, 2008).

Muslim League could no longer claim to be the representative political party of the Muslim nation after independence and so couldn't dare to hold general elections. Differences between the Eastern and Western wings had reached the extent that no compromise was possible on any outstanding issue of national importance. This was perhaps the primary reason that they could not frame the constitution for the newly born Pakistan. Moreover, all these strengthened non-political forces in the country where democracy was yet to start its journey. The first constitution of 1956 was nevertheless a compromise that couldn't offer a panacea to the ills the nation suffered from. It lacked consensus that provides a base to any constitution around the world. Its abrogation couldn't mean a lot to the citizens.

While politicians were at loggerheads with each other besides having no roots among the masses, the Pakistan army reorganized itself to match the Indian challenge and ensure that the country was born to live forever. Even the civilian leadership recognized the need for maintaining a strong and efficient armed force to ensure the territorial integrity of the country against the threat that was in the shape of our next-door neighbor. The liberal allocation of funds to the armed forces brought them to a position of advantage.

Their exposure to modern training and visits to technologically advanced states equipped them with a will, capability and sufficient resources to dominate the core political decisions and sectors of the state. As the political forces, including the mainstream leadership, were disparate, incapable and weak, the military's disposition developed a strong impact on the course of political change, including the transfer of power from one set of the elite to another (Rizvi, 2013).

While most of the countries have an army, the Pakistan army has a country (Siddiqua, 2008). Given the relative weakness and mutual differences and rivalries of the politicians, the Pakistan army established autonomy in almost all respects. Institutional autonomy, coupled with comparative strengths, made the army an organization strong enough to make decisions independently of politicians. The first army chief, General Gracy, even put down Muhammad Ali Jinnah's orders to mobilize forces in Kashmir against India in 1948. This tradition further strengthened after the indigenization of the armed forces who insulated the army from civilian control and oversight mechanism. General Ayub Khan was perhaps the most stubborn of all who wanted to monopolize matters related to armed forces. He strongly resisted Prime Minister Malik Feroz Khan Noon's decision to empower the civilian minister to procure military equipment (Siddiqua, 2008). The military, under Ayub Khan, became deeply embedded in the country's economic and power structures besides insulting itself from any interference civilian government (Chaudhry, PAKISTAN'S FIRST MILITARY COUP: WHY DID THE FIRST PAKISTANI COUP OCCUR AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?, 2012). Interestingly, Ayub Khan masterminded the defence deals of SEATO and Cento in the mid-1950s with the Western World. He visited the USA time and again in his capacity as Army Chief to persuade the former and have the deals finalized. The mandate of the civilian authorities was stolen when much of the parameters and features of those deals were set and agreed upon by the Army General. The military had already entered into civilian's area of jurisdiction.

The frequent deployment of the army in aid of civilian authorities in non-military operations since earlier days has further added to the military's influence in the country's political life. The deployment has led to involvement in return. Ironically, it also has exposed the seamy side of the civilian administration and politicians, making them vulnerable to further military encroachment (Bhimaya, 1997). Moreover, the manner of deployment is also subject to serious criticism. For instance, when the army was called to the city of Lahore to restore law and order in the wake of sectarian violence, they were given a free hand. In the absence of any Terms of Reference, the operation was conducted with civil administration neither had any control nor know-how of the intricacies of the facts on the ground (Bhimaya, 1997). Such instances gave Pakistan army enough knowledge and confidence to interfere in matters falling not in their area of jurisdiction.

With the ascendancy of General Ayub Khan to the status of Chief of the Army Staff, the Pakistan army reorganized and redirected itself politically and militarily. Things further moved to the advantage of the army in the absence of a constitution that had yet to be framed and passed by the representative Constituent Assembly of Pakistan. Had the first constitution been made on time, General Ayub Khan could not hold the office of Defense Minister in uniform. With no clear demarcation of authorities and responsibilities, one was often found encroaching into other's area of jurisdiction without difficulty and hindrance. The ground and preparation had already been made for a coup, but it was now a matter of time and opportunity only.

By the mid-1958, the whole country was subject to serious economic and financial crises. Public expenditures were going up, and the government had to resort to imposing new taxes to fill the budget deficit (Nawaz, 2008). Foreign exchange reserves were draining, and the political leadership had no plan and will to address all such harsh realities of national life. Strikes and mob violence had become matters of routine to disturb the life pattern of citizens. The Provincial Assembly of East Pakistan presented the scene of a civil war resulting in the death of the Deputy Speaker on the floor of the assembly was an occasion big enough to capture the attention of the President and Army Chief (Nawaz, 2008). Americans also could

not see any other alternative to the coup because they feared that the elections scheduled for 1959 could possibly result in the election of socialist tilted politicians.

On October 7, 1958, President Iskander Mirza abrogated the constitution and declared Martial Law in the country. This was the first of many military regimes to mar Pakistan's history. With this step, the Constitution of 1956 was abrogated, ministers were dismissed, Central and Provincial Assemblies were dissolved, and all political activities were banned. Major-General(R) Iskander Mirza, in his presidential proclamation of martial law, pointed out that the ruthless struggle for power among politicians, corruption and shameful exploitation of the simple, honest, patriotic and industrious masses, the lack of decorum and the prostitution of Islam for political ends was something that gave a logical reason to the imposition of martial law. General Muhammad Ayub Khan, the then Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, became the first Chief Martial Law Administrator. The parliamentary system in Pakistan came to an end. Within three weeks of assuming charge on October 27, 1958, Iskander Mirza was ousted by General Ayub Khan, who then declared himself President.

There were people who were worried about the days to follow in the wake of the military regime. However, few shed tears on the suspension of democratic dispensation. In fact, there was a feeling of satisfaction, and people heaved a sigh of relief in the hope that the military may give them a stable and better government, capable of relieving them of their miseries (Rizvi, *The Military and Politics in Pakistan 1947-1997*, 2013). That was perhaps the reason that normalcy could be seen in the streets of the cities around the country on the next day after the declaration of martial law. This put a big question mark on the credibility of political leadership.

On the assumption of political power, Ayub Khan started a series of reforms to put things right. In terms of administration, Ayub's era is often termed the best in the history of Pakistan. To win legitimacy, powers were devolved to the grass-root level. The 1962 constitution was framed, though the most controversial for some provisions. Despite all such good works, the army is never a solution to the evils a country suffers from in the political arena. The more they prolong their stay, the more they breed evils. When the military leaves the corridors of power, they leave behind themselves evils that make the country suffer for many long years to follow. They are not made and trained to run the affairs of the state.

## **Second Martial Law: 1969**

Pakistan came under direct military rule for the second time in 1969 when army chief Muhammad Yahya Khan imposed martial law in the country. Ayub Khan violated his own constitution when he handed over power to army chief Yahya Khan instead of the speaker of the assembly as provided by the 1962 constitution when he resigned (Choudhry, 1969). The transition was smooth and silent, with people not caring for the change of guards (Sinder, 2013). The politicians of the country were only silent spectators who were watching the transfer of power from one army general to the other. What else could they do?

The Tashkent Declaration signed by the Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri and the Pakistani President Muhammad Ayub Khan in the wake of the 1965 war was not at all approved by the general public and was regarded as submission to India and humiliation for the nation. The people at large believed that the war Pakistan had won on the battlefield was lost to Indian on the negotiations table. The impression took strong roots in people's minds that the bravery demonstrated by the Pakistan armed forces was nullified by the leadership. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the then Foreign Minister, recorded serious reservations against the declaration, which caused him to part of ways with President Ayub Khan. As the rift between the two widened, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto resigned.

The Resistance movement was gaining roots in Eastern Pakistan, whose grievances had not been given due importance. Since independence, they had been objecting to the dominance of the Western wing of the country and complained that much of the country's resources had been directed to benefit the part that was to make Pakistan in 1971. Their underdevelopment was due to over development of

the later. The Eastern wing generated much of the country's foreign exchange reservoirs but were spent in an imbalanced way to the advantage of Western Pakistan. Ayub Khan's tall claims of development were often challenged by the Bengali politicians whose share was negligible in terms of economic prosperity. This uneven development widened the gap between the two wings, giving a boost to feelings of discontent and secession. The East and West could be seen on a confrontation course in the wake of Ayub's irrational economic policies.

The popular agitation against the Ayub's 1962 Constitution that made the uninformed President all-powerful continued for years. The resistance converted into countrywide street strikes in the last quarter of 1968, with students playing the leading role. The major political parties of the country questioned the legality of Ayub Khan as President and demanded, inter alia, the resignation of him, abrogation of the 1962 Constitution, and restoration of the parliamentary form of government. They also demanded the dismemberment of the 'One Unit' scheme, whose wisdom had been contested tooth and nail since its inception by politicians from smaller provinces, and restoration of four provinces in West Pakistan. From East Pakistan came the old demand for provincial autonomy and representation on a population basis in the national legislature (Pardesi, 2012). At the other end, Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party had gathered enough power and mass support to be a headache for Ayub Khan. Bhutto appealed to people who came out in large numbers against Ayub to quit. Agitations created political chaos in the country, and no compromise formula could be evolved to overcome the crisis (Pardesi, 2012). In 1969, faced with the growing disorder, President Ayub Khan attempted to negotiate with opposition leaders to reach some compromise to resolve the crisis (MacDermot, 1972). However, rioting continued throughout the country. In view of the deteriorating law and order situation, Ayub Khan resigned from office and handed over power to Agha Muhammad Yahya Khan, Chief of the Army Staff.

Yahya Khan imposed martial law throughout the country on 25<sup>th</sup> March 1969 and abrogated the 1962 constitution. It looks that Yahya Khan had no appetite to stay in power for long. He wanted the power to be transferred to the civilian political administration in the first instance through democratic ways. To hold the election, the Military General issued the Provisional Constitutional Order, which inculcated broader terms to run the affairs of the state in the absence of any constitution. The country was heading towards crises of far greater magnitude.

The holding of the 1971 elections divided and polarized the nation to the extent of separation (Rizvi & Gilani, 2013). Two major political parties, the Pakistan People Party, led by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Awami League of Sheikh Mujib Ur Rehman, presented manifestos that tried to cash on people's feelings of regionalism and provincialism. The election results were not surprising. There were a total of 300 general seats in which 162 had been allotted to East Pakistan while the remaining 138 to West Pakistan. Awami League emerged as the largest party in East Pakistan by winning 160 seats, giving it a clear majority in the national legislature. In West Pakistan, Pakistan People Party won 81 seats and so was the second largest national party in terms of number. However, soon differences came to the surface when the two major parties could not agree on the formation of the government. President Yahya Khan, who had publicly spoken of Sheikh Mujib ur Rahman of Awami League as the 'future Prime Minister of the country, seemed to be sparing no effort in seeking to find a viable way out of the impasse that Pakistan had plunged into, but to no avail (MacDermot, 1972). Unfortunately, mutual suspicions, apprehensions and misunderstandings didn't allow them to work out any formula to avoid further crises.

When all negotiations failed to bring any meaningful results, Yahya Khan resorted to the military operation in March 1971 to have the issue resolved. The Bengalis retaliated, and there began a civil war in the country. India didn't let this opportunity go to break Pakistan into two. On 16<sup>th</sup> December 1971, Pakistan armed surrendered to India, resulting in the birth of the independent state of Bangladesh. The demoralized Pakistani forces retreated to their barracks with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto taking oath as the first civilian martial law administrator as well as President on 20<sup>th</sup> December 1971.

## **Pakistan's Third Martial Law, 1977**

The chaos in the wake of the 1977 general elections paved the way for the emergence of yet another martial law in Pakistan (Rizvi & Gilani, 2013). If the 1971 general election helped in dividing the country into two parts, the next elections facilitated the way for another military takeover. Hardly has the state of Pakistan seen controversial elections than the one held in 1977, often cited as the most rigged elections, and all the parties gathered in unity in opposition to the Pakistan People Party, which emerged as the single largest party in terms of seats won in the National Assembly. Prior to the elections, all the opposition parties had united into Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) against Bhutto's People Party, and people expected a close contest between the two camps, given their relative strengths. Elections were held to a total of 200 general seats. However, the results stunned everyone, with PPP winning 151 seats. The PNA candidates returned only on 36 seats which were, nevertheless, surprising. All the opposition parties disapproved of the polling results.

The moment the election campaign began, both PPP and PNA made access to the people at the grass root level to win their favour. Bhutto termed PNA to be supported and financed by those who wanted to dismantle Pakistan's nuclear program. PNA, which mostly consisted of right-wing political parties criticized Bhutto's economic policies and authoritarian nature of governance. The response of the people during the election campaign showed that the margin of victory would be quite narrow. However, Bhutto left no stone unturned to win the elections even by unfair means. Being a feudal, he by nature was a dictator and dealt every opposition with an iron hand. To clear ground for yet another tenure, many opposition leaders were killed, while some were abducted on the eve of elections (Choudhry, 1969). The district administration, whose role was crucial in the conduct of the elections, was scrutinized with care, and 'undependable' Deputy Commissioners and the Superintendents of Police whose loyalty was subject to suspicion were either transferred or sent on leave (Amin, 2007). The PNA's candidate contesting the election against Mr Bhutto from Larkana, Maulana Jan Mohammad Abbasi, was detained all night in order not to allow him to file his nomination papers. Other PNA candidates opposing the chief ministers were also treated in the same manner. The Prime Minister and all four chief ministers have declared elected unopposed in order to give an impression that PPP is going to rock the elections (Amin, 2007). On the polling day, many opposition polling agents were locked in separate rooms until evening. At several places, the votes cast were found more than the actually registered votes. Interestingly, state owned television and radio started announcing results even before the polling ended (Amin, 2007). Even the Chief Election Commissioner later issued statements accepting the allegations that there had taken place massive rigging in the 1977 elections (Hassan, 1977).

With the exception of PPP, all the major political parties of the country rejected the election results. They all gathered under one umbrella to put pressure on Bhutto to hold elections afresh. However, Bhutto was adamant and didn't pay any heed to their demand. Elections to the provincial assemblies were boycotted by all the opposition parties, which met complete success. Starting from Sind, the agitation movement spread to the rest of the country. General strikes were observed throughout the country, and life came to a standstill, questioning the legitimacy of the elections. PNA gave the agitation movement a twist by terming it 'Tehreek-i-Nizam-i-Mustafa' to gather mass support as people in Pakistan have historically shown greater enthusiasm for movements launched in the name of Islam (Amin, 2007). Despite government use of force, the movement went unabated. To cope with the worsening law and order situation, the President proclaimed a state of emergency in the country, suspending citizens' fundamental rights, placing a long list of penal offenders under the jurisdiction of military courts, giving them wider powers to deal with the lawlessness (Choudhry, 1969).

General Zia ul Haq was trustworthy army chief, for Bhutto had promoted him, bypassing some more senior Generals, and so the former remained loyal to his mentor for this favor. Zia ul Haq came from a humble background who didn't cherish adventures in politics and so could never be a threat, Bhutto

thought. However, sending General Zia to talk with the leaders of the PNA was a foolish step to drag the army into the country's politics by Bhutto that later proved suicidal. On the advice of the Prime Minister, the Army Chief and his Corps Commanders went to meet the leaders of both sides and urged them to reach an acceptable formula to pull the country out of the political crises. Importantly once the military intervenes or is dragged into politics in a developing country, it then establishes for itself a permanent role in the political arena. Pakistan experienced the same since birth.

Earlier, the two camps stood firm on their respective positions, even leaving no room for any dialogues. However, thanks to the Middle Eastern countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, whose mediatory role facilitated the way for negotiations. Negotiations began on 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 1977, however, they wasted much precious time. Although politicians made swift progress on the negotiation table once they sat, army by then had made up their mind to take over the country. But there developed differences among PNA leadership over the terms of agreement with the government. Disagreement and trust deficit among politicians took them to a point of deadlock. There is a difference of opinion in regards to the 1977 military takeover. There are some who believe that the army kept watching the chaos for quite a while but their patience was over and could no longer wait for the politicians who were certainly not closer to reach any agreement anytime soon (Amin, 2007). While some argue that the Generals from GHQ sabotaged the near-successful agreement between ZA Bhutto and the opposition parties and plunged the country into the longest and arguably the most gruesome Martial Law of its history on 5<sup>th</sup> July, 1977 (Zahid, 2011).

## **Conclusion**

Inspired by democratic ideals, Quaid e Azam wanted to establish a country where democracy and its principles would rule. His sayings and deeds were reflective of this fact and were supposed to guide those in the corridors of power. However, soon after the death of the Great Quaid, democracy was found struggling. Politicians could not provide the kind of state that could cater to the needs and demands of its citizens. The result was that the gap between represented and representing widened. In any democracy, the political representatives' strengths emanate from people whose support and favorable opinion add to their strength. The more credible they are in the eyes of the voters, the stronger they are to rebuke military interference.

Ironically, Pakistani politicians, as well as statesmen have never been able to establish strong roots in people. Inefficiency, poor performance, corruption, and so many other weaknesses have degraded them in the eyes of those who vote them to elect. Voters often complain of their broken promises and tall claims. An elected government is more vulnerable to a coup when its legitimacy is put into question. Legitimacy doesn't simply mean that the government is elected through fair elections. A government is legitimate in the eyes of the people when it is effective and responsive to the basic needs and demands of its voters. When people feel improvement in the situation they were already in, it makes the government more legitimate. And when the government fulfils its constitutional responsibilities in a manner appreciated by people, that government is more robust and stronger to resist any unconstitutional adventure. People provide the first line of protection to the government they own, provided it enjoys the confidence of its voters.

Tahir Amin is of the opinion that societal factors, which more appropriately is the performance of the government in terms of socio-economic indicators, determine the level of legitimacy of an elected government. Coups have taken place in Pakistan when politicians, as well as statesmen, have not been up to the responsibility they have had under the constitution. Even there have been politicians who have been found in collusion with an army to take over. While there are some who have invited the military to take the country's affairs into their own hands. Pakistan army has always cashed on politicians weaknesses, mutual differences and rivalries and poor delivery.

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