

Introduction to Civil-Military Relations in Pakistan

In Pakistan, the relationship between civilian governments (the politicians and elected leaders) and the military (army, air force, navy) has been challenging. This relationship has shaped Pakistan's history, politics, economy, and society since its independence in 1947. The military has taken control multiple times, and this back-and-forth struggle between military and civilian leaders has affected the country's development in many ways. Here's a closer look at how this relationship has evolved and its impact on Pakistan.

1. Early Developments After Independence

After Pakistan's independence, the country faced many issues, including poverty, a lack of political stability, and constant tension with neighboring India. These issues created challenges for civilian governments, which were still trying to establish themselves. At that time, the military was a well-organized institution, trained by the British, and was seen as capable of helping to maintain order.

In 1958, General Ayub Khan led the first military coup (takeover). He justified this by saying that the civilian government was weak and chaotic. This move set a precedent (a standard or example) for future military leaders, showing that it was possible to take control when the country faced crises. Over time, this first intervention made the military a powerful force in Pakistan's politics.

2. Military Rule and Civilian Struggles

Pakistan has had several periods of military rule, where army leaders have directly controlled the government. Notable military rulers include:

General Ayub Khan (1958-1969): He introduced "controlled democracy," meaning that while some civilian institutions existed, the military had the final say. This weakened the growth of democratic institutions, as people grew used to the military being in charge.

General Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988): After another coup, Zia strengthened the military's control and introduced Islamic laws to make his rule seem more acceptable. These policies not only shaped Pakistan's legal system but also gave the military a strong presence in the country's religious and social life.

General Pervez Musharraf (1999-2008): Musharraf took control, claiming the government was corrupt and unstable. His time as leader is known for aligning Pakistan with the U.S. during the "War on Terror," which increased Pakistan's international military and financial ties. Though Musharraf eventually stepped down, the military retained influence over politics, especially in matters of security.

3. Military's Influence on Foreign Policy

The military's impact on Pakistan's foreign policy is significant, particularly with India and Afghanistan. The army sees itself as the defender of Pakistan against these neighbors. The Kashmir issue, a long-standing conflict with India, has been a key focus. The military's stance on Kashmir has heavily influenced Pakistan's approach to its neighbors and affected peace negotiations, as military leaders often drive these policies rather than civilian governments.

In the years after 9/11, Pakistan's decision to support the U.S. in Afghanistan was largely a military choice. This alliance brought foreign aid and military funding, but it also increased the military's grip over foreign and security policies. Civilian leaders often have limited influence in these areas because of the military's established power and experience in defense matters.

Overall, the toll of the War on Terror on the Pakistani military is substantial, with estimates of **over 8,000 military deaths** between 2001 and 2021.

4. Military's Role in Pakistan's Economy

Beyond defense, the military has also expanded its role in the economy. Military-run companies operate in several sectors, such as:

Real Estate: Large tracts of land in cities like Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad are managed by military organizations.

Defence Housing Authority (DHA):

- **Founded:** 1980s, DHA is responsible for developing high-end residential areas primarily for military personnel, but also for civilians.
- **Land and Projects:** DHA controls thousands of acres of land, including in major cities like Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, and Rawalpindi.
- **Estimated Revenue:** DHA's annual revenue is difficult to track directly but could be in the range of **\$500–700 million**, considering its massive real estate portfolio.
- **Total Assets:** Estimated to be worth upwards of **\$10 billion**, based on land holdings and infrastructure projects.

The **Defence Housing Authority (DHA)** controls over **100,000 acres** of land across Pakistan, making it one of the largest real estate developers and landowners in the country.

Manufacturing and Agriculture: The military owns companies that produce goods like cement, fertilizer, and food products.

Fauji Foundation:

- **Founded:** 1954 to manage welfare activities for retired military personnel.
- **Business Interests:** The Fauji Foundation is one of the largest business groups in Pakistan, with holdings in various sectors such as fertilizers, cement, food processing, pharmaceuticals, and banking.
- **Estimated Annual Revenue:** Around **\$1.5–2 billion** annually.
- **Total Assets:** Estimated to be worth **\$8–10 billion**.

- **Key Companies:** Fauji Fertilizer, Fauji Cement, Fauji Oil, and Gas Company, and Askari Bank.

Others

Army Welfare Trust (AWT):

- Founded: 1970, AWT operates similarly to the Fauji Foundation and supports the welfare of military personnel.
- Business Interests: In sectors such as real estate, cement, and manufacturing. AWT also holds significant land and real estate assets.
- Estimated Annual Revenue: Around \$400–500 million.
- Total Assets: Estimated to be worth around \$3–4 billion

When adding up the assets and revenues of the major military-run conglomerates like Fauji Foundation, AWT, DHA, and Askari Group, the total annual revenue generated by military businesses can be roughly estimated at \$3–4 billion. The total assets controlled by the military through these enterprises could be anywhere from \$25–30 billion, including land holdings, investments, and business operations.

These businesses are managed by organizations such as the Fauji Foundation and Army Welfare Trust, which help retired military personnel find jobs and contribute to the economy. Supporters say this provides stability and jobs. However, critics argue that it gives the military too much economic power and diverts funds from the civilian sector. They believe this makes the military financially stronger than the civilian government, reducing the influence civilians can exert on it.

5. Impact on Democratic Institutions

Military takeovers have disrupted Pakistan's democratic processes. Each time the military has taken control, it has suspended the **constitution** (the country's fundamental laws) and imposed a different form of rule. This action has made it difficult for democratic institutions, like **parliament** and the **judiciary** (courts), to develop and become strong.

For example, civilian leaders, such as **Zulfikar Ali Bhutto** in the **1970s**, tried to assert control over the military, but often these efforts led to conflicts, sometimes resulting in coups. The constant power

struggle has prevented civilian institutions from gaining the authority and maturity needed to run the country independently and effectively.

In **2008**, civilian rule was restored, and efforts were made to reduce the military's control. The 18th Amendment to the constitution in 2010 aimed to give more power to provinces and reduce central control, which was partly an attempt to lessen military influence. However, the military continued to have substantial power over areas like national security and foreign policy.

1. Parliament's Lack of Independence

a. Military's Influence in Civilian Governments

- **Example: General Musharraf's Rule (1999–2008)**
 - After **General Pervez Musharraf** took power in a military coup in **1999**, he ruled Pakistan for nearly a decade. During his rule, the **parliament** was severely weakened. **Musharraf's government** controlled the political agenda, sidelining elected representatives.
 - **2002 General Elections:** Musharraf engineered elections in 2002 to create a **supportive parliament** that would approve his military rule and constitutional amendments, including **Article 58(2)b**, which allowed him to dissolve parliament at will. While this was technically a **civilian government**, it was heavily shaped by **military interests**.
 - **Impact on Parliament:** The parliament became **subservient to military interests**, with many politicians **forced to cooperate** with the military to stay in power. In practice, the parliament didn't represent the will of the people as much as it acted under the shadow of the military's power.

b. Political Parties and Military Alliances

- **Example: The Role of the Military in Political Parties**
 - In Pakistan, **political parties** are often **divided** and have to balance **military interests** to stay in power. For example, **Benazir Bhutto** (PPP) and **Nawaz Sharif** (PML-N) both had to navigate relationships with the military. Although these leaders were elected through **democratic processes**, they often had to make deals or compromise on military influence in decision-making.
 - **Nawaz Sharif's Removal (1999):** Nawaz Sharif, who was elected prime minister, was ousted by a **military coup** led by Musharraf in **1999**, after attempting to assert civilian control over the military, particularly in terms of foreign policy (Kargil conflict). This demonstrated how civilian governments can be **overthrown** if they challenge military power, making **parliament** and leaders reluctant to defy the military.

c. The Military's Role in Political Decisions

- **Example: Imran Khan's Government (2018–2022)**

- Even under the **civilian government of Imran Khan** (PTI), the military played a behind-the-scenes role in many of the government's policies. While Imran Khan and his government claimed they were independent, the **military's influence** was evident in key national decisions, especially regarding **foreign policy** (e.g., with Afghanistan, the US, and India).
- **Impact:** The military's covert role in policy-making meant that the **parliament** often had to work around military preferences, limiting the true power of elected representatives.

2. Judiciary's Lack of Independence

a. Judicial Legitimization of Military Rule

- **Example: Validation of Military Coups**
 - During **General Zia-ul-Haq's regime (1977–1988)**, the judiciary, led by Chief Justice **Anwarul Haq**, **legitimized the coup** through the Supreme Court, declaring the military takeover constitutional. Zia's **martial law** was never challenged by the courts, even though it was clearly a violation of the democratic process.
 - **Effect:** This judicial **complicity** allowed military rule to persist for over a decade, undermining the democratic principles of civilian governance. The **judiciary** failed to stand up for constitutional democracy, effectively enabling the military to control the country for years.

b. Musharraf's Ouster of the Judiciary (2007)

- **Example: The Lawyers' Movement**
 - In **2007**, **General Musharraf** tried to dismiss **Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry**, who had shown signs of independence. **Chaudhry** had been critical of the military's involvement in civilian affairs and had started to question the validity of Musharraf's rule.
 - **Musharraf's Response:** He **fired** Chief Justice Chaudhry and **suspended** the judiciary to consolidate his power. This sparked the **Lawyers' Movement**, a **nationwide protest** demanding the restoration of judicial independence.
 - **Effect:** Musharraf's actions and the military's pressure on the judiciary led to significant **public backlash**, culminating in the **restoration of Chief Justice Chaudhry** in **2009**. However, this episode showed how the **military** could directly **control the judiciary** during authoritarian periods.

c. Judicial Appointments and Military Influence

- **Example: Judges Appointed During Military Rule**
 - Even after **Musharraf's departure**, military influence continued to affect the judiciary. **Judges** who were appointed during military rule (e.g., Musharraf's period) often showed **favoritism** toward military interests.

- **Impact:** This resulted in a **lack of judicial independence**, where courts were sometimes reluctant to challenge military decisions, especially on issues like **national security**, **military operations**, or **disappearances** (e.g., in **Balochistan** or **Waziristan**).

d. Recent Examples of Military-Judiciary Relations

- **Example: Missing Persons Cases**

- The **Supreme Court of Pakistan** has heard cases related to **enforced disappearances** in regions like **Balochistan** and **FATA** (Federally Administered Tribal Areas), where people were allegedly abducted by **military and intelligence agencies**.
- Despite the judiciary's rulings demanding the **release of missing persons**, the **military** has often ignored the court's orders. **Justice Shaukat Siddiqui** of the Islamabad High Court openly **accused** the military's **intelligence agencies** of **interfering** with judicial decisions, but the military's influence meant that such matters remained unresolved.

6. Current Situation and Power Dynamics

Today, Pakistan is sometimes described as a "**hybrid democracy**," where both military and civilian leaders share power. For example, during **Imran Khan's** tenure as Prime Minister (**2018-2022**), many believed the military played a strong behind-the-scenes role in decision-making. When he was removed from office, it was seen by some as evidence that the military still holds significant control over political outcomes in Pakistan.

Pakistan's economic challenges also impact this relationship. With high inflation, increasing debt, and dependence on foreign loans, the civilian government often lacks the stability and resources that the military has. This situation makes it difficult for civilian leaders to push for changes that would reduce military power.
