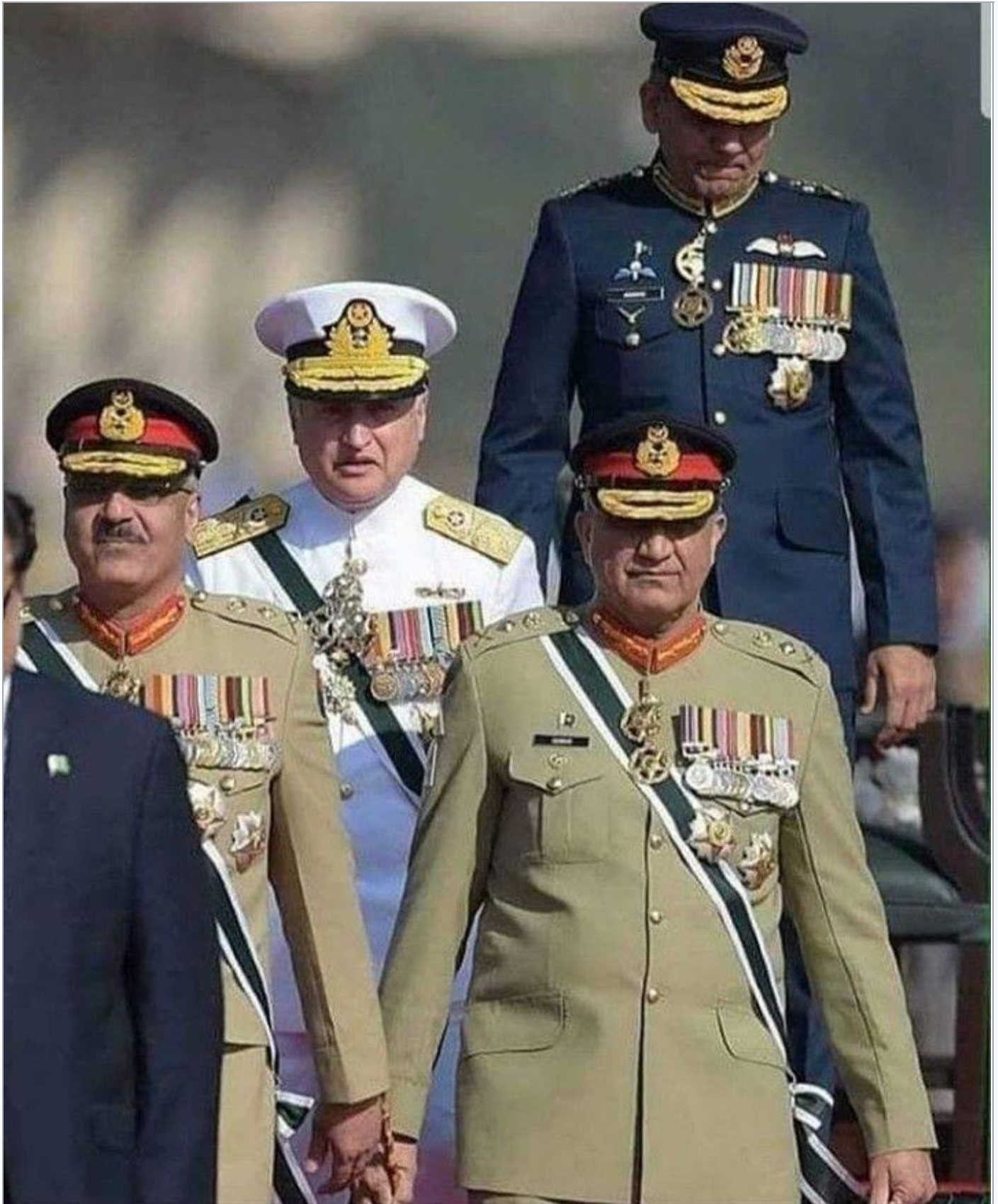


Role of Military in Politics of Pakistan





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Role of Military in Politics of Pakistan title can be described as the military has played a pivotal and often dominant role in the politics of Pakistan since its inception in 1947. Due to frequent political instability, weak democratic institutions, and security challenges, the military

emerged as a powerful institution, often stepping in to fill governance vacuums. It has directly ruled the country for nearly half of its history through military coups in 1958, 1977, and 1999. Even during civilian rule, the military has exerted significant influence behind the scenes, particularly in matters of foreign policy, national security, and internal governance. This pervasive role has often undermined the democratic process, weakened civilian institutions, and restricted the growth of a robust political culture. While the military justifies its involvement as necessary for national stability, critics argue that it has hindered Pakistan's democratic development and accountability mechanisms.

Historical Background of Military Interventions

Since Pakistan's early years, the military has emerged as a powerful institution due to a combination of regional security threats, weak political leadership, and institutional inefficiencies. The first military coup occurred in 1958 under General Ayub Khan, setting a precedent for future interventions. The military justified its takeovers by pointing to civilian incompetence and national emergencies. These repeated interventions established a pattern where democratic transitions were frequently interrupted, making it difficult for parliamentary democracy to take root.

Military's Influence During Civilian Governments

Even during periods of elected civilian rule, the military has often wielded significant power behind the scenes. It has influenced foreign policy, especially regarding India, Afghanistan, and relations with the United States and China. Civilian governments have often had to seek the military's approval or face resistance on key national security and foreign affairs issues. This "shadow control" has curtailed the autonomy of elected officials and created a parallel power structure that often limits genuine democratic governance.

Control Over Security and Strategic Policies

The military has maintained control over Pakistan's strategic assets, including the nuclear program, counterterrorism operations, and defense-related policymaking. Through institutions like the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency, it has played a central role in both internal and external intelligence operations. This control has allowed the military to shape Pakistan's security narrative and project itself as the ultimate guarantor of national stability, often sidelining civilian authorities in the process.

Military and Judiciary Nexus

The judiciary in Pakistan has at times legitimized military takeovers through the "doctrine of necessity," which provided constitutional cover to martial law regimes. In return, military rulers have extended benefits to the judiciary, creating a complex relationship that has undermined the independence of the judicial system. This collaboration has contributed to the erosion of checks and balances and has made it difficult to hold the military accountable for its political interventions.

Impact on Democratic Development

The military's continued involvement in politics has weakened democratic institutions such as parliament, political parties, and the media. Frequent disruptions in democratic rule have prevented the development of a stable and mature political culture. As a result, political parties

have struggled to build long-term policies or gain public trust. The fear of military backlash often limits political expression and discourages bold reforms, hampering the country's democratic evolution.

Recent Trends and Civil-Military Relations

In recent years, there has been growing public awareness and debate about the military's role in politics. While the military continues to influence major policy areas, especially under the guise of "national interest," there has also been pushback from civil society, the media, and some political leaders. However, tensions often arise when civilian governments attempt to assert authority over traditional military domains, revealing the ongoing struggle for balance in civil-military relations.