



# MONITOR

## Civil-Military Relations in Pakistan

August, 2014



**PILdAT**  
Pakistan Institute of  
Legislative Development  
And Transparency

This Monitor of Civil-Military Relations covers the period between August 01 - 31, 2014 and analyses the key issues affecting civil-military relations in Pakistan during this time.

## Army called by the Federal Government to Civil Aid in Islamabad

It was announced on July 25, 2014 that the Federal Government requisitioned the Army at the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) under Article 245 of the Constitution read with Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997 with effect from August 1, 2014 for a period of three months, to, as the Government put it, *'pre-empt any possible blowback of operation Zarb-e-Azb.'*

Many political leaders criticised the move and interpreted it as the Government's panic decision in the face of long marches to Islamabad announced by the PTI and the PAT. The Daily DAWN in its editorial on July 29, 2014 very aptly commented on this development: *'...in invoking Article 245, the PML-N has boosted the perception of indispensability and profile of the military in civilian domain – precisely the opposite of what the democratic project needs. If indeed Article 245 is linked to the PTI's August 14 rally, then has the PML-N unwittingly made the military the final arbiter in politics yet again?'*

## Azadi March, Inqilab March, Dharnas (sit-ins) and Statements by the Pakistan Army

Both Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) led by Mr. Imran Khan (IK) and Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT) led by Dr. Tahir ul Qadri (TuQ) launched their separate but coordinated long marches from Lahore on the Independence Day (August 14, 2014) towards Islamabad where both had announced to stage sit-ins. IK's main objective was to protest against what he called massive rigging in May 2013 General Election and called his march the *Azadi* March. TuQ wanted to 'revolutionise' the current system by first dismantling the prevailing system. He called his march as *Inqilab* March. Both however converged on one point: Current Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who had taken over his position 15 months ago, should resign.

The reports of stresses in the relationship between the Federal Government led by Nawaz Sharif and the Armed Forces were out in the open including media when the plans for the two long marches were announced. Many analysts including some serious media commentators repeatedly expressed the opinion that either the military controlled intelligence agencies have collaborated with the two parties to mount pressure on Nawaz Sharif so that he may back down from some of the policies which the military opposes such as trade with India, trial of General (Retired) Pervez Musharraf, a generally assertive role of the Civilian Government in matters such as greater civilian influence in proposed Local Governments in military cantonments, etc. A few irresponsible statements by PML-N officials and ministers had also strained the critical relationship with the Armed Forces.

In this background, the two long marches were seen as an effort to bring Nawaz government under pressure, weaken it so that it may

not be in a position to assert its policies and, if required, remove Nawaz Sharif in the wake of widespread law and order problems which the two long marches may create by paralysing the capital city especially the working of the Government including the Parliament, Civil Secretariat and the Supreme Court.

There is no concrete evidence that Military or its Intelligence apparatus was or is involved in the planning or aiding the long marches in any way but the military and its intelligence agencies continue to be named as 'script writers' of the two long marches and the continuing sit-ins. The accusations became so loud and repetitive that the Military through its directorate of Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) had to formally deny any association with the two parties and their on-going agitation. In this backdrop the pronouncements made by the ISPR during and about the sit-ins and events flowing from them assumed special significance.

On August 19 when the two leaders (IK and TuQ) violated the undertaking given by their respective parties to the Islamabad administration of not entering the red zone and led their followers from the places of their sit-ins to the sensitive 'red zone' where the Parliament, the Supreme Court, diplomatic missions, President's House and Prime Minister's House and Secretariat are located along with many other important offices, and the Police did not offer any resistance and the State seemed to capitulate in front of the agitators in full glare of the media especially 24/7 television channels which showed and mostly eulogised the triumphant entry of the two groups into red zone, the Director General ISPR issued the following statement:

*'Buildings in red zone are symbol of state and being protected by Army, therefore sanctity of these symbols must be respected.'*

*'Situation requires patience, wisdom and sagacity from all stakeholders to resolve prevailing impasse through meaningful dialogue in larger national and public interest.'*

Many analysts noted that in the second part of the statement the military apparently seems to be treating at par both the agitators who violated the undertaking not to enter the red zone thus threatened the security there and the Government which is responsible to maintain peace and order. It seemed that the Military was placing itself in an equidistant and neutral position as far as the Federal Government and the agitators were concerned.

Another statement was issued by the ISPR after the four hours long Corps Commanders Conference on August 31, 2014 in the backdrop of agitators' assault on the Prime Minister House, Parliament and the President's House and the ensuing night-long clashes with the police a day earlier. During the assault, which was led by the two leaders in their respective containers, the agitators tried to break-open the gate leading to the President's House; successfully broke the fence of the Parliament House, entered the Parliament compound and fixed their tents, etc. within the lawns of the Parliament compound. The assault was also led by a heavy-duty crane to remove the barriers placed by the Police to protect the important public buildings. They also advanced towards the gate of the Prime Minister's House. Police responded with baton-charge, intensive tear gas shelling and rubber bullets firing. Agitators fought pitched battles with the police and

thrashed policemen whenever they got a chance to get hold of one. The ISPR Statement, at the time, read:

*'While re-affirming support to democracy, the conference reviewed with serious concern, the existing political crisis and the violent turn it has taken resulting in large scale injuries and loss of lives. Further use of force will only aggravate the problem. It was once again reiterated that the situation should be resolved politically without wasting any time and without recourse to violent means. Army remains committed to playing its part in ensuring security of the state and will never fall short of meeting national aspirations.'*

The following aspects of the statement need to be taken note of:

1. Reiteration of Support to democracy
2. Expression of serious concern about large scale injuries and some deaths (during the clashes between police and the protesters during the past 24 hours)
3. Clearly opposing further use of force (both by police and the agitators)
4. Again underlining the need for political resolution of the prevailing situation.
5. Pointing out the urgency of the need to resolve the situation.
6. Reiteration of Army's commitment to play their part in ensuring security of the state

The statement gives the impression as if a supra body is sitting in judgment about the conduct of both the Government and the agitators and telling them what the Army expects them to do in very measured words but leaving no doubt that the Army is not happy about the handling of the crisis. The statement virtually asks the Government including Police and other law enforcement agencies to not use force against agitators. Police took the message seriously and it almost surrendered before the agitators in the following days to the extent that the agitators attacked and captured the Headquarters of the Pakistan Television the next day (September 1, 2014) without facing any resistance by the Police and the agitators were able to suspend the transmission of PTV for the first time in the history of the country. The PTV headquarters were eventually cleared off the agitators when the Army was called and they drove the agitators out without apprehending any one.

While input of the military to the formulation of policies in general and security-related policies and decisions in particular is imperative, it is a question worth exploring whether such an input should be given through the official channels of communication or through press releases like the one issued after the corps commanders meeting.

### **Army as 'facilitator' of dialogue among political parties**

It is now clear that the Prime Minister of Pakistan had asked the

Chief of Army Staff in a meeting on Aug 28, 2014 at the PM House to facilitate 'the resolution of the current impasse.' Although Prime Minister tried to give the impression during his speech in the National Assembly on the morning of August 29, 2014 that it was not he who had initiated the request, the ISPR press release later in the day made it categorically clear: 'COAS was asked by the Government to play facilitative role for resolution of current impasse, in yesterday's meeting at the PM House.'

It is rather disappointing that the very politicians who complain of interference by military and intelligence agencies working under the military in political affairs of the country, invite the COAS to play a facilitative role in a purely political matter. Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly, Syed Khurshid Shah and President of Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party, Mahmood Achakzai rightly took exception to Prime Minister's invitation or request to the COAS to play a role in a purely political matter. Apparently, the PM committed a gross mistake or error of judgment by asking the COAS to facilitate in what is essentially a political matter.

Apparently the COAS accepted the request or invitation by the PM and embarked on the facilitative mission by inviting Imran Khan and Tahir ul Quadri to meet him separately on August 28 late in the evening.

One wishes that the COAS could find a way to politely decline the invitation as facilitating dialogue among feuding politicians is certainly not a part of the professional responsibilities of the Army Chief. Both Imran Khan and Tahir ul Quadri quite eagerly accepted the invitation by the COAS and hastily proceeded to Rawalpindi from the venue of sit-ins to meet the COAS. One again wishes that these two politicians should have thanked the COAS and politely declined the invitation saying that it is a political matter and they would not want to drag army into the political issues.

### **No Meeting of National Security Committee (NSC)**

Despite a raging political crisis faced by the PML-N Government with a cacophony of insinuations and allegations of Military's involvement behind alleged staging of political pressure against the PML-N Government, the Government did not hold a single meeting of the NSC during the month of August 2014.

Instead, the Prime Minister met with the Army Chief at least thrice during the month, every single meeting held without the presence of the Defence Minister, the Civilian Boss of the COAS.

Almost consecutive daily meetings were also reportedly held between the Chief Minister Punjab, the younger brother of Prime Minister and the Federal Interior Minister on the one hand and the Chief of Army Staff on the other to exchange views on the Long Marches of PTI and PAT between August 15-19, 2014<sup>1</sup>

1. For details, please see Army brokered govt-marchers deal, The Nation, August 15, 2014: <http://www.nation.com.pk/national/15-Aug-2014/army-brokered-govt-marchers-deal>; For details please see Nisar, Shahbaz meet Gen Raheel Sharif, Dawn, August 18, 2014: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1126121>; For details, please see Shahbaz, Nisar discuss crisis with Army Chief, Dawn, August 19, 2014: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1126246/shahbaz-nisar-discuss-crisis-with-army-chief>

## Public Opinion Overwhelmingly Supports Democracy: PILDAT Poll

A PILDAT Public Opinion Poll commissioned by PILDAT revealed that a substantial 67% of the country's population believes that democratically-elected Governments constitute the best system for Pakistan.

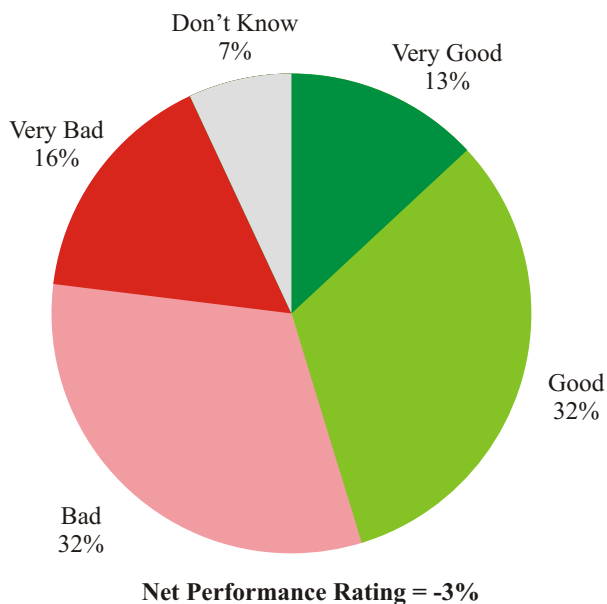
Crucially, the popular appetite for another Army rule in the country remains low as only 19% Pakistanis see another military rule as the best system for the country.

The nationwide poll was conducted during July 16, 2014 to August 6, 2014 with a large sample size of 3065 citizens throughout Pakistan.<sup>2</sup>

## 48% Citizens Consider Federal Government's Performance as Unsatisfactory in establishing Democratic and Parliamentary Oversight<sup>3</sup>

Answering a question about the Federal Government's performance in establishing Parliamentary oversight of the security sector during

**Figure 1: Democratic Oversight of the Security Sector (all over Pakistan)**



Source: *Quality of Democracy and Governance Survey, 2014 (PILDAT)*

its first year in office, 48% citizens termed it as unsatisfactory, outnumbering the 45% citizens who termed it as good or very good. This resulted in a negative Net Performance Rating (NPR) of the Government at -3% on this count.

## Pakistan Ex-Servicemen Association Called for Dissolution of Assemblies

The Pakistan Ex-Servicemen Association, headed by Retired Vice Admiral Ahmed Tasnim on August 20, 2014 issued a statement supporting the call for dissolution of Assemblies, formation of a caretaker government, introduction of electoral reforms and appointment of an independent election commission to hold fresh elections. The association's executive council held a meeting in Rawalpindi to discuss 'current crises-like political situation prevailing in the country'.

The ex-servicemen, who call themselves 'former military strategists' expressed concern at the failure of the Government to implement orders of the additional session judge of Lahore to register the FIR of the Model Town killings, and termed it an instance of contempt of court and breach of fundamental rights of people enshrined in the constitution. The association also offered its services to act as facilitator to defuse the political crisis.

The meeting was attended by Admiral (Retd.) Fasih Bokhari, Lt Gen. (Retd.) Naeem Akbar, Air Marshal (Retd.) Masood Akhtar, Brig (Retd.) Mohammad, Brig (Retd.) Mian Mahmud, Brig (Retd.) Masud ul Hassan, Brig (Retd.) Simon Sharaf and Major (Retd.) Farouk Hamid Khan.<sup>4</sup>

2. For details please see Public Opinion Overwhelmingly Supports Democracy: PILDAT Nationwide Poll, PILDAT, August 12, 2014: <http://www.pildat.org/eventsdel.asp?detid=711>

3. For details, please see, Public Opinion on Quality of Democracy in Pakistan First Year of Federal and Provincial Governments: June 2013 – May 2014, PILDAT, [http://www.pildat.org/publications/publication/SDR/PublicOpinionOnQualityofDemocracyInPakistan\\_June2013ToMay2013.pdf](http://www.pildat.org/publications/publication/SDR/PublicOpinionOnQualityofDemocracyInPakistan_June2013ToMay2013.pdf)

4. For details, please see Ex-Military men back call for dissolution of Assemblies, Dawn, August 20, 2014: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1126538/ex-military-men-back-call-for-dissolution-of-assemblies>