

Observation no: 216 – Pakistan (Kargil War)

Country-year: 1999

1. Did the current regime come to power in a military coup?

No.

In 1958, the military Commander-in-Chief Ayub Khan seized power from the civilian leadership and governed through a lightly applied martial law regime.¹ As the chief army commander, Khan first entered the government in 1954, when he was brought into the ruling parliamentary cabinet “as part of a bid for stability, marking the beginning of the loss of civilian control.”² After four years of political instability, Khan and President Iskander Mirza colluded to take over the government in 1958, though Mirza was quickly exiled to London, leaving the Khan and the Pakistani military in control of the country.

In 1968, Ayub Khan stepped down from power and General Yahya Khan assumed the reins and imposed martial law over Pakistan. After the failure of the 1971 Bangladesh war and the concomitant loss of East Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto wrestled control of Pakistan from the military through democratic elections. The Bhutto years (1971-1977) are notable from a civil-military perspective since he created his own personal army, the Federal Security Force (FSF), to provide him personal protection and repress any opponents. In 1977, the military dissolved Bhutto’s government and Zia ul-Haq took the reins and imposed martial law until his assassination in 1988. The significant impact of Zia ul-Haq on the Pakistani military is discussed below. After Zia’s death, the civilians regained control of the government in democratic elections. Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif alternated as the head of state during the late 1980s and early 1990s. In 1997, Nawaz Sharif succeeded Benazir Bhutto as prime minister.³

2. Has the country ever experienced a military coup?

Yes.

By 1997, Pakistan had experienced two major military coups (1958 and 1977). See 1.

3. Is the country’s top leader a former military officer?

No.

¹ Stephen Philip Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 124-125; Brian Cloughley, *A History of the Pakistan Army: Wars and Insurrections* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 21-45.

² Staniland, Paul. “Explaining Civil-Military Relations in Complex Political Environments: India and Pakistan in Comparative Perspective.” *Security Studies* 17, no. 2 (2008), 349.

³ Anatol Lieven, *Pakistan: A Hard Country* (Public Affairs, 2011).

See 1. The top leader of Pakistan in 1997 was Nawaz Sharif, the democratically elected prime minister.

4. Are ethnic, sectarian, or racial criteria used to exclude segments of the population from the officer corps?

Yes.

Pakistan was partitioned from India with the core purpose of creating a state for Muslim South Asians. The Pakistani army originated as the British Indian Army before partition. Many units in the British Indian Army were mixed in religions, ethnicity, and castes. The partition plan allocated the British Indian Army to India and Pakistan according to a 70:30 split. Thus, “a battalion ordered to join the army of Pakistan would retain only its Muslim company or companies and those headquarters’ officers and men of the same religion.”⁴ Although Muslim identity was required to join the military officer corps, many different ethnic groups exist within Pakistan. The Pakistani military has always been “extremely cagey about releasing figures for ethnic proportions in the military,” though Muslims from the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province regions traditionally outnumber and dominate Muslims from Sindhi, Mohajir, and Baloch.⁵

5. Are there strict ideological requirements for entry into the senior officer corps?

Yes

During the decade of military rule under Zia ul-Haq, the “outlook of the army altered. Its members were encouraged by the example of the [Chief of Army Staff ul-Haq] to pay more attention to religion, which some did as lip-service, some as genuine devotees. Some, of course, ignored the call, and were quietly shunted sideways or out. Some ignored the call and were too valuable to dismiss...Many of Zia’s new senior officers were by upbringing and education more inclined to religion than their worldly predecessors whose secular approach he had long distrusted.”⁶ The explicit introduction of Islam did not supplant the core *raison d’être* held by the Pakistani armed forces (the Indian threat), but it certainly impacted promotional patterns long after Zia’s death. The armed forces maintained a highly professional military hierarchal system based fundamentally on the British Indian army, but with creeping theocratic overtones.⁷

6. Is party membership required for entry into the senior officer corps?

No.

⁴ Brian Cloughley, *A History of the Pakistan Army: Wars and Insurrections* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 2.

⁵ Lieven, 179.

⁶ Cloughley, 241, 246.

⁷ Anatol Lieven, *Pakistan: A Hard Country* (Public Affairs, 2011), ch 5.

See 5.

7. Does military training involve extensive political education or ideological indoctrination?

No.

See 5.

8. Has the military been used to repress internal dissent in the last five years?

No.

9. Has the military been used to govern the country in the last five years?

No.

See 1.

10. Is there a paramilitary organization separate from the regular military, used to provide regime or leader security?

No.

However, several paramilitary organizations led by army officers provide internal and border security, particularly in the Northwest along the disputed border in the Pashtun areas with Afghanistan.⁸

11. Is there an internal intelligence apparatus dedicated to watching the regular military?

Yes.

The two primary external intelligence organizations in Pakistan are the (infamous) Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and the Defense Intelligencies of Pakistan. The Intelligence Bureau is the main internal intelligence and security organization, and is directly controlled by the head of state. The Military Intelligence agency plays a similar and overlapping role, though it focuses primarily on intra-military espionage and counterinsurgency intelligence. To some degree, the ISI, IB, and MI all watch the regular military.

⁸ Cloughley, 30; Ziring, Lawrence. *Pakistan: At the Crosscurrent of History*. Oneworld, 2004: 70.

12. Has a purge of the officer corps occurred in the last five years?

No.

13. Is there an institutionalized forum through which civilian leaders and military officers regularly exchange information?

Yes.

The Defense Committee of the prime minister's Cabinet stands at the apex, with the Defence Council of the Ministry of Defense as the next tier.⁹

⁹ Cloughley, 303.