

Military culture: a dynamic phenomenon



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Military culture is a dynamic phenomenon which undergoes evolution in consonance with changing environments. Effects of changes may not be sudden or abrupt but over a period of time; however the variations in environment have potential to alter the entire character of an army. Sequel to this, organizational changes have direct bearing on military culture, as they define the lifestyle of a military outfit. These changes coupled with increased requirements of specialized outfits due to intrinsic geographical diversity have catalyzed cultural shifts in our military. These smaller and particular set ups have actually created/likely to lead to a no of variant or sub-cultures in the army. This sub-cultural shift if not controlled and channelized may result into serious mutations from our very strong, seasoned and well evolved military values as well as culture.

In view of above, carryout an in depth study of change in the culture of Pakistan Army attributable to organizational changes as well as concept of specialized outfits with a view to suggest remedial measures to offset any ill-tendencies / disadvantages.

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ABSTRACT

Culture is diverse in nature. It exists everywhere on this earth. Pakistan is has a rich Culture which is a blend of various cultures that existed in the sub-continent during the pre-partition era. Our psycho-social and socio-economic environment has deteriorated over the past decades. The employment of units in Sub Conventional Warfare in the last decade and due to Indians Pro Active Operations Strategy has affected the military culture in Pakistan Army. The military culture whether it is affected by the organizational

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changes and establishing of the satellite cantonments or not is a question that has been discussed in this paper. The social and cultural problems like reduced ethical values, increased careerism, individualism etc has greatly influenced the military lifestyle. The military culture which had very strong values, customs and traditions is undergoing a process of degradation. More so the media and general awareness has also played a major role in giving rise to materialistic approach among the officers and soldiers alike.

This study has highlighted the reasons for the degeneration of military culture and also gives certain recommendations which can reduce the level of deterioration and revive the lost traditions which are a hallmark of our Military Culture.

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EFFECTS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES AND CREATION OF SPECIALIZED UNITS ON MILITARY CULTURE

“ An Army without culture is dull witted army, and a dull witted army cannot defeat the enemy”

Moa Tse Tung

Introduction

1. Cultural and social changes have been a dominant part of the evolution of mankind. Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by

man as a member of society[1]. Military society is a unique and distinct entity with its own sub-culture. This form of culture provides an environment under which leadership and management are exercised in the armed forces. Military culture is often determined and modified by the nature of the society of its origin. Although the elements of the military culture like training, discipline, codes, conditioning etceteras play a pivotal role to bring about changes in the cultural traits of military personnel, the cultural traits of the society remains its very foundation.

2. For a military outfit it is extremely important to have a team equipped with an enriched military culture which can deliver in the hour of need. What makes a soldier fight? In some cases it is the motivation based on ideology, in others it may be materialistic motives. It takes a wide span of time to inculcate all those attributes which a soldier needs to withstand challenges in the combat. This is a whole time commitment where one spends more time in dealing with professional choirs than with normal society. History is witness to the fact that military culture has played a key role in the final outcome of many battles. Culture is a barometer of society's health. An eroded culture will be a reflection of the illness of a society and vice versa.

3. After 9/11, not only affected the society of our country but also transformed the military culture of Pakistan Army a lot. The Sub Conventional Wars in Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Swat and areas of Balochistan resulted in formation of new specialized outfits with specific tasks. Indians Pro Active Strategy has also resulted in the organizational changes as well in the form of establishment of new satellite stations/ cantonments. These organizational changes has affected the military culture

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in Pakistan Army prevailing a decade ago resulting in the deformation of already established military customs, traditions and culture. There is a dire need to identify the deformation that has taken place and the effort that is required to remove/ correct them.

Aim

4. To carry out an in depth study of changes in Pakistan Army culture in historic perspective, current changes in the culture attributable to organizational / specialized outfit related transformations, with a view to suggesting remedial measures to offset the deformation in the military culture.

PART-I

BASIC DEFINITIONS AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Basic Definitions

5. In order to undertake the study it is imperative to understand the following basic concepts so as to build a sound base for the analysis.

a. Society. The English word “ society emerged in the 15th century and is derived from the French word societe. The French word, in turn, had its origin in the Latin word societas, which means a ‘ friendly association with others,” from socius meaning “ companion, associate, and comrade or business partner.” The Latin word is probably related to the verb sequi, “ to follow”, and thus originally may have meant “ follower”[2]. In political science, the term is often used to mean the totality of human relationships, generally in contrast to the State, i. e., the apparatus of rule or government

within a territory. In the social sciences such as sociology, society has been used to mean a group of people that form a semi-closed social system, in which most interactions are with other individuals belonging to the group. Societies may also be organized according to their political structure. In order of increasing size and complexity, there are bands, tribes, chiefdoms, and state societies. These structures may have varying degrees of political power, depending on the cultural geographical and historical environments that these societies must contend with. Thus, a more isolated society with the same level of technology and culture as other societies is more likely to survive than one in closer proximity to others that may encroach on their resources. A society that is unable to offer an effective response to other societies it competes with will usually be subsumed into the culture of the competing society.

b. Ethos. Ethos, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is defined as “the characteristic spirit, prevalent tone of sentiment, of a people or community; the ‘genius’ of an institution or system”, although it originally has its roots in the Greek word ‘etho’ or “to be accustomed to”[3]. In a place where one might gather often, the opportunity for developing communal values indefinitely arises. These types of values are those which are established in the meaning of ethos. Therefore, to be a good example of ethos, one must portray the types of traits that are most valued within a society which sometimes differs for every society. For example, those virtues as related to Athens would be “justice, courage, temperance, magnificence, magnanimity, liberality, gentleness, prudence, and wisdom.”[4]

c. Culture. Culture is defined as “ the sum of symbols, ideas, forms of expression, and material products associated with a social system”. It is a dynamic medium through which societies create a collective way of life reflected in such things as beliefs, values, music, literature, art, dance, science, religious ritual, and technology. In this sense, it is literally the source from which we create most of what we experience as reality, and as such its place in human life is enormously important[5]. “ Culture is the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief and behavior. Culture thus consists of language, ideas, beliefs, customs, taboos, codes, institution, tools, techniques, work of art, rituals, ceremonies, and other related components. Some researchers say that culture is concerned with the state of mind, spirit and civilization. Even human society also enjoys its own particular culture, or socio-culture system which overlaps with other systems. Variations among socio-cultural system are attributed to physical habits and stretches to the range of possibilities. Culture is inherent in various areas of activity, such as language, rituals and customs. The attitude, values, ideals and beliefs of individuals are greatly influenced by the culture in which they live. Precisely, culture is the sum total of the ways of life of people in a particular society. “ Culture is the key to understanding a group, has a lot of practical value to a sociologist. If we know the culture and its implication for man or group of men, we can predict certain part of their behavior, and explain most of its part actions. Following aspects of culture are vital[6].

(1) Culture is a continuously changing process. It adapts itself to new situation and environment though it is not observed since the changing process is quite slow apparently but has deep under currents.

(2) Whenever culture of a society is dilated upon, the instance of that society is not protected.

d. Mores. Mores are norms that reflect deeply held cultural ideals about how people should behave. Mores make more important distinctions, such as those between good and evil, virtuous and sinful, laudable and repugnant. A society's mores define standards of behaviour that are more serious and punishment for their violation tends to be both more certain and more severe. Mores extend beyond the rightness or wrongness of certain acts to the most profound ideas about life in a society is supposed to be about[7].

e. Military Culture. The military society is a unique and a distinct entity with its own sub culture. This form of culture provides an environment under which leadership and management are exercised in the armed forces.

Military culture is often determined and modified by the nature of the society and of its origin, although, the elements of culture like training, discipline , codes, conditioning etc play a significant role to bring about changes in the cultural traits of military personnel, nevertheless, the cultural traits of the entire society remains as the foundation. Since differences or changes in cultural traits are brought about by these elements, they become factors of consideration, particularly in crisis or battle situation. The performance and conduct of soldiers in crisis and battle are the sum total of cultural traits they have imbibed over a period. Military culture is generally based on ideals of

honour, sacrifice and discipline, thereby appearing different from the traditional value system of any society. The extent of attainment of these ideals; account for the professional rating of the military. This consequently differentiates a professional army from a nonprofessional one. Pakistan Army evolved along with the history of the nation itself and has experienced modifications of its military culture at various critical times. The different stages that the army experienced has helped to modify its culture to what it is today exercising both positive and negative trends on its professionalism.

Historical Perspective

6. Genesis of Military Culture in a Global Perspective. Military culture can be traced back to the genesis of human society itself. The interesting phenomenon is that despite the wide diversity of the world's cultural scene, military culture all over, has the same basic ingredients and therefore cannot be isolated drastically from the national culture. Military culture breeds respect, honour and regard for fellow soldiers. Its builds a positive culture in which its members live. It is the mainstay of any successful military organization[8]. Military culture, apart from geographical influences, also has deep historical roots in the genesis of the particular army as well. The armies raised by the colonial powers retain the imprints of colonial occupation in their overall outlook. As humans developed their dwellings into communal groups and the network of tribal society began spreading, so did the profession of arms. Initially all members of the clan were supposed to take up arms whenever circumstances necessitated acquiring or retaining. As civilization grew larger, different people took to different walks of life. This was the origin of professionals. In order to understand the genesis of military

culture in its broader perspective, Ancient civilizations of Egypt and Greece will be mention here:-

a. Military Culture of Ancient Egypt. Egypt is known as a land of ancient wisdom[9]. By the 1468 BC, small groups of people started settling down along the banks of the Nile. These settlements became small villages and in time the headman of one village grew stronger and more powerful than his neighbours. Finally his descendants became rulers were known as Pharaohs and there subjects worshiped them as gods[10]. The first Pharaoh to rule the Kingdom of upper and lower Nile was Menes, but Hyksos was the first ruler who organized the army and gave birth to the ancient military culture of Egypt. The Hyksos dynasty were driven out by Ahmes in 1567 BC, and from his time onwards, the practice of methods of war became an essential part of the Pharaoh's training curriculum. The cities needed dedicated people to defend them and the state needed a powerful army to implement its policies within and without. The Army was the only tangible instrument of power, so great care was taken to indoctrinate its members in a way that that believed in the divinity of the monarch. The important components were:-

(1) Chivalry.

(2) Courage.

(3) Honour.

(4) Duty.

(5) Patriotism.

(6) Sense of Sacrifice.

(7) Fidelity.

(8) Unquestioned Obedience.

(9) Divinity of the Cause.

b. Military Culture of the Greeks. Greeks are a part of our mental furniture, our cultural baggage. Alternatively, they are the rock on which the painfully constructed edifices of our experiences actually rest[11]. But which Greeks are they, precisely, whom we should look back to, to trace the genesis of military culture? Alexander, the greatest flag bearer of Greek Culture, was not a Greek but a Macedonian. Nevertheless, Greeks were a warrior people. War, as Heraclites of Ephesus put it round about 500 BC, “ is the king and father of all things and all men, some he makes free some slaves. War in ancient Greece, defined the political rights and responsibilities of citizens and colonies, as well as providing a peculiarly demanding test of brute physique and mental strength. It drew the line between the free and the unfree both within the Greek world and between the Greeks and the surrounding barbarian or non-Greek cultures. Apart from their cardinal values of their military culture, the Greeks had moral opposition to militarism that sets classical Greek military culture apart from that of the peoples, ancient or modern, making it ancestral in particular to ‘ Western’ military culture[12].

ROOTS OF MILITARY CULTURE OF SUB CONTINENT

7. The Indus Valley civilization and culture emerged in about 2500 B. C. Later in 3rd century BC, King Ashoka gave a concept of highly trained and professional Army to the subcontinent. Military culture based on Ashoka's values of bravery and wisdom, flourished in the land for the centuries to come.

Early Muslim Conquests and Our Military Culture

(1) In early 8th century, Muhammad Bin Qasim defeated Raja Dahir's army at Hyderabad. This exposed people of Subcontinent to the Islamic military culture based on brotherhood, bravery, justice, equality, honour and sacrifice.

(2) The next major exposure to our military culture was of Muslim sultanate which was established in Delhi by early 13th century. In 16th century the Mongols, who were the decedents of Genghis Khan swept over the mountain passes from Central Asia came to this region. Now, besides the balanced culture of Islam, the harsh culture of YASA (the constitution of the Genghis Khan), the cast-ridden culture of Hinduism and soft culture of Buddhists and Confucius got induced into the military culture of Subcontinent.

The British Colonial Era

(1) The next cultural big bang occurred due to the arrival of British on the scene. The British restructured and reorganized the local forces. British Raj influenced various facets of our military culture like customs, institutions, and ceremonies.

(2) In British Indian Army, religious tendencies were not advocated; rather British officers laid emphasis on loyalty, duty and regimentation. They presented new ideas like mess culture and the creation of rank of Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO). They also created phenomenal training institutions like Military College Jhelum and Command and Staff College Quetta. So our military culture till independence was a cluttered culture of various civilizations and did not have a single theme to be pursued.

Transition Period (1947 – 1953). 1947 brought new dreams, new hopes and new challenges for the new army. That was the right time to identify our true military culture and shun all unwanted elements. But unfortunately that could not happen because at the time of independence Pakistan Armed Forces were deficient of officers. The shortage of officers, forced Pakistan Armed Forces to retain almost 500 British officers on contract at senior command and staff appointments, who maintained status quo. Therefore, Pakistan Armed Forces could not find their cultural identity in its new composite entity. Disengagement of the residual British officers in 1953 was the beginning of the development of a new military culture.

Consolidation Era (1953 – 1971). This phase witnessed political instability and the appointment of General Ayub Khan as the Commander-In-Chief. This era brought the idea of “ Martial Law” in the Pakistan Armed Forces. Present shortcomings in our present military culture, due to interactions with the civilians, have their roots embedded in the time frame of consolidation era i. e. from 1953 to 1971. Another important happening in this time frame was the realization that we should give away the British traditions and in this search of our identity and national pride, the pride in affiliation with the

British Crown was disowned by symbolic removal of the word “ Royal” that preceded all unit designations. This era also saw 1965 War. The armed forces enjoyed an intimate backing from the civilian masses and the war made soldiers as national heroes.

e. Period From 1971 – 1977

(1) This era witnessed the darkest turn in our National history. Nation faced a political defeat in a military arena.

(2) On the contrary, the strength of the Armed Forces was not decreased and the Government maintained a strong and efficient military. Our culture did not change much in this period but the masses and the Armed Forces started feeling the requirement of integrating the Islamic values into their daily lives.

f. Period From 1977 – 1988

(1) This era again brought the Armed Forces to the center stage of national politics. In this phase, religion remained central to General Zia’s philosophy. Changes such as comprehensive ban on drinking were implemented. A cultural shift from a westernized life style to a more Islamic life style started to begin.

(2) Military co-operation with other countries improved. It was estimated that about 30, 000 Pakistani troops were stationed in 24 different countries in 1983. This brought a wave of prosperity among the officers and men. There was a swift shift of culture in this time frame from western style to core oriental and Islamic way of military life style. This was the era whose impressions can still be found in our present military culture.

Period From 1988 – 1999. This era was characterized by democratic rule and political instability. In a span of seven years, four governments were changed. Due to self interest of various political parties, the political atmosphere remained charged. In spite of tall claims, the economic state depleted and foreign investment decreased due to rampant corruption, deteriorating law and order and political instability. During this decade, both India and Pakistan became overtly nuclear. This gave a temporary boost to National spirit and the public sentiments aroused. This was immediately followed by the Kargil Campaign. Our culture, however, did not change much during this decade.

Period From 1999 to 2007

(1) General Pervaiz Musharraf took over as Chief Executive after military coup. Qualified / suitable Retired military / civilians were appointed as heads of prime organizations which gave an economic boost to these organizations. This era also attracted foreign investment, offered better job opportunities and increase in foreign exchange reserves. Some of its achievements were:-

- (a) WAPDA was saved by the Army from total disaster.
- (b) Pakistan Railways was rescued and it started giving profit.
- (c) Steel Mill also started giving profit.
- (d) Media became independent and a lot of private channels were opened.

(2) The events of 9 / 11 changed the complexion of international environment and perception of our people. Government decided to become an ally of NATO forces on Global War on Terror (GWOT). Effects of this

strategic shift can be seen even today. In later stage of his reign General Musharraf lost his pride as a leader which had direct influence on the image of the Army. This era can conveniently be termed as one man show. The episode of Dr Abdul Qadir Khan, assassination of Akbar Bugti, Lal Masjid operation and removal of Chief Justice, holding of President office being in uniform and emergency declared on 3rd Nov 2010 were some of the controversial decisions resulted in the decline of Musharraf's era.

i. 2008 till todote

(1) Army pulled out from all political institutions. Elections were held and Political Government was set in. Inefficient people with accelerated promotions got appointed as heads of prime institutions. At occasions, National and Provincial Assemblies gave a picture of fish market. The institution which had the public mandate lost its value, resultantly all organization from transport (PIA and railways) to energy sectors are on verge of collapse. Corruption, lawlessness, injustice, worst energy short fall, unabated inflation and price-hike have further compounded the situation in the country. There seems to be no strategy to give relief to the commoners. Uncontrolled and un-steered media became a monster. Instead of providing strength to the society it started to bash various organizations with Army as no exception. Presently, talk shows have become famous for blame game and use of un-parliamentary language. Some of the under mentioned incidents clearly show planned Army bashing by media and politicians:-

(a) 2nd May incident.

(b) Memogate scandal.

(c) Salala post incident.

(d) North Atlantic Treaty Organization supplies issue.

(2) However, during this period Army totally remained focused on military affairs and improved its image. Professionalism came back and training took the center stage. Some of the highlights of this period are appended below:-

Army level war games (AzmeNau series).

Year of soldier with introduction of Base line menu.

Pay package was considerably increased.

Introduction of Yum e Shuhada including Shuhada package.

Year of training focusing back to basics.

Army level study periods.

Incentive of free uniform and plots for JCOs / soldiers.

Revision of policies.

Improvement in Information Technology environment (inclusion of Office Automated System).

Success of Military Operation in Swat.

Management of Internally displaced personnel (IDPs).

Introduction of combat dress.

Enhanced accountability.

PART – II

Organizational / Role Changes over Past Decade in Pakistan Army

8. Organizational Changes. After the incident of 9/11 and the following Global War on Terrorism brought not only changes to the Pakistani Society but also had definite changes onto the military culture of Pakistan Army. It changed the outlook of almost entire army as to how it looked before its commitment in the Sub Conventional Warfare's operations. It definitely had some positive aspects to its credit but as far as military culture is concerned it brought some drastic unwanted changes and deformation. The organizational changes that took place during this decade were:-

a. Commitment of Army in civilian affairs to include monitoring of various state run institutions which were decaying due to inefficiency, which included:-

(1) WAPDA.

(2) Government educational institute.

(3) Hospitals.

(4) Census.

(5) Elections.

(6) Railways.

(7) Pakistan Steels and others.

b. Pakistan Army moved to the lawless Federally Administered Tribal Area along the Durand line after the invasion of Afghanistan by United States of America. Pakistan Army moved to these areas for the first time after the independence. The units and formations those were deployed have a changed role not previously practiced or known to them. They were not properly trained for this type of warfare. These units had to undergo changes not only in their role but also in their military culture due to the changed environment. These changes in the military cultures were demand of the situation and time. With the passage of time these unwanted deformation in the military customs and cultures came with these changes in the organization and roles of the units and formations of army.

9. Evolution of Special Units/Outfits. The last decade saw changes in terms of evolution of specialized outfit and units. The raising of these units, outfits and organizations vastly improve the combat potential of the Pakistan Army. The evolution and raising of these new units and outfits was the need of the hour. These specialized units were trained; equipped and stationed at special locations in consonance with their operational roles. The examples in case are Light Commando Battalions and Units of Army Strategic Force Command. Due to their peculiar roles and task, these units were cut off from the routine life of a cantonment; adversely affecting the military culture of these outfits.

10. Establishments of Satellite Station/Cantonments. In the last one decade, Indian Army has been evaluating and practicing its Pro Active Operations Strategy. This strategy has serious consequences for Pakistan Army resulting

in the construction and establishments of new forward cantonments/satellite stations. Pakistan Army's response to Indian's Pro Active Operations Strategy is New Concept of War Fighting. This entailed moving of troops to forward locations during the peace time. This factor has further put troops and officers away from the main cantonments and away from the military cultures. This also includes affecting the training and grooming of all ranks.

11. Strengths of Military Culture. Pakistan Armed Forces enjoys the reputation of being a professional combat force capable of taking on any operational task. This has been proved time and again by our troops engaged in the nation building, United Nations peace keeping missions and during war with India. Some of the strengths of our military culture are:-

a. Symbol of National Unity. Ever since its emergence, military has maintained its nationalistic ethos despite various cultural, ethnic, religious rifts gripping Pakistani society. The military has a stature of being above these, thus acting as a unifying force for the country. The role it played in subduing the anti national forces has earned them the respect and are being viewed as the Symbol of National Unity.

b. Strength of Institution. The institution of armed forces is constituted on strong ideological foundations of defense of the motherland from internal and external threats.

c. National Army. Military culture has an inherent flexibility of warmly accepting all individuals without any discrimination of caste, creed or colour. A large number of Balochi Youth has been inducted in all arms and services of Pakistan Army not only to bring them in mainstream but also to make

Pakistan Army as true National Army. It approves healthy competition of achieving professional excellence and rightful doings.

d. Religious Values. The recruitment of armed forces is carried out on voluntary basis. Because of the inherent religious strength of our society the desire for martyrdom has always been the prime facet of our military culture.

e. Fair System. Military has a s