

Military influence in pakistan



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The military oligarchy occupied a dominant position and has been in effective command of state power ever since the creation of the state. This oligarchy installed politicians and political parties in office to provide a façade of parliamentary government for a decade; it then decided to expel them in 1958, when the prospects of the impending general elections seemed to pose a challenge to its supremacy. The intervention of this oligarchy and more particularly, of the military, became more effective and intensified when the new state started facing problems of vast magnitude. These included inexperienced and inadequate administrative staff, a massive refugee problem, poor economic resources, regional conflicts, the decline of the Muslim League and the advent of coalitional politics and unstable governments. This ultimately led to the collapse of the parliamentary system, the utter failure on the part of the political leadership to provide a functioning civilian government by developing a consensus on the rules of polity, and the total indifference of the elites towards the masses and their problems.

Causes of Military Intervention in Pakistan: A Revisionist Discourse

It is interesting that India and Pakistan provide illustrations of the contrasting as well as changing patterns of civil-military relations. The most outstanding contribution of British rule in India in the field of military administration was the norm and practice of civil-military relations which emphasized overall civilian control and the military's aloofness from politics. ¹ However, in Pakistan, after little more than eleven years of the façade of civilian parliamentary government, the military intervened and imposed its own rule. On four occasions, the military intervened overtly and imposed martial law throughout the country: October 1958, March 1969, July 1977 and October 1999. The military justified its extreme action on the ground of instability in

<https://assignbuster.com/military-influence-in-pakistan/>

the country. In 1958, General Muhammad Ayub Khan justified the coup on the basis that the country had to be rescued from chaos. This became the mantra for all the succeeding military takeovers. This was the fallout of the circumstances of the pre-1958 period, during which Pakistan was facing ideological and ethnic divisions as well as administrative and security problems. 2 The poor institutionalization of the Muslim League, and the centralization of power within it, hindered the establishment of a truly participatory democracy. The frequent dissolution of the provincial and national governments made it difficult to lay the foundation for a parliamentary system. Political and constitutional crises added to the tensions between the Centre and the provinces. 3 Such problems made it possible for the bureaucracy and military to maintain a superior position in the power structure of the country. Pakistan represents an example of how an apolitical military could slowly be drawn into the political field due to the failure of political institutions and politicians, low political mobilization, as well as external factors. In the first instance, being well-organized and skilled, it helped every government to maintain law and order, until it slowly became an important factor in the decision making process, and ultimately displaced civil authority. Therefore, a study of military interventions in politics can help to make some general remarks about the causes which allow a professional military to assume an overtly political role. 4 In short, there are multiple causes of military intervention in the political sphere of Pakistan. No single factor can be cited as the sole factor for the militarization of the country. Today, Pakistan stands at the cross-roads of history. Pakistan is fighting against the menace of Talibanization of the Tribal Areas. The basic causes of repeated military intervention in the politics of Pakistan, which

turned the polity into a praetorian state, are explained in the next section.

The Untimely Demise of the Quaid-i-Azam and A Leadership Crisis Like many third-world countries, Pakistan was born a fragile nation-state. It was burdened with ideological and ethnic cleavages, and created amidst administrative chaos. The nationalist movement that culminated in the creation of Pakistan in August 1947, although populist in character, cohered singularity around Mohammad Ali Jinnah's determination, sense of purpose, and faith in democratic constitutionalism. These have generally been recognized as some of the attributes of Jinnah's leadership. The first year of Independence was marked by heavy dependence on the charismatic personality of Jinnah; he was Governor-General and President of the Constituent Assembly. He had charismatic appeal, stature and unrivalled prestige that commanded and compelled unquestioned acceptance of his leadership all over Pakistan. However, he died on 11 September 1948, leaving behind an enduring political vacuum. Liaquat Ali Khan, Jinnah's lieutenant and Pakistan's first Prime Minister, guided the country with courage and confidence during a difficult period but lacked the authority of the Quaid-i-Azam. He endeavored to strengthen the parliamentary system, but his tenure was cut short by an assassin's bullet in October 1951. The death of two top leaders so soon after freedom was won, created a vacuum and the pattern of 'paternalistic' executive set up by the Quaid i-Azam came to an end. 6 With Liaquat's death, the façade of "parliamentary democracy" began to erode. The bureaucratic elites did not take long to convert the office of Governor-General into an instrument of bureaucratic intervention. In the provinces, on several occasions, bureaucratic intervention occurred in the garb of the Governor's rule. 7 The Chief

<https://assignbuster.com/military-influence-in-pakistan/>

Ministers were dismissed, despite the fact that their parties had a majority in the provincial assemblies. Conclusion In short, Pakistan inherited the well established tradition of supremacy of civil-political over military institution under British political theory. Within a few years of her independence, Pakistan encountered the ever growing influence of military into politics. Ultimately, unlike India, Pakistan degenerated into a praetorian state with dreadful political, social and economic fallouts. This process of militarization of Pakistan owes its transformation to multiple variables as have been discussed. No single factor can be cited as the sole cause; rather, a cluster of causes led to the intervention of military into politics in Pakistan. Notes and References 1 Yeena Kukreja, *Military Intervention in Pakistan: A Case Study of Pakistan* (New Delhi: NOB), 1985. 2 Ian Talbot, *Pakistan: A Modern History* (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 1999), 3 Sumita Kumar, 'The Army in the Power Structure in Pakistan' in Behera, Ajay Darshan and C., Mathew 4 Joseph, eds. *Pakistan in a Changing Strategic Context* (New Delhi: Knowledge World, 2004), p. 149. *Pakistan Vision* Vol. 12 No. 24 Ibid, p. 50. 5 Saeed Safqat, *Civil-Military Relations in Pakistan from Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to Benazir Bhutto*, (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press), p. 22. 6 Zarina Salamat, *Pakistan 1947-58: An Historical Review* (Islamabad: NIHCR, 1992), p. 35. 7 Saeed Shafqat, *Political System of Pakistan and Public Policy* (Lahore: Progressive Publishers, 1989), p. 142. 8 Iftikhar H. Malik, *State and Civil Society in Pakistan: Politics of Authority, Ideology and Ethnicity*, (Lahore: Macmillan Publishers, 1997), p. 75. 9 Ibid, p. 36. 10 Chaudhri Muhammad Ali, *The Emergence of Pakistan*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 364. 11 Ali, *The Emergence of Pakistan*, p. 366.