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Reverberations of the Dharna: Civil-Military Relations after the Report of the Inquiry Commission 2015



Before, during and after the sit-ins by the PTI and PAT, many have alleged the involvement of certain members of the Inter-Services Intelligence agency in orchestrating the protests¹

The 126-day sit-in by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was perhaps the watershed moment in civil-military relations in Pakistan for the current term of the PML-N Government. As PILDAT had previously noted, the sit-ins and the way these paralyzed the business of the State humiliated top State functionaries and institutions, leading to a visible humbling of the democratically elected political leadership and an equally visible ascendancy of Military. The clean-chit granted to the General Election 2013 by the General Election 2013 Inquiry Commission 2015 was nothing short of a much-needed lifeline for the PML-N Government.

However, the aftermath of the Report has seen regrettable posturing by central members of the PML-N, implying as if the Government might take up an inquest into the alleged involvement of senior Military officials in the sit-ins. For example, the Federal Minister for Defence, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, MNA, during an interview to Mr. Absar Alam on July 12, 2015 named 'Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Ahmad Shuja Pasha and Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Zaheer-ul-Islam for pushing the London plan as a conspiracy against the PML-N Government'.² Similarly, the Chairman of the Privatisation Commission, Mr. Muhammad Zubair, also stated on July 14, 2015 that prior to the October 30, 2011 jalsa of the PTI, Lt. Gen. Ahmad Shuja Pasha, then DG ISI and a serving military officer had approached '7-8 corporate heads to support the PTI, including himself'. Similarly, the Chief Minister of Punjab, Mr. Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif, MPA, who is usually known to take a measured line vis-à-vis the military, also demanded that a Parliamentary Commission be formed, consisting of the Parliamentary leaders of all political parties in order to 'ascertain who funded the sit-in and helped stage it... [and] an investigation into the issue should not be left incomplete and should be taken to a logical end'. The Chairman of the PTI, Mr. Imran Khan, MNA,

1. Picture courtesy Pakistan Today
2. For details, please see Two ex-ISI chiefs pushed anti-govt London Plan of sit-in: Defence minister, The News, July 13, 2015, as accessed on August 03, 2015 at: <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-38580-Two-ex-ISI-chiefs-pushed-anti-govt-London-Plan-of-sit-in-defence-minister>

apparently demanded the same as well on July 30, 2015 stating that '*if the PTI has conspired with the Military against the elected Government, the matter should be investigated. However, the Military should not be maligned through media statements*'.³

PILDAT believes that there is some weight in the position that Mr. Imran Khan has taken. Given the precarious nature of civil-military relations in Pakistan, either the senior Ministers of the PML-N Government should stop giving these statements on the national media, or ask the Prime Minister to institute an Inquiry Commission into the matter without any delay. The elected Government is the custodian of the Constitution, and it belies irresponsibility on part of its senior members who are only resorting to public statements, rather than taking concrete step towards investigating the matter further.

Sindh Government Grants Extension to Pakistan Rangers (Sindh)



The Pakistan Rangers (Sindh) have become a permanent feature of the law enforcement landscape of Sindh, and are believed to be spearheading the Karachi Operation³

The apparent stress in civil-military tension in Sindh took yet another turn when the Chief Minister of Sindh, Syed Qaim Ali Shah, MPA, wrote a letter to the Director General of Pakistan Rangers (Sindh) on June 17, 2015, stating that with the raid of the offices of the Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA) and the Lines Area Development Project (LADP), the paramilitary force had '*acted beyond their authorities and mandate*'.⁴

In this backdrop, it appeared that the PPP-led Sindh Government had employed another pressure tactic when the Chief Minister stated that the Rangers' stay, and the granting of policing powers to them, could only be extended if ratified by

3. Picture courtesy the Express Tribune

4. For details, please see the PILDAT Monitor on Civil-Military Relations in Pakistan, June 2015, which can be accessed at:

the Provincial Assembly of Sindh under Article 147 of the Constitution. The period for the presence of the Pakistan Rangers (Sindh) in Karachi was to expire on July 20, 2015, whereas the special policing powers granted to them on July 08, 2015.

As it turned out, however, the Sindh Government issued the notification on July 09, 2015, extending the policing powers assigned to Rangers for a month.⁵ Similarly, the presence of the Rangers was extended for a year in the province after a meeting of the Sindh Cabinet, in the leadership of the Chief Minister, on July 18, 2015.⁶

The legal position taken by the Chief Minister may hold true.⁷ However, the Sindh Government has adopted an inconsistent policy over time. The Provincial Assembly of Sindh did not ratify the special policing powers granted to the Rangers on November 10, 2014. Taking the matter for ratifications for extension of these powers after-effect appeared only as yet another pressure tactic adopted by the PPP leadership against the paramilitary force, after the diatribe made by the Co-Chairman of the party, Mr. Asif Ali Zardari on June 16, 2015.

Meeting between Mr. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Lt. Gen. Naveed Mukhtar, and Maj. Gen. Bilal Akbar

In a first of its kind huddle, a meeting was held between the Chairman of the PPP, Mr. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the Chief Minister of Sindh, Syed Qaim Ali Shah, MPA, Corp V Commander, Lt. Gen. Naveed Mukhtar, and the Director General of the Pakistan Rangers (Sindh), Maj. Gen. Bilal Akbar, on July 12, 2015 at the Chief Minister House. Given that no official Press Release was issued either by the Provincial Government of Sindh, the PPP, or the Military leadership, salient features of the meeting have remained a topic speculation for various media outlets. Relevantly, some outstanding questions include:

1. Upon whose request had the meeting been called? The PPP or the Military leadership?
2. Was the meeting arranged in haste, or had any prior preparations gone into it? According to a report appearing in daily Dawn on July 13, 2015, *'though, the party leaders insisted that it was not a scheduled meeting, some well-placed sources said it was a duly arranged gathering'*.⁸ In a Press Conference addressed on the same day by the then Provincial Minister for Information, and now the Provincial Minister for Archives, Works and Services, Mr. Sharjeel Inam Memon, MPA had termed it a *'usual courtesy meeting', which had been 'previously scheduled'*.⁹
3. Does this meeting raise an entirely new possibility of the Military leadership interacting with heads of the political parties?

Although the various media reports diverged on certain details of its outcome, two common themes of discussion that emerged were:

1. That better coordination would take place between the Provincial Government of Sindh, and the Pakistan Rangers (Sindh) when it came to conducting any raids in the future.

5. For details, please see Sindh govt extends Rangers' special powers for a month, Dawn, July 09, 2015, as accessed on August 01, 2015 at: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1193244>

6. For details, please see Policy of cooperation: Sindh grants one-year extension to Rangers, Express Tribune, July 18, 2015, as accessed on August 01, 2015 at: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/922863/policy-of-cooperation-sindh-grants-one-year-extension-to-rangers>

7. Article 147 of the Constitution states that *'the Government of a Province may, with the consent of the Federal Government, entrust, either conditionally or unconditionally, to the Federal Government, or to its officers, functions in relation to any matter to which the executive authority of the Province extends, provided that the Provincial Government shall get the functions so entrusted ratified by the Provincial Assembly within sixty days'*.

8. For details, please see Bilawal meets corps commander to discuss 'tough issues', Dawn, July 13, 2015, as accessed on August 01, 2015 at: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1194064>

9. For details, please see PPP to fully back Karachi operation, says Bilawal, The News, July 13, 2015, as accessed on August 02, 2015 at: <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-38579-PPP-to-fully-back-Karachi-operation-says-Bilawal>

2. That the Provincial Government would take action against the various 'terrorists' found present in Government departments.¹⁰

Regardless of the finer details, it is apparent that the meeting was successful in re-establishing the apparent disconnect observed between the PPP and the Military leadership. The granting of an extension to the presence of the Pakistan Rangers (Sindh) and a re-shuffle in Sindh's Cabinet on the very same day was perhaps symptomatic of this.

PILDAT hopes that instead of such ad-hoc 'meetings' or 'gatherings', the official channels of communication such as the Provincial Apex Committee of Sindh would be used effectively vis-à-vis the Karachi Operation and better civil-military coordination.

10. For details, please see Apex committee decision: Sindh to mount crackdown on 'RAW affiliates', the Express Tribune, July 13, 2015, as accessed on August 01, 2015 at: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/919656/apex-committee-decision-sindh-to-mount-crackdown-on-raw-affiliates>

Mr. Altaf Hussain's Endless Barrage of Incendiary Remarks

Just when Pakistanis feel that they have heard enough of the most bizarre and inappropriate remarks from Mr. Altaf Hussain, he starts again with a barrage of yet more incendiary thoughts, each more inappropriate and diametrically opposed to his earlier position. Mr. Altaf Hussain, who had only till February 2014, called for the Pakistan Army to take over the State,¹¹ is now decrying the attitude of the 'rotten eggs' in the institution.

His speech on July 12, 2015 marked the 'latest episode' in this developing saga of bitter criticism unleashed by the MQM leadership specifically against the Pakistan Rangers (Sindh). According to media reports, Mr. Hussain's barrage was perhaps a response to the speculation that the Pakistan Rangers (Sindh) might be releasing a 'fact sheet' on the March 11 raid on the MQM headquarters, Nine-



Following the initiation of the Karachi Operation, which has seen action against specific elements of the MQM, Mr. Altaf Hussain has repeatedly issued inflammatory statements against the Military leadership

Zero. Taking exception, Mr. Hussain stated that '*Are Rangers a security force or a political party? Does the code of conduct of the armed forces allow the Army, its paramilitary forces like Rangers, to issue a charge sheet against a political party? We are not against the Army; we are against the rotten eggs in the institution*'.¹²

Apart from the statement issued by the Federal Minister of Interior, Chaudhary Nisar Ali Khan, MNA, criticizing Mr. Altaf Hussain for using '*such language against the country's security and defence institutions*',¹³ a series of FIR's have been registered against Mr. Altaf Hussain not only in various parts of Sindh, but also in Islamabad, Hangu and Kohat under Section 153 of the Pakistan Penal Code. It is not entirely clear who was orchestrating the registration of these FIRs but was it really needed to register so many FIRs? Cant the state proceed on the basis of just one FIR?

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11. For details, please see Altaf urges Army to take control of state, The News Teller, February 25, 2014, as accessed on August 01, 2015 at: <http://www.thenewstribes.com/2014/02/25/altaf-urges-army-to-take-control-of-state>
 12. For details, please see FIRs lodged against Altaf Hussain across Sindh, Dawn, July 15, 2015, as accessed on August 01, 2015 at: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1194407>
 13. For details, please see Govt to raise Altaf's army bashing with UK, The Nation, July 14, 2015, as accessed on August 01, 2015 at: <http://nation.com.pk/national/14-Jul-2015/govt-to-raise-altaf-s-army-bashing-with-uk>

Development in Balochistan



Commander Southern Command, Lt. Gen. Nasser Janjua, COAS Gen. Raheel Sharif and the Chief Minister of Balochistan, Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch can be seen during a briefing given by the FWO on July 25, 2015¹⁴

During Gen. Raheel Sharif's visit to Panjgur and Turbat on July 25, 2015, he was apprised that '*as many as 11 units of the FWO have been employed in Balochistan for construction of 870 KM long stretch of roads at five different locations simultaneously, out of which 502 kilometers of roads have already been completed in less than one and half year*'.¹⁵

Given that Balochistan has a long road to development ahead of it to come at par with even other provinces of our developing country, news of any infrastructure development is positive. While the FWO has been contracted to build roads and its accomplishments in a difficult terrain should be commended, it is the elected Governments both at the centre and in the province whose efforts to demonstrate commitment and allocate State resources for this development must be acknowledged and appreciated.

Of Dormant Forums and Lack of Institutionalization: Wither the NSC?

Given Pakistan's security challenges, July 2015 too has had its share of incidents including , among others, Indian spy drone being shot down along the Line of Control, violations by the Indian Border Security Forces (BSF) in the Charwah Sector, and the death of 3 Pakistani civilians due to firing by the BSF near Sialkot. Yet again, however, the month passed without the National Security Committee failing to meet.

14. Picture courtesy the ISPR

15. For details, please see the Press Release issued by the ISPR on July 25, 2015, which can be accessed at: https://www.ispr.gov.pk/front/main.asp?o=t-press_release&date=2015/7/25

The continued dormancy of the NSC raises the question whether it is due to lack of initiative by the civilian leadership or is it due to the discomfort both civil and military leadership may have in sharing their powers. Regardless, the responsibility to have an active forum is that of the civilian Government. The NSC is an important institution created to fill a historical and critical disconnect between the civil and the military. While the decision-making status of the NSC must be altered, its dormancy is inexplicable.