



MONITOR

Civil-Military Relations in Pakistan

May 01, 2014-May 31, 2014



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

Civil-Military & Media Relations

The civil-military and media relations continued to be tumultuous in May. The relations that soured after an attack on Mr. Hamid Mir¹ continued to cast a long shadow on civil-military relations in Pakistan.

The fiasco created by the PEMRA meeting and its legality or illegality for suspending the licences of three television channels owned by the Geo TV network² further intensified the perception that the Government did not see eye-to-eye with the Military on the issue of the petition by the Ministry of Defence. While the petition against the network remains with the PEMRA, various officials of the Government including the President and the Prime Minister continued to take a public position that it was against the suspension or closure of any media house.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif addressing a conference in UK said that the Government, Media and Army must work together for the country to take Pakistan out of the multifarious and serious crises facing the motherland. *“We all have to join hands to move forward. Be it the media or Pakistan's armed forces, the government or the security institutions, we all will have to work together. Pakistan is surrounded by crises and we have tried to put it back on track since coming to power,”* he said.³

On May 27, the Geo TV network and Jang Media Group tendered a public apology to the Armed Forces and Inter-Services Intelligence for hurling allegations

against the D.G. ISI Lt. Gen. Zaheer-ul-Islam. In a statement, the Group said that *“After serious retrospection, editorial debates, feedback and engagement with all parties, directly and indirectly, we have concluded that our coverage immediately after the tragic and unnerving attack on Hamid Mir on April 19 was excessive, distressful and emotional”*. The group accepted that the coverage of the incident was *“misleading, disproportionate and inappropriate giving impression of a campaign,”* although it followed current media practices, including the version of the Armed Forces with the photo of DG ISPR televised repeatedly. The group apologised to the D.G. ISI Lt. Gen. Zaheer-ul-Islam, his family, Pakistan Army and large number of television viewers for causing “deep hurt.”⁴ This appeared to be a positive step towards the restoration of Media-Military relations but the issue remains far from resolved.

Statements by Sitting Ministers

Despite a murky history of sour civil-military relations in Pakistan pointing to the critical need of utilising institutional and formal channels of communication on policy areas, it appears that the PML-N Government, or at least some of its Ministers have not learnt the value of this important lesson.

Some of the Government Ministers continued to use news media – an extremely informal channel – to air views point to the growing stresses in civil military relations again. Insinuating that Mr. Imran Khan was following the diktats of the “establishment” in taking anti-Government and anti-Geo position and that attempts were being made to pit media against the Army and the Army against the politicians.

1. For details, please see **PILDAT Monitor on Civil-Military Relations in Pakistan**, April 2014: http://www.pildat.org/Publications/publication/CMR/MonitoronCivil-MilitaryRelationsinPakistan_April012014_April302014.pdf
2. For details, please see **Geo's licenses suspended till May 28: PEMRA**, The Express Tribune, May 20, 2014: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/710817/geos-licenses-suspended-till-may-28th-pemra/>
3. For details, please see **Govt, media, army must work together for country: Nawaz**, May 02, 2014: <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-30053-Govt-media-army-must-work-together%20-for-country-Nawaz>
4. For details, please see **Geo, Jang apologise to army**, May 27, 2014: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1108792/geo-jang-apologise-to-army>

An example in this regard include Rana Sanaulah Khan, Law Minister Punjab, in a press talk termed Imran Khan as a toy in the hands of the 'establishment.' He said, "*Establishment Khan gheir jamhoori quowato ka aala-e-kaar ban gayay hain.*"⁵

While these may be valid concerns of the Government but airing these in public is in neither taking the State towards the solution of these nor towards the stability that we require. Government has formal channels and institutions available to it to voice issues and grievances. Those are the channels that must be effectively and regularly utilised. Often, it appears, parties in Government forget it is them who have been elected to power through popular vote. While the luxury of a knee-jerk reaction may be available to opposition in making public statements, the Government neither has nor should employ this strategy. At the end of the day, the job of a responsible Government is to try to contain and resolve conflict scenarios and not exacerbate those by taking sides, tempting as it may be.

Chief Minister Punjab meets COAS before PM's departure to India

Mr. Mohammad Shahbaz Sharif, Chief Minister of the Punjab, met with the Chief of Army Staff General Raheel Sharif on May 26, 2014. While the meeting details were not officially disclosed, the media reports suggested the meeting had taken place to discuss Prime Minister's visit to India.⁶

In the constitutional demarcation of roles and powers in Pakistan, provinces and Provincial Chiefs have generally no official business to interact with the Military Chiefs. Perhaps the successive meetings have more to do with the person of the Chief Minister Punjab, younger brother of the Prime Minister, than his official position. If indeed the conversation between the two related to Prime Minister's trip to

India, once again, it shows the Government is unwilling or unable to utilise official and formal channels of communication.

COAS Joins Meeting on Karachi Law and Order

The Chief of Army Staff (COAS) joined the Prime Minister in a meeting on Karachi Law and Order situation on May 14, 2014.

Under ordinary circumstances, it is not the job of the Military to be part of internal security conversations. It is also not the first time that such a scenario has emerged in Pakistan in which the Military has been asked to join the conversation on internal security. However, as we progress on the road to democracy, and evaluate performance of elected Governments on providing good governance to the people, it is not the Military which should be continually asked to be part of internal security management.

While in specific scenarios, it can and should be asked, but without planning and arrangements in place to strengthen the internal security apparatus, i.e., Police and other civil LEAs, the engagement of military in internal security arrangements only points to our worsening capability for internal security.

It is also worth remembering the scenario in not so distant past when General Ashfaq Pervaiz Kayani, the then-COAS, had held an independent meeting with Karachi businesspersons and then directed the D.G. Rangers to meet the demands of the business community.⁷

Meeting of Prime Minister and COAS

In May 2014, the Chief of Army Staff General Raheel Sharif met with Prime Minister Mohammad Nawaz Sharif 4 times.

5. For details, please see **Imran Khan is nothing but a toy: Rana Sanaulah**, May 20, 2014: http://youtubeproxy.co/browse.php/IrSfsQRY9Rk7BfjT9I_2FstOd_2FdNGDTi_2BEzE8oqG1Vbmtdxk4FYSE_3D/b25/fnorefer/
6. For details, please see **Shahbaz Sharif Meets Army Chief To Discuss Pakistan-India Relations**, May 24, 2014: <http://www.pakistantribune.com.pk/15118/shahbaz-sharif-meets-army-chief-discuss-pakistan-india-relations.html>
7. For details, please see **Businessmen win Kayani's Support**, September 21, 2011: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/257765/businessmen-win-kayanis-support/>

In the first meeting on May 08, 2014, the Army Chief briefed the Prime Minister about the security situation in Karachi, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA.

In the second meeting during the month, on May 14, 2014 Karachi law & Order was discussed.

The third meeting was held on May 20, 2014 to review security issues. The meeting was attended by Minister for Interior, Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, MNA, Advisor to PM on Foreign Affairs and National Security Mr. Sartaj Aziz, DG ISI Lt. General Muhammad Zaheer-ul-Islam, Chief of General Staff, Lt. General Ashfaq Nadeem, DG MO Maj. General Amir Riaz.

The fourth meeting was held on May 30, 2014 to

review the internal security. The meeting was attended by the Federal Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, DG ISI Lieutenant General Zaheer ul Islam and other higher officials. The meeting was held to review the security situation of FATA and Balochistan.⁸

Defence Budget Debate by Senate Standing Committee on Defence

A public forum on Defence Budget was held by the Senate Standing Committee on Defence on May 19, 2014. Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Defence briefed the Committee, as well as the Defence Reporters Forum of the news media on details of Pakistan's Defence Budget. A media manual was also prepared and distributed by the Senate Standing Committee on Defence.

8. For details, please see **PM Chairs Meeting to Review Security Situation in FATA and Balochistan**, May 30, 2014: http://pmo.gov.pk/press_release_details.php?pr_id=513