Civilian-Military Relations: Dynamics and Challenges

Maintaining a Balance and Strengthening Security Structures of State and Enhancing Institutional Co-Dependence and Cooperation
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Study Visit to Turkey was organized by PILDAT from November 10-16, 2013 by including key members of Pakistan’s Parliament and members of PILDAT Dialogue Group on Civil-Military Relations to study the developments in Democratic Civil-Military Relations and Consolidation of Democracy in Turkey.

Individual delegates have penned down their learning and analyses based on the Study Visit. This paper titled *Civilian-Military Relations: Dynamics and Challenges* has been authored by Sardar Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari, MNA (NA-173, D.G. Khan-III, Punjab, PML-N) and newly-elected Chairperson of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs.

We at PILDAT are grateful to him for sharing his analysis and are happy to publish it for a wider dissemination.

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Introduction

This paper aims to analyze the existing fault-lines in Pakistan's institutional structures and the issues that continue to affect the cooperation among the institutions for the implementation of a conflict free democratic form of governance. Foremost and most vulnerable of this aspect are the relations between the Executive and the Military, and the Judiciary, lending its weight as and when required. While the relationship between these two key pillars of State has not been ideal and there continues to be mistrust and fear in the shadows, Pakistan has in the past six years managed to rise out of the quagmire and in fact, has paved the way for a democratic system, which has to-date suffered because of a number of factors.

For Pakistan, the crucial challenge is to maintain a balance between the institutional pillars and allow the executive to take ascendance, as is its constitutional right.

Turkey offers Pakistan a good model to emulate. Not only is it a close Muslim state that has managed to strike the right balance between secularism and ideology, it also is a regional military powerbroker and one that has successfully democratized its own political system and integrated the military by subsuming it within the political fabric.

Although, according to Prof. Dr. Ersel Aydýnlý, Associate Professor of International Relations at the Bilkent University, Turkey "still has not designed the New System and civil-military relationship has not been defined as yet. But surely, the over emphasis of the army has gone. Putting the adventurists to task has surely created an environment where holding a coup is accountable."

Traditionally a heavily military influenced system, Turkey can now proudly proclaim success in democratization and a healthy relationship between its political wing and the military.

Interaction with different segments of society also confirmed that accession to the EU and the decision to shift to a market economy were the main causes of the existing reform-oriented Turkey. This has not been easy, with several hard steps having to be taken in order to exercise the right of the political administration, but nonetheless the setup now is one that has proven both sceptics and critics wrong.

Pakistan is unfortunately beset with a host of issues that continue to cast a pall on the democratic process and also places a burden on the civil-military relations. The institutional set up is fragile, even though it has managed to come out stronger after decades of interrupted civilian rule and a number of military governments. The military in Pakistan is still considered the most influential institution and continues to exercise a strong role in key foreign policy decisions and the country's security policy. This is not necessarily a bad thing considering the way things stand at present but given the fluid nature of power dynamics and the latent mind set of political leadership that has suffered at the hands of the military, there is a subversive 'fear' that can only go if both institutions work together to rebuild that trust and gain lost ground in paving the way for a system that could withstand future attempts to derail the democratic process.

However, such relations are not something that should be attributed to the military leadership's penchant to play the power broker though this may have been the case in several instances. The military's role and activities in the political domain and its assertive role in shaping the foreign and security policy is also because of the way the civilian leadership has failed to live up to its own responsibilities and also because of collusion in the past with the same military regimes. We all need to own up to this factor, whether it is politicians, military leadership, bureaucracy or judiciary. Even the civilians play a contributing factor and this role must be understood in greater depth to harness the potential and help the country move forward. This is best exemplified in a comment by the Turkish Deputy Minister of Defense, Mr. Kemal Yardimci, who said: "We control the Army within the limits of the Constitution. Being open, transparent and communicating constantly is the answer to our civil-Military relations."

This paper addresses Pakistan's current domestic challenges, its inter-institutional relations, and its foreign policy dilemmas and how it can successfully meet these challenges. Pakistan's regional role vis-à-vis the stabilization of Afghanistan post the international forces' withdrawal and the Iranian nuclear deal, relations with India and its stand in developments in the Middle East are issues that are of concern to Pakistan's allies and the international community. It aims to put things in perspective in
Pakistan's Institutional challenges

As noted, Pakistan has been beset by a number of challenges that have imperilled democracy and been the major cause of institutional deadlock. This has also led to a rise in inter-institutional antipathy and clashes, that with the passage of time led to a downgrading of political institutions — principally the executive branch. It also had a deep impact on the political mind set, leading to the growth of encouraging affinities among the military top cadres with certain political groups, a practice that only the military cannot be accused of, but one that mainstream political parties have indulged in to abet their own political survival and strength.

There is no doubt that the collusion of civilian leadership with the military has fostered, encouraged and developed this practice. In Turkey “there was an understanding between the Military and the Civilian Elite (Republican Elite), that of Controlled Accommodation” remembers Dr. Aydını. The Judiciary has also in the past, been part of the collusion mechanism, often sanctioning military rulers to continue their rule after the passing of the preliminary emergency period.

But moving on, the recent resurgence of political leadership is an encouraging development. Credit for this must also be given to the military that wisely stayed away from getting involved in the political affairs and resisted the temptation to oust the past civilian setup of the Pakistan Peoples Party government (there were a number of occasions in the PPP government under President Asif Ali Zardari when rumours were rife about a military takeover, given the precarious handling of the country’s domestic and foreign policy by the Government). Fortunately, that did not happen and despite the poor performance by that Government, they managed to weather their five years in power, only to suffer a defeat in the 2013 polls, when the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz swept to power.

The 2013 election was hailed as the first election following the successive completion of a democratically elected Government, a first in the history of Pakistan. It has also set a precedent that successive regimes and military leadership are likely to follow. The fact that the people have clearly lost appetite for a military takeover is also apparent.

The other integral factor is that the evolution of this democratic pattern has received a major boost from a robust and vibrant media that has contributed to the development of a democratic society. It may not be ideal but thanks to its vigilance the media has inadvertently provided a check and balance. But the Pakistani media has still a long way to go in acting in a more responsible manner and not becoming proxies for different political factions to target each other.

The need for any State to have a non-partisan Judiciary cannot be stressed enough. It can play critical role in balancing State power and maintaining a neutral platform that can provide justice, whether it is deciding matters related to government decision or civilian affairs. The re-assertion of authority exercised by the Supreme Court of Pakistan following the tussle with former president Pervez Musharraf is a testament to the fact that public support for the ousted judges and their consequent reinstatement after a country-wide popular movement was actually an exercise of people’s will in the sanctity of the Constitution and the respect of institutions that is accorded to them under that Constitution. More importantly, it symbolized the hope invested in changing the system Pakistan had sunk into.

The institutional relations even at this juncture are fragile. Trust has to be re-built and worked on but this is something all three State branches can work in tandem on and achieve.

To help obtain this, it is important to study the Turkish model that has managed to ensure a smooth and integrated process in which all branches of Government work in close coordination and harmony. More institutional contact between the two countries and workshops to understand how to overcome any glitches or obstacles may help Pakistan learn from its close ally. How Turkey overcame the challenges and paralysis within its institutions, principally the military and the executive, is important as it is first, successful and second, not too removed geographically and culturally to not be able to relate to.

The National Security Council in Turkey is the highest level body where the rationalized balance of civil and military leadership openly talk things over regarding all aspects of security that include armed conflict, terrorism, energy, logistics, education, cyber security, food security, etc.

However this is a continuous practice and one Turkey continues to develop. The Secretary General of the NSC, Mr. Muammar Turker said that “We are still reforming and stabilizing the system and we feel strongly that communication among all stakeholders and feedback is
critical, whether it is the masses at the grass root level or institutions like the military." This is where in my opinion, lay the strength of the Turkish reformist model.

Pakistan’s Domestic Crises

The country is facing myriad crises and not just in one sphere. But, if one were to identify key concerns that if addressed could change the tide, then it would be important to go over these in an objective manner not just for theoretical discussion but as recommendations for the Government to address so as to bring much needed improvement at home and also to earn the respect and trust of the country’s international allies and observers, whose main criticism today is on our seeming apathy to handle critical governance and security matters.

Wise leaders and statesman like H. E. Mr. Abdullah Gül, President of the Republic of Turkey, were amongst many that our delegation met during our week long study visit hosted by PILDAT. The President, while elaborating his feelings of being a friend and well wisher of Pakistan said that we “Needed to treat our country like our child. And if we didn’t put our house in order, there would be uproar within our country and through foreign interventions.” He said that when the Justice and Development Party (AKP) took over in 2002, they faced similar conditions to what Pakistan is facing now.

According to Prof. Dr. Ersel Aydýnlý, “Leadership representing religion, technological advancement, economic prosperity, better international presence and nationalism” had helped Turkey in the last 11 years to get where it was.

Looking at Pakistan, the downfall suffered by the economy as a result of global economic crisis, dwindling international investments (despite the PPP Government’s democratic credentials one reason why international investments were not enough was because of lack of trust in the PPP Government and the systematic corruption it was involved in), severe energy shortages which have had a highly adverse effect on industry and production and rising inflation and lack of a coordinated strategy to address the key concerns. The current efforts underway since the new Government took charge seem to be on the right track but delivery and results would take considerable time.

What will have an immediate effect is the start of countrywide small-scale projects principally in provinces that have been neglected by previous Governments that will provide employment to local population. Investing into the water sector to secure the lifeline of Pakistan and setting up schools and vocational and skills training centres that also offer employment to local communities will have a positive impact. Ridding administrative machinery of corrupt officials is another good precedent, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government undertook by dismissing three provincial ministers. This should be emulated in other provincial setups and at the centre as well.

Unless education and health sectors are not invested in, the economy will continue to suffer. Blaming administrative strictures or lack of resources is not enough. Every government, especially democratic governments, have adequate resources to allocate for this purpose. It is incumbent upon Pakistan to provide these basic facilities for its people. A point well imbibed in the Turkish model. The Chairman of the strong Planning and Budgetary Commission of the TBMM, Mr. Lutfi Elvan said that: “Education and Health are most important in terms of budgetary allocations in Turkey.”

For, the human resource capital is something that can impact the economy and develop a well-educated and active civil society that can strengthen democratic institutions and contribute towards nation building. The Managing Director of The Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV), Professor Dr. Guven Sak, said that: “Knowledge based human resource is important for Turkey to transform into a high income country. Good governance, democracy, and systems in society are important for people to think, innovate and develop.”

In this context the role of women is very important. Unfortunately due to rise in radicalism and militancy, girls’ education has suffered, even in settled areas of Pakistan and not just the tribal belt, and the Government needs to ensure security and access to facilitate this to the best of its capability. The more this is neglected, the more militant elements will take this as a measure of their success and get the upper hand in developing a fear psyche in areas they have managed to establish some influence. The successes achieved in Swat and other tribal agencies comprising Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) must not be wasted. Dr. Guven Sak also laid emphasis on the Information Communication Technology infrastructure for targeted subsidy programmes and education. He also mentioned that lower female representation in the labour
force in Turkey was due to their lower educational qualification and that it needs to be rectified.

The civil-military cooperation to bring development to militant controlled areas has seen the start of a progressive educational programme is indeed an accomplishment. A number of schools and colleges have been set up, including girls' schools and skills learning centres in South Waziristan. The Spinkal Cadet College for boys in south Waziristan employs civilian teachers and is run by the military, providing tribal boys from different agencies not just South Waziristan an ideal platform to learn and imbibe different disciplines and partake sports and extra curriculum activities. Just to provide another example of how well the civil-military cooperation works in previously conflict hit areas and where development work has been undertaken, can be seen in the extensive road infrastructure, the development of village and town community centres and commercial hubs providing local population with shops, tea shops and rest places to boost their earning capacity and start small businesses. All this is being done with the round the clock support of the military stationed in the area that also provides help in civil projects through its engineers and civil work personnel.

While a lot is being achieved, which is unfortunately not given as much media bytes as it deserves, a crucial aspect remains one of the biggest challenges facing the country today. That of militancy. Again, this requires joint efforts by the civilian political setup and military. Pakistan's problem has been the lack of both development and application of a fully integrated and aggressive anti-militancy policy. Earlier efforts have either missed or avoided targeting the entire spectrum of militancy, as a result, allowing such groups to change tactics and proliferate under new guises. This is also why outsiders have been pointing fingers at Pakistan's 'dual policy' of targeting some militants while allowing others to sustain in the State to use at some point. We need to ask ourselves whether such a policy - if it exists even on a miniscule scale - is benefitting us in any way, as part of our strategic doctrine pertaining India and Afghanistan or whether it has just brought us condemnation and to make matters worse have created a potent anti-state force within? The Turkish guiding principles for targeting terrorism are something Pakistan should look at and tailor to suit its requirements. Turkey has been "trying hard to keep the critical balance between security requirements, and the need to preserve and even enhance freedoms concurrently. This is the guiding norm according to which we conduct counter terrorism activities in Turkey today." This formula is missing in Pakistan's counter-terrorism doctrine. While it is true that Pakistan's counter-terrorism challenges are far bigger than Turkey's because of its geo-strategic position and the proximity to Afghanistan and in the historical context of being a conduit for jihadists who had been coming to the country since the time of the Afghan Jihad against the Soviets, Turkey's experiences and strategy in dealing with terrorism is something that should be shared and practiced.

Pakistan's Foreign Policy Issues

The problems besetting Pakistan regionally have been on a rise since its involvement in the US-led war on terror. This involvement was largely circumstantial and the decision to become allies more or less dictated by lack of another alternative.

The US-Pakistan relationship has been uneasy. Despite being allies, they face abysmal distrust and this is clearly apparent in the cooperation both countries engage in. Pakistan's standing vis-à-vis Afghan insurgents and Al-Qaida leadership taking refuge in Pakistan and forming their bases has raised doubt about transparency among the Pakistan's political and security establishment. Often the State apparatus, especially the military and intelligence, has been alleged to provide safe havens and logistical help to the Afghan insurgents/Al Qaida remnants. While the FATA belt particularly North Waziristan and some pockets in other agencies are under control of Pakistani Taliban that extend help to their Afghan counterparts and foreign militants, it is clear that unless Pakistan decides to clear the rest of these areas, such charges will remain to be levelled. The decision to not launch another military offensive in North Waziristan to-date has been based on a critical factor, developing the right environment - the same factor that helped make Swat, Bajaur and South Waziristan operations so successful. Local support is an integral factor but this must come after preparations for repatriation of these people are made.

As the Turkish model shows, engagement and development is equally important as use of force in order to defeat insurgencies. Similarly, for a new offensive to be launched and made a success, it is important to undertake extensive groundwork. Unfortunately, both Washington and Kabul fail to understand the need to do this and have
been pressuring Islamabad to undertake this offensive, they deem as the panacea for the war in Afghanistan and the pivotal factor that will help them crush the insurgency. A rather simplistic view. Nonetheless Pakistan will have to speed efforts and take the critical decision to extend operations in the remaining areas as well, sooner rather than later. This decision will have to be taken by the Government and timed in accordance with the advice of the military.

Similarly, Pakistan's relations with India also depend on the security factor. The long-standing issue of Kashmir, that has often been shelve aside while dealing with India, needs to be tackled at an international level. The fate of the Kashmiri people as per the UN Plebiscite is to be decided by them, but India's refusal to implement the agreement and allow for a free and fair decision by the Kashmiris in Indian Held Kashmir continues to fester. It is high time the international community supports this and pressures India to initiate the process, notwithstanding its refusal to have any mediation on this issue. If left unresolved, the issue will continue to mar relations between the two countries and also impact regional stability.

In view of the regional developments, particularly the Arab Spring, the Iranian nuclear deal, the instability in Middle East vis-à-vis Syria, the continued unrest in Iraq, China's increasing interest in South West Asia, Pakistan needs to evolve its position in keeping with its national interest, its solidarity with Arab states and to promote regional stability and cooperation.

A proposal of starting a regional security organization on the lines of NATO for Islamic states in the wider Middle East, Gulf and South West Asia that will also have Turkey as a member state is interesting. It can actually serve a more comprehensive agenda; can look at regional cooperation to fight terrorism, drug production and trafficking and human trafficking and organized crime. Besides terrorism, these issues continue to be a cause of instability and pose a threat to all regional states' economy and security.

It is interesting to note the observations of The Saadat Party (a right wing conservative party in Turkey) that called for the formation of an organization for the Muslim Ummah on the lines of the United Nations. Although they are considered to be extreme right wing Islamists, their understanding of an Islamic society was that of tolerance and not imposing one's will on another. They considered France to be an oppressor secularist state, while UK as respectful of all religions as it believed in letting people have the freedom to live the way they wanted to. This was the balance and lesson of tolerance that most religious parties in our part of the world need to learn, irrespective of whether they are Hindu extremists in India or radicals and extremists in Pakistan.

Besides, Pakistan and Turkey should urge the Arab States using the OIC platform and other regional and international platforms to take a united stance on dealing with the humanitarian aspect of the Syrian crisis, the Palestine issue and on developing a concerted strategy to tackle the soft security issues affecting the region.

With the role of the military in the Arab Spring countries suffering, (in Egypt the Army has been criticized for ousting President Mohammad Mursi's Government and taking authoritarian measures following the Muslim Brotherhood's removal from power; in Syria, the military is engaged in fighting a protracted war against the Syrian Rebels and other jihadist groups; in Libya, there is an absence of a structured coherent national army with armed militias engaged in obtaining maximum influence), Pakistan and Turkey's militaries have gained more importance and will help them gain a more strategic role. Pakistan, as a nuclear power and considering its geo-strategic position, will continue to be in the limelight and will have to formulate its position in the region in lines with the evolving dynamics. Afghanistan's growing strategic relations with India are a source of concern for Pakistan. The notion of being hedged in on both borders by its neighbour, which has long term plans for maintaining presence and increasing strategic presence in Afghanistan makes it difficult for Pakistan and will require diplomacy and strategic foresight to work out its relationship with Kabul as it enters a new phase in finding its own feet after the pullout of the international forces. Though the US intends to maintain a 15,000 strong contingent in the country, Kabul will have to more or less fend for itself. It is unfortunate that because of mistrust with Islamabad, Kabul has preferred to seek help from New Delhi to train its security officers and is also reported to be seeking weaponry and defence systems from them. Kabul will have to be careful in playing its direct neighbour Pakistan against India and should avoid getting involved in any sort of proxy power flexing. Similarly, with China since Beijing has made investments to the tune of billions of dollars in Afghanistan and has also signed a strategic pact that involves training of Afghan policemen, Kabul must be careful in maintaining a balance given India and China's regional influence carving.
Conclusion

There is no doubt that Pakistan enjoys good relations with Turkey but much more needs to be done to develop those relations. Similar sentiments were expressed by Chairman Planning and Budgetary Commission, Mr. Lutfi Elvan who said that "our economic ties are not as strong as our political ties." I also strongly feel that Pakistan and Turkey must come together and find ways to improve existing ties on the economic front and on the defence side. Similarly, Pakistan must engage with politicians in Turkey and learn from how their country managed to bring political reforms and consolidate the State's democratic system of Government.

For Pakistan, despite the past civilian setups, its democracy is in a nascent stage and requires extra care and effort to nurture and develop. The military in Pakistan continues to play a larger role than the civilian leadership in deciding internal security matters, but given the intermeshing of the external security threat with the internal threat in form of indigenous militancy, it may be the best way of tackling this issue. The military for now has left critical decision on launching military offensives in parts of the country to the government.

It will take time and change in dynamics to have a more forceful civilian hand in deciding the country's policy in dealing with militants and insurgents. But both the executive and the security establishment can work together in identifying weak or grey areas that need to be targeted and worked on.

It is important that Pakistan and Turkey also work towards improving regional ties and help each other in overcoming any tensions with other regional states. Pakistan can extend this in helping Turkey improve its relations with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states and similarly Turkey can help Pakistan in improving ties with Kabul and India.

During the study visit, the Syria situation vis-à-vis Turkey came up and it being a grave concern to me, I, as a friend of Turkey, would seriously recommend it to be very careful about getting involved in any way in a proxy war in its neighbourhood. Pakistan would not want to see Turkey suffer as it has, and continues to, due to proxy wars being fought on its soil.

Shiite and Sunni conflict being seen by some think tanks in Turkey as a “project pursued by someone” is another issue that merits attention by Turkey and Pakistan jointly in order to avoid serious problems in the future in this region.

But there is more to bilateral ties than politics and security and it is high time that Pakistan and Turkey work on boosting cultural ties and promoting exchanges between educational institutes, facilitating businessmen from respective ties and have regular cultural shows and visits in each other's entertainment industry and sports. Professor Dr. Esra Hatipoglu from the Marmara University observed that "there have been MOU's signed between the two countries but not much has been seen on ground. Programs and projects need to be implemented on ground more than there currently are." We have seen a stronger Turkish presence in Punjab with Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif pursuing economic and business ties between the two countries.

Dr. Bora Bayraktar from the Kultur University’s observation that only bad things in the news appear about Pakistan in Turkey and that we like each other as nations but don't know each other as well, must be noted. It is true that the media reports mainly negative developments. There is much more going on though one cannot dismiss the largely negative happenings but it is important to highlight the parallel progress being made in other sectors, which unfortunately goes unreported. More interaction and a revised media strategy that aims to project a positive image must be undertaken by us.

There is a natural affinity and liking for each other among the people but because of less contact there is a lot that needs to be learnt. It is important that the Governments understand the need to promote this and form bodies that work with each other to promote more people to people contact and exchanges.

It is important to note that Indian and Turkish think tanks have forged a strong working relationship, as pointed to us by Chairman Sensoy from TASAM. It is high time that analysts and researchers from Pakistan's research centres and think tanks engage on a regular basis with their Turkish counterparts.

It is hoped that there will be a systematic policy designed to address any shortfalls currently existing and this will help both States to deepen cooperation at the State level as well. It is highly recommended that more contact among the militaries and among the politicians and think tanks and other fora be held on a regular basis to promote this cooperation.