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# Embracing A Combined Approach: Reimagining Civil-Military Relations In Pakistan

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## Abstract

Civil-military relation (CMR) in Pakistan is a complex issue where civilian authority is often trifled with by the powerful military which has significant influence over politics and society. This study builds an understanding of the long-standing issue of CMR in Pakistan. Different theoretical explanations are explored to understand this phenomenon. This study advocates a combined approach as a framework that is considered more practical and applicable in the Pakistani context. It is argued that the integrated combined approach to CMR would ensure to balance the role of the military's participation in political decision-making with civilian authority. This strategy seeks to lessen the dangers of military dominance over politics while ensuring its effectiveness in development and security projects. Adopting a combined strategy may open the door for peaceful civil-military cooperation, resulting in a robust democracy and strengthening national security in Pakistan.

**Keywords:** Civil-military relations, Combined approach, Pragmatic, Military dominance, Democracy, Security.

## Introduction

Pakistan's military continues to play a significant role in shaping Pakistan's politics and society making civil-military relations (CMR) a topic of extreme interest and importance. As evidenced by the four military coups in its history, the military's influence over politics and civilian authorities has raised deep concerns over the sustainability of democracy and the protection of human rights. This research sheds light on the complex web of CMR in Pakistan in order to understand the underlying causes of military interventions which affect governance and society at the same time.

Like any other country, Pakistan has a unique context that warrants that a tailored theoretical approach is conceived to fully comprehend the dynamics between the military and civilian authorities. This paper aims to investigate various theoretical perspectives that have been proposed to understand the interplay of military power and its influence within Pakistan's political landscape. The study will contextualize Pakistan's military impact on Pakistan's political trajectory by looking at well-known theories like the praetorian theory, the guardian theory, and Huntington's developmental theory.

The paper argues that the normative concept of the Combined Approach is a potential model to address the complexities of civil-military relations in Pakistan, even though there are various approaches to CMR in Pakistan, which the writers believe are not capturing the whole picture of this complex situation. This integrated combined approach brings together the interests of the military and civilian authorities and ensures a balanced power dynamic that fosters democratic governance and national security. The approach emphasizes the significance of shared values, effective communication, and mutual trust between civilian and military authorities. Thus this study promotes informed discussion on CMR and invites scholars to look into CMR in Pakistan from a combined perspective.

### **The Importance of Studying CMR in Pakistan**

Pakistan's military is a powerful institution that can exert a profound impact on the security and stability of the country. Scholars (Cheema, 2015; Fair, 2014) have studied this phenomenon to understand the influence of the military on civilian authorities and the implications for Pakistan's governance and stability. The military has a crucial role to safeguard the country and thus its interaction with the civilian leadership becomes important to understand. Research (Ahsan, 2018; Hussain, 2019) has highlighted that if the military has a good rapport with the civilian authorities, it has shown efficacy in dealing with security challenges the country faces. The army has a larger role in society where it is actively engaged in essential social services, including education and healthcare (Talbot, 2018). Thus, the interaction between the military and civilians shapes the accessibility and delivery of vital provisions to society.

Throughout Pakistan's history, the military has periodically assumed direct rule through military coups or exerted influence from behind the scenes during civilian governance. Notably, the country has experienced multiple military coups, with instances such as General Ayub Khan's overthrowing of President Iskander Mirza's government in 1958 (Ahsan, 2018), General Zia-ul-Haq's ousting of Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1977 (Cheema, 2015), General Pervez Musharraf's removal of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in 1999 (Fair, 2014), and General Musharraf's imposition of emergency rule and suspension of the constitution in 2007 (Hussain, 2019).

The military's interventions in politics have not been without repercussions. Scholars (Ahsan, 2018; Cheema, 2015) have observed that dissent has been suppressed, and political opponents have faced crackdowns. Moreover, allegations of human rights abuses,

encompassing extrajudicial killings, torture, and disappearances, have surfaced (Fair, 2014; Hussain, 2019; Talbot, 2018), underscoring the significance of studying the ramifications of CMR on democracy and human rights in Pakistan.

### **Objective and Structure of the Paper**

This paper seeks to delve into the intricate role of the Pakistan military in politics and propose a theoretical framework that best aligns with the specific context of CMR in the country. To achieve this, the paper will commence by delineating the significance and multifaceted role of the military in Pakistan's politics. Subsequently, it will explore various theories and models frequently applied to Pakistan's CMR landscape. Finally, the paper will present a compelling case for the "Combined Approach," justifying its relevance and addressing concerns regarding alternative models. Through this comprehensive analysis, the paper aspires to contribute to the discourse on civil-military relations in Pakistan and advances understanding toward establishing an effective and sustainable framework for governing the relationship between the military and civilian authorities.

### **Navigating the Complexity of CMR**

The military's interventions in Pakistan's political landscape are underpinned by a series of justifications, encompassing both pull and push factors, which intricately shape the dynamics of civil-military relations. The pull factors primarily revolve around the military's imperative to restore order, safeguard national security, and combat corruption, providing the army with justification for its interventions in governance (Ahsan, 2018; Cheema, 2015; Fair, 2014). Despite periods of relinquished direct governance, the military's enduring influence over the political realm poses persistent challenges to civilian administrations striving to maintain civilian control over the armed forces.

On the other hand, the push factors hold significant sway in driving the army's involvement in politics, predominantly fueled by the military's sense of self-preservation and its perceived role as the guardian of the state (Hussain, 2019; Rieck, 2018). The military perceives political instability and terrorism as serious threats to the stability of the country alongside the perceived threat of its arch-rival India, thus intervening in politics to safeguard the national interests. The military believes that it alone can safeguard the national interests in the face of such myriad problems and political instability. The military also wants to maintain its influence in politics. Since it enjoys the influence from the beginning of Pakistan's history it does not want to let go of it (Haqqani, 2005; Talbot, 2018).

Internal power struggle sometimes also triggers coups. One such example is the 1999 coup by General Musharraf. It was the result of an internal power struggle and the civilian prime minister's desire to influence the institution of the army (Chengappa, 2002). The coup was carried out on behalf of General Musharraf by his devoted military factions while he was on a flight coming back from Sri Lanka. From time to time, civilian leaders try to exert their influence on the army and try to rein in their powers, particularly through the appointment

of army chiefs of their own choice. It sometimes irks the army's top brass and they move in to intervene and preclude such an initiative.

Another important aspect of the army's role in politics is its economic, military-industrial complex. The armed forces own several businesses making up a sizeable chunk of the national economy. They are involved in the manufacture and sale of the military as well as industrial goods, infrastructure projects, mining, banking, insurance, agriculture, etc. (Cheema, 2015; Ahsan, 2018; Hussain, 2019; Siddiqa, 2016). This military business has generated controversy, with claims ranging from being a financial burden and distorting the market to being essential for national security and offering employment and benefits to the general public (Khan, 2017; Mushtaq, 2018). There is criticism of such involvement in business highlighting the issues of conflict of interest and lack of transparency and civilian oversight (Khan, 2016; Hussain, 2019).

Additionally, the dynamics of civil-military relations in Pakistan are shaped by the changing security environment, which includes the enduring threat of terrorism and regional tensions. The military's pivotal position in anti-terrorist operations and border security increases its significance in the public discourse and, occasionally, could result in increased public support, further obfuscating the distinction between its military and political functions (Siddiqa, 2016). In order to navigate the complexities brought on by these security challenges, it becomes essential to strike a balance between the needs of security and democratic governance within the combined approach.

It is also noteworthy that the military does not always rule directly. After each coup, it stepped back from direct rule and went into the background. The army's propensity to step back from direct rule when facing challenges does not imply a disappearance of its role in politics. Rather, it strategically retains its influence from behind the scenes, continuing to wield power and influence over the political landscape. This shift in tactics is often driven by domestic and international pressures that the military encounters when directly ruling the country. The military's responsiveness to domestic pressure was evident in 1988 when widespread protests and demonstrations prompted its withdrawal from direct rule (Cheema, 2015). Additionally, international pressure, exemplified by the United States and other Western countries, played a role in the military's retreat from direct governance in 2007 (Fair, 2014).

The economic costs associated with direct rule also contribute to the military's consideration of stepping back. The military rule can be financially burdensome, diverting resources from essential sectors such as education and healthcare. Moreover, the military may find indirect means, like supporting a civilian government aligned with its goals, as more effective in promoting its interests. This strategic approach was exemplified in 2013 when the military withdrew from direct rule after facilitating the installation of a civilian government perceived as friendly to the military (Talbot, 2018).

Nonetheless, scholars like Chengappa (2002) assert that the military's interference in politics has significantly hindered the progression of democracy in Pakistan. Despite the

military's withdrawal from direct rule following the four takeovers, its influence on Pakistani politics remains pervasive. This enduring influence extends to the government, the economy, and the media, presenting challenges for civilian governments to function effectively and undermining the democratic process.

### **Assessing the Adverse ramification of Military Dominance**

The prolonged history of military intervention in Pakistani politics has fostered a prevailing perception that the military operates above civilian control and remains unaccountable to the people (Cheema, 2015; Ahsan, 2018). Notably, the 1958 coup that toppled the democratically elected government by General Mohammad Ayub Khan set a detrimental precedent for future military interventions, weakening civilian institutions like the parliament and judiciary and impeding civilian governments' ability to assert control effectively (Cheema, 2015). Consequently, the military's interventions have perpetuated authoritarian tendencies, curtailed democratic participation, and hindered the nation's progress towards a true democracy, exemplified during General Zia-ul-Haq's rule from 1977 to 1988, marked by the suspension of the constitution and the crackdown on political parties (Khan, 2017).

The formidable power of the military, backed by a substantial budget, extensive troop strength, and a sophisticated arsenal, poses a significant challenge to civilian governments, limiting their ability to challenge the military's authority (Khan, 2017; Fair, 2014). Moreover, the interventions have fostered a culture of political division and weakness within the civilian government, facilitating the military's influence and making interventions more likely (Waseem, 2018; Mushtaq, 2018). For instance, the 1999 coup that ousted the democratically elected government of Nawaz Sharif was facilitated by the weak and divided state of the civilian government (Cheema, 2015).

The army rule is also tarnished by accusations of corruption, poor management of the economy, abuse of power, and weakening of the democratic forces leaving the country vulnerable to security threats. (Waseem, 2018). Pakistan alleged during the Musharraf rule that it benefited from the US funding in the “war on terror” yet the funds were not used in the fight against terrorism. There is a propensity for army officers to misuse power when there is no transparency or accountability during the military regime.

Furthermore, the army has historically enjoyed public support as compared to civilian governments. People show little faith in their civilian leadership who are always mired in corruption cases. During civilian rule, there is always instability which does not augur well for business. Thus they lack public support which encourages the army to take over the government(Cheema, 2015; Talbot, 2018). A poll in 2017 revealed that only 37% of Pakistanis believed in civilian control over the military (Khan, 2017), indicating a notable lack of public support, further hindering civilian governments' efforts to assert control.

In addition to these reasons, there are cultural factors too which play a role in the dynamic of civil-military relations. Pakistanis have traditionally revered authority like that

of powerful army. They also consider Pakistan's military as a symbol of national strength and unity. There is a lack of criticism in the public discourse of the army. These factors discourage civilians to challenge the power of the military in politics (Waseem, 2018; Haqqani, 2005).

### **Military as a Unifying Agent in Pakistan**

Pakistan is a diverse country made up of people of different languages, ethnicities, and faiths. The only unifying institution/force is the Pakistan Army which is regarded as a national institution transcending racial, religious, and linguistic barriers (Hussain, 2019). The army carries out relief activities during disasters and develops intrastate projects like the Karakoram Highway which helps foster a sense of shared identity and purpose (Hussain, 2019).

Pakistan's army is also a source of stability by ensuring national security. It fosters a sense of security among the people which helps establish stability in the country. It achieves this sense among people by fighting off external threats but most importantly internal threats like terrorism to its security (Fair, 2014). It played a crucial role in fighting the Soviet Union in Afghanistan and putting down the Baloch insurgency and terrorism in the country (Fair, 2014). Pakistan's military is dedicated to professionalism which enhances its capacity to stabilize security situations, help in disasters management, and facilitate good governance. It upholds the law and comes in aid of civilian government where there is a need. This helps in stabilizing the situation (Talbot, 2018). Its professionalism is also witnessed outside Pakistan in peacekeeping missions. Pakistan regularly contributes to UN peacekeeping missions where it demonstrates its professionalism (Talbot, 2018).

Pakistan's military is defined by patriotism and a strong sense of nationalism. It is the main institution of nationalism where it promotes a sense of nationalism in the public through different media and strategic operations. It can unite different segments of society which are otherwise divided on political, ethnic, linguistic, and religious lines (Rashid, 2008). People look up to it whenever there is a national crisis.

Additionally, the involvement of the military in various development projects, such as the building of roads, bridges, schools, and hospitals, has helped in achieving social and economic advancement improving the lives of people. These efforts of social and economic significance have created trust in the institution of the army to deliver when everything else fails. A huge number of people are beneficiaries of such projects (Khan, 2016). A notable example of the military's efforts to advance social welfare is the building of over 10,000 schools and hospitals (Khan, 2016). In conclusion, Pakistan's military plays a pivotal role as a unifying and stabilizing force in a nation marked by diversity and complexity. Its transcendence of ethnic, religious, and linguistic divisions, coupled with its commitment to security, professionalism, nationalism, and social development, positions the military as a central institution fostering unity, stability, and progress in the country.

### **Theoretical Explanations of CMR in Pakistan**

The preceding analysis highlights that the role of the Pakistan army remains substantial, despite pressures from democratic forces and the international community. However, this does not imply an inescapable destiny of perpetual military rule. Civil-military relations (CMR) theories attempt to elucidate the phenomenon and propose models where the military occupies a proper place in politics, if not subordinated to civilian rule. According to Huntington's (1968) praetorian theory, the military has significant influence over policy and is prone to interfering in politics to advance its goals or protect its interests. The military's four interventions since Pakistan's independence in 1947 show that the argument is in line with the country's situation. Similar to this, Janowitz's (1960) guardian theory, which contends that the military sees itself as the state's protector and intervenes to defend the country from both internal and external threats, also applies to Pakistan's CMR. The military in Pakistan frequently argues that its political interventions are necessary for maintaining stability and security of the country.

Another useful lens to consider the situation in Pakistan is Huntington's developmental theory (1968), which suggests that the military can strengthen the political system by bringing stability along with expertise in national security and economic development. Given the military's participation in national security and development initiatives, this viewpoint is consistent with Pakistan's reality. The normative concordance theory put forth by Stepan (1988) stands out among the other theories as a strong candidate for its application in Pakistan. According to this theory, the military and civilian government should reach a high level of consensus in order to achieve the best possible civil-military relations. Shared values, effective communication, and mutual trust can all promote such consensus. The theory recommends that the military and civilian governments should work together to promote national interests. Defense should be the prime responsibility of the military while political decisions are taken by the civilian government. Civilians and the military both share a common understanding of the threats to national security. This theory also prescribes that the social makeup of the officers' corp in the military should represent diversity in terms of ethnicity, religion, and social class. By doing this, it is made sure that the military is seen as a national institution rather than an instrument of one particular organization or faction. Officer recruitment should be merit-based, eschewing favoritism or nepotism, to promote professionalism while minimizing ties to the ruling class. The theory supports military participation in political decision-making without giving it veto power; on issues of national security, the civilian government should have the final say. The military should also adopt a behavior pattern consistent with democratic principles, showing respect for civil authority and abstaining from using force for political purposes.

The theory seems promising but it is not exhaustive. Achieving these goals through such a paradigm is a tall order. It is hard to convince the Pakistan military to just give into civilian control. That is why the authors contend that, in the context of Pakistan, an integrated approach to civil-military relations appears to be more pragmatic and relevant. The historical trajectory of Pakistan reveals that despite the considerable influence wielded

by the military, the coexistence with civilian governance has been fraught with challenges, leading to vulnerabilities for the nation. Consequently, a normative and pragmatic Combine Approach is deemed imperative to address the complexities of Pakistan's CMR landscape.

### **Combined Approach to CMR**

The integrated combined approach to civil-military relations emerges as a robust model that underscores the imperative for collaborative engagement and coordination between the military and civilian authorities. Barzilai (2007) posits that this approach integrates two existing paradigms - the liberal approach, prioritizing civilian control, and the statist approach, emphasizing military professionalism. The mutual inclusion of civilian control and military expertise in the combined approach offers a comprehensive and pragmatic framework to analyze civil-military relations. The civilians' control is ensured by its capacity to ensure that the military complies with the will of the people and carries out its missions (Barzilai, 2007). The military also is bound to uphold the rule of law, and human rights, and ensure long-term stability in the country.

The approach also calls for a thorough investigation of power dynamics between civilians and the military. They should look into how the power plays out; how the two interact and intersect policy making, and provide governance. Thus, in each context, a thorough investigation is needed to know the complexity. In this mix, other stakeholders are also taken into account. For instance, the media and public perception are important factors that can not only keep watch on both the civilian government and the military but also provide a forum for perception management. CMR is greatly influenced by how the public feels about the military. Furthermore, CMR is also affected by external factors and actors like international alliances, regional geopolitics, and globalization. The alignment of the military with external actors or defense cooperation agreements may introduce new dimensions to the dynamics of civilian-military relationships, further affecting the balance of power and decision-making processes.

The combined approach exhibits several advantages, chiefly improving military effectiveness through the synergy of resources and expertise between the military and civilian authorities. This enhanced effectiveness can bolster the military's capabilities in deterring and countering threats. Additionally, the approach fosters trust and cooperation between the military and civilian institutions, helping to avert conflicts and crises. Furthermore, the integrated model promotes democratic values within the military, ensuring that the armed forces serve as a positive force in society.

However, implementing the combined approach poses challenges as it necessitates a delicate equilibrium between civilian control, military effectiveness, and the military's allegiance to democratic principles. In the context of Pakistan, the application of the combined approach demands strengthened control by civilian authorities over the military (Khan & Cloughley, 2017). This entails empowering civilian authorities to appoint and dismiss military leaders, establishing military budgets, and determining the usage of military



force. Establishing clear chains of command between the military and civilian government, while ensuring the military's subordination to civilian authority, becomes paramount (Fair, 2014).

In Pakistan's quest for effective civil-military relations, a key imperative lies in forging a professional and accountable military, respectful of civilian authority and committed to the rule of law and national service (Fair, 2014). This entails ensuring the military's unequivocal subordination to civilian oversight and the principled application of force as a last resort. Moreover, mechanisms must be established to hold the military accountable for its actions, emphasizing the significance of civilian authority (Khan & Cloughley, 2017). To address national security challenges effectively, cooperation between the military and civilian authorities becomes paramount, based on mutual respect and trust (Fair, 2014). Collaborative endeavors, facilitated by information sharing and coordinated actions, become instrumental in bolstering the nation's security apparatus, particularly during times of crisis (Khan & Cloughley, 2017). The ability of the military and civilian authorities to work together seamlessly is essential in order to respond quickly and effectively to a national security emergency. The combined approach emerges as the most viable path, striking a delicate balance between maintaining civilian control and ensuring military effectiveness (Fair, 2014).

The combined approach to civil-military relations in Pakistan offers several potential benefits for the nation like entailing the promotion of democratic values within the military, fostering a culture that aligns with civilian ideals and reinforces stability and democratic governance (Khan & Cloughley, 2017). **Strengthened Democracy:** By fostering a cooperative and balanced civil-military partnership, the combined approach can contribute to a more resilient democracy. It encourages the military's subordination to civilian authority, ensuring that political decisions are made through democratic processes and that civilian institutions retain their rightful role in governance. **Enhanced National Security:** The combined strategy encourages communication and information exchange between military and civilian authorities, resulting in more coordinated and effective responses to security threats. The country's security apparatus can be strengthened and made better equipped to handle a range of threats, including terrorism and external challenges, by combining the knowledge of the two sectors.

**Greater Stability and Governance:** The strategy can result in more stability in Pakistan by easing old tensions and lowering the danger of military dominance. It is possible for the government to effectively address social, economic, and political issues when there is a more balanced relationship between the military and the civil sector. **Socio-economic Development:** Long-term planning and development initiatives can be facilitated by a cooperative and inclusive civil-military partnership. The military and civilian sectors can direct resources and efforts towards infrastructure projects, healthcare, education, and social welfare initiatives, ultimately advancing the nation's overall socio-economic progress. An improved international reputation can be attributed to a stable and harmonious civil-

military relationship in Pakistan. It conveys a commitment to democratic principles and respect for civil authority, which can strengthen diplomatic ties and international collaboration while promoting goodwill among nations.

**Enhanced Public Trust:** The approach advocates for a transparent and accountable civil-military partnership, which can boost public confidence in government agencies. People become more confident in the government's capacity to address their concerns and defend their rights when they perceive that the military is dedicated to fulfilling its constitutional role and respects civilian authority.

In conclusion, adopting the combined approach gives Pakistan a chance to improve civil-military cooperation, establish democratic principles as the foundation of government, and preserve national security. Pakistan can set the stage for a strong and harmonious civil-military relationship that ensures a stable and democratic future for the country by strengthening civilian institutions, encouraging reciprocal cooperation, and placing a strong emphasis on accountability.

As the bedrock of a democratic nation, strengthening democratic institutions like the parliament, judiciary, and media serves as a vital bulwark against military dominance (Fair, 2014). Adequate funding and resources for these institutions reinforce their independence, ensuring they can effectively check the military's power. Legislative measures can also be implemented to safeguard their autonomy. In addition, the media and the public hold vital roles in promoting effective civil-military relations by ensuring accountability of both the government and the military (Khan & Cloughley, 2017). Civil society organizations also contribute by educating the public on CMR issues and advocating for essential reforms. Together, these stakeholders play a crucial part in fostering transparency, inclusivity, and democratic values within the civil-military partnership.

Although the combined approach has not been explicitly adopted in Pakistan's history, there have been periods where its principles were followed to varying extents. For instance, during Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's presidency from 1971 to 1977, relatively amicable civil-military relations prevailed, attributed to Bhutto's ability to build a strong rapport with the military and foster democratic values within it (Barzilai, 2007; Khan, 2011). Similarly, from 1988 to 1999, under prime ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, collaboration between civilian leaders and the military resulted in achievements aligned with national security goals (Hussain, 2010; Fair, 2008). Conversely, the period from 1999 to 2008 marked a period of military rule, during which civilian control waned, and democratic values within the military weakened (Khan & Cloughley, 2017).

## **Conclusion**

Civil-military relations in Pakistan are a crucial and multifaceted issue due to the military's pervasive involvement in politics and society. With a history of four interventions, it holds substantial influence over civilian government, raising serious concerns for democracy and human rights. Understanding CMR in Pakistan is vital as the military's formidable power

significantly impacts state stability, security, and the provision of essential social services like education and healthcare. The long history of military rule underscores the necessity of incorporating the military within a practical and well-balanced combined approach that ensures both civilian control and military effectiveness. However, implementing this intricate model is complex and challenging, demanding sincere cooperation and power-sharing between the military and civilian authorities. If these obstacles can be effectively overcome, the combined approach holds the potential to serve as a valuable and powerful tool in promoting democracy and security in Pakistan.

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