

Military Dominance in Post-Colonial States: A Case Study of Pakistan

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Abstract

This article investigates the concept of military dominance in post-colonial states, with a particular focus on Pakistan. The article evaluates how the military has exerted significant influence over the country's government and governance structures, drawing on past and present analyses of Pakistan's political atmosphere. The article investigates the underlying foundations of military dominance in Pakistan using case studies and historical accounts, including the legacy of colonialism, political & economic instability, and external pressures. According to the article, the military's dominance of the political sphere has had a significant impact on the country's development and stability, as well as its democratic systems. The study also looks at potential approaches to decreasing military influence and increasing civilian oversight of government, such as constitutional reforms, strengthening civil society, and improving electoral processes. Finally, this research aims to contribute to a broader understanding of military dominance in post-colonial states, as well as the challenges that countries trying to seek to transform to strong democratic government face.

Keywords

Post-colonial States, Military, Pakistan, Government, Democracy, Political instability, Institutions

1. Introduction

Military dominance has been a recurring issue in post-colonial states, particularly in the global South, since their inception. Pakistan is one such state that has experienced prolonged periods of military rule, resulting in a weak democratic system and stunted socio-economic development. The reasons for Pakistan's military supremacy are varied and complicated, ranging from inadequate political institutions and leadership to economic and political instability, high levels of corruption, and external meddling. The far-reaching implications of military authority have had a long-term impact on the country's political, economic, and social fabric.

The aim of this article is to investigate the causes for military influence in post-colonial governments, with a special focus on Pakistan. This paper aims to provide insight into the underlying elements that have enabled the military to dominate the political scene, as well as the ramifications for the country's democratic aspirations and socio-economic progress, through a detailed review of Pakistan's political history. Furthermore, this paper attempts to contribute to the ongoing debate on military supremacy in post-colonial governments by providing insights into how to reduce its negative impacts on governance, democracy, and development.

This paper is divided into four sections. The first section provides a historical analysis of military dominance in the post-colonial world. The second section examines the reasons for military dominance in Pakistan. The third section provides a detailed analysis of military rules and argues that they cannot replace civilian rules. The fourth section suggests effective strategies to minimize the military's role in governance. Finally, the paper concludes by summarizing the key findings.

2. Historical Background

The period from the 17th to the 19th centuries is remembered as an era of colonization, during which powerful states gained political control of weaker states for political and economic reasons [16]. The Dutch, Portuguese, Spanish, and British were colonial masters in North and South America, most of Central America, North Africa, and South Asia. They conquered various areas to achieve their political and economic goals by extracting resources and returning them to their home states. However, these empires began to decline during Europe's Great Depression and even further during World War II.



Figure 1. Map of Pakistan

As a result, they were unable to govern their colonies and the United States pressurized colonizers for colonial independence. Furthermore, nationalist movements began to emerge in these areas. Thus, the decolonization process began in two stages. The first phase began after World War II, with the Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian nations gaining independence and emerging as new states. The second phase began in 1955, after North African and Sub-Saharan African nations gained independence. These newly formed states were now referred to as post-colonial states.

Economic instability and poor government performance can create conditions in which the military is seen as a more effective and reliable provider of public goods and services than civilian institutions. This is a significant problem in many post-colonial states [10, 23]. Similarly, legitimacy crises caused by factors such as corruption, electoral fraud, or human rights violations can erode public trust in civilian leaders and institutions, strengthening the military's grip on power. Under these circumstances, the military may easily overthrow the civilian government. However, if the country is economically and politically stable, the military cannot seize political power. Military takeovers cannot succeed without popular support.

The dominance of the military in post-colonial states is often rooted in the legacy of colonialism [10] and instability and conflicts that persisted after gaining independence from colonizers [23]. In some instances, the armed forces may act as an interest group to obtain government benefits [16]. They often achieve this by using propaganda to create a perception that they protect the country from foreign aggression, thereby gaining public support. The military is one of the state's most powerful institutions, highly organized and disciplined. Army chiefs can advise the government informally, but in practice, particularly in developing countries, they can influence foreign and defense policies.

2.1 The Prevalence of Military Coups in the World

The issue of military dominance in post-colonial states is complex and multifaceted, requiring a nuanced and interdisciplinary approach. By considering the historical, cultural, economic, and political factors that shape state-society relations in these contexts, scholars can gain a better understanding of the conditions under which military dominance may emerge, as well as the potential consequences of this dominance for democratic governance and human rights. Between 1950 and 2014, approximately 471 coups were registered worldwide [18]. However, military direct rule was most common in Asian and African countries.

Myanmar's civilian government was overthrown by a military coup in 1962 and remained in power until 2011, when it was ousted again on February 1, 2021 [15]. In Bangladesh, the secular government of Mujib ur Rehman was overthrown by the military in 1975 (in a coup led by Zia ur Rehman) in favor of an Islamic government [35]. The military subsequently overthrew the government again in 1982 [7], and there were several failed coups attempts in 1996, 2007, 2009, and 2011. Nigeria was also ruled by the military from 1966 to 1999 [26], while Sudan, an African country that gained independence following World War I, saw its civilian government of Omar al Bashir deposed by a military coup led by General Abdel Fateh Burhan [6]. Although the army officially performs its duties under civilian command (king or president), a similar coup attempt to that which occurred in Turkey on July 15, 2016, tried to depose Recep Tayyip Erdogan [5]. Despite public opposition to the army and government support in 1971, the Chinese army attempted but failed to destabilize Mao's government [31]. Thailand has experienced the most successful coup attempts in the world, with a total of eleven.

Egypt has also experienced several military coups since its independence in 1952. The country's first military coup was in 1952 when a group of army officers overthrew the monarchy. The military has since intervened in the country's politics several times, with the most recent coup taking place in 2013 when General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi overthrew the elected government of President Mohamed Morsi. The reasons for military coups in Egypt include political instability, economic crisis, and the military's desire to protect its interests [29].



Military rule has been a common occurrence in many post-colonial states. One notable example is Chile, where the military took power from the democratically elected socialist president Salvador Allende, resulting in military rule from 1973 to 1990. The reasons for military rule in Chile included economic instability, political unrest, and fears of communism.

Uganda also experienced military rule between 1971 and 1979 due to similar reasons of economic instability, political unrest, and fears of communism. Ghana has had two periods of military rule, from 1966 to 1969 and from 1972 to 1979, due to economic and social instability, corruption, and political unrest.

Chad also experienced military rule due to similar reasons, including political instability, economic crises, and ethnic and religious tensions. In Iraq, the military played a dominant role in politics for much of the country's history, with several coups and takeovers occurring between 1958 and 2003. These military interventions were motivated by political instability, sectarian tensions, and national security concerns.

Syria is another example of a post-colonial state that has experienced military rule due to similar reasons like Iraq, including political instability, sectarian tensions, and national security concerns. Zimbabwe was also under military rule under Robert Mugabe until 2017, with reasons for military intervention in Zimbabwe including political instability, economic crises, and corruption.

These examples demonstrate how military rule has been a response to various challenges faced by post-colonial states, including economic instability, political unrest, corruption, and national security concerns. In summary, Pakistan is not an exceptional case where the military is dominant and overthrows civilian governments.

3. Literature Review

There is a wealth of literature on military dominance in the "Islamic Republic of Pakistan." This study examines existing research on the military's dominance in Pakistan. The abundance of literature distinguishes two schools of thought discussed in this section.

One of the seminal works on military dominance in Pakistan is "Pakistan's Army: The Way It Is" by Stephen Cohen. In this book, Cohen provides an in-depth analysis of the Pakistani military's institutional structure and its relationship with the civilian government. He argues that the military's dominance in Pakistani politics is a result of its strong institutional culture and the country's weak civilian institutions. Cohen suggests that to control military dominance, Pakistan must strengthen its civilian institutions, particularly the judiciary and civil society organizations [9].

Ayesha Jalal's book offers a comprehensive investigation of the military's role in Pakistani politics and society, as well as the implications for the country's long-term stability and development. It is an invaluable resource for anyone interested in deciphering Pakistan's political atmosphere [20].

Hassan Askari Rizvi's book examines the development of Pakistan's military role, starting with the vision of the nation's founding father, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, of a professional military that would serve the state but remain outside of politics. Rizvi then examines the military's growing involvement in politics, including the country's numerous military coups and the military's role in the 1980s Afghan War. He also discusses the impacts of army rule in the country. Further, he argues that its involvement in politics hinders the development of democracy and restrictions on political rights [28].

Hassan Abbas' book discusses the rise of religious extremism since 1947 and examines its links to the Pakistani army's encompassing interests and relations with the USA. He also provides a detailed overview of General Pervez Musharraf's foreign and domestic policies [1].

Another important work is "Military Inc.: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy" by Ayesha Siddiqa. In this book, Siddiqa examines the military's extensive involvement in the country's economy and argues that this economic power contributes to its

dominance in politics. She suggests that to control military dominance, Pakistan must address the military's economic power and reduce its role in the country's economy [33].

In "Pakistan's Enduring Challenges", C. Christine Fair and Sumit Ganguly examine the various challenges facing Pakistan's democracy, including military dominance. They suggest that to control military dominance, Pakistan must establish a stronger democratic culture and reduce the military's involvement in politics and governance [13].

Aqil Shah outlines steps for restructuring Pakistan's military and reducing its interference in politics and political institutions in his study. He also discusses the lessons for fragile democracies working to bring the military under civilian control [32]. Ayesha Saddiqa Agha investigates the military's economic power in Pakistan, arguing that it has become a key player in the country's economy and politics [3]. While the reviewed literature deals with the military's role until 2017, this paper discusses all developments up to 2023.

In Pakistan, there are different perspectives on the role and influence of the military in the country's politics. Some scholars hold a pro-military perspective and believe that the military should have a significant role in shaping the country's political landscape. Other scholars hold a liberal or anti-military perspective and advocate for civilian supremacy and a reduction of the military's influence in politics.

Pro-military scholars argue that Pakistan is facing various internal and external security threats, and the military is the only institution capable of dealing with them. They believe that the military's involvement in politics is necessary to ensure the country's stability and security. For example, Hussain Haqqani, a former ambassador of Pakistan to the United States, has argued that the military's role in Pakistan's politics is necessary to protect the country's territorial integrity and prevent the rise of extremist forces.

On the other hand, liberal or anti-military scholars (Ayesha Jalal, Ayesha Saddiqa Agha, and others) argue that the military's involvement in politics undermines democracy and the rule of law. They believe that civilian supremacy is essential for democracy to thrive in Pakistan. For example, Ayesha Siddiqa, a Pakistani political scientist, has written extensively on the military's influence in Pakistan and has argued that the military's dominance in politics has hindered democratic institutions' growth in the country [22, 25]. Overall, the debate over the military's role in Pakistan's politics is ongoing, and there are different perspectives on the issue. While some argue that the military's involvement is necessary for national security and stability, others contend that it undermines democratic values and institutions.

In conclusion, military dominance in Pakistan's political system is a complex issue with various contributing factors, including institutional culture, economic power, weak civilian institutions, and a fragile democratic culture. The literature suggests that to control military dominance, Pakistan must address these factors through strengthening civilian institutions, reducing the military's economic power, and promoting a stronger democratic culture. The works reviewed in this literature review provide a solid foundation for further research on this topic. The present study not only provided an updated data on the topic but also critically analyzed these factors (above mentioned) with new approaches or strategies to control the military dominance and empower the civilian institutions in Pakistan. This study also presents a historical background of military dominance world widely.

4. A Case Study of Pakistan

The long history of military dominance in Pakistani politics has had a significant impact on the country's development and governance. This phenomenon began with the partition of India and the military establishment of Pakistan in 1947, the year the country was founded. Since then, the military has directly controlled the government for nearly 33 years of the country's history, with the remaining periods characterized by a significant military presence in civilian leadership.



4.1 Reasons Behind the Military dominance in Pakistan

There are various reasons of the military's dominance in Pakistan like other post-colonial states. One of the main reasons is the weak state institutions (such as judiciary and parliament) and the absence of a strong democratic tradition, which has created a power vacuum, allowing the military to seize and keep political power [10]. The military's economic clout, coupled with its portrayal as a defender of stability and national security, has helped it to tighten its grip on power. The antagonistic relations between Pakistan and India play an important role in the military's attempt to achieve its objectives by portraying India as a threat [2, 4, 12]. Additionally, the absence of effective local government has caused instability [17], which encourages the military to overthrow the regime.

The refugee crisis was the primary motivator for the army's and bureaucracy's strengthening in the country [8]. Another factor contributing to military dominance in Pakistan is the Kashmir problem, which has been a source of contention between India and Pakistan since the emergence of Pakistan [34]. Other factors that contribute to the military's dominance in Pakistan are the challenges of national building and legitimacy crisis, political instability, conflicts over religion, ethnicity, and geography.

The military can take over if the government fails to meet the Army's commercial or economic interests, conflicts arise over religion, ethnicity, and geography, and the government loses legitimacy. External forces also sometimes help the military seize control to advance their own agendas, and the military can seize political authority if the government fails to summon the armed forces during an emergency.

A suitable example of military dominance in Pakistan is the coup led by General Pervaiz Musharraf on October 12, 1999, toppling the government of Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif. This coup was motivated by conflicts over commercial and economic interests and the failure of the civilian government to summon the armed forces during an emergency [21, 4]. The international environment was also favorable for the military to seize power [14].

Many other factors that contributing to the military's dominance in Pakistan are the challenges of national building & legitimacy crisis and political instability [10, 23]. The country is also facing nation-building, due to linguistic, cultural differences, disparities and political exclusion of particular community, since the country's inception. Government did not more focused on the nation-building due to which an integral part (East Pakistan, Bangladesh) of the country separated forever in 1971. If the government loses legitimacy, the army can easily overthrow it. General Muhammad Ayub Khan led a coup against the civilian government in October 1958 [24] and on July 5, 1977, General Zia Ul Haq overthrew Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's government [27], majority of the people and opposition parties welcomed these coups in Pakistan. In Pakistan, the government summons the military in an emergency, and the armed forces can assist civil institutions because they are well-equipped. According to article 245 of the 1973 constitution of Pakistan, armed forces in Pakistan are required to assist other institutions in times of need. If a situation spirals out of control and the police are unable to handle and maintain law and order in the state, civil servants or public officials can summon the armed forces.

The possibility of the military usurping political authority in a country under certain circumstances. One of the reasons for this could be if the government fails to meet the commercial or economic interests of the army. This phenomenon is known as "Milbus," a term coined by Ayesha Saddiqa [4]. The military often has a significant stake in a country's economy and may have commercial interests that they want to protect. If the government fails to meet these interests, the military may see it as a threat to their power and take over the government to protect their interests. Another factor that could lead to military intervention in politics is conflicts over religion, ethnicity, and geography. These conflicts can be destabilizing for a country, and the military may see itself as the only institution capable of maintaining order and stability.

Overall, the passage highlights the complex interplay between weak state institutions, economic factors, external forces, domestic politics and conflict over religion and ethnicity that contribute to the military's dominance in Pakistan.

4.2 Examining Military Rule as a Potential Alternative to Civilian Governance

The military is often seen as an alternative to civil government, but in reality, the two are at odds. However, the military can provide an alternative form of civilian rule by putting civilians in power. The military can seize power in two ways. The first method is to overthrow the civilian government and seize total control, which is widely used. A council is formed of military officials, pro-military civil servants or bureaucrats, and politicians, as in Myanmar. Political activity is strictly prohibited, and the military exerts control over all governmental institutions. People's rights are restricted, and there are strict controls over the media, publications, and other things. Military leaders have occasionally formed their own political parties or collaborated with one or more political parties to legitimize their rule. For example, in Bangladesh, General Zia Ur Rehman and General Mohammad Ershad founded the Jatiya Party and the Bangla National Party, respectively. In Pakistan, the Muslim League Q backed General Pervez Musharraf, while opposition parties to Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto backed General Zia and the Conventional Muslim League backed General Ayyub Khan.

The second approach to military rule is indirect. In this practice, the military destabilizes the contemporary system and installs a new civil government [19]. The newly installed government receives military instructions. Military officers issue orders, and the civilian government carries them out. However, the military actually runs the state while presenting a civilian face to the public. Even though it appears that the civilian government is doing everything, the military is actually in control. In this way, the military is able to maintain its positive public image.

4.3 Strategies for Effective Military Control

There are two approaches commonly used to limit the military's ability to influence civilian governments: the objective or liberal approach and the subjective or penetration approach. The objective approach has been used in developed countries with strong political leadership, where the military avoids intervening in politics and focuses on its responsibilities. Political and military duties are clearly separated, and civilians control the military institutions. The military acknowledges civilian supremacy and only offers advice rather than attempting to persuade them [11].

The subjective model, on the other hand, was founded in one-party systems and dictatorships, where leaders strictly control the military institution through political maneuvering. However, both models are unworkable in Pakistan's political culture because of the military's significant role in the social, political, and economic spheres. Due to economic and political uncertainty, a weak institutional structure, and a fragile democratic culture, the military has a long tradition of intervening in politics and governance. Therefore, it is critical to investigate possible solutions to control Pakistan's military dominance [19]. Other good examples of penetration or subjective models include the People's Republic of China, Nazi Germany, and fascist Italy. However, both models are unworkable in Pakistan's political culture because the country's military plays a significant role in the social, political, and economic spheres. Because of economic and political uncertainty, a weak political institutional structure, and a fragile democratic culture, it has a long tradition of intervening in politics and governance. As a result, it is critical to investigate possible solutions to control Pakistan's military dominance.

The issue of controlling military dominance in Pakistan is complex and multifaceted, and there is no one-size-fits-all solution. However, there are suggestions to reduce military influence and respect civilian institutions. Strengthening civilian institutions such as the judiciary, media, and civil society organizations can help achieve this. Providing them with sufficient resources, autonomy, and legal protections to ensure their independence from the military can allow them to act as a check on the military's power and ensure that it follows the constitution and democratic norms, as seen in Turkey where the civil judiciary challenged the military's influence, and in South Korea, where the media and civil society played a significant role in democratizing the country.



Another suggestion to reduce military influence is to increase civilian control over the military budget. Pakistan's military budget is one of the largest in the world, and it is mostly controlled by the military itself. By increasing civilian control over the military budget, the government can limit the military's ability to expand its power and influence. This suggestion has also been made by Y. Saeed [30].

Economic empowerment can contribute to a reduction in the military's influence in the country. The state should prioritize economic development, job creation, and poverty reduction to reduce the military's role in the economy and limit its ability to control public assets. This approach has been successful in countries like Japan and Germany, where economic growth helped to reduce the military's influence following World War II.

Electoral reforms that increase transparency and accountability can also help reduce the military's influence in the electoral process. This could include establishing a more independent Election Commission, implementing a biometric system of voting, and ensuring equal opportunity for all political groups. Such initiatives can help ensure that civilian governments are elected through free and fair elections. As seen in Brazil, political reforms helped to reduce the military's influence on politics, and in Indonesia, a strong multi-party system has ensured civilian control over the military.

Establishing an effective civilian oversight mechanism over the military can also aid in controlling its dominance. This could include the establishment of a parliamentary inquiry on national defense and the expansion of the National Security Council to include more civilian members. Additionally, the government can establish an independent body to investigate human rights violations committed by the military, promoting accountability and transparency.

International pressure can also be effective in controlling military dominance. International actors can use their leverage to pressure the military to respect democratic institutions and civilian authority. The United States, for example, has used its aid and diplomatic influence on pressure Pakistan's military to respect civilian authority.

In conclusion, reducing military dominance in Pakistan requires a multifaceted approach that includes strengthening civilian institutions, increasing civilian control over the military budget, political reforms, economic development, and international pressure. However, Pakistan must tailor its approach to its unique circumstances, and there is no guarantee of success. However, by implementing these strategies, Pakistan can work towards reducing military influence and promoting civilian control over the state.

5. Conclusion

The history of military dominance in Pakistan, as well as other post-colonial states, can be attributed to various factors, including weak political institutions and leadership, high levels of corruption, ethno-religious conflicts, Injustice and economic and political instability. Pakistan is not a unique case in this regard. Our political structures have always been fragile, and the untimely demise of our founding father, Quaid-e-Azam, and Prime Minister Choudhry Liaquat Ali Khan only exacerbated this situation. When the political leadership was unable to resolve political and economic issues, maintain law and order, and establish peace, the military had the opportunity to intervene. At the time, people welcomed military interventions in politics because they no longer trusted political leaders. However, the personal interests of the generals were undoubtedly at stake, and the process took time. The military has ruled the state ever since, despite the fact that its form has shifted from direct to indirect, and then back to direct. To reduce military dominance, strong political institutions must be established, and backdoor contacts must be eliminated. Only a strong political leadership that is committed to prohibiting military intervention in politics can make this happen. All political parties must agree to resolve all issues on their own, and they need to sign a charter like the Charter of Democracy. Furthermore, they need to improve their performance and build public trust.

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