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2 Dimensions of the mi

THE MILITARY IS NOT IN POWER IN PAKISTAN IN a narrow and technical sense because the military rule, introduced on October 12, 1999, was civilised in November 2002. President General Pervez Musharraf alluded to this in his address to the Command and Staff College, Quetta, on April 2 saying that the "army is in the barracks and have no role in politics". He maintained that the prime minister and the cabinet were doing well and that his role was limited to checking the "government affairs and nothing else".

President Pervez Musharraf's statement does not, however, change the reality that the military's expanded role is the most conspicuous feature of governance and political management today. Civilianisation of the government in November 2002 was carefully crafted by the military to share power with a section of the political elite prepared to play politics on the terms set out by Pervez Musharraf and his top commanders.

The federal cabinet and the parliament have not been able to acquire an autonomous role. The consensus among political analysts is that the presidency continues to be the focal point of power, calling the shots in the political system. If anything, Pervez Musharraf's rule has consolidated the military's role in Pakistan's government and society and, in the form of the National Security Council, which provides it a legal cover. Another channel that links the military with politics is Pervez Musharraf's continuation as the army chief. This strengthens his position in the political system but keeps the military, especially the army, entangled in politics.

The military is a formidable political player and contender for power in Pakistan. It has the capability and experience to dominate core political institutions and processes either directly or from the sidelines. The task is made easier by weak and fragmented political parties, social and political conflicts and a disregard for

democratic norms at the operational level. Dislodging a tottering civilian government has never been difficult for the military top brass. Having assumed power, the top brass develops a stake in power and shapes the political system to its preferences.

The decision of the top brass under the leadership of General Mirza Aslam Beg (COAS, 1988-1991) not to assume power after the death of President-Chief of Army Staff General Ziaul Haq in August 1988 set the stage for the return of civilian political leadership. During 1988-1999, the military leaders were prepared to stay on the sidelines if the civilian leaders did not threaten their professional and corporate interests. After the military takeover of October 1999, the disposition of the top army commanders has changed. In addition to their external security role, they now view themselves as guardians of the domestic political order. They do recognise the role of civilian political leaders, parties and institutions but want them to function within a defined domain.

Direct military rule is only one dimension of the military's role in politics and society. The military has several options for securing its centrality in a political system that has a strong tradition of the military's political role against the backdrop of a fragmented and incoherent political process. It has expanded its role in non-professional fields by a host of strategies. These include appointment of serving and retired military (predominantly army) officers to lucrative civilian jobs, active involvement in banking, leasing and trading sectors and industry, private sector educational and training institutions and the real estate business.

A ten percent quota was fixed for military personnel in civilian government jobs by the military government of General Ziaul Haq. Though it never received formal parliamentary approval, the governments, civil and military, implemented it. In certain types of lucrative jobs, i.e. ambassadors and some top appointments at the fed-

VIEW



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eral level, the quota is often exceeded. Retired and serving officers are inducted in government jobs in several ways. First, formal induction of young officers — mostly captains and majors or their equivalents from other services — in the central superior services. Second, an assignment for a definite period after which the officer

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returns to his position in the military. Third, contract appointments of retired officers.

Initially, the military authorities nominated the young officers to the central superior services who joined the civilian probationers at the Civil Services Academy. Later, the Federal Public Service Commission was allowed to interview the military nominees for final selection. Exact data on such inductions is not available, but this has been going on since the mid-1980s. On an average, six to nine officers are inducted annually. Serving and retired officers are appointed to lucrative civilian government and semi-government jobs by the federal and provincial governments. 178 military officers were inducted in the central superior services on a permanent basis between January 1978 and October 1999. 1,027 retired and serving officers were appointed to different ministries, divisions and departments under varying terms and tenures during October 1999-September 2003. Of these, 87 serving and retired military officers were appointed in grade 20-22 posts. The retired military personnel are also appointed to civilian intelligence agencies. Since 2001, military officers are also being inducted into banks and development financial institutions. The top administrative positions in some state universities are assigned to retired generals, brigadiers and colonels.

The military is engaged in commercial and industrial activities. These are undertaken mostly through five charitable foundations. In some cases the local military authorities, too, manage some businesses. The foundations include the Fauji Foundation, Army Welfare Trust, Shaheen Foundation, Bahria Foundation, and the POF Welfare Trust. It is not possible to list details of their commercial and industrial projects in this space. There has been a phenomenal increase in these activities.

In 2004, the total assets of the Fauji Group (Fauji Foundation and its various projects) were Rs 99,431 mil-

lion. These Foundations have also entered private sector education — a lucrative business. In addition to managing secondary schools and colleges, they run four private sector universities and medical colleges as well as professional training centres. Some of the Defence Housing Authorities/Societies also run educational institutions.

The allotment of agricultural land and residential commercial plots in urban centres to military personnel is an old practice. The military authorities sought allotment of agricultural land under various schemes for military personnel during the Musharraf era as well. The military is also engaged in real estate development. In addition to floating and managing Defence Housing Societies, it now builds housing schemes for its personnel. This sector has evoked a lot of controversy, especially due to the current practice of sale and purchase of "files" of the plots before they are available for transfer to the owners. Recently, there were changes in the management of the Lahore Defence Housing Authority in the wake of press reports about its affairs. The military authorities need to reveal their involvement in real estate development and housing schemes because this exposes them to a lot of criticism.

Most of these activities are beyond the scrutiny of parliament. Senator Farhatullah Baber and some other parliamentarians have raised these issues in the parliament. Some questions got partial answers while others were turned down by the chair on the ground that they dealt with sensitive issues. The available evidence indicates that the military has developed substantial stakes in non-professional fields. This makes it imperative for it to get involved in policy making and management to protect these interests. This, in turn, adversely affects the prospects of autonomous growth of civilian political, economic and societal processes.

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