**The stagnancy disaster**

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I Skander Mirza and Ayub Khan, the first President, and desi Sipah-e-Salar respectively were both graduates of the famous Sandhurst Military Academy in the United Kingdom (UK). Together they connived to lay siege to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in October 1958. Instead of holding elections under the 1956 unanimouslyagreed constitution, they abrogated it. Since then, the civilian authority has often been deemed an enemy of the state. Agha Muhammad Yahya Khan and ZiaUl-Haq were trained at Dehradun Academy while Pervaiz Musharraf and Qamar Javed Bajwa were graduates of the Pakistan Military Academy (PMA) Kakul. The first sixteen, sipah-esalars were all a product of the UK style of military academies. Amongst them, there were many disasters. It is time to revisit the structure and curriculum of our military academies to avoid future adventurism. Every graduating cadet takes an oath to defend the constitution which they might not read or understand. When the 1956 document was abrogated there was no resistance from within the institution. Again, when 1973 unanimously agreed constitution was disfigured in 1977 and 1999, no voices were raised. For the nation to move forward, this siege has to end. The civilian authority has to be restored. Colonised nations have to carefully tread their march towards freedom. Issues of continuity and discontinuity have to be understood and handled. In the US, a fresh start was made, and British imperialism was rejected and wiped out. Despite being a former colony of the Crown, the country never joined the Commonwealth of Nations. There was a total disconnect from the

[Passenger van falls in river, four die, several disappear in Battagram](https://www.nation.com.pk/13-Dec-2022/passenger-van-falls-in-river-four-die-several-disappear-in-battagram)

past. Heroes and zeroes were identified and then cornered. A new education system was developed with freedom in mind. In Iran, after the revolution in 1979, there was a total revamp of the academic structure. Universities and military academies were shut down to upgrade their curriculum to serve not to rule. Imperialism has been buried for all times to come in the Islamic Republic of Iran. In the decade of the seventies, a delegation from the UK visited PMA. They were surprised to see the continuity of our old ways. Even the military boots (ammo shoes) had not been changed. There was a spontaneous remark, “You are still using our boots”? Prompt came the reply, “Yes under our feet.” Which in my opinion was far away from the truth. Colonialism continues to dominate our minds today. A few years back I read an article about the ‘slab guard duty’ at the Scouts Mess in Chitral. About a hundred years ago, a cement slab was poured into the yard of the officer’s mess. To protect the uncured slab, a guard was instructed to stand there. Since then, he has not been removed. It has now been turned into regular duty. In the year 2004, I visited the site after which I wrote an article titled; “The Slab Guard is still there.” They are everywhere, as a nation, we have not been able to free ourselves from the past.

[Will negotiate with PDM only if elections are discussed, says Pervez Khattak](https://www.nation.com.pk/13-Dec-2022/will-negotiate-with-pdm-only-if-elections-are-discussed-says-pervez-khattak)

A major institutional overhaul is needed. On August 14, 1973, after the enactment of the constitution, Pakistan emerged as a constitutional democracy. All Government of India Acts should have been nullified but unfortunately, they were not. The resistance to change is mind-boggling. Guns overrule laws. Air Marshal Asghar Khan was the first desi Air Chief while Ayub Khan managed to become the sipah-e-salar against merit. Asghar Khan was an able and honest leader who built the Air Force with dedication. Pakistan Air Force (PAF) has served the nation well with outstanding performance. Leaders who followed were also world-class, like Air Marshal Nur Khan, Air Marshal Zulfiqar Ali Khan, and Air Commodore M.M. Alam to name a few stars. By contrast, Ayub Khan crossed the line. He weakened civilian institutions. Instead of the nation, empire-building started under his misrule. For the motherland, perhaps he was the biggest disaster that came out of the military academy of the colonial imperial power. In 1962, Pakistan could have liberated Kashmir but the opportunity was lost as the leader was compromised. The 1965 war was a total misadventure. Pakistan was saved by the valour of junior officers like Major Aziz Bhatti, Captain Abid Majid, Sqdn Ldr. M.M. Alam etc. The strategy and planning of war were seriously flawed. While advancement at the Akhnor sector in Kashmir was slowed down by the change of command, there were no reinforcements to defend the cities of Lahore and Sialkot which came under attack.

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Iqbal talked about the academic manipulation of thought. Every institution has to be aligned with the needs of the nation with freedom at the core. Sandhurst may be good for the UK, but its curriculum has not been aligned to serve the Islamic Republic of Pakistan which is a constitutional democracy, not an imperial monarchy. Our heroes and zeros are not the same. After over 75 years our march towards freedom remains off track, it is time to end this derailment that was started in October 1958 by the Sandhurst-trained first sipah-e-salar of the republic who was promoted against merit. While Asghar khan emerged by to be a hero, Ayub khan proved to be a zero.

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