**Myths and facts about the Pakistan army**

**[Masud Ahmad Khan](https://nation.com.pk/Columnist/masud-ahmad-khan)**

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Often pseudo intellectuals, liberals and proponents of anti-army sentiment make exaggerated claims while referring to the army’s budget, foreign policy and its welfare organisations. The myth about the budget is that Pakistan’s army takes the lion share of the entire defence budget. Pakistan’s armed forces is the sixth largest army in the world but its expenses per soldier are the lowest. Americans spend nearly four lac dollars per soldier, India spends 25,000 dollars and Pakistan only 10,000 dollars. The United States has the largest defence budget followed by China and Saudi Arabia. The Indian defence budget is 20 billion dollars but never made it an issue in Indian politics and in the case of Pakistan, the total budget is around 7 billion dollars.

According to Farrukh Saleem, a financial analyst, Pakistan’s military expenditure on a per capita basis is actually one of the lowest on the face of the planet. Israel spends 2000 dollars on a per capita basis and Pakistan spends just 22 dollars per capita. He further explained that in the budget of 2020-21, “Defence affairs and services has been allocated Rs.1289 billion out of total budgetary expenses of Rs.7295 billion. What this means is that defence comprises 17.67 percent of total expenses and non-defence related”. Some percentage of the budget allocated to the army is also utilised for the purpose of nation building through the construction of hospitals, schools and the development of infrastructure in remote areas.

[UK: Facebook sued over loss of user data](https://nation.com.pk/10-Feb-2021/uk-facebook-sued-over-loss-of-user-data)

The second myth is that the army makes the foreign policy of the country and retains a dominant influence over the security policies of the country. The army is one of the vital organs of the state but is subservient to the political government. The main objective of Pakistan’s foreign policy is to protect its territorial integrity and national security from an external threat. India and Afghanistan are central corners of the country’s foreign policy and the main threat remains from India.

In the past even during martial law regimes, the army did not dominate the foreign policy which was run by bureaucrats. It is only national security which necessitates the involvement of armed forces. Pakistan’s army supplements the foreign office with its input in areas of interest only when asked by the foreign office. It is the civil government which makes the foreign policy with strategic understanding with its armed forces. Our army is considered to be an effective institution in the country which remains within the boundaries of the role defined in the constitution of Pakistan.

[UN Human Rights Council to hold special Myanmar session](https://nation.com.pk/10-Feb-2021/un-human-rights-council-to-hold-special-myanmar-session)

Another myth is that the army is running a business empire and there is no accountability. Ayesha Siddiqa, in her book, tried to portray the army as an organisation involved in running business rather than the defence of the country. The sole intention of writing the book was to malign armed forces and the book is based on lies and false assumptions. She tried to create friction amongst the general public and also cause dissent among the ranks. She frequently writes for Indian newspapers and appears on Indian electronic media to spew venom against the army and ISI.

Pakistan’s army has remained the most well-managed, disciplined and responsive institution of the country which, besides ensuring the defence of the country, also helps the government in various fields. It has made positive contributions in remote areas of the country like Gilgit-Baltistan, FATA, Chitral and Balochistan through the construction of roads, education facilities, medical facilities and water supply schemes. The army plays an important role in nation building through its organisations like the Fauji Foundation (FF), Army Welfare Trust (AWT), Frontier Works Organisation (FWO), and the National Logistic Cell (NLC).

[US Senate declares Trump's 2nd impeachment trial legal](https://nation.com.pk/10-Feb-2021/us-senate-declares-trump-s-2nd-impeachment-trial-legal)

The Army Welfare Trust generates funds for the welfare and rehabilitation of orphans and widows of Shuhada (martyrs). The welfare projects also create employment opportunities for retired and disabled armed forces personnel. The Fauji Fertiliser (FFC) is one of the highest tax payers in Pakistan and according to a report in 2019, the FFC paid rupees 42 billion in taxes and duties.

Another myth is that generals take up top civilian posts. This narrative was again raised by Ayesha Siddiqa and anti-army elements. One is not commissioned into the Pakistani army as a general but instead he has to pass through a process. Some of the general officers appointed on some posts have delivered according to the best of their abilities and that is acknowledged by everyone. All the appointments in civil departments are done on a merit basis as armed forces officials can manage civilian institutions effectively. Imran Khan made it clear, in an interview, that the army had never asked him to appoint any person to any position and all those military persons working in different organisations were appointed on merit.

[Political laws show Fazlur Rehman's dual standards: Shibli](https://nation.com.pk/10-Feb-2021/political-laws-show-fazlur-rehman-s-dual-standards-shibli)

There are anti-army media cells and social media brigades of political parties that systematically campaigned against the army and its top brass. They upload misleading posts and fake news to malign the army by using offensive language against military leadership when all that is happening is that they are giving sacrifices for the nation on a daily basis. Ridiculing Pakistan’s army and senior officers in the name of freedom of speech is not acceptable.

According to Stephen Cohen’s book, “There are armies that guard their nation’s border and there are those that are occupied with protecting their own position in society and there are those that defend a cause or idea, the Pakistan army does all three”. The citizen should not engage in any activity that would cause damage to the prestige and reputation of the Pakistani army. Let us not forget the situation in Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, Iraq and Yemen. It is our army which is keeping this country together. Pakistan’s army today is a professional and operationally responsive force and its leadership at all levels is professional, competent and battle hardened.