

How Socio-Political Indicators of Poor Governance Pave the Way for Coup d' Etate in Pakistan? An Analysis of Nawaz Shareef's Second Tenure in Government

Ayaz Ali Shah * Nelofar Ehsan † Hina Malik ‡

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Abstract

This paper is about the relationship between the socio-economic indicators of poor governance and how it helps the military to take over the affairs of the state with ease. The 1990s era witnessed serious lapses in the governance system of Pakistan, and so, the military made frequent entries in politics. What this paper finds is that if the system of governance doesn't improve during the civilian government, it provides an opportunity for the armed forces to impose martial law and takes over the country. Though Nawaz Shareef had formed a government with a two-thirds majority, he hardly made any improvement on the governance front, and this was the major reason for his dismissal from the office of prime minister ship. The methodology employed is secondary sources of data collection, including books, research papers and newspaper articles.

Key Words: Socio-Political Indicators, Governance, Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif

Introduction

Pakistan army, no doubt, is one of the largest, most modern and well-financed armed forces in the world. Since independence, thanks to western support and funding in defense and strategic cooperation, the armed forces have grown in strength and capacity at the cost of other institutions in the country. Importantly over the years, with its size and weight, the military's political role and interference in matters solely reserved for the elected civilian government have also expanded. There is no denying the fact that one of the factors that heavily contributed to the expansion of the army and its political role is the underdevelopment of the country's political institutions and corrupt and incompetent politicians whose self-centred or party-centred policies hindered their way to work for the common national good. The regular dismissal of elected governments in its early days, factionalism in political parties and its detachment from the general public seriously damaged the reputation of political parties and politicians. On the other hand, the army was able to project its reputation of institutional pride, portraying itself as an organized, well-disciplined force capable of even running state affairs (Giunchi 2014).

The modern governance system works at two levels of the agency. The first one is accorded by the people to the civilian leadership through free and fair elections to make decisions for them. The second level of agency is that elected leadership delegate these powers to the specialized bureaucratic institutions but still requires the agent to follow the instructions of the principal (Dasgupta, 2001). Going by this rationale, militaries often argue that they often violate the second-order to restore the first one. In other words, the military takeover is justified on the ground to restore the broken system of governance, improve the delivery function of the state and fill the trust deficit between the state and its citizens.

* Lecturer, Department of Political Science, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, KP, Pakistan. Email: ayaz_mrdn@hotmail.com

† Lecturer, Department of Political Science, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, KP, Pakistan

‡ Demonstrator, Department of Political Science, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, KP, Pakistan.

Pakistan has a history of military coups and martial laws. The question is that why Pakistan is such a coup-prone state or why Pakistan's democracy does not prosper. There is no doubt that the reasons for imposing martial laws in Pakistan are many, but the understanding of core issues that have resulted in a crisis of governance will make it easier to understand why the military takes the affairs of the state with so ease.

Social Indicators of Poor Governance

The government under the leadership of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was to face an uphill task on the social front where there was much space for improvement. The country's overall situation was not conducive to live a dignified life with all facilities of good life available. There was ethnic and political violence, sectarianism and terrorism, with life having lost all its value and importance. There were issues of unemployment, poverty and inflation, adding further fury to the fire. Education and health facilities were rare commodities available to the common man. There could be seen rising cases of suicide attempts in the country, police tortures, and extrajudicial killings. All this put the government on the back foot to be defensive.

Life is, no doubt, a gift from God, and suicide is its ultimate rejection. The ratio of suicide rose three times since the year 1997 in Pakistan. There were some 1000 cases of incidence of suicide, many of which were self-immolation as the most extreme form of protestation against the state (Haq, 1999). A democratic government establishes a welfare state, but when the state becomes the source of one's death, better it is called anarchy. Pakistan in the late 1990s saw slow economic growth with rising inflation and poverty rates. Employment opportunities dropped down to an alarming level. To supplement a poor's income, the government only transferred only one percent of the GNP in zakat, usher and charity, which was too small. Under such circumstances, people found it easier to resort to suicide, and the responsibility of such a death falls on the state.

Violence, Crime and Law and Order Situation

The fundamental responsibility of a state is to protect the life, liberty and property of its citizens. This should be a yardstick to gauge the performance of a government. However, looking into the statistics, PML (N) led government (1997-99) was found short of what it had promised. As said earlier, the steep increase in the number of suicide committed put a big question mark on the credibility and tall claims of the government.

Karachi was there to present a black picture. There were some more than 3000 people killed in politically motivated conflicts in Karachi since 1995. Of them, 1000 had been killed in 1998 alone. Some 565 people were killed in extrajudicial encounters in the year 1998 alone. Thousands were killed in sectarian violence, particularly in Punjab (Haq, 1999). Violence in Karachi had reached a point to assume the form of a civil war. The head of KESC was shot dead; many police officers were killed in cold blood; in a single attack, 25 workers of a political party were killed; in the month of April 1998 only, more than 100 people were killed (Sethi, 1998). It seemed that Karachi had been left at the mercy of gangsters and criminals. Peace in Karachi looked to be a distant dream, with the government in a state of confusion as to what to do. It looked the government had reached a compromise with MQM to do whatever they liked to maintain its hold and criminal control. Karachi that once used to be the hub of commercial and trade activities now represented an era of darkness. Businessmen started taking their investment out of it to move on to safer countries.

Punjab province was in the grip of serious sectarian violence. The province could well be seen sharply divided on sectarian lines into Shias and Sunnis. The state, instead of addressing the issue, sided in this sectarian war as there were instances of the government arming the Sunni radicals. To further worsen the situation, the government released Azam Tariq of the Sipah e Sahaba Pakistan from jail, who was one of the major parties in sectarian bloodshed. Many Iranian Shias were killed in Rawalpindi and Karachi. Funding

to these militant organization from abroad with the state being a silent spectator strengthened these outfits so much that even then, the government was afraid to take any action against them. Violence, both political and sectarian, had reached such a magnitude that America was about to declare Pakistan a terrorist state (Sethi, 1997).

Violence against woman didn't surprise any. Much of such violence went unnoticed and unreported as there was no law to protect them. As woman avoided opening their mouth when the perpetrators of violence were within the family, no such information and data could be collected. Children, the most vulnerable in society, were also subject to the worst form of violence. By 1998, there were 4000 reported rape cases in Punjab, of which half were minors. This showed the failure of the government.

Police in Pakistan had not been unable only to control crime and upholding the rule of law; there were cases of police physical torture and inhuman punishments. Data shows that more than 700 people were killed in police custody and encounters in the year 1997-98. As per 1998 estimates, there was one case of custodial torture every three days against women. There were even instances of police officials having been found in sexual abuse and rape of women in custody. A survey conducted in 1999 showed that there were only 13 percent of people in Pakistan were satisfied with the performance of the police.

Deplorable Condition of Health and Education Sectors

Education and health, the two fundamental sectors to have a direct effect on the people at the gross root level, starved for funding and effective reform packages. The budgetary allocation to those sectors reflected the government's apathy towards them. Under financing to the education sector caused the sector not to stand on solid foundations and deliver. Despite tall claims, the budgetary allocation could not cross the limit of 2 percent of the GDP, which was quite low in the region as well as worldwide. The National Education Policy, 1998 envisaged the allocation to be raised to 4 percent of the GDP, but ironically in that year, it came down from 2.7 to 2 percent. Worse enough, of the total budget allocated to the education sector, Pakistan spent 88 percent on recurrent and 12 percent in development expenditure in the year 1997. In the year 1998, recurrent expenditure went up to 91 percent while development came down to 9 percent (Naveed 2012). With such disproportionate spending, one could imagine the quality of education and educational institutions in the country. The most worrying point was the literacy rate that was reluctant to rise. By the year 1997, there was some 60 percent of an adult who was illiterate in the country. In the same year, a quarter of the total female population was literate (Naveed 2012). Low budgetary allocation combined with a higher unemployment ratio was a demonstration of the poor governance system as people thought it not advisable to waste time and money in an education system that can't enable them to earn a job.

Pakistan suffered additionally by low-quality teaching standards and a rising gap between student-teacher ratio in the years when Nawaz Sharif was Prime Minister for the second time. Only 4.9 percent of the total budgetary allocation to education was allocated to teachers' training program (Naveed 2012). This was a figure quite low in a country like Pakistan, where teaching standard is far below than international standard. The student-teacher gap increased from 36 pupils per teacher in 1990 to 52 pupil per teacher in the year 1999 (Naveed 2012). This gap was too wide to have any positive bearings on the overall education ratio of the country.

Facts reveal that by the year 1998, the gross enrolment stood at 87.6 percent at the primary level, but at the secondary level, it sharply dropped down to 17.5 percent. Moving further, it came down to 4.1 percent at the higher level, which is too frustrating for any elected government. Almost 50 percent of the children dropped out of schools before fifth grades (Haq 1999). The government did too poor as far as technical education was concerned for the reason that allocation for technical education was reduced by 76 percent between 1996-97 and 1997-98 (Haq 1999). Despite the government's tall claims, it failed miserably to fill the literacy gap between male and female by raising the latter's literacy rate. Moreover, the rural and urban literacy gap also kept widening. This was too much worrying point as a great majority of

the population had concentrated in villages. Technical education never came under the government spotlight and went unattended. Perhaps the government never gave the education sector its due importance.

The health sector also presented a deplorable condition. The budgetary allocation of 0.8 percent of the GDP in the year 1996-97 was reduced to 0.7 percent in 1997-98. It remained unchanged in 1998-99 as well as 1999-00. Of the total allocation of Rs. 20808 (in Millions) in the year 1998-99, Rs. 5492 (in Millions) went to developmental expenditure while the rest were allocated to current expenditure (TheNetwork for Consumer Protection, 2005). This was a serious dilemma as it was the developmental expenditure that mattered, but the allocation in comparison to current spending reflected government negligence. The 24.01 percent amount allocated for social sector development in the 8th Five years Plan (1993-98), only 6.2 percent went into the health and family planning (Haq, 1999). That again was too a small allocation, given the serious condition of the health sector in the country. With such a small allocation, one could imagine that there were 45 percent of people who didn't have access facilities.

The government didn't pay attention to preventive health services. Preventive health services like child care, immunization, health awareness and education and maternal health have a direct and positive impact on the poor and so require maximum attention. It was also observed that much of the government spending on health was limited to big hospitals in urban centres, leaving too little for basic health facilities in rural areas. As government health centres and hospitals were subject to mismanagement with often limited facilities coupled with other problems, people were forced to go to private clinics. One could imagine the situation on the ground when education and health were declared the most corrupt departments.

The State of Unemployment

Pakistan population grew at a higher rate in the 1990s era, but employment didn't rise up accordingly between 1993 and 1999. In the year 1993, there were some 32.45 million people employed in the country, which rose to 38.59 million in 1999. This rise in employment was not proportional to the growth in population. Most employment concentrated in the rural areas with 67 percent. In the same period the unemployment rate increased from 4.73 to 6.10 percent. Between 1993 and 1999, the number of unemployed labor force went up from 1.53 to 2.36 million (Haq, 1999). Of the total labor force, 44 percent was employed only in the agriculture sector. This was never a good sign as the rest of the sectors contributed quite less. Moreover, only 12 percent were women in the country's total labor force. They were almost 50 percent of the total population, but their share was too small. The dependence of such a large population on male segment of the society could never be considered a positive sign from governance perspective.

Youth in Pakistan was hit hard by the rising level of unemployment. In the late 1990s, youth who remained unemployed stood at 40.7 percent against their 23.6 percent share in employment. Underemployment was also an issue of concern. By underemployment is meant working less than 35 hours a week. This went from 10 in the 1980s to 11.5 percent in the year 1997. Pakistan's unemployment presented a very dark picture as it caused so many other evils to breed in a society like poverty, crime, low living standard and so on.

Poverty

People in Pakistan have been pressed badly by the heavyweight of poverty over the years. Successive governments have strived hard to pull these people out of the clutches of poverty but to no success. Even there were times when the government adopted poverty alleviation strategies, but the incidence of poverty went up. In this regard, the era of the 1990s was quite unfavorable as the poverty rate increased sharply in the country. Poverty (HeadCount) estimates rose from 24 in 1996-97 to 32.6 percent in 1998-99 (World Bank 2002). Poverty rose in Pakistan partly due to the slowing down of economic growth in the 1990s,

but more importantly, due to the inability of successive democratic governments to translate the economic growth of the 1980s into a better life for the poor (World Bank 2002).

A wide gap existed between rural and urban poverty. During this period, the incidence of urban poverty declined while rural rose to stand at 36 percent. This was a matter of serious concern as 71 percent of the population lived in rural areas (World Bank 2002). This was primarily due to the concentration of land in few hands while a great majority were landless (Anwar, Qureshi, & Ali, 2004). Though the government embarked on a package of land reforms, it didn't make any noticeable impact. Furthermore, a good deal of the population was at the risk of falling into the pool of poverty, as 43% of the total population were concentrated within a small range of 75 to 125% of the poverty line (in consumption terms) (World Bank 2002)

Politics of Patronage and Personalization

In Pakistan, entrance into politics is driven by the desire for personal gains instead of having any quest to serve the people. The result is that the ultimate authority lies in the hands of few individuals at the cost of established institutions (Haq, 1999). For people, politics is a kind of investment. If you win elections, you are in a good position to have access to state resources to use them for your own benefit and advantage. This is perhaps the reason that some of the people in Pakistan have developed a monopoly over state structure, not allowing others from the middle and lower classes to enter the race. They have deliberately made politics a game of money by investing too much in elections so as to discourage common people from thinking of contesting elections.

The composition of both houses of parliament in the 1990s would reveal that they were very much occupied, mostly by landlords and industrialists coming from the upper strata of society. One-third of the National Assembly consisted of feudal lords. The share of the industrialists in the Lower House has doubled since 1980. As economic power has concentrated in few families, political power could not devolve to the rest of society. Between 1990 and 1997, almost 60 percent of the cabinet ministers were jointly from feudal lords and industrialists. Not only cabinet ministries, but they also held key positions in political parties and other bodies of decision making. The reason for their rise into the corridors of political power was the induction of money into politics. Politics had become a game that could only be played by those with money.

The dominant position of elites in politics impacted the country's governance system quite badly. As they were people of status quo, they blocked every way for reforms. Moreover, the system in place had been designed in a way to serve their interests only. People time and again complained of the kind of the political system in the country to have no remedy for a downtrodden segment of the society. In even many cases, they didn't have any expectations from their elected political leaders.

Pakistan suffered additionally from the dilemma that the same political actors have alternated each other with no one of the calibre and potential to introduce a positive change to improve the situation on the ground. The country has seen the same prime ministers alternated at the helm (Haq, 1999). Furthermore, the same ministers have reshuffled their chairs in the cabinet, having almost the same composition. Most of these ministers had been raised to the corridors of powers for no other good reason but being the relatives and dears of the Prime Minister. Good sense suggests that if the government was dismissed once for its underperformance, it should have been enough to learn a lesson from. If the government was sincere on its agenda to introduce reforms for the betterment of its people, he should have included ministers and advisors on merit with knowledge, vision and expertise to proceed with the agenda of reforms.

Alienation in the Federating Units

Pakistan was an over-centralized federation in the 1990s. The country's constitution divided the subjects in such a way to give the federal government an overwhelming dominance over the federating units. The four

provinces had very limited items to legislate on. The very spirit of provincial autonomy was missing from the prevalent political structure. The provinces neither had power nor resources to shape their own destiny. They were pushed into a position of subordination and heavily dependent on the central government for revenue. National Finance Commission (NFC) is a constitutional body responsible for the distribution of resources vertically between center and provinces and horizontally among federating units. However, it was subject to much reservations and criticism.

The provincial governments continuously raised voices against the unjust distribution of resources both vertically and horizontally. So long as tax collection was concerned, the national government generated a total of 94 percent of revenue while the rest of 6 percent was collected by provincial governments. This big gap was simply for the reason that the provincial governments were deprived of financial autonomy. Furthermore, the disproportionate share of the federal against the provincial governments was also a source of disturbance in the federating units as the former got 75 percent share while the latter only 25 percent.

The distribution of resources was such that Punjab used to get a lion share from the divisible pool in the shape of 58 percent as the division formula was based on the ratio of population. This was unfair and unjust, fuelling centrifugal tendencies in other provinces. This further strengthened the feelings of alienation based on regionalism and provincialism in smaller provinces. They demanded the distribution be made in a way to give due weightage to their concerns. The smaller units had already been complaining of the over-Punjabization as the cabinet ministers were mostly from Punjab, greater industrialization and development, and other reform packages were blamed for being aimed at benefitting Punjab only. It seemed that Centre and Punjab were in collusion against the other three federating units. This could never be a good sign of federalism.

The movements of resistance and confrontation were specifically strong in the provinces of NWFP and Baluchistan. Both the provinces refused to sign the NFC award. There were additional issues of royalty from natural gas and electricity. The center had long withheld the payments to these two provinces in the royalty which caused alienation among the people of NWFP and Baluchistan. They blamed the federal government for exploiting their resources to the advantage of Punjab while they themselves couldn't benefit from it. They maintained that even if the money due in royalty had been released in time, it could be enough to rid them of backwardness and deprivation. The allocation of 1 billion dollars to Islamabad-Peshawar motorway when the developmental funds had been frozen to the rest of the country won much criticism from funds starved provinces of Sindh and Baluchistan (Talbot 1998). These injustices on the part of the federal government were enough to strengthen the waves of separatism in Baluchistan and NWFP.

The mistrust and misunderstanding continued to widen, especially during Nawaz Sharif second tenure, as he did nothing to console the federating units whose genuine demands were not listened to. The government of Baluchistan time and again objected to the deployment of FC and Coastal Guards in the province and demanded their withdrawal immediately. However, the Central Government didn't heed it. Awami National Party, a dominant political party from NWFP, had joined the PML (N) government at the centre on the condition that NWFP would be renamed into Pakhtunkhwa, but the commitment was not taken care of. Resultantly, ANP withdrew from the coalition, thus further embittering the relations between Central Government and Federating Unit (Talbot 1998). The Central Government's plan to proceed with the construction of much controversial Kala Bagh Dam further alienated ANP and the people of the defunct NWFP. The province of Sindh was also subject to secessionist movements for the reason that the Prime Minister pursued wrong policies. The net result of all these negative tendencies was that the federation was weakened and could not function smoothly and effectively. Mr. Sharif's opportunist deals and policies to deal with situations in NWFP, Baluchistan and Karachi were bound to lead Islamabad into a state of confrontation with the three provincial governments. He was warned that this could pose severe problems in the periphery. "If Mr. Sharif ignores these incipient threats to the state or gives in to them", we wrote, "His federal democracy will lead to provincial anarchy. But if he deals with them unfairly or harshly, he will provoke a provincial backlash against federal autocracy" (Sethi, 1997). The lack of trust between the federal

government and provinces made the former controversial, lacking all the credibility to plan things properly. The government was in a serious political crisis.

Institutional Tussles and Crisis

Nawaz Sharif's quest to accumulate more and more power brought him into a confrontation with other state institutions. He embarked on a series of institutional and constitutional reforms to subordinate the rest of state pillars and departments to his will and dictations. Parliament was not more than a rubber stamp. Much of the policy matters were decided outside the parliament. President's powers to issue ordinance were evoked time and again. In cabinet meetings, hardly anyone was allowed to express his own opinion. Even in the appointment of President Rafiq Tharar, the cabinet was not taken into confidence, and much of the ministers were taken aback when the name of the nominee was disclosed. He didn't consider his cabinet ministers worthy enough to be consulted on such an important matter (Sethi, 1998).

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif could not convince himself to develop and keep cordial relations with President Farooq Ahmed Khan Laghari. Though the heavy mandated PML (N) parliament clipped the President's wings bypassing the 13th amendment to the constitution, which undid the notorious 8th amendment, the Prime Minister still could not trust the President. Nawaz Sharif wanted in the Presidency someone who would be a puppet in his hands to follow his dictations wholeheartedly and never pose a threat to his government. The two continued to work in an atmosphere of mistrust and fear for some time when finally Nawaz Sharif made up his mind to send the President packing. Their difference came to the surface at the time of appointment of the Sindh governor. Nawaz Sharif wanted to appoint the nominee of Mutahedda Qumi Movement (MQM) as Governor while the President put his weight behind Lieutenant General (R) Moin ud Din Haider (Kamran 2008). When the relation further worsened, the government decided to get rid of the President through impeachment. Fearing a disgraceful exit, Farooq Laghari tendered his resignation on the 2nd of December, 1997 (Kamran 2008).

After doing away with the President, the Prime Minister now decided to lock horns with the apex judiciary (Kamran 2008). The Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) and Prime Minister came to the point of confrontation when the former opened cases involving the awarding of wheat shipment contracts from the USA and the allocation of residential plots by the latter. Their relations further worsened over the establishment of Speedy Trial Courts by the government when the Prime Minister didn't heed the advice of the CJP. The new courts would not be under the control of the superior judiciary, which alienated the CJP. Meanwhile, Sajjad Ali Shah proposed five judges be added to the bench to deal with the pending cases, but the government delayed their notification. The tension between the two mounted with CJP requesting the President to intervene and notify the appointments. The Prime Minister ultimately had to surrender, and the President issued a notification (Talbot 1998).

However, the Prime Minister soon retaliated in vengeance to divide the apex judiciary into political lines. As Sajjad Ali Shah had earlier superseded some other senior judges to be appointed as CJP during Ms. Benazir's second term, the matter was taken up and challenged in the Quetta Bench of Supreme Court. As the other senior Judges had been alienated by Shah's appointment, they now lined up against him with the government. On the other side, contempt proceedings had been initiated against the Prime Minister in the Supreme Court. His conviction could have disqualified him from being no more Prime Minister. Meanwhile, the validity of the 13th and 14th amendments was also challenged before the Supreme Court. The Prime Minister and his party colleagues suspected that the President and CJP were in collusion against the former to dethrone him. To put pressure on the CJP, the Supreme Court building was attacked by PML (N) Parliamentarians and party workers (Iqbal 2001). The CJP had to confront not only the government but also his colleagues who wanted to cash on the opportunity to settle scores with Shah. Eventually, the appointment of Shah as CJP was declared illegal by the larger bench of the Supreme Court (Iqbal 2001).

Nawaz Sharif's greed for power resulted in an open war between the Executive and Judiciary. Though the Executive had the last smile who survived unhurt, the Superior Judiciary was bruised and mauled. It had to lick its wound for many years (Iqbal 2001). It was the same Executive to appoint the CJP by superseding the other senior judges of the Supreme Court of Pakistan. And when he started working independently to exert his authority, he was targeted and harassed to play second fiddle to the Prime Minister. The integrity and honor of the upper courts were dashed to the grounds for political ends. The judges were divided in a way to teach a lesson to the CJP. Though he won, the Executive Head of the Government won too much criticism and disrespect in the eyes of even those who had voted for him.

Now it was time to take on the most formidable, the Pakistan Army. Nawaz Sharif now was confident enough to show eyes to the military. The Prime Minister had for some time started meddling in the affairs of the army, which antagonized the latter. In fact, Pakistan Army doesn't allow civilian political leadership to interfere in its working and has increasingly insulated itself from any interference both at the operational and administrative level (Chengappa 1999). He had developed differences with the Army Chief, General Jahangir Karamat, over certain issues and forced the latter to resign. Though the Prime Minister had won the first round, the army was waiting for the right opportunity to strike.

Conclusion

Pakistan, no doubt, was faced with a serious governance crisis on the eve of October 1999 martial law. There were issues of law and order situation; poverty index was going up; corruption was rampant; institutional tussle, though undesirable, was but a reality; unemployment hit the people very hard; there was a feeling of alienation and disturbance in smaller federating units, and the politics of nepotism and favoritism had tarnished the very image of the elected government. All this worked to the advantage of the armed forces, who just were waiting for the right opportunity to come. The opportunity presented itself on the 12th, October of 1999, when Musharraf, on their way back from Sri Lanka while still up in the air in the plane, masterminded the coup and removed the elected government of Mian Muhammad Nawaz Shareef. No one mourned the death of the elected government, and the reason was simple; the broken system of governance on the part of civilian government.

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