

Scenario 25

Pakistan: Military Coup of 1999

The Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif once told in an interview to the ARY TV Network that:

'I was sitting in Prime Minister's House when the television went off and I heard that the military was around and I saw military entering and surrounding my office. Meanwhile my wife Kulsoom telephoned me and asked about the situation and later General Mahmood in uniform entered the Prime Minister's House with dozens of armed guards and asked me and my brother Shahbaz Sharif to go with him [Gen Mahmood].'

When the PM asked Gen Mahmood why the military had taken over Prime Minister's House, the latter replied that:

'Don't you know the military has taken over because you changed the army chief without any cogent reason.'

Later the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Shahbaz Sharif were taken to Rawalpindi in a vehicle with tinted glasses.

Nawaz Sharif also told at ARY that:

'I gave the Army immense support during the Kargil adventure though Musharraf had deliberately hidden some aspects of the Kargil war from me. Even then I took all the blame and saved the army. I didn't ask President Clinton to call me in Washington and resolve the Kargil dispute, it was Musharraf who pressed me to meet Clinton and resolve the Kargil issue. I didn't want to take any action against Musharraf after the Kargil episode because I wanted to move forward.'

In Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf came into power on 12th October 1999 and an elected PM Nawaz Sharif was taken in army custody under the guard of military rifles. Comments of one Rodha Kumar, a Fellow of Council on Foreign Relations, New York appeared in **'The Hindu' of 21st October 1999** as follows:

'The coup was primarily a reaction to the (then) Prime Minister, Mr. Nawaz Sharif's attempts to subjugate every one of Pakistan's institutions to his extraordinarily flip-flop dictate.'

Having looted the state and packed the executive with cronies and relatives, he (PM Nawaz Sharif) tampered with the Judiciary, altered the Constitution to consolidate his power, used the peace process with India as an opportunity for both political gain through Kargil and personal gain through sugar contracts, and finally turned to playing 'divide and rule' with the army.'

.....Understanding this context should not, however, detract from the fact that the coup was precipitated by the Kargil debacle, and that many in Pakistan welcomed it on the grounds that the (then) democracy (was) too costly for the country.....'

Ever since Nawaz Sharif and Gen Musharraf fell out over Kargil; Nawaz wanted to get rid of Gen Musharraf and waiting for a suitable opportunity. He would have probably let Gen Musharraf finish his term and avoided confrontation but Gen Musharraf once insisted that Corp Commander Quetta Lt Gen Tariq Pervaiz (a close relation of a Federal Minister Raja Nader Pervaiz) who had allegedly acted as a spy for the Sharifs; be forcibly retired because

he had met Nawaz Sharif without GHQ's permission required under the Army regulations. This odd demand brought Nawaz Sharif to repent on his choice of Army Chief.

According to the PML sources, there were news pouring in that Gen Musharraf, after feeling humiliation over the Kargil episode, had started cursing Nawaz Sharif in private meetings of Generals and diplomats. Nawaz Sharif himself told that:

'Gen Musharraf came to me once and told me that he wanted to send Lt Gen Tariq Pervez home because the latter had not behaved well with him during a mutual meeting.'

The actual reason for his shunting was that Gen TP, then Corp Commander Quetta, had complained that why he (Gen Musharraf) had not told them about the Kargil Operation before its launch; and if PM Nawaz Sharif would not have bailed them out, the whole image of Pakistan Army could be spoiled. We argued over the issue for a long while but, to save army relationship, I ultimately agreed.

I was astonished next day when I was told and shown all the newspapers were mainly captioned that Gen Musharraf had sacked Lt Gen TP "on the charge of having met the PM". I immediately contacted ISPR, Secretary Defence, GHQ and Acting CAOS Saeeduzzafar (because Gen Musharraf had gone to Sri Lanka) but could not get a satisfactory reply nor could that news be taken back by the ISPR [Pak Army's public relations wing].

It was much embarrassing for me, for a PM. That was the moment I had thought to send the Army Chief Gen Musharraf home.'

Nawaz Sharif, however, maintained that Gen Musharraf, before departing for Colombo, himself had chalked out a similar 'special programme' with the help of his four buddies Generals in place who were also looking for a chance to 'deal with the PM' at some appropriate moment. The PM House had felt changes in the routine duties of 'Brigade 111' (responsible for security duties at the PM House); new Commander, new special walki-talki sets, noting about visiting people, increased strength and much more. It meant that Gen Musharraf's team had already started the 'take over' game.

The army circles maintained their side of story that when PM Nawaz Sharif ordered Gen Musharraf to attend Colombo SAARC Conference whereas, at par with Indian delegation, a Lt Gen rank officer should have gone. The PM had full plan in his mind to shunt out the Chief that was why Gen Musharraf was sent to Colombo whereas army had no such plan to topple the government at that moment.

The fact remains that on 12th October, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had attempted to dismiss Gen Musharraf and install ISI Chief Gen Ziauddin in his place. Gen Musharraf, who was on official tour to Colombo in connection with SAARC meeting, was coming back to Pakistan.

Nawaz Sharif had ordered that the Karachi airport be closed to prevent the landing of the airliner, which then circled the skies over Karachi. In the coup, Gen Usmani, the Corps Commander of Karachi, ousted Nawaz Sharif's administration and took over the airport. The plane landed, allegedly with only a few minutes of fuel to spare, and Gen Musharraf assumed control of the government some moments after he landed.

Gen Musharraf had, through his 'sixth sense', taken precautions and prepared his two close friends and course mates, CGS Aziz and Lt Gen Mahmoud, Corps Commander Rawalpindi, for all eventualities. The Army Chief, however, did not expect to be sacked while still in the air.

Nawaz Sharif would have succeeded if he had chosen a fighting General to replace Gen Musharraf. Nawaz Sharif's mistake was that he had chosen his 'boot licker' who was from the Engineering Corps. Nawaz Sharif did not realize that officers from the fighting branches of the Army like Infantry, Artillery and Armour hate to receive orders from the supporting branch officers especially from Sharif's home servant.

There is no point in arguing whether Nawaz ordered the PIA plane to remain in air or to go to Nawab Shah or elsewhere. Nawaz Sharif had constitutional right to sack the Army Chief, but through cogent reasons. He should have called his army chief to PM's office and asked him to resign instead of announcing his removal on TV. It was not a child play.

[Incidentally, it was only a week before the coup d'état took place that Nawaz Sharif himself had extended Gen Musharraf's term as Chief of Staff until 6th October 2001.]

Gen Musharraf later, through a pre-recorded message, had accused the Prime Minister of leading the country to a political, economic and security deep hole and of attempting to splinter and politicize the military in order to satisfy his hunger for power.

Nawaz Sharif was on the 'high' after having successfully removed the Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah, replaced Jehangir Karamat as Army Chief and earlier replacing the President Farooq Leghari. All that needed was to get the 15th amendment passed through the Senate which would have consolidated his family rule over Pakistan for the next 20 years at least. Nawaz Sharif had liked to follow Nehru dynasty; Shahbaz Sharif or Hamza Shehbaz after Nawaz & and then his son Hussain Nawaz or son in law Capt Safdar or Maryam Nawaz in due time.

A survey of Gallop Pakistan (headed by known figure Dr Ejaz Shafi Gilani, who was offered a ministerial slot by Gen Musharraf in his cabinet but Mr Gilani declined) on legitimacy of 12th October 1999 military coup had shown that 70% of Pakistanis had approved Gen Musharraf's take over and sending Nawaz Sharif home. The reasons for success in survey and the said pole were:

- Chasing of Benazir Bhutto, Mr Zardari and their close associates by Ehtesab Bureau's Saif ur Rehman and his team of 'wolves' and simultaneously filling their own pockets by twisting through Ehtesab Cell. Justice Qayyum was also a party to it.
- Launching attack on the Supreme Court buildings in November 1997, mixing political workers & judges together and buying certain angry judges to send the Chief Justice home.
- Launching covert attacks on the media offices especially on 'the Jang' and enforcing a new Press Ordinance to curtail the press and media freedom.
- Getting Pakistan's foreign policy framed by Pentagon, falsely claiming the President Bill Clinton as his family friend and allegedly surrendering Kargil before them under pressure.
- Economic development rate coming down from 6% in 1988 to 2% in actual statistics but keeping the bank counters alive to release loans of billions for Sharifs.
- The magical development of their own family owned industrial empire at the cost of other industries in competition; getting all the loans written off through arm twisting of State Bank & courts.

PM Nawaz Sharif was detained on 12th October 1999 and the military had filed a complaint in the court accusing him of criminal conspiracy, hijacking, kidnapping and attempted murder. Nawaz Sharif was made to appear before a Special Anti-Terrorist Court in Karachi in November 1999 without formally being charged (but alleged) with hijacking & kidnapping with criminal intent, the attempted murder and plotting to wage war against the state. Charge sheet was probably served on 8th December 1999.

[It may be interesting to note that nabbing Nawaz Sharif and his family members, without issuing them a formal charge sheet, was not a new phenomenon in Pakistan. Nawaz Sharif, when he assumed the office of Prime Minister in February 1997, himself adopted the same measures for his political opponents and those members of bureaucracy who had gone against him in the past.]

Nawaz Sharif had brought one of his trusted companions named Saif ur Rehman (a senator) as the Chief of Ehtesab Bureau (an organization to implement accountability in the country)

and through this bureau, immediately suspended 87 top bureaucrats in April 1997 who had been investigating the cases against him and his family's corruption on mass scale when he was in power during 1991-1993.

Then Nawaz Sharif and Saif ur Rehman levelled allegations of corruption against most of his political opponents specially Asif Ali Zardari, husband of Ex-Prime Minister Ms Benazir Bhutto and pushed him behind the bars. False cases / references were registered against their companions and high ranking officers were sent home on the basis of baseless enquiries, and their family members were tortured through special powers given to Ehtesab Bureau.

Time is the real master of fortunes. Just after 30 months of ruthless rule, Nawaz Sharif, his family members, Saif ur Rehman and his family members were picked up by the army authorities in the same way and subjected to same kind of treatment, detention without warrants, trials without issuance of formal charge sheets under the same laws and regulations and by the same agency named Ehtesab Bureau (afterwards re-named as National Accountability Bureau by the military regime) and were tried in the same military courts which were originally designated by Nawaz Sharif himself.

That is a separate question that where were the higher courts then. What they felt and what were their feelings towards rule of law.]

But why it happened so; peep into the depth of few lines from an essay written by a veteran parliamentarian of Nawaz Sharif's own party, **Ayaz Amir**, appeared in **'the News' of 20th April 2001**, saying that:

'... True, Nawaz Sharif had got General Jahangir Karamat to write out his resignation, an event which gave rise to the legend that after conquering other institutions he had humbled even the army. Still, this was not the same thing as having another Justice Malik Qayyum as army chief [plying as domestic servant].

This is the significance of October 12: Nawaz Sharif in Hercules mode setting out to rectify this situation by removing Musharraf and putting a fellow Kashmiri from Lahore, Lt-Gen Ziauddin Butt, in his place. The scheme went awry because it was not thought through properly or the army command had had enough and was in no mood to be pushed around.

Remember also that the army command was smarting from Kargil, a defining moment in the longstanding love affair between GHQ and the Sharifs (the Sharifs having been discovered and groomed for great things by General Zia himself, Lt-Gen Jillani, Lt-Gen Hamid Gul and a whole line of minor geniuses in ISI).

A wounded tiger and wounded Generals: the mood between them is about the same. Nawaz Sharif did not have a measure of this feeling. He was also surrounded by a school of bumpkins, the kind who act as cheer leaders to prize fighters. "Play it on the front foot" was their constant refrain. Mian Sahib played it on the front foot once too often and did not know what hit him.'

In last week of July 2011, Nawaz Sharif himself narrated the story of his arrest on 12th October 1999 to some closest media friends as under:

"On 12th October 1999, I was arrested from the PM House Islamabad and taken, in a car having black tinted windows, to an army mess in Chaklala where armed guards were taking care of me. The window pans of room where I was detained were covered & pasted with old newspapers. At midnight, Gen Ehsan, Gen Mahmood and Gen Orakzai came to my room, placed a typed paper before me and asked me to sign it. It was a statement saying that:

'I hereby resign from Prime Minister's slot and advice the President to dissolve the Assemblies.' I flatly refused to sign. They asked me time and again but I did not agree. Gen Mahmood got angry; resorted to threats and started abusing me. I told

them categorically that even you shoot me dead, I'll not sign it. The three Generals left the room leaving me alone with that typed paper.

[The fact remains that the Generals had rather attempted to remove Nawaz Sharif by forcing him to resign and then bring in a civilian government from amongst a host of technocrats, who would be approved by the parliament. When they failed to get Nawaz Sharif on line, they declared the dissolution of parliament and dismissed all the provincial Assemblies, thus assuming the reins of powers directly.]

Next day I was taken to face a Brigadier in uniform in his camp office. He offered me chair and started putting questions, as it was an interrogation by a 'thanedar', in low and high tones. I told the officer that I'll not answer any question; I'll only speak in the court. His temperature went high he took out a newspaper from his table drawer and forwarded to me. Main caption was; 'Making a special cell in Mianwali jail for Nawaz Sharif'. The Brigadier told me smilingly to get ready for it then. I was kept in that room for about three weeks.

During one night of second week of November 1999, I was taken to Murree where I was kept in a very small room having a bed and stand-only space, with tinted in pitch black windows and with small attached bathroom. The room was kept locked from outside and I had to knock the door and wait for guard to hear me.

Once an officer in uniform attended me and I simply requested him that if he could open a side window for me enabling me to see the sun light. He very politely declined my request.

Once I heard voice of Quraan's recitation, while in the same room of Murree, from which I could imagine that my son Hussain was also around. Once I requested that army officer if I could meet my son for a while. Again I was refused. Instead he did a favour to me that while taking me out next morning, he made out way to let me pass near my son's room. We only saw each other, wave hands and said goodbye because we were going apart.

When Gen Ziaul Haq had arrested late Z A Bhutto in 1977, the later was also brought in the same rest house of Murree. Meeting between Gen Zia and Bhutto was also held at this place."
(Ref: Daily Jang London 29th July 2011)

Ch Nisar Ali Khan of PML(N), in his interview to *Hum* TV in 2006 had given an insight over what happened on 12th October 1999 and the events which lead to the take over. According to his assessment, Gen Musharraf was a very obedient officer and considered Nawaz Sharif as the captain of the ship.

But it was the team of three other Generals, who where behind Kargil Fiasco, created misunderstandings between the two chiefs. They threatened Gen Musharraf that the PM would make minced meat out of them over the Kargil issue and the four of them would be court martialled. At the same time another team was working on the PM to take action against the Army Chief.

Other information the PM had availed was of a mock coup exercise conducted by the army officers, in which they visited president house, parliament house, Prime Minister House, Radio station and PTV station. This info was perhaps leaked purposely to the PM. More so, Gen Musharraf had a lust for power like his predecessors which lead to the coup. It was personal vendetta and a sense of fear.

Gen Musharraf had once said in an interview, that **'Nawaz Sharif would have been prime minister till today had he not removed him'**. Nawaz Sharif was flying high after having successfully removed the Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah, replaced Jehangir Karamat as Army Chief and finally replacing the president Leghari.

All that needed was to get the 15th amendment passed through the Senate. This would have secured his family rule over Pakistan for the next 20 years like Nehru dynasty of India.

Much later, Nawaz Sharif was tried in the same 'Anti-Terrorist Court' at Karachi which was once established by him. He got the same treatment from his own hand-made courts which

he wanted to deliver to his political opponents when he had assumed power in 1997. Time is the real master. He was sentenced for imprisonment and was kept in Attock Fort, partly converted into jail, till 10th December 2000 from where he was sent to Saudi Arabia for ten years after negotiating a deal with Gen Musharraf but brokered through Saudi rulers.

Nawaz Sharif and his brother Shahbaz Sharif had signed a memorandum of understanding that they would not take part in Pakistan politics for ten years and would stay in Saudi Arabia.

[However, they managed to come back to Pakistan on 10th September 2007 as a result of immense combined pressure from US, Benazir Bhutto and the Royal Saudi Rulers. So many times tried to wriggle out but each time was snubbed by his Saudi masters.]

Gen Musharraf's NAB (name of Nawaz Sharif's Ehtesab Bureau was changed by Gen Musharraf to be called as National Accountability Bureau) had hired international detectives to trace an estimated £700 million in assets of Nawaz Sharif when he was allowed to go into exile.

This surprise decision to free Nawaz Sharif from a life sentence and let him and his family flee to Saudi Arabia was perhaps taken on the advice from investigators that the only way to track down the missing fortune was to let him start spending it. While he was in prison the military government could manage to locate only \$6 million [£4.1 million] in accounts which were confiscated.

The evidence gathered till then by NAB had suggested that 'Mr Sharif owns seven apartments in London, including one in Mayfair and Park Lane each, and holds bank accounts in London, Liechtenstein, Austria and Switzerland. ***This is a phenomenal rise in wealth for a man who, when he started in politics in 1979, owned one re-rolling foundry at Lahore shared by Mian Sharif's brothers too.***'

Throughout this rise in graphs of wealth, the Pakistani courts kept their eyes closed, rather Sharif family's personal judge Justice Malik Qayyum of Punjab High Court always provided them shelter, relief and mostly acquittals in all cases filed by the state or banks in connection with their corruption at various times.

Considering the other responsible factors; the observers of the situation in Pakistan did not rule out a change in the authority, because the demonstrations organized by the Pakistani opposition parties had been consistent those days. The opposition, which included 19 parties, had one single agenda, that is to topple government by exploiting the spirit of resentment felt by the masses in the wake of the **Washington Declaration** of June 1999 between the American president Bill Clinton and the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, pertaining to the withdrawal of Kashmiri fighters from the Indian side of Kargil.

It was clear from day one that the coup was staged with the blessing of America. The American warning on 22nd September 1999 was in fact deemed as a sign that the coup was imminent. America had attempted to topple Nawaz Sharif by destroying him in the eyes of masses through forcing him to withdraw the military forces from Kargil and then inciting the masses and the political parties against him.

However, Nawaz Sharif continued to cling to power and this forced the United States to remove him by a military coup, backed by a broad popular support, see 70% poll in Gallop's survey mentioned above.

Furthermore, Nawaz Sharif failed to comply with the resolutions of the IMF, mainly amongst others was that 220 billion rupees should be recuperated from influential personalities who defaulted in their repayments and returned to the banks. From inside the America knew it that this huge amount was actually taken out as loans by Sharifs and their close associates. The America had the record of all such details. Due to his dictatorial attitude, Nawaz Sharif had squandered the state's funds in buying people's loyalty, especially in the media circles.

Christina Lamb wrote in *'The Telegraph'* of 19th June 2001 under caption **'Sharif is freed to lead Pakistan to lose £700m'** that:

'Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Abdullah, who negotiated the deal, had threatened to cut diplomatic ties with Pakistan if his friend Mr Sharif was not freed. Mr Sharif has been accused of corruption, but was actually jailed for attempted hijacking. Although there has been criticism within Pakistan of the decision to free him, Mr Haqqani insisted that the deal was good for the military regime.'

A similar deal was also offered to Ms Benazir Bhutto whereby corruption charges against her, for which she was sentenced to five years imprisonment in absentia, was to be dropped had she agreed to hand over some property & foreign cash and not to participate in politics of Pakistan. Ms Bhutto had refused, arguing that this would imply guilt.

Coming back to Army's take over, the irony of fate is that every military government used to blow their brass trumpets at full volume stating and trying to prove with 'facts & figures' that they have come to save Pakistan from flood of corruption, bankruptcy and lawlessness brought by dismissed political governments. Gen Musharraf had also started his rule with the same slogans. To keep his control over the affairs of government, Gen Musharraf adopted a two way policy but mainly depending upon the historical weak character of higher judiciary.

While doing so Gen Musharraf availed that routine opportunity of getting his rule validated by the Supreme Court of Pakistan for three years, after which the Constitution was restored (after making amendments which only suited Gen Musharraf) and elections were held.

The 17th Amendment was incorporated in the Constitution permitting the President to continue wearing the uniform of COAS up to 31st December 2004 as agreed between the government and the supporting parties in the parliament and MMA (*Mothida Majlis-e-Amal*, a coalition of Islam loving parties sitting on opposition benches in the Parliament).

Gen Musharraf announced on electronic media that he would give up the post of COAS after 31st December 2004, which he never obliged till the end of 2007.

[In 1977, after imposing martial law, Gen Ziaul Haq had also made a similar promise on TV with the people that he, being a simple soldier, did not have political ambitions and would hold elections within three months, but he did not keep the promise and ruled for eleven years.]

Nawaz Sharif was blamed for destroying Pakistan's economy and bringing Pakistan to a near default. Though Pakistan was facing sanctions over nuclear tests and the international trade was affected but the historians would remember some bitter facts also from which Pakistan had suffered a lot but the Sharifs got maximum benefits out of that situation i.e:

Firstly: A week before the nuclear tests on 28th May, all foreign currency held by Sharifs and their close associates was taken out from the banks and Saif ur Rehman personally took those bags and brief cases to Dubai.

Secondly: When the foreign currencies were nationalized, the PML within two days converted all his wealth in Pakistani rupee currency into dollars from the nation's frozen foreign currency and again despatched them to Dubai as second instalment.

Thirdly: When the US government imposed sanctions, the PM announced a donation scheme named **'Qarz Utaro Mulk Sanward'**. The people of Pakistan donated generously but not even a single rupee was paid as foreign debt. Till today there are no accounts available for that huge collection of money. Once the then Finance Minister Ishaque Dar, while replying a stinking question about that scheme, had told the print and electronic media that:

'The money collected was deposited in the main account 'A' of Ministry of Finance.'
No evidence is available on record till today.

A '**Media Forum Analysis**' dated **29th October 1999** carried out by *Hizb-ut-Tahrir*, still available at www.hizbuttahrir.org seems to be more convincing because it was written by a foreign organization and just two weeks after the military coup in Pakistan. This analysis categorically told two things: Firstly that the coup had prior approval of America and; secondly it was an off-shoot of Kargil episode in which America wanted to help the Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee.

Details available were that just before the flare-up of the military hostilities between India and Pakistan around Kargil, the Indian government of PM Atal Behari Vajpayee collapsed on 18th April 1999 by a majority of one single vote, and when the Congress Party failed to form a new government, general elections were held in India. This led to a further decline in the popularity of the Congress Party whose deputies were reduced from 141 in the parliament of 1998 to 112. On the other hand the majority of the coalition of 24 parties led by AB Vajpayee had increased.

The main reason for the success of Vajpayee over Gandhi was because his coalition was presented as a **victor in the Kargil war** and propagated as capable of vanquishing the enemy. The battle of Kargil had washed away certain negative effects caused by the feuds between the coalitions of Vajpayee during its first term of office. It is well known that Atal B Vajpayee was a pragmatic politician, who held a host of radical slogans, such as 'India for the Hindus'.

It was through him and his party that America succeeded in breaking the dominance of the Congress Party over the political life in India which lasted more than 45 years.

Therefore, Nawaz Sharif's submission to the American pressure to withdraw from Kargil had led to the victory of Vajpayee in the Indian general elections and to the crushing defeat of the Congress Party that had historically been loyal to Britain, which fact the US never approved.

But was the coup justified?

The army on 12th October 1999 came forward with a common, but ever appealing slogan of '**eradication of political corruption**' for Pakistani people. Was it appropriate for the army to prosecute corruption mafia who themselves kept a blurred history in this respect? Pakistan's army, with its record of dictatorial intervention and rule and then getting legitimacy & approval through the kangaroo courts of known fame, hardly qualified as exceptional.

However, despite its prolonged and best endeavours, Pakistan's army has not been able to entirely subjugate its civil institutions and especially the judiciary as in the military regimes of Spain of the past and other countries of South American continent. Many analysts had noted that Gen Musharraf's regime had done little to quash corruption. In fact, Pakistan, which was ranked 79th in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index in 2001 dropped to 142 in 2006, placing it in the bottom quarter of the list, 22 spots away from the last entry. What a qualification the Pakistan possess.

As per polls done by Dawn, News, Indian Express and CNN-IBN in individual capacity and at intervals, a majority believe that corruption during this administration had increased. An Asian Development Bank report on the state of the country during the 60th year of Independence described it as a country with 'poor governance, endemic corruption and social indicators which are among the worst in Asia'.

Once in 2007, Gen Musharraf's team cost national exchequer millions of Rupees to hire teams of expensive lawyers to represent his government in courts. In one such case regarding the privatization of Pakistan Steel Mills Corporation, whose worth was stated to be Rupees 600 billion, and which was sold out for mere Rupees 20.6 billions, the government had spent Rupees 90 million, with Sharifuddin Pirzada alone getting away with 6.6 million rupees. The Supreme Court had taken *suo moto* notice of that dubious deal and the said case had played a background role for decision of sending the Chief Justice Iftikhar M Chaudhry home in March 2007.

Most serious side effect of Gen Musharraf's rule was that the army lost its credibility as an institution. There was an escalating civil war-like situation on our north-western frontiers where soldiers were routinely being killed or kidnapped nearly daily, military installations were being attacked, and military casualties were piling up.

Most importantly, public resentment against the military as an institution was as high as one could ever recall. Arguably, not since 1971 had the Pakistan military been under such internal strain.

In Pakistan, every dictator 'General' had always taken all due cares and precautions to keep reins of the government in his hands. Gen Musharraf adopted the same methodology to extend his rule under one pretext or the other and by keeping his guns on the shoulders of higher judiciary. Gen Ziaul Haq had also done the same.