

Changing Power Dynamics in Pakistan

Why in news?

\n\n

Government has proposed an amendment in the oath by Members of Parliament.

\n\n

What is the ongoing problem?

\n\n

\n

- The changes made in the oath reportedly moderated the mention of Prophet Muhammad.

\n

- The protesters are alleging that this would amount to blasphemy, a highly contentious issue in Muslim Pakistan.

\n

- They also claim that the oath was softened to enable the participation of Ahmadis, a long-persecuted Islamic minority sect.

\n

- The Prime Minister withdrew the proposed amendment in the wake of Islamist protests, hoping that it would pacify them.

\n

- However, Islamist groups, led by the chief of Tehreek-i-Labaik, continued to demand the resignation of Pakistan's law minister.

\n

- The Government of Pakistan closed down all television news channels for a day and shut down Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.

\n

- Moreover education institutions have had to be closed for few days in parts of the country.

\n

\n\n

How was the problem resolved?

\n\n

\n

- The protest finally ended following an agreement between the protesters and the government.
\n
- The agreement was mediated by a Major General of the Inter-Services Intelligence, and the Law Minister resigned.
\n
- The signed agreement concludes with crediting the Army Chief and his representative team for their “special efforts” in mediation.
\n
- However, the Islamabad High Court has criticised the Interior Minister for giving the military the role of “mediator”.
\n
- This is notably since the military had turned down the civilian government’s request to intervene earlier.
\n
- The judge bravely noted that this was “proof of the military’s involvement”.
\n

\n\n

What is the larger concern?

\n\n

- **Military** - Various evidences clearly suggest that dharnas were supported by very senior members of Pakistan’s Army.
\n
- They are suspectedly using the agitation as a means to dismiss the democratic governments.
\n
- In the current standoff, for a small and insignificant group to be so well coordinated across diverse cities adds to the above speculation.
\n
- Also, the military did not respond to the earlier call by the civilian government to render law and order duty according to the Constitution.
\n
- This was a clear act of disobedience and of destabilising further a weak government.
\n
- **Government** - Ever since the return to democracy in 2008 in Pakistan, the threat by extra-democratic means of destabilising democracy has loomed large.
\n
- Particularly, now Pakistan is in a vulnerable condition trying to stabilise itself under a new Prime Minister, after earlier PM Nawaz Sharif was disqualified

on charges of corruption.

\n

- Given this, the recent protest by a minuscule political entity of unarmed men has created such a major crisis for the government.

\n

- The government is criticised for its delayed response and certainly letting the organisation consolidate to gain strength and support.

\n

- **Democratic Politics** - The cause of the current stand-off could be that non-mainstream parties now do politics outside the rules of democratic politics.

\n

- Or the rules of democratic politics have changed to include disruptive activities which might completely destabilise democracy itself.

\n

- Clearly, religious groups and parties are far better organised and committed than the liberal organisations and the civil society.

\n

- On the other hand, the military overrules its chief executive and the civilian government.

\n

- Military has become indispensable to ensure agreements between the government and protesters.

\n

- All these are indicative of the changing nature of democratic politics in Pakistan, the continuing erosion of executive authority and the rising instability of the government.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n

