

Pakistani Army's Political Clout

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n

- Pakistan Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa had recently concluded a high-profile 3 nation tour of Brunei, Malaysia and Maldives.
- This raised considerable interest as his popularity within Pakistan is rising and he has also called for peace with India - which might mark a new geopolitics.

\n

\n\n

What were the contours of his trip?

\n\n

\n

- In Mr. Bajwa's three-nation tour, it was his visit to Maldives that gained much attention due the political churn going on in the island.
- Maldives had only recently lifted the much criticised 45 day emergency that was imposed by its president Yameen to save his government.
- Mr. Bajwa is hence the 1st high profile delegate to have visited Maldives after the emergency, and he has called for closer ties between both the countries.
- The visit is all the more significant as the Pakistani PM had only recently declined an invite by the Maldivian government and criticised the emergency.
- Additionally, considering the aggressive Chinese foray into Maldives, India too has been highly cynical of the island's political situation.
- Notably, Mr. Bajwa appears to be the most powerful man in Pakistan presently and has also been vocal on political issues within Pakistan.

\n

\n\n

What marked the rise of Gen. Bajwa's profile?

\n\n

- **Conference** - In early March, Gen Bajwa briefed about 30 top Pakistani journalists for a record 4 hours, which was a first since Gen Pervez Musharraf.
- The press meet wasn't restricted to "peace and security" alone and the General is said to have answered most question in clear and direct terms.
- He spoke about the poor shape of the economy, criticised Pakistan's massive social security scheme, and called for bettering civilian institutions and police.
- Notably, previous army generals too had given out political statements, and this is seen as the army's way to destabilise the civilian administration.
- **Controversies** - He commended the judiciary for its work, while it is facing accusations of trying to destabilizing the ruling PML government.
- Additionally, he even stated that politicians need to step up their game and that if martial law was to be imposed, it would be because of their snag.
- More importantly, he criticized the 18th Constitutional Amendment that devolved more power to provincial governments to strengthen democracy.
- While the amendment had largely been received positively, the general had stated that the provisions were dangerous and could lead to sectarian fissures.
- **The interpretations** - The contents of the pressmeet have been coined the "Bajwa Doctrine" by the media due to its comprehensiveness.
- The event generated a political storm and prompted some to question the intention of the general - which forced the military to issue a clarification.
- ISPR (military's media wing) had subsequently issued a generic clarification that the Army doesn't wish to derail the civilian democracy.

\n\n

What are the security implications of the Bajwa doctrine?

\n\n

\n

- On reading between the lines, some analysts state that the General seems to want a proud Pakistan with a peaceful and friendly neighbourhood.

\n

- But he has made it unambiguous that the Pakistan will continue building its military prowess, in order to respond with muscle if provoked or pressurised.

\n

- While a compromise on Kashmir looks distant, the general seems to be renouncing war for the cause and is hoping an economic integration first.

\n

- Interestingly, he mooted further that India and Pakistan should establish trade ties akin to the US-Canada model.

\n

- He even boldly asserted that Pakistan lacked strategic depth in Afghanistan and stressed the need for promoting peace with Iran and Afghanistan.

\n

- He also suggested a non-confrontational dialogue with the US to resolve thorny issues, but simultaneously asserting that U.S. can't intimidate Pakistan.

\n

- For 'de-weaponising' various groups within Pakistan and mainstreaming them, the general had vouched for following the Ireland model, which doesn't distinguish between good and bad terrorist.

\n

\n\n

What are the implications for India?

\n\n

\n

- Gen Bajwa's views on making peace with India could be perceived as a mere reiteration of Pakistan's traditional position.

\n

- Hence, India would continue to be sceptical until Pakistan acts against the Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), and other militants who are active in Kashmir.

\n

- However, Mr. Bajwa's reconciliatory tone on issues regarding the US, Afghanistan and China indicates a genuine desire for peace and stability.

\n

- Hence, the rise of General Bajwa could usher in a new geopolitical reality to the subcontinent and beyond.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: Indian Express

\n\n

\n\n

\n

