



RESEARCH PAPER

A Sneaking Exposure to Premiumship through Politics of Tactics and Compromises – Civil Military Relationship during Benazir Bhutto’s Government 1988-90

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ABSTRACT

This study navigates on civil military relationship during the occasion of her first tenure as Prime Minister (1988-90). She made pragmatic approach and used well political tactics to land in corridor of power. Further, it encapsulates and explains how she was convinced; to continue Gen. Aslam Beg as Chief of Army Staff, to retain Sahibzada Yaqoob Khan as Foreign Minister, not to cut the defence budget and not to interfere in military affairs. This research work presents a systematic and factual analysis of her political acumen, sagacity and dexterity to develop civil-military relations in constructive way for the sake of democratic norms, tradition and to inculcate its environment. It also throws light on civil-military relations as well as the circumstances that led towards her ouster from premiership during her first tenure 1988-90. Furthermore, theories like trait theory, behavioral theory, situational theory and path goal theory have also been applied to have a better understanding of Benazir Bhutto’s leadership qualities and administrative abilities.

Introduction

The tenure of Benazir Bhutto as a Prime Minister (1988-90) is an important era of Pakistani political structure and democratic stability. Keeping in view the challenge to develop understanding with military which were being faced by Benazir Bhutto, during her first tenure as Prime Minister, the administrative responses, and managerial skills of Benazir Bhutto, as a ruler/Prime Minister of Pakistan can be gauged in the prism of trait theory, behavioral theory, situational theory and path goal theory. These theories are helpful to better understand the Benazir Bhutto’s managerial skills, political tactics and dexterity during her first

tenure as Prime Minister of Pakistan (1988-90). The aforesaid theories explore the administrative skills, political acumen, revisiting challenge to develop better understanding with military and Benazir Bhutto's responses as Prime Minister during 1988-1990, attitude and motivational factors of any leader in office of authority while devising strategy to resolve the issues and to steer the country towards prosperity as well as democratic stability.

The above mentioned assessment unfolds that Benazir Bhutto possessed exceptional leadership qualities as she displayed in the face of different personal and political challenges. The advent of Benazir Bhutto in the corridor of power was not a bed of roses, it was a hard journey which was full of myriad challenges. She exhibited exquisite response to the challenges by demonstrating political acumen, administrative and managerial skills. She acted, sometimes decisively, to prove her authority and sometimes demonstrated compromises with the other political stakeholders in Pakistan. Thus, the trait theory, behavioral theory, situational theory and path goal theory can be helpful for the readers to peep into political leadership of Benazir Bhutto keeping in view the challenges and the administrative responses of Benazir Bhutto, as a ruler/Prime Minister of Pakistan 1988-90.

Delving the challenges in Civil-Military Relationship during Benazir Bhutto's Premiership (1988-90)

In 1988, the Pakistan Peoples' Party majority raised eye brow in military leadership because the party's leadership used to be considered as conspired against military elites (Shafqat, 1996, p. 655-672). Barrister Ch. Aitzaz Ahsan, Minister of Interior, Law and Justice during Benazir Bhutto's first Premiership (1988-90) revealed in an interview by the researcher that the military regime of Gen. Zia-ul-Haq ruled more than a decade long, therefore, after the death of Gen. Zia, the military entrenchment in politics was still prevailing at that time. They were not ready to accept the government of Benazir Bhutto. Thus, mutual distrust and hostility existed between Benazir Bhutto and military elites at that time. However, the departure of Gen. Zia from the corridor of power, the achievement of majority by PPP in 1988 general elections, required a situational attitude transformation from political as well as military leadership. Therefore, Benazir Bhutto not only demonstrated bargaining chip to become Prime Minister but she also accepted military's demands; to retain Sahibzada Yaqoob as Foreign Minister, not to cut the defense budget, and let to continue Gen. Aslam Beg as an Army Chief (Interview of Barrister Ch. Aitzaz Ahsan, Interior Minister during Benazir's Premiership (1988-90) conducted by the researcher on 16th August 2018). The primary administrative challenge of Benazir Bhutto was to develop understanding, trust as well as cooperation with military (Dharamdasani, 1989, 198). On flipside of the coin, military was willing to develop a better relationship with civilian leadership (Shafqat, 1996, p. 655-672). At that juncture, civilian leadership and military elites demonstrated; caution and suspicion towards each other, by and large, started the era of civil military understanding (Interview of Sardar Asif Ahmad Ali, Foreign Minister during Benazir Bhutto's Premiership (1993-96) conducted by the researcher on 23rd

May 2018). In this political challenge, Benazir Bhutto coined the bargaining chip, reasonably well, to the challenge of civil military relationship (Shafqat, 1996, p. 655-672).

Replacement of ISI Chief Gen. Hameed Gul

Even, in the office of Prime Minister, in spite of initial understanding, she kept on creating more challenges for herself and antagonized the military by taking various steps during her first tenure. On 24th May 1989, Benazir Bhutto replaced Gen. Hameed Gul, Head of ISI, chief strategist during Afghan War with Lt. Gen. Shamsur-Rehman Kallu; who was retired military officer. Instead of making appointment from serving officers, she appointed retired General as ISI Chief without consultation of Army Chief (*The Nation*, May 25, 1989; Sheikh, 2000, p. 153-154). However, this action of Benazir was not appreciated by military. Therefore, military considered this step of Benazir Bhutto as violation of her commitment as well as interference in professional affairs of Army. In these circumstances, it was coming difficult for Benazir Bhutto to make administrative decisions related to military affairs or to keep herself aloof to avoid any kind of interference in the affairs related to military (Burki, 2004, p.80: *Dawn*, May, 27, 1989). As a Prime Minister, this was a grave challenge for her government; to develop better understanding with military elites in Pakistan.

Pacca Qilla Incident

Moreover, Benazir Bhutto faced another challenge related to misunderstanding with military, on 26th May 1990, when Sindh government, unleashed massacre of *Muhajir* children and women in *Pacca Qilla*. The Sindh government was reported that a large cache of various categories of weapons concealed by the MQM militant group, therefore, the provincial authorities carried out an operation Clean-Up (Akhund, 2000, 141; Sheikh, 2000, 182). As a result of this operation, prominently having ethnic factor and association, almost 30 persons were killed at *Pacca Qilla*. This operation led towards strong riots in Karachi by *Muhajir* community and reaction caused by *Muhajirs* killed almost 350 persons. When operation was launched, Aslam Beg, the then Military Chief was on foreign tour. Further, at that time, the Corps Commander of Sindh was also on the visit of border areas. Therefore, the timings of the operation were chosen when the top brass of military was not present. Consequently, this *Pacca Qilla* incident was taken against *Muhajirs* (Shafqat, 1996, p. 655-672). At that juncture, the army troops moved in and took the control of the area and commanded the Police authorities to clear out with immediate effect. The police complied with the instructions of armed forces (Sheikh, 2000, p. 183). Later, When Gen. Aslam Beg visited different affected areas in Hyderabad; he received a cordial welcome and people shouted slogans for removal of Benazir Bhutto by imposing martial law. This incident of *Pacca Qilla* parted ways between Army Chief as well as Prime Minister (Akhund, 2000, 141-143). Even, Army Chief and Prime Minister did not meet between 27th of May till 24th of July 1990 (Talbot, 1998, p. 309). This incident also created problems for Benazir Bhutto and she

could not handle the relationship with military tactfully and misunderstanding with top military brass weakened her grip in the administrative affairs of the country (Akhund, 2000, 141-143; Sheikh, 2000, 153-154; Shafqat, 1996, p. 655-672).

Differences with Army regarding Selection of Army Personnel

Even, Benazir's differences regarding Army Selection Board related to promotions, postings and retirements of senior rank officers; were also arisen towards confrontation. As every year, from April to June, Military's Selection Board conducts its meeting to make decisions regarding the postings and promotions of officers. Pakistan army always focuses to guard the recommendations, proceedings and decisions of Selection Board. Further, in 1970s, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's interference in the Board's recommendations caused uproar in the army (Shafqat, 1996, p. 655-672). In the month of June, 1990, she, being the Prime Minister tried to interfere in Military's Selection Board in order to seek, extension in term of appointment, of Lt. Gen. Aslam Masood who was serving as Corps Commander, Lahore (Talbot, 1998, p. 309). At that juncture, the military leadership conveyed serious concerns to the President and became doubtful about Benazir's commitment regarding power sharing with military. In July, 1990, the generals, in Corps Commander meeting conveyed a decisive message to the President of Pakistan. As a result, the President, Ghulam Ishaq Khan added military's message to his already longer list of charges; like corruption, misconduct, nepotism and inefficiency of PPP government and decided to over throw the government of Benazir Bhutto (Shafqat, 1996, p. 655-672).

In fact, Benazir Bhutto was not effective or skillful enough, to manage his relations with the army. The challenge of developing balance civil military relationship, for Benazir Bhutto, and to fulfill the commitment which she made before taking oath as Prime Minister remained just a verbosity without any practical effort to develop harmonious and understanding based relationship. Later on, this violation of commitment, by Benazir Bhutto, became a grave hurdle for her government and military developed strong misapprehensions about PPP government (Shafqat, 1996, p. 655-672).

Response to Civil-Military Relations

In 1988, the elections brought PPP's victory which facilitated the way for Benazir Bhutto to associate, a hope of becoming Prime Minister of Pakistan. However, civilian political leadership and military bureaucracy were not enjoying mutually deep and understanding based relationship (Shafqat, 1996, p. 655-672). Further, Civil and military leadership was suspicious, doubtful and on the brink of trust deficiency (Interview of Sardar Asif Ahmad Ali, Foreign Minister during Benazir Bhutto's Premiership (1993-96) conducted on 23rd May 2018). While responding to this political challenge, Benazir Bhutto floated the chip of compromises through the policy of give and take. Military was willing to carry on the Zia led Afghan Foreign Policy in order to keep strategic depth in North Western frontier border of Pakistan. The response of Benazir Bhutto, initially, was

compromising when she accepted the military's demands to retain Sahibzada Yaqoob as Foreign Minister of Pakistan, not to interfere in military's internal affairs and also to give direct role to the military in foreign policy etc (Bhatia, 2008, p.92-93: Dharamdasani, 1989, 198).

On accepting military's demands, Benazir response was a positive step to bring a democratic transition as a leader in a country. In fact, before taking oath, for the office of Prime Minister, military affirmation and approval was important and Benazir responded with political dexterity and accommodative attitude as a sagacious politician. However, if Benazir would have been rejected the demands of military and her response was not positive to the military's demand; her arrival at the office of Prime Minister would have been jeopardized state of affairs (Bhatia, 2008, p.92-93: Dharamdasani, 1989, 198).

According to trait theory, leaders demonstrate their intelligence, temperament and attitude in different timings and duration. Therefore, Benazir's personality demonstrated a positive attitude and temperament while dealing political bargaining with army; to smooth her way towards the office of Prime Minister of Pakistan. Therefore, trait theory is helpful to gauge the leadership qualities of Benazir with her accommodative attitude and good temperament.

Harmonizing Response regarding Gen. Aslam Beg's continuity as Army Chief

Benazir Bhutto not only accepted the demands to retain Sahibzada Yaqoob as Foreign Minister, not to interfere in military's internal affairs, to give direct role to the military in foreign policy but also exhibited harmonizing response to agree on military's willingness regarding continuity of Aslam Beg as Army Chief in her first tenure of Premiership (1988-90). As a political leader, it was need of the time to accept military's demand regarding the continuity of Gen. Aslam Beg as Army Chief. (Zakria, 1989, p.10).

Benazir Bhutto's positive response regarding the Army Chief, removed, to a larger extent, the misunderstanding and suspicions between top military brass and PPP's political leadership. Therefore, the presence of army chief, on 2nd December 1988, in the oath taking ceremony of Benazir as Prime Minister of Pakistan, removed misgivings and conveyed a symbolic message that civil and military leadership have developed reasonable understanding to resolve suspicions and doubts among each other. Hence, Benazir was agreed, for Gen. Aslam Beg, to carry on his services for Pakistan armed forces as Army Chief. Therefore, Gen. Aslam Beg was generous and courteous enough to demonstrate his pledge of loyalty to the Premiership of Benazir Bhutto (Zakria, 1989, p.10).

As behavioral theory describes that personality of the leader can be analyzed through his managerial activities, effectiveness and application of one's learning according to the demand of the profession. Therefore, Benazir Bhutto showed a good behavior towards Civil Military relationship and was agreed regarding the

continuity of Gen. Aslam Beg as an Army Chief. Therefore, behavioral theory is applied about the compromising and harmonizing behavior of Benazir Bhutto to handle the affairs with the state institutions with good behaviors and attitude.

Showing willingness Not to Cut the Defense Budget

The perception of Pakistan Peoples' Party, in the eyes of military, was anti-army and the party's leadership used to be considered as conspired against military elites (Dharamdassani, 1989, 198). Therefore, the top military leadership was doubtful that presence of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto as a Prime Minister will cut the defense budget of Pakistan. If Benazir Bhutto would have curtailed defense budget, it would have created many hurdles and problems for Pakistan military as well. The Indian aggressive designs, border skirmishes, volatile situation in Kashmir, always required Pakistan's defense system; to keep updated and modernized technologically. For this purpose, military's insistence not to cut the defense budget was justified demand which received a positive response from Benazir Bhutto as well. Therefore, the military's perception about Benazir Bhutto as anti-army was removed (Shafqat, 1996, p. 655-672).

The top military brass, through its demand, and Benazir's response of acceptance to military's demand was a significance attitudinal change; between military behavior and Benazir's acceptance as a women leader of the country. It was a sagacious reaction, on Benazir Bhutto's part, because, historically army had dominated in politics of Pakistan. Benazir Bhutto's response to the initial challenges was a skillful demonstration, of a young leader, to hold the office of Prime Minister while tackling and managing the powerful forces in Pakistan political structure during her first tenure (Shafqat, 1996, p. 655-672).

According to the situational theory, the leaders always performed well according to situation by the using their discretion, performance and authority. At the very outset of her journey, as a first female Prime Minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto showed her willingness, not to cut the defence budget, according to the situation as well as demand of military. Thus, Benazir Bhutto acted according to situation, agreed to military's demand, ascended to the office of Prime Minister of Pakistan, while showing leadership skills and presence of mind as the situation was demanding.

Formulating Committee to review Intelligence Agencies' role in Democratic Polity

Gen. Zia used the role of intelligence agencies, to influence the politics of Pakistan, within country to achieve his arbitrary and authoritarian purposes, in order to seek longevity for his dictatorial rule. Therefore, after the attack of the Soviets on Afghanistan, American CIA and ISI remained very close and worked collaboratively. After successful role in Afghanistan, the ISI gained boost and was encouraged to run Afghan Policy as well. Such effective political role was also creating hurdles and hindrances when Benazir became Prime Minister in 1988.

Hence, she attentively tried to assess ISI role in politics. Therefore, she constituted a Committee in February 1989 to assess and review the role of Intelligence agencies in Pakistan's politics. The said Committee presented its findings, although, Committee appreciated the excellent performance of ISI, yet, also showed deep concerns over its influence in Pakistan's politics (*Dawn*, Change of Guard at the ISI, May 29, 2000).

As the path goal theory explains leader's response to achieve various goals; in different tasks, to get satisfaction and to assign work according to different political environments. Benazir Bhutto assigned a task to a review Committee for determining the role of ISI in Pakistan's political environment; in order to satisfy herself as a politically and democratically elected Prime Minister of Pakistan.

Replacing ISI Chief

In the light of suggestions of the Committee, Benazir Bhutto decided to take control of operation; related to Inter Service Intelligence (ISI). She was fearful that more than one occasion, ISI undermined her government and she stated it, on many occasions, about the ISI as well. Historically, Benazir Bhutto's distrust and doubts existed with ISI because it hounded her, during Zia regime and contributed a key role to create IJI just before the elections of 1988. (Muneer Ahmad, 1990, 108-123) For this purpose, Benazir Bhutto was willing to bring ISI under effective and vigorous civilian control. While neglecting the advice of Chief of Army Staff, Benazir Bhutto removed the then powerful ISI chief, Lt. Gen. Hameed Gul in May 1989 (*The Nation*, May 25, 1989; Sheikh, 2000, p.153-154).

The replacement of Lt. Gen. Hameed Gul was a courageous response and a brave move by Benazir Bhutto. Lt. Gen. Hameed Gul, who was not only an important policymaker during Afghan War in military regime of Gen. Zia but he also contributed significantly for the creation of IJI. However, US foreign policy experienced a strategic shift because of peaceful prospects of settlement of Afghan issue. However, the presence of Hameed Gul became as an irritant factor to US policy makers. She demonstrated a little understanding with military and acted fearlessly, by appointing a retired Lt. Gen. Shams-ur-Rehman Kallu as ISI chief instead of making an appointment from serving officers to the post of ISI chiefs. Hence, Benazir Bhutto exhibited political dexterity and relentless courage for trying to bring Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) under her control as a Prime Minister through a courageous and fearless response. Although, it was considered interference in military's professional affairs yet, for a spirit of accommodation, army complied with Benazir Bhutto's orders (Shafqat, 1996, p. 655-672).

Compassionate Response and Morale Boosting Visit of Siachen Glacier

Benazir Bhutto gave an active response to the activities and contributions of soldiers who were facing difficulties and tribulations in harsh climatic conditions at Siachen glacier. For this purpose, on 21st August, Benazir Bhutto travelled to Skardu on Air Force C-130 Plane. It was a very supportive response on behalf of Benazir

Bhutto; because no head of the state visited Siachen glacier before her. Then, she visited Dansam from Skardu and she also went Ali Brang saw while travelling on Puma helicopter. The visit of Benazir Bhutto on such high places with little availability of oxygen, proved a morale boosting visit and encouraged the morale of soldiers through her confident and compassionate response at Siachen glacier (Akhund, 2000, 113).

During her first tenure, Benazir Bhutto, sometimes, gave compromised response while, on different occasions, used her office and authority, to minimize the role of ISI in democratic decision making process. She also remained proactive to shun the impression of any civil military rift. Even, in conflicting situation, after the removal of Gen. Hameed Gul as ISI Chief by her, she, made efforts, to bridge the engulf, and visited Siachen glacier in order to show solidarity and compassionate response by a Prime Minister, for the soldiers, who, were facing severe climatic difficulties at Siachen glacier (Akhund, 2000, 113).

Conclusion

Benazir Bhutto's first tenure remained a mixture of understanding and conflict between Civil Military relationship. However, her decisions and actions, in her first tenure, demonstrated a tilted attitude, by Benazir Bhutto, towards the attainment of domination of democratically elected government; in a state where military was entrenched in politics of the country.

Her party's victory in 1988 elections raised eye brow of military leadership because PPP was considered as anti-army political party. Thus, in spite of her initial bargaining chip with military, she was unable to develop understanding with military on several issues like; replacement of Gen. Hameed Gul, ISI Chief, without consulting the then Army Chief, *Pacca Qilla* incident and using of her authority regarding promotion, posting and retirement of senior Army officers.

The study has observed that, in order to come into power and to run administrative machinery of the country, she adopted pragmatic approach and tried to develop harmonizing relationship with Gen. Aslam Beg, Army Chief, accepted military's demands without which it would have been possible to bring a democratic transition in the country's political arena. Therefore, the good-will gestures and pragmatic approach of Benazir Bhutto dispelled the concerns of military leadership about Benazir Bhutto and PPP as they had perceived them to be holding an anti-army stance and security concerns. She also assured the army that she will not cut the defense budget. Besides this, her compassionate response and morale boosting visit of *Siachen* glacier contributed her positive image as a Prime Minister in the eyes of Army.

Therefore, Benazir inherited some outstanding issues in the internal and external fronts but some of them were those issues which were specifically created for Benazir Bhutto. Some issues and challenges were also the outcome of her

administrative mishandling or governance. However, the plain fact is that she could not complete her first tenure as Prime Minister because of multiple factors, regardless of nepotism and corruption, the most important cause for her short tenures was the bad civil-military relations.

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