

# Evolving Political Equations in Pakistan: Can the Civilian Leadership Deliver?

Savita Pande

Pakistan's transition to democracy is being much talked about because it is for the first time in the country's political history, that an elected government has handed over the reins to another elected government after completing its term of five years. The significance of the May 2013 general elections in Pakistan for the National Assembly as well as Provincial Assemblies of Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was highlighted by the fact that the voter turnout was as high as 55 per cent despite the Taliban threat (it was 44 per cent in 2008) as 46.2 million people voted (compared with 36.6 million in 2008).<sup>1</sup> This was a significant achievement, considering that as many as 2,674 people were killed in 1,108 incidents between January and April 2013; the targets were mainly the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), sparing the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).<sup>2</sup> The peaceful transition of the Presidency from Asif Ali Zardari to Mamnoon Hussain was also lauded as strengthening democracy, with the former credited for it "by moderating the powers of his own office and the confrontational tone of politics in general."<sup>3</sup> The Presidential

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election was, albeit not all that smooth in the sense that the election was boycotted by the main Opposition party, the PPP, as well as the Awami National Party (ANP) and the Balochistan National Party (BNP), as the Supreme Court had rejected the decision of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) of not allowing the preponement of elections.<sup>4</sup>

For Nawaz Sharif, this is a third time victory (this time on an unexpected scale). His party the PML-N won 126 seats (14.9 million votes) followed by the PPP which got 32 seats (6.9 million ballots) and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Party (Pakistan Movement for Justice) which secured 28 seats (7.7 million votes). The PML-N got an overall majority once other independents joined it. The PML-N secured absolute majority in the house of 342. As for the provinces, the PML-N formed the government in Punjab, the PPP in Sindh, the PTI in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Baloch and Pashtun nationalists formed a government in Balochistan.

Equally hailed is the smooth transition in the President's office. Although in effect it amounts to strengthening of the power of the Prime Minister, the incoming President, Mamnoon Hussain, apart from a brief stint as Governor of Sindh in 1999, is actually a political non-entity (he has no role in decision-making either inside the PML-N and outside) like the former President Rafiq Tarar. It has been said that the "sole criterion for his selection seems to have been his unwavering loyalty to Nawaz Sharif and the PML-N, particularly after the 1999 coup when Hussain was removed as Governor of Sindh".<sup>5</sup>

Another such selection, which suited Sharif? was that of the Governor of Punjab, Muhammad Sarwar, a businessman from Glasgow, who has no known political role in the PML-N or in Pakistan's politics. He belongs

to the category of overseas Pakistani called in to occupy key positions and stay so long as the politician supporting them are in these positions, say people like Moeen Qureshi, Shaukat Aziz and Abdul Hafeez Sheikh. This is also true of women on reserved seats from the PML-N who are related to some important personality or the other. Thus, remarks Rizvi, “The current PML-N practice of placing people with no autonomous political standing in key official positions strengthens the position of the Prime Minister because all such leaders look towards him for guidance.”<sup>6</sup>

The big question is: will Mian Nawaz Sharif, serving his third term as Prime Minister, be able to deliver on all the promises made by him? His challenges are extremely formidable: Taliban led extremism and militancy inside the country, discontent over a badly ailing, failing economy, endemic rampant corruption, including at high levels, chronic and unbearable power cuts and strained relations with the United States. And this, when he favours negotiations with the Taliban, has talked tough on civil-military relations and on improving ties with India, not allowing militant groups to attack India – issues which will have him at loggerheads with the General Headquarters (GHQ).

### **Civil-Military Relations**

While Nawaz Sharif is apprehensive of the Army, being ousted in a coup in 1999, the Army’s distrust of him came to light when WikiLeaks disclosed that Kayani had thought of ousting Zardari to prevent Sharif from coming to power.<sup>7</sup> Sharif’s decision to personally oversee the Defence and Foreign Ministries, hitherto the domain of the Army, shows his moves to establish a powerful civilian government.<sup>8</sup> The issues of immediate friction were conjectured to be: his call for probing the Kargil debacle during the election campaign and after winning, his demand for trying Musharraf for high treason; whether these could lead to the rolling of other heads; the selection of the next Army Chief; and his attitude towards the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) (discussed in detail later).<sup>9</sup>

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Soon after his takeover, Gen Kayani met Sharif and asked him to slow down his potential engagement with India.<sup>10</sup> Katherine Adney doubts whether Sharif's bid of rapprochement with India will bring him into confrontation with the Army. To quote her, "Their (Army's) increasing entanglement with Pakistan's economy might provide an incentive, but it would be a brave analyst who would predict a normalisation of relations between the two

countries".<sup>11</sup> She also thinks the friction may come because the "Pakistani Army is wary of further ceasefire deals with the TTP. In contrast, Sharif has advocated talks".<sup>12</sup> The latter was evident when on May 20, the Prime Minister said: "If the Taliban offers us an option to have dialogue, we should take it seriously. Why can't we talk to the Taliban to make our country peaceful?" Kayani, on the other hand, praised the people of Pakistan who had "defied unfounded dictates of an insignificant and misguided minority in the recently held general elections".<sup>13</sup> Nawaz lost ground as nine days later the Taliban withdrew from the talks, following the killing of the TTP's second in-command Waliur Rehman in a drone attack.<sup>14</sup>

Sharif's attempts to establish civilian supremacy were much talked about after the leak of the Abbotabad Commission Report to Al Jazeera, ostensibly from within the Prime Minister's Secretariat.<sup>15</sup> It was in the aftermath of this leak that he visited the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Headquarters and sought better coordination of the intelligence agencies and a civilian supervision of them.<sup>16</sup> As Kayani's term comes to an end in November this year, the guessing game remains basically among the three: Lt Gen Rashad Mahmood, the current Chief of General Staff, Lt Gen Tariq Khan, who is considered pragmatic on US relations, and Lt Gen

Haroon Aslam, the seniormost official after Kayani... “Some have even floated the idea that Kayani – whose term was extended for three years in 2010 to the discontent of some of the top brass climbing the ranks below him – might end up staying in the job for another three years”.<sup>17</sup> Nawaz Sharif has to appoint the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC) as the present incumbent Gen Khalid Shameem Wyne is also retiring in October.<sup>18</sup>

Sharif has old relations with the military: handpicked by the military (Gen Zia), his entry into the politics of Pakistan was through the rigging of the elections by the country’s security agencies, as was revealed during the Asghar Khan Case verdict.<sup>19</sup> He ousted two Army Chiefs during his previous terms as Prime Minister – Jehangir Karamat (forced to quit) and Pervez Musharraf (sacked) the second leading to his own ouster and being jailed and then seeking asylum in Saudi Arabia.

The status of civil-military relations was reflected in the creation of the National Security Council (NSC) to improve coordination between the civil and military institutions by formulating a national security agenda guiding defence policy, foreign policy, internal security policy, etc. According to media reports, there was consensus in the PML-N that the NSC would be formally struck off for which a constitutional amendment would be moved to repeal the NSC Act adopted by the Parliament in April 2004.<sup>20</sup> The NSC would be headed by Nawaz Sharif and have the Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Defence, Interior and Finance, the three Services Chiefs and the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee as members.<sup>21</sup> Nawaz had strongly opposed its creation when the then Army Chief Gen Jehangir Karamat floated the idea in October 1998, (although

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it was mooted first by Gen Yahya Khan). Even in the Charter of Democracy signed between Nawaz Sharif and the late Benazir Bhutto in May 2006, there was a clause that said the NSC would be abolished, and the Defence Cabinet Committee (DCC) would be headed by the Prime Minister, having a permanent Secretariat. So months after coming to power, on August 22, Sharif reconstituted the DCC into the Cabinet Committee on National Security (CCNS), to replace the NSC (then considered as likely to be abolished through another Act of Parliament).<sup>22</sup> Ayesha Siddiqi thinks the move is not constructive for a positive civil-military balance in the long run. Despite more civilians on the council, the fact that the military dominates information and intelligence and is a key political player will enable it to dominate the decision-making. The fact that Nawaz Sharif could not put life into the DCC and created the NSC instead, speaks volumes of where the power lies at the moment”.<sup>23</sup> She also thinks that “sources suggest that making of the national security strategy and counter-terrorism policy were outsourced to the National Defence University team or someone in the GHQ. This indicates a weakening of resolve to turn the civil-military balance around”.<sup>24</sup>

Sharif’s retaining of the foreign and defence portfolios indicates his plans to assert civilian control in these areas, “in which elected politicians have been constrained by the military”.<sup>25</sup> According to Najam Sethi, Homeland Security and Counter-Terrorism will be given to the Interior Minister, Chaudhry Nisar, while the National Security Advisor, Sartaj Aziz, will oversee its foreign policy dimensions as Foreign Affairs Advisor with the rank of a Minister. “On the face of it, this looks to be a good strategy... but in actuality, it is burdened from the start by the political egos and ambitions of both its overseers.”<sup>26</sup> The judiciary as well as

military failed to get Zardari evicted from the Presidency, largely because the then opposition PML-N did not yield. Nawaz learnt his lesson from 1993, when he had to resign under pressure from the Army prematurely after he locked horns with President Ghulam Ishaq. That this may have led to reduction in the powers of the President *a la* the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment, especially to dismiss the Parliament and that may have resulted from Sharif's own objective of seeking the repeal of the Legal Framework Order to seek another term as Prime Minister, is inconsequential. Even the bubble burst phenomenon of Qadri, the cleric from Canada, making a bid to bring the judiciary and Army into the future set-up did not work.<sup>27</sup>

The major challenge in this context comes from the issues of the global War on Terror (WoT) in which, from 2003-13, as per one estimate, Pakistan has suffered the loss of 49,771 lives (till September 29, 2013).<sup>28</sup> While Gen Kayani in his speech on Martyr's Day in GHQ took the ownership of, and responsibility for, the war on terror, saying that the "war the Army was fighting was Pakistan's war and that the anti-democratic forces would never be acceptable", the political parties built their electoral campaigns arguing the contrary.<sup>29</sup> For them, the military would be last option. Similarly, in the case of drone attacks, it has been argued that the "drone war is to be divorced from the WoT and handled exclusively by the Foreign Office or it will become part of the strategy that oversees the exit of US forces from Afghanistan. *This will be testing for civil-military relations*".<sup>30</sup>

## Judiciary

Post-2005, Pakistan saw judicial activism, hitherto unknown. Of special mention are its invalidation of the privatisation of the Pakistan Steel Mills where its judgement talked of mismanagement, flouting of rules, etc.; and the case perusal of *habeas corpus* and strong reaction by the Supreme Court against the Executive for abuse of power. Gen Musharraf reacted by suspending the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Justice

Iftikhar Chaudhry, declaring him non-functional, on March 9, 2007, and also moved a reference for the Chief Justice of Pakistan's (CJP's) accountability before the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) under Article 209 of the Constitution. The court invalidated the suspension of the CJP and reinstated him.<sup>31</sup>

Post-Musharraf, from February to June 2012, the judiciary also directly attacked both the Executive and the Legislature on the issue of corruption, and in the process, the Prime Ministers became the target. The Supreme Court bench found then Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani guilty of contempt of court for refusing to reopen corruption cases against the President, and gave him a symbolic sentence (of a few minutes' detention in the courtroom).<sup>32</sup> In June 2012, Gilani was disqualified for Prime Ministership for contempt of court by the Supreme Court and debarred from holding a seat in the Parliament (from the date of his conviction on April 26).<sup>33</sup> The Supreme Court also ordered the arrest of his proposed replacement, Makhdoom Shahabuddin, for importing chemicals used in the production of narcotics when he was Health Minister.<sup>34</sup> While it accepted the nomination of the next proposed Prime Minister Raja Pervez Ashraf (accused of electricity theft), when the Swiss authorities themselves refused to reopen the case against him, the Supreme Court ordered his arrest also on corruption charges, but the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Chairman refused to comply with the Supreme Court (SC) orders.<sup>35</sup>

The judiciary has also taken on the military. It ordered the government to begin criminal proceedings against Gen Aslam Beg, a former Army Chief, and Lt Gen Asad Durrani, a former Chief of the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate, both accused of distributing public money to the anti-Benazir Bhutto alliance of right-wing political parties that opposed Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party. At least nine retired Generals are facing judicial scrutiny for financial irregularities in different cases. Thus, while Gen Kayani said, "No individual or institution has

the monopoly to decide what is right or wrong in defining the ultimate national interest,” Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry replied, “Gone are the days when stability and security of the country was defined in terms of the number of missiles and tanks as a manifestation of hard power available at the disposal of the state”.<sup>36</sup> Musharraf is facing trial for having violated the Constitution in 2007 and being involved with the murders of Benazir Bhutto and the Baloch leader Akbar Bugti. Interestingly, he is not being charged for the 1999 coup, after which the the current Chief Justice took an oath and declared the 2002 Constitution legitimate under the “rule of necessity”.

The Chief Justice’s role itself came under scrutiny as corruption charges figured against his son, Arsalan Iftekhhar (who was accused of taking \$3.6 million in kickbacks from Malik Riaz, a wealthy property magnate) and the Chief Justice was accused of protecting him by claiming that this was an attack on the independence of the judiciary—the court had stayed the proceedings.<sup>37</sup> The Chief Justice’s popularity further waned as he backed down after accusing Imran Khan of contempt for criticising the judiciary for failing to prevent alleged election rigging. Again, the court reprimanded Babar Sattar, for some of his newspaper columns. According to Sattar, “The court is trying to control the narrative at a time when criticism is mounting, and to a certain extent, it has succeeded.” He further claimed, “Newspapers are carefully vetting articles on the Supreme Court before they are published”.<sup>38</sup>

Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry is due to retire in December 2013, and uncertainty dogs judicial activism after him. The most serious and current controversy relating to the institution concerns judges’ appointments to the superior judiciary. As per the 18th and 19th Constitutional Amendments, the Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) has to recommend the names of judges to be appointed to the superior judiciary. The lawyers have been critical of the fact that the “JCP gives too much power to the CJP and is, therefore, fundamentally non-inclusive

as far as the other members of the JCP, particularly its members drawn from the Bar, are concerned".<sup>39</sup> While amendments did give a role to the Parliament, the role itself is debatable. Thus, after the 19th Amendment, passed in 2010, the parliamentary committees can reject any name proposed by the JCP for appointment as a judge of the superior judiciary only if it is approved by a three-fourths majority and is in writing, and the rejection is subject to a judicial review by the superior courts.

## **Can the Civilian Leadership Deliver?**

### *Militancy*

Since the new government has taken over the reins, terror attacks have gone up in terms of both intensity and frequency, despite the fact that the PML-N, like the PTI, fought the elections with the slogan of initiating talks with the Taliban. The Taliban, after initial restraint, launched terror attacks ostensibly as a response to the killing of their second in command Waliur Rehman.<sup>40</sup> The TTP has repeatedly killed more than 49,000 Pakistanis in the last 12 years (24,000 from 2001 to 2008, more than 25,000 people since 2008).<sup>41</sup> More recently, on September 29, as many as 17 members of a single family were killed, On September 27, a bomb attack on a bus killed 20 people; on September 22, as many as 83 died in a church bombing; and a week prior to that on September 15, the TTP posted an online video to back up their claim of killing of senior Army personnel in Swat.<sup>42</sup>

In September beginning, an all parties conference endorsed the proposed dialogue with the Taliban after weeks of discussions within the PML-N government. But before it could be worked out as to when the talks would begin, who would take part in them or the conditions, if any, they would be held under, the General Commanding Officer (GCO) of 15 Division, Maj Gen Niazi, was killed in a terror attack, which came a day after the troops' withdrawal began from Malkand.<sup>43</sup> A development

that will make it harder for the government to start the negotiations, particularly in the light of the fact that the Taliban have two conditions for the dialogue: “First, Army troops should pull out from the entire tribal area. And second, our prisoners should be released.”<sup>44</sup> Responding, the Army said, “No one should have any misgivings that we would let terrorists coerce us into accepting their terms”.<sup>45</sup>

The Army has taken a tough position after the above mentioned killing of Maj Gen Niazi. A statement issued by the Army said that while the Army supported the political process, the terrorists will not be allowed to take advantage of it... The Army has the ability and the will to take the fight to the terrorists”.<sup>46</sup> The ANP, taking advantage of the situation, blamed the PTI, saying militants had come back to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and reinforced their position because of the PTI’s “lenient” policy.<sup>47</sup> The PTI, in turn, has asked the federal government to quit this “so-called war on terror” which was not Pakistan’s war.<sup>48</sup>

Militancy reportedly is also a factor in the formation of the PML-N and PTI governments in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The success is attributed to their links with extremist Islamist groups and anti-Americanism. WikiLeaks had alleged, “PML-N government in Punjab helped Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) ‘evade’ United Nations (UN) sanctions right after the Mumbai 26/11 attacks. President Asif Ali Zardari, speaking to former US Ambassador Anne Patterson, had alleged that Shahbaz Sharif had tipped off the LeT about the UN sanctions, which gave the banned outfit a chance to empty its bank account before a raid or freeze.”<sup>49</sup> The Punjab government was also reported to have given nearly one million

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dollars to institutions linked to the Jamaat-ud-Dawa, according to a budget document presented in the Punjab Assembly in 2010.<sup>50</sup>

It is, thus, argued, “It is no coincidence that Imran Khan’s PTI, a one-man band since its inception in 1996, won most of its seats in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and has formed the provincial government there. Khyber Paktunkhwa is a Taliban stronghold and borders Afghanistan. The PTI could only form a government there with the tacit support of Islamist extremists.”<sup>51</sup> Babar Sattar feels, “The manner in which the APC has endorsed unconditional talks with the TTP creates two problems. One, it legitimises the pro-terror narrative that has confused and polarised our nation i.e. terrorists might be mistaken in killing fellow citizens, but that is understandable because they are so incensed by wrongful state policies. And two, it is terrorists who are setting conditions and defining the framework of talks and not the state, and as a consequence, if the talks fail, the onus will be on the state”.<sup>52</sup>

### *Karachi*

Nawaz has a problem in Karachi as his party has a marginal presence in Sindh. The ultimate solution would be political and the Sindh Assembly would have a major role to play there. The main disputants — the MQM, the PPP, and the ANP — have failed to do so despite being part of the federal and Sindh coalition governments for the past five years.<sup>53</sup>

Despite being the sole target of clean-up operations ordered by Sharif’s government (Army-led) in 1992 and Benazir Bhutto’s (Police-Rangers-led) in 1994-96, the MQM has called for Army rule as it knows fully well that Nawaz Sharif will never agree to it (Choudhury Nisar has already ruled it out).<sup>54</sup> While it conveys to the PPP in Sindh, its unhappiness over the imposition of a local government system in

which all financial and administrative power will rest with the PPP provincial government, a reason why it supported the PML-N's presidential candidate, on the one hand, on the other, the MQM will put pressure on the PPP government in the province to seek the MQM's cooperation to jointly protect their interests in the province; otherwise the PPP may face imposition of Governor's Rule. Argues Sethi, "Under the circumstances, with the MQM and PPP playing hide and seek games, it will not be easy for Sharif to move swiftly, decisively and efficiently in Karachi. If the PPP and MQM are jointly in control of any clean-up operation in Karachi, it will amount to nothing with all sides blaming the other for its failure. If the federal government imposes Governor's Rule, both will cry foul and protest".<sup>55</sup>

The volatile province of Balochistan has been up in arms since independence generally, and 2006 specifically; rife with sectarian and ethnic violence, it has seen no relief despite the change of governments in Islamabad and Balochistan. The people earlier reported missing have been now found killed and dumped, reportedly by the security agencies. The government has constituted a task force to maintain law and order, and the Hazaras continue to be targeted.<sup>56</sup> Even while the province is in the throes of a major calamity killing more than 500 people, an attack killed two security men and they promised to carry out more such attacks.<sup>57</sup>

### *Economy*

The total size of the federal budget barely went up, with the total increase in federal outlays to Rs.21 billion, an increase of 0.6 percent over the previous fiscal year (ended June 30, 2013). The estimated budget deficit for fiscal 2014 is Rs.1.6 trillion, or about 6.3 percent of the size of the economy, lower than the previous year's fiscal of 8.8 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Almost 30 percent of Pakistan's \$ 36 billion budget for 2013-14, or over \$11.5 billion, has been allocated for debt-servicing.<sup>58</sup>

Pakistan's dwindling foreign exchange reserves (\$ 5 billion) and the huge gap between its income and expenditure are causes for serious concern. About two weeks after taking office, in sharp contrast to its election rhetoric about economic independence, the Nawaz government began negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which continued for two weeks and "were tough".<sup>59</sup> The IMF finally agreed to give \$ 6.6 billion loan as an Extended Fund Facility (EFF), \$ 540 million immediately, and the rest after the quarterly review.<sup>60</sup> The steps that the government has been forced to take in order to receive the fresh loan from the IMF have further burdened the common man: inflation, including the imposition of more taxes, withdrawal of tax exemptions, an increase in power and gas tariffs and elimination of power tariff subsidies. The debt trap is evident in the fact that the amount expected to be received by the IMF in the current fiscal year is around \$ 2.2 billion, whereas the amount to be paid to the IMF as debt servicing is \$ 3 billion in the same time period.<sup>61</sup> It is surmised that the 10,935 notices that have been issued to tax defaulters in the last two months may also be in response to the IMF conditionality; so may be the case with the former Federal Bureau of Revenue (FBR) Chairman's Computerised Risk-based Evaluation of Sales Tax (CREST) programme, which cross-checked data across a range of sources to assess sales tax evasion, which had been given up by the interim government.<sup>62</sup> With the rise in the prices of Petroleum, Oil, and Lubricants (POL) products, electricity charges have soared, with substantial increases in tariff; which may go up for bottom slab users also, earlier resisted by the government which is reported to be "working exceptionally hard at removing the subsidy on all products of daily necessity, including staple food items such as flour, as evidenced by the leap in its price".<sup>63</sup> There are no answers to the questions being raised: "What precisely is its economic agenda, other than building more motorways? What are they doing to inspire investors' confidence, both domestic and foreign? How do they plan rebuilding Pakistan's image abroad?"<sup>64</sup>

Pakistan's energy crisis is most visible in the power cuts even in the cities. Power shortages also take a large economic toll, causing financial losses of over \$13.5 billion a year or about 1.5 percent of Pakistan's GDP. Pakistan produces 11,000-12,000 megawatts of electricity a year whereas national demand is over 17,000 megawatts. This imbalance is exacerbated by the fact that the government heavily subsidises energy from state-owned energy producers and is exceptionally poor at preventing energy theft or recouping losses from unpaid bills.<sup>65</sup> The

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electricity tariff for residential consumers was increased by Rs.5.89 per unit on people who consume 201-300 units of electricity and by Rs.3.67 per unit on those who consume 301-700 units of electricity.<sup>66</sup> It has also been agreed that all subsidies will be phased out for users above 200 kWh and reduced for all but the lowest in the 0-200 kWh range within two to three years; and a gas price rationalisation plan is expected to be announced by December 31, 2013.<sup>67</sup> The government has announced a plan for increasing power generation capacity to 26,800 megawatts from the current 11,000-12,000 and reducing average generation cost from Rs.14.67 per unit to about Rs.10 per unit by "bringing in efficiency, merit order and transparency in the entire spectrum of the power sector".<sup>68</sup> The new energy policy entails four separate sectoral policies "to cover four major areas of the power sector — supply chain of the power sector, generation system, transmission and distribution system".<sup>69</sup>

There is no doubt that it is far too early to comment on whether Nawaz Sharif will deliver. Rana raises some fundamental questions: "Will Pakistan consider this diversity of militant groups in its counter strategies? Can it isolate small terrorist cells from major groups before initiating peace moves? Or can these small groups be engaged in the peace process

and peace deals be made with them?” and then answers them by saying: “The probability is not bright. It is not because of their fluid structure but the nature of their nexuses with Al Qaeda and the TTP. The probability of Pakistani militants disengaging from Al Qaeda depends on how the state can weaken the bond. Can this objective be achieved through talks or will a full-scale operation be required? This is a complex situation, where the scope of success of both talks and the use of force is difficult to measure.”<sup>70</sup>

No one can dispute that this time around, Sharif faces unprecedented challenges, topping the list of which is stamping out terrorism. His policy on this issue – dialogue rummaged through an all party meeting – has come under challenge, forcing him to say that to make these talks a success, it is essential that the militants abide by the Constitution.<sup>71</sup> This implies that Nawaz Sharif is now caught in a trap evidenced by his going back on the end to the moratorium on capital punishment. The promised institutions/instruments – finalised National Security Policy, Joint Intelligence Centre and National Counter Terrorism Authority – that were supposed to be targeting terrorism, are nowhere in sight. Not totally unlinked and seriously challenging is the issue of the economy which has failed to revive during the first three months of the new government, disappointing many. About half of the country’s energy needs are met by imported oil, paid for in dollars. By accepting the IMF’s recommendations about the rupee’s value, as it needed the money, it faces a dilemma – the lower value of the rupee “means higher energy costs, and, thus, higher costs of doing business. More importantly, higher energy costs mean higher inflation, including in the cost of essential items”.<sup>72</sup> The increase in energy costs, in turn, will adversely impact on inflation and, consequently, the disposable income of the population, that is already in dire straits.

Going by the past record, especially his last tenure, Sharif needs to be cautious on civil-military relations, notwithstanding the fact that the

military does not approve of his policies either on militancy or on relations with India. It is not coincidental that as the civilian leadership resorted to the all party conference which endorsed a dialogue with the Taliban, the Army launched military operations in the border areas.<sup>73</sup>

Much will depend on how the PPP fares as an opposition, and whether it is able to bounce back. The party has serious problems, lacking a leader of Benazir's stature, and it has to contend with both the PML-N as well as PTI. The PPP has decided to hand over the leadership to Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, who will take the reins by the end of the year. Bilawal became Chairman of the party after the Jamaat-i-Islami legally challenged President Zardari for retaining two positions, the other being co-chairman of the PPP.<sup>74</sup> Maleeha Lodhi says, "In the past five years holding on to power took primacy over the pursuit of a public agenda. Shorn of programme or any policy conviction, the PPP lost direction".<sup>75</sup> Nevertheless, it is the main Opposition party and has a government in Pakistan, apart from the Bhutto legacy.

## Notes

1. AFP, "PTI Received Second Most Votes in General Election," <http://tribune.com.pk/story/555048/pti-received-second-most-votes-in-general-election/>
2. Pakistan Conflict Tracker report (January–April 2013), Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), Islamabad, May 3, 2013.
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