

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

• The changes made in the oath reportedly moderated the <u>mention of Prophet</u> Muhammad.

\n

• The protesters are alleging that this would amount to <u>blasphemy</u>, 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.

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

۱n

• 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?

 $n\n$

• The protest finally ended following an agreement between the protesters and the government.

۱n

- The agreement was mediated by a Major General of the Inter-Services Intelligence, and the Law Minister resigned.
- \bullet The signed agreement concludes with crediting the Army Chief and his representative team for their "special efforts" in mediation. $\mbox{\sc h}$
- However, the Islamabad High Court has criticised the Interior Minister for giving the military the role of "mediator".
- This is notably since the military had turned down the civilian government's request to intervene earlier.
- \bullet The judge bravely noted that this was "proof of the military's involvement".

 $n\$

What is the larger concern?

 $n\n$

\n

- Military Various evidences clearly suggest that dharnas were supported by very senior members of Pakistan's Army.
- They are suspectedly using the agitation as a means to dismiss the democratic governments.
- In the current standoff, for a small and insignificant group to be so well coordinated across diverse cities adds to the above speculation.
- \bullet 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
- \bullet This was a clear act of disobedience and of destabilising further a weak government. $\ensuremath{\backslash n}$
- Government Ever since the return to democracy in 2008 in Pakistan, the threat by extra-democratic means of destabilising democracy has loomed large.
- 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.

۱n

- Given this, the recent protest by a minuscule political entity of unarmed men has created such a major crisis for the government.
- The government is criticised for its delayed response and certainly letting the organisation consolidate to gain strength and support.
- **Democratic Politics** The cause of the current stand-off could be that non-mainstream parties now do politics outside the rules of democratic politics.
- Or the rules of democratic politics have changed to include disruptive activities which might completely destabilise democracy itself.
- \bullet 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.
- Military has become indispensible to ensure agreements between the government and protesters.
- 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.

 $n\n$

 $n\n$

Source: The Hindu

\n

