

A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF MILITARY COUPS IN PAKISTAN:
POWER, IDEOLOGY AND TRANSGRESSION

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Abstract

Military takeovers have been pivotal and frequent in political history of Pakistan having a significant effect on the democratic development, institutional integrity, and governance frameworks of a country. In the context of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this study uses Ruth Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) to investigate the rhetorical and linguistic tactics used by military regimes to justify their political interventions. Finding out how beliefs of authority, control, the national interest are deliberately created and spread in order to influence public opinion and political legitimacy is the goal of the study. To find recurrent themes and discursive patterns, historical records, political speeches, press releases, and media narratives were examined. According to the findings, Pakistan's military regimes have continuously used tactics like positive self-representation, nationalism and ethical guardianship appeals, invoking political stability and national security, and disparaging civilian leadership as dishonest or inept. In addition to legitimizing military involvement, these rhetorical strategies strengthened hegemonic power structures, accepted undemocratic behavior, and shaped the public's sociopolitical consciousness. The study sheds light on the relationship between language, ideology, also political legitimacy in Pakistan's civil-military dynamics and advances knowledge of how speech serves as a tool of power in authoritarian settings.

INTRODUCTION

In the political history of Pakistan, military coups have been a repeated phenomenon through the military that used to present themselves as a supreme defender for the strength and safety of a country. A narrative that aims to defend the revocation of democratic processes has proceeded to each interruption; it commonly characterizes the coup as a required step to solve political strife, corruption, or governance issues (Jaffrelot, C, 2015). In this process of legitimating, the role of media has been very important and considered an influential tool for manipulating public sentiment and developing ideological

narratives. Researcher aimed to explore the interaction of power, ideology, and transgression in forming public support for controlling rule, which examines how media discourse in Pakistan has historically helped to normalize military incursions.

In Pakistan, the media frequently switches on both positions during military takeovers. On the contrary, it may serve as a watchdog, upholding democratic principles and holding those in roles of control accountable. However, it has often served as an ambassador for the military, propagating views in favor of replacing civilian authorities (Hussain, 2007). Important concerns

arise up by this dichotomy regarding the function of media as a platform for the development of ideologies and its involvement in the deterioration of democratic institutions. In this paper, I aim to identify how news coverage authorizes military operations and the consequences of this process for the political culture of Pakistan by looking at significant events in the history of the country including the 1958, 1969, 1977, and 1999 coups.

The main argument of this analysis is that through formulating and spreading discourse, the media actively constructs political realities and not merely explains these realities. The media plays a crucial role in making authoritarian leadership legit and weakening the people to trust democratic processes since it makes military coups a matter of fact and necessity, establishes polar oppositions between the military and civilian leadership, and employs ideological and nationalist discourses (Entman, R.M, 2009). This investigation will critically examine these discursive techniques using some historical examples of Pakistan and will demonstrate the ways in which the media narratives have been employed to silence dissent and justify military action. This analysis is important even beyond Pakistan due to its understanding on the broader relationship between media, power and ideologies in postcolonial governments. The impact of the media encouraging coups can be disastrous in terms of political and governmental stability in circumstances when the strength of democratic institutions is low, and the military possesses significant influence (Ali, 2023). This study aims to move the discourse on the problems of democracy in Pakistan and in similar contexts a step further by shedding light on the mechanisms by which military interventions are normalized.

Objectives of the Study

Primary purpose is to critically observe the discursive ways which are used by Pakistani Military governments to advocate their interruptions in politics. By Ruth Wodak Critical Discourse Analysis method, this study aims to show how language is used to create and

maintain the authority, ideology and transgression in the framework of military coups. . The following are the specific objectives of the study:

- To investigate how military coups' discourses are affected by power relationships and ideological constructs
- To determine the role that historical and socio-political contexts play in shaping and being shaped by the language through which military interventions are justified
- To evaluate how the discourses of military affect the Pakistani political culture, and in particular how military intervention has been naturalized through the military discourses at the expense of democratic principles

Research Questions

1. What role have discursive forms like positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation and appeals to national security played in allowing Pakistani military regimes to justify their coups?
2. What is the place of power relations and ideological discourses in the creation of the narratives of military intervention in Pakistan?
3. How do the socio-political and historical context in Pakistan shape how military discourses are constructed and normalized through time?

Hypotheses

H₁: Pakistani military regimes apply the discursive strategies, i.e. positive self-presentation, negative other-presentation and appeals to national security, to justify their interventions and guarantee political dominance.

H₂: The discourses of military coups are informed by power relations and ideological organization which are then used to construct and affirm military dominance at the expense of the democratic institutions.

H₃: Pakistan has a socio-political and historical background which promotes the normalization of military intervention, and inter-textual allusions make the military rule legitimate over time.

Literature Review

Historical, political, and institutional aspects of military rule have historically been the focus of scholars in Pakistan and especially military coups. There is a relatively less literature that has examined the discursive mechanisms adopted by military governments in justifying their interventions. The current review thus informs us of the gaps in the existing literature on the subject of military coup, power relations, ideology, and transgression, and investigates how the concept of transgression can be analyzed in the framework of military operations.

Pakistan Power and Military Coups

In the sphere of military actions, it questions the concept of transgression, demonstrating the way in which military regimes violate constitutional standards and at the same time create the rationalizations of their acts. We all know that Pakistan is a country dominated by the military in its political scene. Jalal (2009) argued that the main force behind the hegemony of the military is the colonial background of the country and the failure of the civilian institutions to impose democratic standards. According to Jalal, this is a long-standing strategy of the military to justify its interventions as the protector of the national security.

The use of ideological platforms has been a common tool by the Pakistani military regimes to win popular support as well as international legitimacy. The policies of the 1980s under the leadership of General Zia-ul-Haq were sold as a revival of the Islamic tradition in Pakistan, as the policies of Islamization aimed to be popular with the domestic and international audiences (Haqqani, 2005), but the policy of enlightened moderation under General Pervez Musharraf was meant to be close to both national and international audiences through the description of the regime as a force of modernization and reforms (Fair, 2014). These examples highlight an important theme of the current study namely that of strategic use of ideology by military governments to create their own narratives that justify their actions.

Violation and Militarization of Military Interventions

To understand the coups of Pakistani military, it is important to have an encounter with the concept of transgression. Transgression here refers to violation of the democratic ideals and constitutional principles by military regimes. The military coups are often presented as a necessary step to achieve stability and order although it is not democratic in nature. This justification is constructed using discursive strategies of foregrounding civilian failures in government and military saviourism. Siddiq, A (2007) examined the political activism in the military as a result of the need to protect the corporate interests of the military, she further notes the use of narratives of national security and stability which is increasingly becoming normal to justify the violation of the norms of the constitution.

DA and Military Legitimacy

The discourse analysis has been applied to examine the presence of the use of rhetoric in justification of military rule in different contexts. The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework by Ruth Wodak offers a powerful framework of analyzing discursive tactics of military regimes. Wodak (2001) also stresses the role that language creates and maintains power relations and ideologies, as well as the impact that historical and sociopolitical backgrounds have on the process of discourse production. The study of the ways in which military coups have been constructed and justified over their time will be consistent with the understanding of intertextuality as it was conceived by Wodak where it is assumed that texts are read against the others and through the discourse. This paper aims to find out the discursive strategies used by the Pakistani military regimes and evaluate the consequences of the same in the context of democratic governance using the Wodak's CDA model.

Associating Literature and Transgression

The notion of transgression is an important point of reference in the interpretation of discursive practices of military regimes. Military coups are

contraventions of constitutional standards and democratic principles; but military dictatorships consistently develop discourses that authorize and legitimize such vices. To understand the discursive strategies used by military regimes, the concept of transgression should be discussed because military coup is the violation of democratic principles and constitutional norms. As an example, the coup of General Musharraf in 1999 was presented as a counter-coup to rescue the political and economic disintegration of the country, and the coup of General Ayub Khan in 1958 itself was described as a revolution that was necessary to modernize Pakistan and cleanse it of corruption. The discourses that re-brand transgressions as a necessity and even a desirable trait by normalizing military action re-brand war crimes and battles as the only way to deal with them. This research paper aims to reveal how military regimes defend their atrocities and the legitimization of their rule by analyzing a variety of discourses (Saddiq, A, 2017).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the present study is a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model, and specifically her Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), which provides a strict framework to analyse the discursive policies of Pakistani military regimes. Foregrounding the relations of language, power, and ideology, integrating the historical and socio-political conditions under which the discourses are constructed and read, the CDA model suggested by Wodak is considered particularly appropriate in the current inquiry. The model has identified the main elements that will be used in this work and how these will be operationalized to examine the discourses on military coups in Pakistan, are mentioned here.

1. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis is a technique of analysis which transcends the boundaries of disciplinary approaches to interrogate the ways language is utilized in the production and reproduction of power, ideological, and social institutions as well as social norms. The basic

belief of CDA is that discourse is not a reflection of social reality but a preforming agent of social reality. According to Wodak and Meyer (2015), discourse is a social act that is at once symptomatic and constitutive of power formations and, therefore, is a fruitful instrument to explore the ways in which power is reinforced by those wielding power. Interdisciplinary method like CDA looks into how language may be used to create and recreate ideologies, power relations, and social norms. The main postulation of CDA is that discourse actively constructs social reality, but does not necessarily mirror it. Wodak and Meyer (2015) believed that discourse is a social action that creates and maintains power structures. CDA offers a methodological tool in the analysis of the ways in which military regimes utilize linguistic resources to develop their identities, justify their interventions, and to suppress dissent as far as military coups are concerned. Through lexical analysis, syntax and rhetoric, CDA exposes the hidden power relations and ideological basis that such discourse is anchored.

2. Discourse Historical Approach (DHA)

One type of CDA is the Discourse-Historical Approach which focuses on socio-political and historical circumstances under which discourse is articulated. The DHA brings into consideration wider historical and institutional context in which discourses are inscribed, which makes it particularly suitable in the evaluation of multi-dimensional social processes like a military coup. Wodak (2001) defines three dimensions of DHA being interrelated:

Textual Analysis

This dimension is the study of the linguistic nature of a piece of writing, its rhetoric, grammar and words. To illustrate, it takes into account the ways that military regimes justify their efforts as being revolute, stable, or national security.

Discursive Strategies

This dimension deals with the construction of speakers claims- how they convince, legitimize and justify their positions. Military regimes, such

as those in the Middle East, tend to use negative other-presentation strategies, which establish the civilian governments as corrupt, and positive self-presentation strategies, which establish themselves as saviors.

Contextual Analysis

Contextual analysis places the discourse in its social, political and historical context to understand the larger implications of the discourse. An example of this can be found in the manner in which geopolitical processes like the Cold war or the legacies of colonialism influence the discussion of military coups in Pakistan.

Power, Ideology, and Transgression

The CDA model by Wodak comes in especially handy in the context of discussing how power, ideology, and transgression in the discourses of military couges can converge. The role of power relations in CDA is central, since discourse is considered as the tool of reproduction of the dominant groups. However, in military coups, the rule is by linguistic control and regimes use language to create a sense of legitimacy and suppress the anti-voices.

Ideology as explained is made up of beliefs systems and values that provide a guide to social practice (Wodak, 2001). The military regimes tend to justify their behavior as that of the mainstream ideologies like nationalism or Islam. As an example, the Islamisation policies of General Zia-ul-Haq were presented as a restoration to the Islamic heritage of Pakistan, and the discourse of enlightened moderation of General Musharraf tried to place his government at the position of progressive and reformist.

Transgression is the term that can be used to describe the violation of constitutional norms and democratic principles by military juntas. Military coups, despite being not democratic, are introduced as the only way of restoring order and stability. This justification is realized with the help of discourse that underlines the drawbacks of civilian governments and portrays the military as the saviour of the nation. Through the analysis of such strategies, the current study will seek to explain the practices of how the military regimes

justify their abuses and how they exercise their authority.

Pakistan Military coup

This analysis uses the CDA model by Wodak to examine discourses that are related to military coups in Pakistan. It particularly examines the ways military regimes use discursive methods (including positive self-presentation, negative other-presentation and appeals to national security and ideology) to justify their interventions. The studies also reflect on the way discourses are influenced by the historical and socio-political circumstances, the inter textual allusions to which continue the normalization of the military interventions over the long period.

As a case in point, the 1958 coup by General Ayub Khan was paraded as a revolution that would take Pakistani into the modern era and eliminate corruption, even when General Musharraf carried out a coup in 1999 to overhaul the country, which was fraught by a shattered political and economic landscape. The study aims to highlight the power relations and ideological constructions that consent to the military rule in Pakistan by interpreting these discourses.

Contribution to the Field

When the study uses the Wodak model of CDA in examining military coups in Pakistan, the research may widens the existing academic knowledge about how dictatorships use discourse to gain legitimacy. It may also emphasis the significance of examining the socio-political and historical environments that create and maintain such discourses. Finally, the study may make a contribution that can serve to overturn the legitimatizing discourse of military regimes and assist in bolstering democracies in Pakistan.

Methodology

Researcher used the Critical Discourse Analysis model, the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) to question the discourses of the military coups in Pakistan: the first coup by General Ayub Khan on 7 October 1958; the second coup by General Yahya Khan on 25 March 1969; the third intervention by General Zia-ul-Haq on 5 July

1977; and the fourth intervention by General Pervez Musharraf on 12 October 1999. The methodology follows Wodak (2001) where the methodology is broken down into three main steps, i.e. textual analysis, discursive tactics and contextual analysis.

Textual Discussion: The Legitimization Discourse

Historically, strategic language has played the role of defence mechanism by Pakistani military administrations whenever they participated in political interference. A consistent motif of linguistic decisions that can be seen in the primary sources, especially in the government announcements, the military proclamations, the coup speeches, strengthens the military image of a stabilizing force (Rizvi, 2000).

In the post-1958 coup communiqué of General Ayub Khan, the word revolution was used with a purpose of making the coup appear vicarious and necessary in cleansing civilian rule of inefficiency and corruption (Jalal, 2009). In the same way, General Musharraf in 1999 used the words economic collapse, corrupt political leadership and national salvation to justify his intervention in the 1999 speech to the nation (Fair, 2014). These linguistic selections are part of a story that predicts necessity rather than ambition by putting the actions of the military leaders into a reactionary context to an impending crisis (Haqqani, 2005).

General Ayub Khan intentionally referred to a revolution in his address after the 1958 coup to show that a coup was an essential measure that was taken to eliminate corruption and inefficiency in the civilian government (Jalal, 2009). Similarly, in a speech in 1999, General Musharraf used words like the collapse of the economy, corruption in political leadership and salvation of the nation, to legitimize his coup (Fair, 2014). These words show that it is a discourse pattern according to which military generals explain their moves as the reaction to a certain emergency, so that they can build a narrative of neediness, but not ambition (Haqqani, 2005).

The use of common nouns and passive forms in these speeches is used to dissociate individual responsibility as seen in the statements like it was necessary to be stable and we had no option but to do it. Through such linguistic tactics, the agency of the military leaders is eliminated and the coup is situated as a necessary element which occurred because of outside factors (Van Dijk, 1998). In addition, the ideology that equates military power with order and control is reinforced by the high frequency of dominant concepts in the discourse of military power: discipline, stability, progress, etc. (Wodak, R, 2001).

Discourse Strategies: Legitimacy Building

The present work uses DHA of Wodak to single out three main discursive strategies that are employed by military regimes to form the image of legitimacy:

Having stated that, remember that when a staff member presents oneself negatively on social media, that person takes a risk that could damage his or her career over time. Having said that, it is important to keep in mind that when a staff member portrays himself or herself negatively in social media, he or she does it at a cost that may be harmful to a career in the long-term.

Wodak and Meyer (2009) argue that the military commanders appear as protectors of the nation, who come in to fix what has failed the civilian rule. General Zia-ul-Haq often used his coup as religious and moral duty thus making his leadership conform to Islamic ethics (Haqqani, 2005). Equally, the rhetoric of enlightened moderation was employed to justify the coup of General Musharraf in 1999 and his military rule was presented as a progressive requirement to modernise Pakistan (Fair, 2014). The purpose of these discourses is to position the military as the custodian of choice to national well being by emphasizing on their moral virtues, commitment, and devotion to national interests (Rizvi, 2000).

Negative Other-Presentation

On the contrary, civil governments are portrayed as corrupt, incompetent and unable to govern

professionally (Jalal, 2009). This story formed the basis of propagandas by the then General Yahya Khan after the coup in 1969, whereby the political parties were described as egoistic institutions which had even driven the country to ruin (Haqqani, 2005). Similarly, General Ayub Khan made himself appear as the only possible choice by mentioning the failures of civilian politicians. Such discourses legitimize military coups by encouraging popular sanction of coups by the people (Rizvi, 2000).

Appeal to Ideology and National Security

The threat to the national security is one of the strong legitimization tools that were used by military regimes (Fair, 2014). This was clearly shown by General Zia-ul-Haq following the 1977 coup, who defended his action by stating that he was acting in response to prevent anarchy in the country since the civilian government had been accused of electoral malpractices (Haqqani, 2005). In addition, the idea that the military dictatorship was a necessity to sustain national cohesion was used by General Musharraf in 1999, on the basis of political instability and disintegration of economy (Jalal, 2009). The pattern that Van Dijk (1993) suggested in his argument about crisis discourses as a rationalization method by political elites is supported by the fact that this is widespread in the rhetoric of military coups.

Background Analysis: Historical and Sociopolitical Inter-textual Relations

There is a contextualization of all the incidences of military coups in Pakistan, where historical references are used with contemporary discourses. The most significant basis of explanations lies in intertextuality whereby military commanders use the past coup to develop a sense of continuity and legitimize their action (Wodak, 2001). The argument of the government having failed in civilian form and that the military was needed to stabilize the situation in the country was a common assertion made by General Zia -ul-Haq in 1977 similar to the one made in the 1958 Ayub Khan coup (Jalal, 2009). Musharraf in his speech on the

coup of 1999 hinted at earlier coups by implying that military government in the past had brought about stability and development (Fair, 2014).

In this wider goal of state building in the 1958 coup, Ayub Khan presented his place as part of a whole modernisation agenda (Rizvi, 2000). As part of the strategy to gain popular backing, Zia-ul-Haq used the religious ideology in 1977 revolution thus connecting his rule with the principles of Islamic government (Haqqani, 2005). The coup of 1999, which was headed by Musharraf, and took place during the era of globalization was framed in a discourse of economic reformation of the state and modernization thus projecting his legitimacy onto the current tendencies in governance (Fair, 2014).

Consequences to Democratic Administration

These discursive strategies have been used regularly throughout the years, hence justifying the legitimization of military interventions in the Pakistani political framework (Rizvi, 2000). These discourses replace the normal trust of civilian governments and solidify a long-standing trend of authoritarian politics by regularly depicting military coups as the only panaceas needed to remedy the lack of democracy (Jalal, 2009).

Second, these are the stories that influence the opinion of the people at the end of the day as military might is seen as a major enhancement of an otherwise civil government (Haqqani, 2005). The fact that protest against military rule is cast as betrayal or chaos, and that appeals to ideological legitimization and perceived threats against the national security weaken the opposition to civilian democracy further (Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

Democratic Resistance and Counter-Discourses

The counteracting of the legitimizing discourses of coups is crucial, and that should be done by constructing counter-discourses, which emphasize the long-term consequences of military rule. In this regard it entails highlighting the following:

- Weakening of the democratic institutions (Jalal, 2009)

- Intra-state human rights abuse (Haqqani, 2005)
- They have persevered during military rule (Fair, 2014).

Media-literacy education has the potential to oppose the military propaganda by promoting critical processing of an existing discourse as opposed to unthinking acceptance (Van Dijk, 1998). To contain the influence of authoritarian discourses and maintain stability in the democratic rule in Pakistan, the institutions of democracy should be enhanced, transparency promoted, and political responsibility ensured (Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

Key Findings

- Military leaders use ideological framing and narratives of crisis when they want to control (H₁ approved)
- It is because each positive and negative self-presentation forms public opinion (H₂ supported)
- In the long run, historic references give a strength to coups (H₃ approved)

Conclusion

This study used the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) paradigm by Ruth Wodak to explore the discourses of these four military coups in Pakistan. As the analysis shows, military regimes employed such discursive strategies as positive self-presentation, negative other-presentation, and the appeal to the national security and ideology to justify their coups. The paper has also noted that discourses of military coup use transgression. Military governments used words to create legitimacy and silence the opponents by couching their coups as necessary and justified. This civitification of military rule had a major effect on the politics of Pakistan, as it strained the political institutions and processes. This paper noted that transgression is part of the discourses of military coup. To achieve legitimacy and to keep off critics, military regimes justified their coups even when they infringed democratic norms and even constitutional standards. The emergence of the counter-discourses that are more democratic and based on civilian dominance and institutional responsibility is essential in the overcoming of the legitimizing

discourses of military coups. In this way, Pakistan can potentially stop the trend of military interventions and move forward to a safer and more democratic future.

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