



Identifiers:

ID: 371-25/DTN

December 4, 2025

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AI Tools: Artificial Intelligence tools employed for scientific content development, data analysis, formulation, synthesis and conclusions for accuracy, validity and implications of the work.

Conflict of interest:

Author accepts all potential conflict of interest.

Funding:

The authors received no direct funding.

Ethics approval:

No ethical approval needed for this work.

Consent for publication:

Author is agreed to publish this article.

Peer Review: Not peer reviewed

Blog Article

WHY DO MILITARY ESTABLISHMENTS, DEEP STATES, AND BUREAUCRACIES SOMETIMES ACT AGAINST THEIR OWN PEOPLE?

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Running title: Military establishment, deep state behavior

Keywords: authoritarian governance, civilian supremacy, power structures, bureaucratic corruption, democratic erosion, national security narratives, foreign alliances, civil liberties, state repression

Data Source: Archives, Biographies, Databanks, Encyclopedias, Libraries, Metadata Registries, Reports, Repositories, arXiv, Crossref, OpenAI, Wikipedia, World Health Organization, Zenodo.

Why Military Establishments and Deep States Act Against Their Own People:

Military establishments often view themselves as superior to civilian authority, believing they are the ultimate protectors of national integrity. This mindset leads to undermining democratic processes and institutions, especially when they perceive elected leaders as a threat to their dominance.

In Pakistan, repeated military coups (1958, 1977, 1999) and the dismissal of elected leaders like Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif illustrate how the military has prioritized institutional control over democratic continuity.

Many post-colonial states inherited authoritarian administrative systems from their colonial rulers. These systems were designed for governance without public participation, making bureaucracies and security institutions resistant to democratic accountability and public empowerment.

Economic interests heavily influence military and bureaucratic behavior. In countries like Pakistan, the military controls massive business empires — such as Fauji Foundation, Askari

Group, and DHAs—which generate billions in revenue. Protecting these assets often becomes a greater priority than serving public welfare.

In Myanmar, the Tatmadaw (military) controls lucrative sectors like jade and energy, providing the institution with financial autonomy and reducing the incentive to support democratic transitions or civilian oversight.

Foreign alliances often incentivize anti-democratic behavior. During the Cold War and post-9/11 era, U.S. support for authoritarian regimes was based on their strategic alignment, not their respect for human rights. Pakistan, for instance, received over \$33 billion in aid from the U.S. between 2002 and 2018, much of it channeled through the military to serve American regional objectives, especially in Afghanistan.

National security narratives are frequently used to justify repression. By labeling political opponents, journalists, and activists as “foreign agents,” “terrorists,” or “traitors,” the establishment creates a pretext to silence dissent and centralize authority.

In Turkey, the military historically overthrew civilian governments by claiming to defend secularism. In Pakistan, critical voices like Hamid Mir or Mohsin Dawar have been targeted under the guise of national security concerns.

Civilian institutions are often deliberately weakened to prevent them from challenging the establishment’s authority. Parliaments are bypassed, courts are politicized, and election commissions are manipulated to maintain elite dominance.

Bureaucratic inertia and resistance to reform are rooted in the fear of losing discretionary powers, illegal income streams, and unaccountable decision-making privileges. Transparency and digitization threaten this status quo, so reforms are routinely delayed or sabotaged.

Mass mobilization by the public is often viewed as a threat. When farmers, students, or workers demand rights, the deep state responds with surveillance, arrests, or violent crackdowns to prevent potential challenges to their authority.

In Iran under the Shah, reformist demands were crushed, leading to a more radical revolution. Similarly, in Pakistan, peaceful protests by missing persons' families or civil rights groups are often met with state suppression rather than justice.

Military doctrines imported from foreign powers promote internal securitization over human development. U.S. counterterrorism training, Israeli-style policing, and Gulf-funded religious narratives often reshape domestic institutions to prioritize surveillance, control, and force over education, welfare, and inclusion.

Defense budgets and military operations remain shrouded in secrecy. In many countries, including Pakistan and Egypt, military expenditures are not subject to public scrutiny, parliamentary debate, or independent auditing. This opacity allows unchecked corruption and misuse of public funds.

Divide-and-rule strategies are used to weaken opposition unity. Ethnic and sectarian tensions are sometimes manipulated to maintain control. In Pakistan, this is evident in the marginalization of Baloch, Pashtun, and Shia communities under the pretext of counterterrorism.

Authoritarian institutional cultures value obedience over innovation or criticism. Military and bureaucratic training suppress independent thinking, creating a governance culture hostile to debate, dissent, or participatory policymaking.

The deep state’s hostility toward transparency stems from its fear of public accountability. Institutions involved in human rights abuses, enforced disappearances, or election rigging resist any mechanism that could expose their actions to legal or moral scrutiny.

The net result is a governance system in which unelected institutions — military, intelligence, and senior bureaucracy — hold de facto power, often undermining the will and welfare of the people they claim to protect.

Without structural reforms, constitutional clarity, and civilian supremacy, these power centers will continue to prioritize institutional survival over public service, often working against the interests of the very nation they control.

What you think Why do military establishments, deep states, and bureaucracies sometimes act against their own people? tell us by reply in comment section.

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