

CONGRATULATIONS TO PAKISTAN FOR PEACEFUL TRANSFER OF CIVILIAN POWER THE MILITARY IGNORES

McClatchy has an article hailing the Pakistani Parliament's ability to serve out its entire five year term without being overthrown.

Pakistan's Parliament completed its term Saturday and the coalition government was dissolved, the first time in the country's history that a democratically elected government has served its full five years in office.

The way is now open for elections and an unprecedented peaceful transfer of power to another elected administration, even though the country is plagued by political instability.

"This is a milestone in the political history of Pakistan," said Rasul Bakhsh Rais, a political science professor at the Lahore University of Management Sciences. "The significance is that there is consensus among all political parties that democracy must continue, no matter how good or bad."

He added, "The only way to improve the quality of democratic government is democratic continuity."

Pakistan has long been dominated by its giant military, which until Saturday had scuttled every previous Pakistan experiment with democracy. The United States, which has supported military governments in Pakistan in the past, blames the military for supporting radical Islamist groups and keeping

relations tense with India and hopes that the establishment of democracy will weaken the army sufficiently to force it to give up its support for extremist groups.

[snip]

Opposition leader Nawaz Sharif has won praise for not seeking to topple the PPP government, and **army chief Gen Ashfaq Kayani has been lauded, especially by the United States and other Western powers, for staying out of politics more than his predecessor had.** [my emphasis]

And while I don't want to diminish this achievement, I find the celebration ironic given this report, from the UN's Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Counterterrorism, Ben Emmerson, reporting on his trip to investigate America's use of drones in Pakistan. In it, Emmerson pointed to a number of pieces of evidence showing Pakistan does not consent to our drone strikes on its soil.

The Special Rapporteur was informed that Pakistan considers that its own democratically elected civilian Government, aided by its law enforcement agencies and military forces, are best placed to judge how to achieve a lasting peace in the region, and that interference by other States in this process has been, and continues to be, counter-productive to those efforts.

[snip]

Officials stated that reports of continuing tacit consent by Pakistan to the use of drones on its territory by any other State are false, and confirmed that a thorough search of Government records had revealed no indication of such consent having been given. Officials also pointed to public statements by Pakistan at the United

Nations emphasizing this position and calling for an immediate end to the use of drones by any other State on the territory of Pakistan.

In addition, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed the Special Rapporteur that since mid-2010 (and to date) the Government has regularly sent *Notes Verbales* to the US Embassy in Islamabad protesting the use of drones on the territory of Pakistan and emphasizing that Pakistan regards these strikes as a violation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and requiring the US to cease these strikes immediately. The Ministry informed the Special Rapporteur that these concerns were expressed in the context of a longstanding bilateral relationship and dialogue with the US that includes positive cooperation across a broad range of issues.

This includes repeated resolutions passed by the Parliament now being celebrated for its democratic resilience. The most recent of these specifically invalidated any verbal agreements entered into by “the Government [or] its component entities.”

Officials also drew attention to a **series of resolutions passed by both Houses of the Majlis-e-Shoora (Parliament) calling for an end to the use of drones. The most recent of these resolutions, dated 12 April 2012, was unanimously adopted by a joint session of both Houses and is entitled *Guidelines for Revised Terms of Engagement with the USA/NATO/ISAF and General Foreign Policy*.** The resolution begins with a statement that relations between Pakistan and the USA should be based upon mutual respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of each other,

and *inter alia* (a) calls for an immediate cessation of drone attacks inside the territorial borders of Pakistan; (b) reaffirms Pakistan's commitment to the elimination of terrorism and combating extremism in its own national interest; (c) **provides that neither the Government nor any of its component entities may enter into verbal agreements with any other foreign Government or authority regarding national security;** (d) **provides that any such agreements previously entered into should forthwith cease to have effect;** and (e) provides that any such agreements should, in the future, be subject to scrutiny by specified Ministries and Parliamentary bodies and then announced through a Ministerial statement in Parliament. [my emphasis]

However, as I noted earlier this week, Emerson's portrayal of universal opposition to drone strikes in the country is undermined by this detail:

The Special Rapporteur regrets that he did not have the opportunity to meet with representatives of the Pakistan Military or the ISI. However, he was informed that their position would be adequately reflected by consultations with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defence.

Now, as McClatchy notes, one of the key factors in this election will be the relative success of Imran Khan, who is running on an anti-drone program. But unless Khan does far far better than people expect, we should expect the democratic government of Pakistan to continue denying any approval of American drone strikes, along with the military and ISI quietly not commenting.