

South Asia Analysis Group

Published on *South Asia Analysis Group* (<http://www.southasiaanalysis.org>)

[Home](#) > Pakistan New PM-Imran Khan: Nothing Changes

Pakistan New PM-Imran Khan: Nothing Changes

Submitted by asiaadmin2 on Mon, 08/20/2018 - 04:22

Paper No. 6411

Dated 20-Aug-2018

By Dr Subhash Kapila

PM Imran Khan, Pakistan's twenty second Prime Minister sworn on August 18 2018 was not swept into office with a thumping political majority but a cobbled coalition of sorts. Hovering over PM Imran Khan emerging as Prime Minister was an unsavoury reputation that PM Imran Khan's emergence as PM was scripted and facilitated by the new power duopoly of Pakistan Army-Supreme Court Judiciary.

Admittedly, PM Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf party obtained the largest number of seats, though short of majority, but contextually this materialised after Pakistan Army's intelligence agency and the Chief Justice of Pakistan Supreme Court ensured that the established Pakistan national political parties were denied a level playing field. This coupled with the seemingly dubious actions of Pakistan's Election Commission in offering technical glitches as excuse for delayed announcement of election results and allegations of rigging threw shadows on what many believed were a contrived victory.

Keeping the above aside, what emerges is that the Pakistani electorate was looking for a political change to displace the established political dynasties of the Sharifs and the Bhuttos.

The Pakistani people were deeply looking for some political leader who could promise a new and transformed Pakistan with a new political template as having been worn out and frustrated by the erstwhile political templates.

However, the crucial question that begs an answer is whether PM Imran Khan is the man who could transform Pakistan into a 'Naya Pakistan' as Imran Khan terms it? A purist democratic Pakistan can only emerges when a civilian Pakistani PM can shake off the stranglehold of the Pakistan Army over Pakistan's governance and foreign policy. Is PM Imran Khan the messiah who can achieve this

challenge? Unlikely it seems, as it is the Pakistan Army who has brought him into power.

PM Imran Khan with his relatively more youthful links, his larger than life glamorous reputed lifestyles abroad and his 'Brand loyalty' as Pakistan's cricket team Captain that brought home the World Cricket Cup, made a big impact on the Pakistani public, especially the under-30 voters.

PM Imran Khan's dual advantages of emerging as the preferred choice of the Pakistan Army Generals for PM along with the PR advantages outlined above tipped the election results in favour of PM Imran Khan, though not fully, and hence the denial of a thumping political victory.

The above political factor will be in full play in Pakistan's political dynamics throughout his tenure as Prime Minister----full five years or a truncated one, if the factors outlined above start impacting.

The established fact on date is that despite all of the above the Prime Minister of Pakistan today is Imran Khan and that Pakistan's 'Deep State' will operate in his favour and ensure his continuance as Pakistan's PM till such time PM Imran Khan does not break ranks with the Establishment.

The above throws a crucial question that whether PM Imran Khan opts for completion of his full tenure of five years as Pakistan's PM by faithfully pursuing the Pakistan Army's political agenda or breaks ranks to fulfil his election pledges to transform Pakistan into a 'Naya Pakistan' that is a 'New Pakistan'.

All available political indicators point in the direction of Pm Imran Khan not endangering his life-long ambition to be Prime Minister of Pakistan. Election pledges and their non-fulfilment can be rationalised and explained to the gullible Pakistani masses as that his hands are tied.

Therefore, NOTHING CHANGES with PM Imran Khan having assumed Prime Ministership of Pakistan and promising a brave new Pakistan.

With the above as a given, it is important to examine what will be the contours of Pakistan's foreign policy thrusts and his domestic political agenda as PM Imran Khan attempts to navigate the choppy waters of Pakistan's foreign policy challenges and a more challenging domestic political environment made more adversarial by the circumstances under which PM Imran Khan was ushered into office by the Pakistan Army.

Foreign policy is the least of the challenges that will be faced by PM Imran Khan as in this domain the Pakistan Army Generals brook no interference in their agenda of Pakistan's diplomatic thrusts towards China, Russia, United States, Afghanistan and India. This also is inclusive of use of terrorism and proxy wars against India and Afghanistan as foreign policy leverage.

PM Imran Khan in his political life preceding becoming Prime Minister was always highly critical of the United States and its military involvement in Afghanistan. The only factor that could have prompted PM Imran Khan to reset Pakistan's US-policy was to enlist Washington's assistance for bailing out Pakistan from its economic mess with IMF bailouts. However, with China and Saudi Arabia pledging to provide billions of dollars to Pakistan in this direction, this would make PM Imran Khan less tempted to alter his anti-US image.

Further, this view synchronises with GHQ Rawalpindi's animosity towards United States incrementally increasing with the cut-offs of US military aid, cutting-off Pak Army officers from courses in UDS military training institutions and US under President Trump adopting hard-line policies towards Pakistan.

China will be top priority for PM Imran Khan both as a necessity to offset US side-lining Pakistan in its South Asian policies and also since China tops the priority in Pakistan Army calculus. More noticeably, China had opened lines of communication with Imran Khan during the election campaign itself and was fawning over him all along as their preferred choice of PM of Pakistan.

In relation to the CPEC, China needs strong support not only from the Pakistan Army but also politically from Imran Khan's PTI prominence in Khyber Pakhtunwa

Russia is the new kid on the block in terms of entering Pakistan Army's geopolitical calculus and would find strong endorsement from PM Imran Khan in relation to Russia furthering Pakistan's interests in Afghanistan stimulated by Russia's reverberative reactions against US military embedment in Afghanistan and India's 'soft power' presence in Pakistan

PM Imran Khan has made opening outreaches to the Afghan President and vice versa. Personally, PM Imran Khan may have emotional preferences to ease violent turbulence in the Frontier Areas bordering Afghanistan but here he would be constrained by Pakistan Army's own preferences in which the safety and stability of Frontier Areas was never of any consequence for the military Generals.

Pakistani PMs who wanted good relations with India and indulged in political reachout to India fell by the wayside as Pakistan Army never tolerated peace and reconciliation with India. Former PM Nawaz Sharif has been the most notable casualty. PM Imran Khan would be fully conscious of this reality and though while in his opening remarks stressed good relations with India but added the caveats of Kashmir and the Pakistan Army-perceived projections Kashmiri people's sufferings.

One already sees in motion Pakistan's attempts to exploit Pakistan-apologists in India lobbies to drum up support for dialogue with Pakistan.

How much of this is real and genuine and how much of it is fake is not difficult to predict. Pakistan Army's armoury of weapons against India of terrorism strikes, border clashes and inciting and financing turbulence in the Kashmir Valley will see no decrease even with PM Imran Khan assuming executive office in Pakistan.

PM Imran Khan has neither the political weight nor political experience to swing Pakistan's India-policy towards peace and dialogue independent of the Pakistan Army. In the same vein, it can be forcefully asserted more for the ears of the large tribe of Pakistan-apologists in India that no Pakistan Army Chief can change the anti-Indian hostility of the Pakistan Army officer cadre whose psyche stills rankles with the loss of East Pakistan in 1971 and its emergence as the independent nation of Bangladesh. Such an Army Chief in Pakistan will be toppled by the Pak Army itself.

Moving into the realm of Pakistan's domestic politics, it is possible that the Pakistan Army may offer him some leg-space for experimenting with his own political preferences or attempting to implement some of his election pledges. Pakistan's domestic politics has always been a minefield for any Pakistani Prime Minister with a witch's brew of unbridgeable egotist differences between political parties, Pakistan Army's constant interference in domestic politics and the political prominence given to hard-line Islamist groups nurtured by Pakistan Army's ISI.

Pakistan's two major national parties, the PML-N and the PPP are not well-disposed towards PM Imran Khan as both feel cheated by Imran Khan's collusion with Pakistan Army generals to emerge as the Pakistani Prime Minister. Both these Parties with sizeable followings in Pakistan with little differentials with the new ruling PTI can be expected to offer strong opposition both inside the National Assembly and in public protests on the streets to make things politically difficult for PM Imran Khan. As a political novice PM of Pakistan PM Imran Khan after his elections as PM has made no placatory moves towards these two national parties.

On the contrary, PM Imran Khan soon after his swearing-in as PM made strong populist and strident calls that those who looted Pakistan with their corruption would be hunted down. This implies that in the garb of his anti-corruption drive election pledges he would be targeting the PML-N and the PPP. This would also make him popular with the Generals but will result in political costs. Besides generating widespread political turbulence this would distract the new PM from more pressing tasks like the economy.

With the Cabinet still not announced there will be political dissatisfaction within the PTI of not sharing the rewards of political office especially the last minute 'electables' that PM Imran Khan inducted after pirating them from other major parties.

Of all the domestic political challenges that PM Imran Khan immediately faces is that of putting Pakistan's terminally-ill economy back on the rails. China and Saudi Arabia cannot match the munificence with which the United States strategic patronage which bank-rolled Pakistan's ailing economy.

There is also no reason as to why the Pakistan Army can be expected to cut down its lion's share of the deficit Pakistan Budget to make

things economically easier for PM Imran Khan. Considerable share of Pakistan Army's budget is devoted to financing of Pakistan Army's terrorism and proxy war in India and Afghanistan. There will be no cut-downs here and nor is PM Imran Khan in a position to enforce them.

Finally, coming down to the sizing up of the personality and preferences of Imran Khan both as a person and how these traits will manifest itself in P Imran Khan's functioning as PM of Pakistan. PM Imran Khan lately in an attempt to rectify his dented image of being the collusive actor with the Pakistan Army in the just concluded General Elections has been citing his political struggle of 22 years in which he opposed the Pakistan Army. Partly true, but then it also emerges that after 20yaers he realised that the reality was that he could ever become PM and fulfil his life-long dream, without the collusion of the Pakistan Army. That became evident when in 2014 he organised the month long siege of Islamabad against Former PM Nawaz Sharif at the behest of then Pak Army Chief General Raheel Sharif.

This throws in bold relief PM Imran Khan's 'opportunistic streak' where he can be expected to temporise with any party for personal gains. This is the general trait of virtually every politician in South Asia but then it will not inspire confidence that he can lead Pakistan towards the horizon of 'Naya Pakistan'. Therefore nothing changes in Pakistan.

Pakistan's governance is not a cricket pitch where aggression and fast bowling would bring political wickets down. Pakistani politics is a minefield strewn with all sorts of political mines and Pakistan Army would not be at his side all along to hold his hand and certainly not if he attempts to stray off the chosen course laid down by the Pakistan Army. It will take him months if not years to gain political maturity to govern Pakistan. Presently, he also lacks the political gravitas and confidence as was evident during his swearing-in ceremony where he fumbled five times in repetition of the oath-lines articulated by the Pakistani President in Pakistan's national language—Urdu. The political disconnect is obvious.

So what emerges as the Final Conclusion? The overall conclusion is that **NOTHING CHANGES** in Pakistan with coming into power of PM Imran Khan. Political leaders imbued with the spirit of transforming their nations and giving a new direction do not do so on the shoulders of collusion with the reigning Establishment, as PM Imran Khan has done. They challenge the existing political templates.

Tags:

Pakistan [1]

Imran Khan [2]

Pak Army [3]

Category:

Papers [4]

Countries:

Pakistan [5]

Topics:

Terrorism [6]

Strategic Affairs & Security [7]

Political [8]

Economy [9]

Copyright ©2012. All Rights are Reserved.

Source URL: <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/node/2334>

Links

- [1] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/taxonomy/term/71>
- [2] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/taxonomy/term/339>
- [3] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/taxonomy/term/208>
- [4] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/papers>
- [5] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/pakistan>
- [6] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/terrorism>
- [7] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/strategic-affairs-and-security>
- [8] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/political>
- [9] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/economy>