

Emerging Political, Economic and Security Dynamics in Pakistan

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Pakistan's political and economic dynamics continue to remain unstable and riddled with uncertainties. Post Imran Khan's dramatic exit from the Prime Minister's office in April 2022, the cricketer-turned-politician, went on a crowd-gathering spree, driving the narratives of "foreign conspiracy", which (he claims) manipulated his fall, and the country is run by "thieves" - the corrupt political families - PML(N) and the PPP. Pakistan's economic crisis appears to be intractable with an alarming debt burden and high inflation. Disgruntled insurgent groups and terror outfits inspired by the Taliban ideology and emboldened by the victory (in Afghanistan) have intensified their positions and are unwaveringly challenging the security apparatus of the State. The military, which has traditionally controlled the political strings is at present maintaining its stand of "political neutrality" and claims that it would refrain from any political interference. Although the military has often claimed to be a neutral player, in practice, the deep state continues to exercise decisive control over political processes and proudly guards strategic decision-making. Pakistan's foreign relations are being reset by the new government. Developments in Islamabad are important for New Delhi for its likely implications on India-Pakistan relations. In addition, the bilateral relations have continued to deteriorate post-Pathankot attack in 2016 with a complete absence of diplomatic dialogue between the two nuclear-armed nations.

Political Uncertainties and Tug of War

Pakistan's history sufficiently narrates the military's political role in the country. No political leader has managed to come into power, or for that matter sustain his or her position of power without the support of the army. Democratic regimes between 1988-1999 changed frequently, especially if the agenda of

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the elected governments challenged the power and functioning of the army. During this period, there were four elections and both Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif returned to power twice. There were four caretaker governments in between as neither of the elected governments could complete its term. The President had the authority to dissolve the National Assembly under the Eighth Amendment, Article 58 2(b) and this was invoked three times in the 1990s - by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan against Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto on August 6, 1990; against Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in 1993; and by President Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari against Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in November 1996. The use of Article 58 2(b) was almost exclusively justified by the President as necessary for the removal of the government on the grounds of corruption. Each dismissal was followed by elections. After the first elections in 1988, when Benazir Bhutto came into power, she got into trouble as she started to assert herself and challenged the authority of the army by fiddling with the issues important to the army, such as the appointment of the corps commander and chairman of the JCSC, replacement of the ISI head Hamid Gul, with the general of her choice, Maj General Shamshil Rehman Kallu.¹

Historical evidence suggests a classic cycle of events in Pakistan's democratic landscape. A promising and confident civilian leadership comes into power with full-fledged support of the military, but typically the civil-military romance seems to have a short-term expiry date and the civilian leadership struggles to complete its full tenure. In case the military has a choice of appointing another political face, the ruling party takes a blow and political leaders land behind bars on charges of corruption and money laundering. Imran Khan's tenure was not very different and he enjoyed the position comfortably until he crossed the unwritten red lines overestimating his political capability, and popularity and asserting his independence in decision-making in the areas which remain sacrosanct to the military.

Saga of the No-Confidence Motion: Manipulation of the Constitution

From the time Imran Khan came into power in 2018, the opposition parties tried hard to gather momentum for his exit. Throughout his tenure, he continued to intensify the narrative of the corruption record of the opposition leaders. This in a way deterred a conducive environment for the functioning of the government and Khan and his party Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) failed to have any working relationship with the opposition parties. His

narrative of himself as a clean corruption-free leader did not enable him to fulfil his election promises of “*Naya Pakistan*”, which committed employment opportunities to the Pakistani youth. The opposition’s aggressive drive to throw out Khan led to the coming together of the opposition parties which is rather unique in Pakistan. Although the no-confidence motion against Imran Khan was supposed to be tabled on March 8, 2022, the build-up for the motion started in November 2021, and the PTI was confident for it to sail through the opposition heat. The no-confidence motion was finally tabled against Imran Khan on March 28, 2021, by the opposition leaders in the National Assembly. On March 31, the Pakistan National Assembly session for the no-confidence was adjourned till April 3. And on April 3, Pakistan’s President Arif Alvi dissolved the National Assembly on the advice of the Prime Minister, who had lost the support of his major allies. The Deputy Speaker, Qasim Khan Suri, who was in chair termed the no-confidence motion against Imran Khan as “unconstitutional” and scrapped it in an attempt to save Imran Khan from the humiliation of a highly probable political defeat. On April 7, the Supreme Court restored the National Assembly declaring the decision to dissolve the assembly as against the Constitution. The Assembly session was called on April 8 and on April 9-10, 2022, after a major political drama with Imran Khan playing all possible churlish tactics to delay/avoid the voting, the opposition voted in favour of the motion leading to Imran Khan’s exit. For the first time, in Pakistan, the Prime Minister was democratically removed through a vote of no confidence. Shehbaz Sharif, the leader of the second-largest political party, PML (N) was sworn in as the Prime Minister.

What went wrong with Imran Khan? He had no experience in governance before becoming the Prime Minister, failed the expectations of the masses, could not keep up with his election promises of *Naya Pakistan* and very importantly, lost the confidence and support of the military establishment which facilitated his victory in the 2018 elections, which were also termed as *Selection 2018* in Pakistan.

Khan held a series of rallies (and continues to hold) and one of the most significant gatherings that was held by PTI was on March 27, to display the mass appeal and popularity of the Prime Minister. The rally was a power show by Imran, which was expected to exert pressure on the judiciary, and military establishment and also, build the momentum of his support before the voting on the no-confidence motion. Khan termed the rally the “biggest ever *jalsa* in Pakistan” and showered praises and compliments on himself and his party in his marathon speech which lasted for more than an hour. During

his speech, he tried hard to present his *Progress Report* and conveyed the assurance that “none of the govt in Pakistan’s history has delivered as much as my [PTI] govt has delivered in these 3.5 years.”² The speech targeted the opposition leaders, and at the same time, blamed foreign hands for persuading and using the opposition against him and creating instability in the country. He said, “Attempts are being made through foreign money to change the government of Pakistan. Our people are being used. Mostly inadvertently, but some people are using money against us.”³ While it is outlandish on his part to convey to the masses that the entire political opposition, the military establishment and his party members are vulnerable to foreign influences and monetary incentives, it is not surprising that Khan tried to shift the blame of his incompetence and poor governance to the “foreign forces”. During the PTI’s tenure, there have been a series of incidents, including the attacks on the Chinese workers engaged in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects and peaceful resentment by the popular Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) demanding basic civil rights of the Pashtuns, where Imran Khan and his loyalists have invariably blamed a foreign hand.

Not only the PTI’s allies but also important members of PTI were frustrated and disappointed with Imran Khan and turned against him making his chances of survival extremely bleak. The Prime Minister relentlessly tried possible constitutional and legal tactics to threaten his party members from going against him on a no-confidence motion. The momentum against Imran Khan was strong and none of his efforts seems to have worked in his favour.

Why Imran Lost the Confidence of the Military?

PTI promised development and Imran was projected as a clean, selfless leader solely driven by the welfare of the state, which Pakistan’s dwindling economy and declining human development index needed badly. For three years, a projection of comfortable civil-military relations was maintained until Imran’s inability to deliver and frequent controversial statements on international forums started to impact the military’s image and position.⁴

The economy went from bad to worse, inflation stood at an all-time high, Pakistan could not convince the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to move out of the grey list, and perpetual struggles for external financial assistance adversely impacted Pakistan’s relations with its conventional Muslim brother nations. The strict conditionalities of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan added significantly to the woes of the masses.

One of the most adverse impacts during Imran's tenure was on the foreign relations of Pakistan, which were strained by Imran and his party's short sightedness and probably immaturity. PTI was held responsible for damaging Pakistan's relations with the United States, Saudi Arabia and also China to an extent.

For decades, Pakistan's foreign policy has been defined by how it manages its relationship with the United States. The relationship has gone through its phases of highs and lows, but it hit its lowest during Imran Khan's tenure. He was openly critical of the US, holding his compulsive victim-hood card without realising that the military was keen to revive ties with the US. Moreover, Pakistan's high dependence on international financial institutions also required US support.⁵

The relationship with Saudi Arabia was also strained during Khan's tenure. Saudi Arabia was upset when in 2019, Imran Khan joined hands with Malaysia and Turkey to form a rival Muslim bloc. Imran was constantly trying to persuade the Saudis to discuss Kashmir on the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) agenda. PTI responded aggressively to the OIC's unwillingness to hold a special session on Kashmir. The former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi on a talk show on *ARY News* said:

"I am once again respectfully telling OIC that a meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers is our expectation. If you cannot convene it, then I'll be compelled to ask Prime Minister Imran Khan to call a meeting of the Islamic countries that are ready to stand with us on the issue of Kashmir and support the oppressed Kashmiris."⁶

Although the army chief tried to mend relations with the Saudis, he was unsuccessful as reflected in the Saudi Arabia's positioning over various issues, specifically in lending money to Pakistan.

Pakistan's relationship with New Delhi has seen the worst phase in the last three years. While the ceasefire agreement was announced in February 2021 along LoC, the bilateral relationship remained extremely stressful. Imran Khan was the most toxic Pakistani Prime Minister as mirrored in his uncompromising targeting of the Indian leadership and accusing it of being run on the Nazi ideology in every possible forum.

Imran's closeness with the former Director-General of the ISI, Lt Gen Faiz Hameed and whispers about him being appointed as the next army chief were surely not comforting for the military's senior leadership. The Military's decision to replace Faiz Hameed with Lt Gen Nadeem Ahmed Anjum received a nod from Imran after a rather unprecedented delay.

Imran Khan's unpopularity had started reflecting in Punjab, Pakistan's most important province where the Chief Minister, Sardar Usman Buzdar, (who resigned on March 28, 2022) was accused of corruption charges and incompetence. A series of developments, proving Imran's inability to stabilise the nation on multiple fronts, led to the military's loss of complete confidence, which also did not want itself to be associated with Imran anymore.

Imran Khan's Tenure: An Era of Narratives

Imran Khan disappointed his supporters but if there was one thing that Imran did passionately during his unsuccessful years of political tenure as a Prime Minister, it was building up a series of narratives and driving them on varied forums in an attempt to fetch strategic dividends. It would be interesting to analyse the narratives Khan created within the country and on international platforms. While some of the narratives cater to Imran's personal objectives and would fade but some narratives are likely to sustain in Pakistan's overall positioning at the domestic and international levels.

In 2018, when Imran came into power with backing from the military, a narrative of a clean politician, free of corruption baggage was created and propagated to counter the leaders of the opposition parties, who were grappling with corruption charges and accused of misusing national funds and manipulating national policies to reap economic dividends for their family and friends. The cricketer projected himself as "a selfless leader", who has had a successful and glamorous life as a sports star, understands the world well and is driven to politics solely for the welfare of the Pakistani *Awam*. Although during his tenure Imran Khan could not do much to cure the corruption menace, the narrative of him fighting hard against corruption, against all challenges was repeated frequently to remind the nation of his selflessness, which he (wrongly!) anticipated would compensate for his incompetence.

Khan blamed the economic crisis on Nawaz Sharif's government and paraded the narrative of him "carrying the baggage of economic desperation from the past". Every democratic regime in Pakistan tries to pass the blame for Pakistan's persistent economic desperation to its predecessors and Imran was no different.

With India, the narrative has been that India is going on a dangerous path and is being driven by the "Nazi ideology under a Hindutva regime" that is intolerant to minorities. The attempt has been to build a perception that India is dangerous for not only Muslims of India but also for Muslims of the world.

The efforts turned aggressive after the revocation of Article 370 by the Government of India in August 2019 and the narrative which emerged was - that Kashmir is not only a concern for Pakistan, but a global responsibility and the world needs to address the issue of Kashmir. He tried to use “nuclear threat” in his Kashmir narrative and highlighted the threat of a probable nuclear war in case the Kashmir problem persists and goes unaddressed. In his article in *The New York Times*, titled, “The World Can’t Ignore Kashmir. We are all in Danger”, August 30, 2019, Imran Khan wrote: “If the world does nothing to stop the Indian assault on Kashmir and its people, two nuclear-armed states will get ever closer to a direct military confrontation.”

His narrative of “Islamophobia” was pursued in all the international forums, and he tried to drive the point that suppression of the Muslims is the root cause of radicalisation. His annual speeches to the United Nations had several references to Islamophobia. In September 2019 in his speech at the UNGA, he said, “I always imagined what I would say and educate the world about Islam if I ever stood on this forum.”⁷

Pakistan’s relationship with the US has gone through ups and downs and it has had three crucial phases of strategic alliances with Washington that brought in much-needed military assistance and weaponry and the strategic dividends which the military cherished. Imran Khan’s “position with the US” is defined by three crucial perceptions that he tried to assert: 1). Pakistan’s biggest mistake has been to accept the US alliance post 9/11, and Islamabad has paid a heavy price in terms of lives and money for being a US partner in the global war on terror; and, terrorism and radicalisation in Pakistan are a result of its role in the war on terror; 2). A foreign power (the US) is behind the political instability in Pakistan and Washington would want him to go. Throughout his tenure, he has been on the see-saw of controversial statements against the US which certainly were discomfiting for the military. Although he initially hesitatingly tried not to overtly name and blame the US for the current political turmoil, his intentions and indications were understood well; And, 3). Pakistan would want to pursue an independent foreign policy, which implies a foreign policy choice free of the influence of the West. He slammed the Islamabad-based Western envoys, who had urged Pakistan to condemn Moscow’s actions in Ukraine.

Imran Khan focused on a series of narratives, but the narratives did not yield the desired results for him. He probably overestimated the weight of the narrative of foreign conspiracy and Islamophobia.

Economic Crisis

Pakistan's economy has always remained an aid-dependent economy and for decades the nation has been in a vicious cycle of taking new loans to repay the old ones. The economic indicators in the last 5 years have been alarming. It would be useful to look into some of the critical numbers to have an understanding of the economic crisis.

- The GDP growth rate stood at – 1.3 % in 2020 before it started to project a positive trend.⁸
- The inflation rate at consumer prices went from 5.1% in 2018 to 9.7 % in 2020⁹ The World Bank, adding frustration to the masses.
- Pakistan has been on a constant lending spree and its total debt liabilities stand at 89.2% of the GDP.¹⁰
- The Pakistani rupee (PKR) has been falling. According to a renowned Pakistan-born economist, Atif Mian, the Pakistani Rupee lost 20% of its value and in the short run, the key issue will be rationing.¹¹ He said, “Pakistan has left itself almost completely at the mercy of foreign assistance – this is the real sin of its political elite. Energy is mostly imported, medicine is mostly imported, and even in food, unfortunately, Pakistan is no longer self-sufficient.”¹²

According to Atif Mian, PTI committed some serious mistakes, “PTI government reduced price domestically and started to subsidise it. How can Pakistan pay for it?”¹³

In July 2019, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved USD 6 billion loans to Pakistan which brought a much-needed respite to the economy. The agreement came to a pause due to the inability of the PTI government to fulfil its commitments to tax collections and subsidy agreements. The IMF levied strict conditionalities including a hike in electricity and petrol prices on the subsequent tranche of the loan. The Sharif government did take tough and unpopular decisions to raise the petrol and energy prices to fulfil the IMF conditionalities. Pakistan's military leadership has been making aggressive efforts to secure a dispersal of USD 1.2 billion under the IMF loan program. The IMF has been insistent on macroeconomic reforms, and transparency about Pakistan's debt situation, specifically the debt it owes to China. The IMF wants to cautiously guard the probability of Pakistan using the IMF funds to repay the Chinese loans.

Pakistan has been on the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) grey list since June 2018. The nation has been on the FATF grey list before in 2008

and 2012. Pakistan has been trying hard to meet the stringent conditionalities laid by the FATF. Although Pakistan has been under massive international pressure to take concrete actions against terrorism, it delayed the arrest of the UN-designated global terrorist Hafiz Saeed, mastermind of the deadly 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, till April 2022. The decision to arrest Saeed came after.

Pakistan was pushed against the wall with the FATF final deadline and warning approaching.

The recent decision (at the time of writing the paper) of the FATF to conduct an onsite visit to Pakistan to physically examine its actions regarding counter-terrorism and money laundering has brought relief to Islamabad. Exiting the FATF grey list will facilitate exports, imports, and international lending needed desperately to manage Pakistan's economic crisis. FATF grey listing might not have immediate and direct economic ramifications but it certainly carries financial and reputational implications for Pakistan.

Emerging Security Dynamics

The 2018 elections in Pakistan provided political space to the candidates representing *jihadi* and extremist groups despite ample controversy and apprehensions raised over the future implications of the development. The USA and the United Nations (UN)-designated global terrorist, Hafiz Saeed's party, the Milli Muslim League (MML), was turned down by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) after a prolonged debate. The Jamaat-ud-Dawa chief collaborated with a little-known Allah-o-Akbar Tehreek (AAT) to contest the 2018 elections. What was surprising was that despite the pressures from the USA and the FATF, Pakistan did accommodate Saeed's political debut. The AAT party did not manage to win a single seat, but this can be credited to the fact that the party was created a few months before the elections and did not have time to expand its political presence.

The old religious parties like the MMA, Ulema-i-Islam Nazryati-Pakistan and Jamiat Ulema-i-Pakistan (National) did not perform well as compared to the 2013 elections, but new splinter groups established their presence.¹⁴ The Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), a newly formed party and an aggressive face of Barelvi politics, emerged as the fifth largest party during the 2018 elections, which received 2,234,138 votes for the National Assembly.¹⁵ The Tehreek-i-Labbaik Ya Rasool Allah started as a protest movement and was registered as a political party by one of the founders, Khadim Hussain Rizvi, in the summer of 2017.¹⁶ The group rose from the protests after Mumtaz

Qadri's execution and came to the limelight in 2017 when it blocked Islamabad for several weeks demanding stricter enforcement of blasphemy laws. Imran Khan supported the party and the TLP managed to get a surprising number of votes in the National Assembly and more than 2.38 million provincial votes, which was termed as a "really spectacularly rapid rise".¹⁷

The TLP managed to gather the maximum number of votes in Lahore. The number of seats that it won was not so significant, but what was relevant was a radical party's entry and performance on the political stage. This indicates the revival of Barelvi sectarian politics in Pakistan and is likely to have long-term implications for the state. Although, lately the leadership has tried to control the TLP's aggressive positioning using punitive means, it will not be incorrect to say that Barelvi organisations will continue to try to increase pressure on the government through mass protests/other means. There will be an effort to employ sectarian discourse by these groups which will be a challenge for the state.¹⁸

Resurgence of the TTP, Islamic State and Rising Religious Intolerance

After the death of Hakimullah Mehsud, the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) faced severe challenges in terms of organisational consolidation. There were reports regarding divisions within the TTP due to leadership issues. The counter-terror operations did challenge the operational capability of the TTP, but the terror attacks continued with varying intensity. A series of attacks in 2017 was claimed by the TTP and the Islamic State (IS). The attacks drew significant attention and did represent a higher intensity of radicalisation within Pakistan. Perhaps one of the most glaring attacks was on the Lal Shahbaz Qalander *dargah* in Sehwan, while devotees were in the middle of *Dhamaal* and at least 90 people died. The attack was claimed by the IS and victims included women and children, and 100 were injured. The attack represented intolerance of Sufi Islam in Pakistan. Another attack on liberalism was the assassination of Pakistan's most famous qawwali singer, Amjad Sabri. The TTP claimed responsibility for the attack citing that the assassination was on account of blasphemy.

In 2020, the TTP announced the merger of its two major splinter groups, the Jamaat-ul-Ahrar and Hizbul Ahrar. The development is important as the militant group was on the run for some time and found sanctuaries in Afghanistan. The TTP has gained strength and a series of attacks have been conducted over the past two years specifically targeting security personnel.

The return of TTP fighters to North Waziristan has seriously complicated the security dynamics in Pakistan. The Pakistani government extended the offer of talks with the group and proposed that the state was ready to grant amnesty to the TTP fighters if the group agreed to give up violence. There have been multiple rounds of talks (facilitated by the military) with the TTP, but the state has not been able to achieve the desired outcome.

The TTP has reunited and gathered its strength. Ever since the Taliban has taken control of Afghanistan (August 2021), the TTP has accelerated the terror attacks specifically targeting the security forces. Surely, the defeat of the democratically elected forces in Afghanistan is seen as a major ideological victory by the group. The TTP was the first organisation to send a congratulatory message to the Taliban in Afghanistan after the group took control of Kabul. Although the Afghan Taliban have claimed that they do not offer formal support to the TTP, a possibility of collaboration between these two groups cannot be ruled out given the fact that the groups share common ideologies and common objectives of establishing a rule-based order on *Islamic Sharia law*.

Defeat of Political Forces in Afghanistan: The Taliban Victory

Pakistan rejoiced the Taliban takeover in Kabul and sees it as its strategic victory. At the political level, Prime Minister Imran Khan said that the Taliban has “broken the shackles of slavery”.¹⁹ For Pakistan, its long-cherished dream of *seeking strategic depth in Afghanistan* has been finally accomplished. Islamabad always desired a pro-Pakistan regime in Afghanistan to cater to its strategic objectives including managing the rebel Pashtun voices and controlling the Pashtun sentiments in its tribal areas, dealing with the challenges of the disputed Durand Line, using the Afghan soil to train anti-India terror groups and, most importantly, deny India any space in Afghanistan. After the Taliban’s victory in Afghanistan, Pakistani voices reflected the sentiment that Islamabad can now use the Afghan Taliban to support its Kashmir agenda.

At the level of religious groups in Pakistan, there is jubilation over victory of the radical ideology. The Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam (S) JUI and Difa-e-Pakistan Council termed the Taliban victory as a glorious victory of the *ideology of Maulana Sami-ul-Haq*. The Jamia Hafsa Seminary in Islamabad celebrated the Taliban victory by chanting slogans, singing the song “Salam Taliban” and hoisting the Taliban flags on its rooftop.²⁰ The ideological wave within Pakistan will get strengthened, which will have severe fall-outs in the long run for Pakistan and the region. But certainly, the Generals in Rawalpindi do not feel

that way. The Pakistan military and the ISI, in their minds, appear to be closest to achieving their strategic objective of controlling Afghanistan.

Implications for India

Pakistan goes through a regular and interestingly predictable cycle of political fragility, manipulative tactics by the state institutions and unresolvable economic woes which demand a constant drip of foreign assistance. However, some factors have remained unaffected: 1) sustained military modernization (with assistance from China); 2) expansion of the nuclear arsenal and its nuclear posturing; and 3) anti-India and victimhood narratives to legitimize its patronage of the non-state actors, continue high-cost military build-up and target India's rising profile, strategic partnerships and sovereign decision-making.

While the political and military leadership in Pakistan have often issued statements that Pakistan is keen to maintain regional peace and stability, the actions of the state do not support the verbal position. Pakistan's Army Chief formulated the "Bajwa Doctrine" in two phases, one in 2018 and the second in 2021. The doctrine aimed at national growth emphasises *geo-economics and connectivity* which seems to be a buzz phrase in Pakistan. Pakistan's first-ever National Security Policy (NSP) was unveiled on January 14, 2022. The public version of the NSP puts "economic security at the core of comprehensive national security" and aims to enhance the economic outreach for Pakistan.

As far as India is concerned, the document attempts to open channels of dialogue with India and puts across that Pakistan would want to resolve all disputes with India, but Jammu and Kashmir is at the core of the bilateral relationship. But the NSP blames India for *having hegemonic designs, raising the threat of military adventurism, arms build-up, expansion of nuclear triad, a regressive and dangerous ideology, introducing destabilising technologies (which) disturb the strategic balance in the region and spreading disinformation against Pakistan*. Ironically, while Pakistan claims that it does not want war with India and seeks peaceful resolution of outstanding issues, its narrative for India has not altered in any form. Although the NSP talks about facilitating peace and stability in the region, Pakistan declined India's invitation to attend the Delhi Regional Security Dialogue to discuss Afghanistan on November 10, 2021. China, who sees India-Pakistan's hostility to its strategic advantage, also skipped the meeting. Pakistan took over a month to respond to New Delhi's proposal of sending wheat to Afghanistan. Pakistan's use of terror has been the deterrent in any dialogue or resolution so far. India's position -

talks and terror cannot go together- has been firm post the Pathankot terror attack on January 2, 2016.

Imran Khan and his party members maintained an extremely toxic position vis-à-vis India. The regime led by Shehbaz Sharif and his minister of foreign affairs, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari talked about improving ties with India but asserted a precondition of reversing Article 370.

Looking into Pakistan's emerging dynamics following conclusions can be drawn to concerning implications for New Delhi:

- Pakistan will continue to intensify its narrative on Kashmir and its efforts will be to internationalize the issue.
- Although there has been a slowdown in Pakistan's covert actions in Kashmir due to India's stricter security apparatus and the international pressure, Islamabad will continue its anti-India activities in Kashmir.
- Pakistan's alliance with China will remain unchanged, despite challenges faced in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor projects.
- Modernisation of the defence capability (primarily with Chinese assistance) will continue despite the economic crisis.
- There might be a pause of periodic nuclear blackmail and threats of nuclear war from Pakistan, owing to its strategic compulsions, but the basic tenets of nuclear posturing are unlikely to change.

Notes:

¹ Ayesha Siddiqua-Agha, *Military Inc. Inside Pakistan's Military Economy*, London: Pluto Press, 2007, p.91.

² PTI Historic Jalsa: PM Imran Khan Complete Speech, March 27, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QryHhqbKtR8>. Accessed on March 29, 2022.

³ Ibid.

⁴ See, Shalini Chawla, "Why Did Imran Khan Lose the Unwritten No-Confidence Motion of the Military", *CAPS Expert View*, March 30, 2022, <https://capsindia.org/why-did-imran-khan-lose-the-unwritten-no-confidence-motion-of-the-military/>. Accessed on March 30, 2022.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "Qureshi asks OIC to stop dragging feet on Kashmir meeting", *DAWN*, August 6, 2020, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1572857>. Accessed on August 10, 2022.

⁷ Full Transcript of Prime Minister Imran Khan's speech at the UNGA - Pakistan - Business Recorder (brecorder.com) <https://www.brecorder.com/news/524851>

⁸ The World Bank, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?>

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- ⁹ The World Bank, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/FP.CPI.TOTL.ZG?end=2021&locations=PK&start=2015>. Accessed on August 10, 2022.
- ¹⁰ State Bank of Pakistan, <https://www.sbp.org.pk/ecodata/Summary.pdf>. Accessed on August 11, 2022.
- ¹¹ “Pakistan’s Economy Is In Deep Crisis, Tweets Economist Atif Mian”, *The Friday Times*, July 21, 2022: <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/2022/07/21/pakistans-economy-is-in-deep-crisis-tweets-economist-atif-mian/>.
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ Ramsha Jahangir, “Religious parties clinch over 9pc share in National Assembly”, *Dawn*, May 19, 2018, www.dawn.com/news/1424235. Accessed on January 12, 2019.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Mossa Kaleem, “The emergence of Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan on Karachi’s political map”, *Herald*, September 20, 2018, <https://herald.dawn.com/news/1398669>. Accessed on December 1, 2018.
- ¹⁷ “The rise and rise of Tehreek-e-Labbaik”, *Pakistan Today*, July 31, 2018, <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/07/31/the-rise-and-rise-of-tehreek-e-labbaik/> Accessed on August 31, 2018.
- ¹⁸ For details, see Iqbal Singh Sevea, “The rise of Barelvi Political Activism in Pakistan”, *ISAS Insights*, NUS, no. 520, 13 October 2018, <https://www.isas.nus.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/ISAS-Insights-No.-520-A-New-Strand-of-Islamic-Politics-in-Pakistan.pdf>. Accessed on April 1, 2019.
- ¹⁹ “PM Imran Khan talks about overpowering ‘shackles of slavery’ at Single National Curriculum Launch”, *Dawn*, August 16, 2021, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1640988>. Accessed on August 17, 2021.
- ²⁰ Anil Kumar, “Taliban flags hoisted at women’s madrasa in Pakistan, children sing ‘Salam Taliban’” *India Today*, August 22, 2021, <https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/taliban-flags-hoisted-women-madrasa-pakistan-afghanistan-1843882-2021-08-22>. Accessed on August 23, 2021.

Disclaimer: Some parts of the papers have previously been published in the author’s work - “Imran’s Narrative-building an Exercise in Futility”, *The Tribune*, April 5, 2022, “Pak Set to Gain If It Exits FATF Grey List”, *The Tribune*, June 21, 2022, and “ Why Did Imran Khan Lose the Unwritten No-Confidence Motion of the Military”, CAPS Expert View, March 30, 2022, <https://capsindia.org/why-did-imran-khan-lose-the-unwritten-no-confidence-motion-of-the-military/>

