

Scenario 262

'FALL OF IMRAN KHAN' - REVISITED

KHAN UNCEREMONIOUSLY SENT HOME

On 10th April 2022, Khan was ousted as Pakistan's prime minister after a vote of no confidence in the parliament; Imran Khan lost, his opponents having secured 174 votes in the 342-member house. Imran Khan's tumultuous term as prime minister of Pakistan ended and weeks of high political drama and days of constitutional chaos started. The Supreme Court's verdict had restored the parliament that Mr Khan had sought to disband and mandated a vote of no confidence that he sought to avoid. He was given a choice: resign or face No Confidence Move in the parliament; his political demise was rooted in the said new twin realities.

[The ruling PTI had already lost the majority in parliament; more than 190 legislators had voted against Khan in an apparent mock session that was held by the opposition on 3rd April 2022. The embattled leader summoned a meeting of the federal cabinet as well as of the PTI lawmakers to chalk out a future course of action. He also scheduled to address the nation on next evening in which, some expected he could announce his resignation.

PM Khan could make alternate dramatic move including en-mass resignations from assemblies – it was unlikely that he would wait for the opposition to vote him out. He could resign but he instead preferred to play the role of an opposition leader in the parliament. No doubt; Khan was still a popular leader and he wanted to go for fresh elections with a narrative that he was a defender of the national interest.

*However, next day, inside parliament, Mr Khan's PTI had lost the support of coalition allies, denying him the majority he needed to defeat the vote of no confidence. Outside parliament, Khan had lost the support of Pakistan's powerful military because the Army Chief Gen Bajwa had publicly fallen out with the prime minister over senior military appointments and some policy decisions. While the principal opposition parties, the PPP and PMLN, had ramped up their efforts to dislodge Mr Khan. They were urging the public rallies that: **"As far as governance is concerned, the government has totally failed".**]*

Taking light from Zafar Aziz Chaudhry's essay appeared in the '**DAILY TIMES**' dated 23rd July 2022:

"In the aftermath of Mr Khan's departure, Pakistan was seen on the brink of disaster due to grave constitutional crisis in continuity which was timely averted due to the intervention of the Supreme Court. This was enough to conclude that '...if the level field is entirely left to the politicians, they can always play havoc with the country'. Mr Khan indeed inherited a bad economy with enormously heavy debts, which no government in the past tried to minimize. Amongst factors which had been influencing price hike was the rapid growth of the population, rising non-development expenditure of the government, the inadequacy of agricultural and industrial

outputs and escalating imports. He did not touch these souring problems – he had no team of macro-financing managers with him in fact.”

On a positive tone, when he won a thumping victory in the by-elections on 17th July 2022, the people had re-asserted his popularity as their saviour, obviously with high expectations of overcoming their on-going problems, for which he could face grave challenges in the future. Since Imran Khan's dismissal, a large population of the public rallied behind Mr Khan (***famous rally of MARCH TOWARDS ISLAMABAD on 25th May 2022 is especially referred***); Khan's anti-corruption message and promises of reform resonated with many Pakistanis especially the youth. His emphasis on the need for greater social justice including poverty and improving access to education (*though nothing done significantly in this field*) and healthcare were translated into effective policy, while gaining popular support from the people.

The road ahead was very tough. Mr Khan and the PTI was expected to seriously analyze their defects and weaknesses and resolve that the same mistakes would not be repeated again. However, his arrest on 9th May 2023, and an un-precedented burden of pseudo type revengeful criminal cases, remotely controlled by his opponent political parties - marching up with the ECP hand-in-hand - didn't allow him to appear or showing face in the next general elections. See a little glimpse of charges framed against him:

Referring to Maliha Baig's analysis on the media pages of 8th April 2023; amongst **Corruption & Terrorism Charges**, Imran Khan was accused of:

- Members of the ruling party PMLN filed a case against Mr Khan contending that he had failed to disclose the assets in declarations submitted to the Election Commission of Pakistan [ECP].
- Illegally selling \$2m unique antique watch, gold pen, ring and cufflinks given to him by the Saudi Crown Prince, Muhammad Bin Salman.
- The sale of state gifts by Mr Khan, known as **Tosha Khana Case**, became a national political scandal, and the ECP suspended Mr Khan from the parliament accusing him of corrupt practices.
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- The opposition parties alleged that Imran Khan and his wife, Bushra Bibi, misappropriated AL-QADIR TRUST funds. As per report by Geo News, the charges against Khan and the others showed that the accused allegedly adjusted 190 million pounds in the trust at the time — sent by Britain's National Crime Agency (NCA) to the government of Pakistan.
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- In another high-profile case Khan was charged with **"terrorism"** by the police, a day after thousands of PTI supporters allegedly clashed with security forces; dozens of party workers and senior leaders were named and arrested for committing that unique type of terrorism.

In November 2022, he was shot and wounded in an attack on a protest rally he was leading in the city of Wazirabad; it was an attempt on his life, but police didn't admit he had been the target. Mr Khan was leading a march on the capital, Islamabad, to demand immediate elections. Earlier, he had suffered another setback when the Election Commission of Pakistan [ECP] disqualified him from holding public office in a politically motivated case – in media known as **'TOSHA KHANA Case'**.

WHAT WAS LEFT FOR IMRAN KHAN...

On 10th April 2022: A long-drawn-out political drama was over in Pakistan; Prime Minister Imran Khan was removed from office following a vote of no confidence in the Parliament. Next day, the opposition leader Shahbaz Sharif sworn in as new prime minister of the country. However, it was not an end of political turmoil in Pakistan, a country of about 240 million inhabitants. After various attempts to

stay in power, Imran Khan was finally voted out - more than 100 members of Parliament loyal to Khan had resigned and walked out of Parliament in protest.

The basic charge against Imran Khan was his mismanagement, especially in Punjab where he had appointed one Usman Buzdar as (dummy) Chief Minister. He knew that CM Buzdar would not be able to deliver but he allowed him to continue – perhaps Imran Khan wanted to make all pivotal decisions for Punjab from his Banni Gala residence in Islamabad. CM Buzdar was only the rubber stamp. However, the scheme didn't work and here was the first point of difference between the Army Chief Gen Bajwa; his die-heart companions like Shah Mahmood Qureshi and Jehangir Treen were also amongst the silent dissidents.

Imran Khan assumed power in mid-2018 promising a 'New Pakistan' and an end to the corruption that was for decades been part of Pakistan's politics; but he failed to live up to that promise. Even his chosen CM Buzdar was accused of widespread corruption, taking bribes for making bureaucratic appointments. Even members of Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), had raised fingers over this menace. On top of this, Khan was vastly criticized for his handling of everything from the pandemic to soaring inflation in the country.

Shahbaz Sharif for a long time had been chief minister of Punjab, and the general perception prevailed that he was an effective administrator there. His brother Nawaz Sharif served as prime minister of Pakistan on three separate occasions - but had been convicted of corruption and was banned from public office. Shahbaz had also faced allegations of cronyism and corruption - but this has been a usual practice in Pakistani politics – nothing is ever proved in court against any including Sharifs.

Imran Khan fell back on a tried-and-tested tactic in Pakistani politics: Blame America. He claimed to have been unseated by a foreign conspiracy aimed at forcing him from power. And it was America, Khan said, that was really behind the no-confidence motion filed by opposition lawmakers. He accused US Assistant Secretary of State Donald Lu of being involved in the plot to overthrow his government, suggesting that Lu had warned Pakistan's ambassador in Washington that there would be implications if Khan survived the no-confidence vote. However, The US dismissed this claim because Khan had offered no evidence to support it.

Khan also said, the Pakistani military was (still) overwhelmingly depending on the US, and as such Pakistan's Generals would want to maintain some semblance of good relations with Washington. But at the top level in politics it was fair to say relations with the US were not good – **'terrible'** was the word Khan used in a 2021's interview.

Imran Khan certainly had a base of support that was very loyal, but doubtful factor was - whether it would outweigh that of the other parties put together – or a coalition of about 13 opposition parties could gain enough seats to oust Khan in the next election. The media analysts held that Khan never governed with a large mandate – his party did not win a majority of seats in Parliament thus required the support of smaller parties. However, many people in Pakistan bought the conspiracy that it was the US that toppled Khan. The fact remained that it was very difficult to win Punjab given the mismanagement through his beloved choice of Usman Buzdar as CM for which he was blamed for - and without Punjab, there would be ashes in the Pakistan's governance basket; for more details see **Prof Ayesha Jalal's** (Tufts University...) analysis on media pages of 13th April 2022.

PAKISTAN DURING 2022 ONWARDS...

Major events in Pakistan during 2022 and 2023 were dominated by significant political instability, a severe economic crisis, a devastating natural disaster, and ongoing security challenges.

Political and Constitutional Crisis: The period was marked by unprecedented political turmoil, primarily centered on former Prime Minister Imran Khan. On 10th April 2022, Imran Khan was removed from office through a no-confidence vote in the National Assembly, the first time a Pakistani PM was ousted by this method. Shehbaz Sharif, leader of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) coalition, was sworn in as the new Prime Minister. Immediately after, Khan mobilized massive public support, holding numerous rallies and marches ('**Azadi March**') to demand early elections; and criticized the new PDM government and military establishment.

On 3rd November 2022, Imran Khan was wounded in the lower leg during a shooting at a political rally in Wazirabad, which resulted in the death of one supporter. On 9th May 2023, Khan was arrested on corruption charges; his arrest triggered nationwide violent protests where PTI supporters allegedly attacked government and military installations, leading to mass arrests of party leaders and a significant government crackdown. The PTI-led provincial assemblies of Punjab and Khyber PK were dissolved in January 2023 to force early elections. The national assembly was dissolved in August 2023, but general elections were postponed to February 2024 due to new constituency delimitations based on the latest census. A caretaker government was appointed in August 2023.

Economic Challenges: Pakistan faced a severe economic crisis characterized by high inflation, a depreciating currency, and dwindling foreign exchange reserves, bringing the country to the brink of default. The government engaged in prolonged and difficult negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to secure bailout funds and avert a sovereign default, which involved implementing tough austerity measures. A last-minute Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) was agreed upon in June 2023, providing temporary relief.

More Crisis: The country experienced major power breakdowns, including a nationwide grid failure in January 2023. Import restrictions led to a significant decline in the trade deficit, while exports also saw a year-on-year decline.

In 2022 Floods between June and October 2022, unprecedented monsoon rains and flooding submerged one-third of the country, affecting 33 million people, displacing nearly 8 million, killing over 1,700, and causing an estimated \$30-40 billion in damages. A state of emergency was declared in August 2022.

The period saw a notable increase in terrorist activity, particularly by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), following the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan. Key attacks included the Peshawar mosque attack (March 2022), the attempted assassination of Imran Khan (Nov 2022), the Tanda Dam boat disaster (Jan 2023), another major Peshawar mosque bombing (Jan 2023), and the Mastung bombing (Sep 2023).

During **2023-2024:** The federal government earmarked **Rs. 97.098 billion** for education in its budget. The HEC received roughly **Rs. 59.7 billion** under the PSDP (approx. Rs. 52.8 billion for ongoing schemes and Rs. 6.9 billion for new ones).

During **2024-2025:** The federal PSDP allocated **Rs. 25.7 billion** directly to the Federal Education & Professional Training Division. The HEC saw an increase, securing **Rs. 66.3 billion** for its PSDP projects.

Despite minor nominal increases, overall education expenditures as a share of the federal budget trended downwards during this period due to competing fiscal pressures and inflation.}

SUMMARY OF KHAN'S FALL-FACTORS:

On 5th May 2023; Mr Khan was speaking to media in the federal capital while appearing before the Islamabad High Court (IHC); he also made an announcement through a video message before leaving for that hearing at IHC. The PTI chairman was going to lead the rally in Lahore to convey the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial and the judiciary about his following in masses.

Mr Khan urged the people to come to the streets next day, Saturday the 6th May 2023, to express their solidarity with the top judge amidst ***then ongoing conflict between the judiciary and parliament*** over the holding of elections in Punjab and Khyber-PK. The PDM was running away from elections and had been violating the Constitution and opposing the CJP.

On 9th May 2023; Mr Khan was arrested on corruption charges, sparking widespread protests that plunged Pakistan deeper into political turmoil at a time when its economy was on life support and food prices were soaring. The arrest was declared illegal at another judicial forum, but in August 2023, he was taken into custody again after being found guilty of not declaring money earned from selling gifts he had received in office - '**TOSHA KHANNA Case**'. He was sentenced to three years in jail; Mr Khan's conviction ended any chance of a resolution between the former PM and the establishment.

Going back for details for a while – while referring to the **BBC News** dated 5th August 2023; few words on Imran Khan's past:

"Imran Khan was born in 1952, the son of a civil engineer. He and his four sisters had a privileged upbringing in Lahore where he was schooled, before he studied at Oxford University....."

In 1995, at the age of 43, he married the 21-year-old British heiress, Jemima Goldsmith - the daughter of one of the world's richest men at the time, Sir James Goldsmith. The marriage brought two boys but was dissolved in 2004.

A second marriage in 2015, to a journalist Reham Khan, lasted less than a year. The former BBC weather presenter alleges she was bullied by his supporters and wrote a tell-all memoir.

Mr Khan married again in a low-profile ceremony in January 2018. His third wife Bushra Watto, a mother of five, was described as his spiritual adviser. Ms Watto later set up a trust that allegedly received land as a bribe from one of Pakistan's top real estate developers [Riaz Malik]. This eventually led to the corruption charge that saw Mr Khan arrested."

..... At last in the aftermath of the Elections of 2018, he gained sufficient strength to get a majority in the Parliament and form his government. On 18th August 2018 when he took hold of his office as Prime Minister, his immediate challenges included flawed energy policies, spiraling fiscal deficit, all-pervasive corruption, grossly inadequate tax to GDP ratio, underinvestment in education and health sectors etc. His economic agenda projected a growth rate of 6 per cent, inflation to be brought down to 7pc, fiscal deficit to be brought down to 4.5pc, and tax revenues to be raised by 15pc. These were his ambitious plans and big challenges ahead.

Mr Khan undoubtedly had significant public support in 2018. However, the critics labelled his government a '**hybrid regime**'; it was because some of his party candidates standing for election were either cajoled or coerced into joining his party. Nawaz Sharif, his chief opponent, was first disqualified and then convicted on corruption charges. Many believed that Mr Sharif had indeed been involved in corruption in the past - but the real reason he was being punished and defeated in 2018 elections was his own falling out with the army. The fact remains that Mr Sharif had started his political career as a protégé of a military dictator, Gen Ziaul Haq, later growing more independent and invoking the ire of the '**establishment**'.

Mr Khan, the former cricket captain, later styling himself as a pious anti-poverty reformer, spoke of his dream of building '**NAYA PAKISTAN**', however, on the basis of old traditional thinking of '**RIYASAT E MADINA**' - an Islamic welfare state; making ambitious promises that included reforming the country's tax system and bureaucracy. Instead, inflation soared, the rupee plummeted and the country became crippled by debt, stoking anger and criticism that Mr Khan had mishandled the economy. Through his party agenda before 2018 elections, Mr Khan had vowed not to seek International Monetary Fund (IMF) help but ended up negotiating a \$6bn rescue bailout to address a balance of payments crisis.

The fact remains that Mr Khan struggled for years to turn popular support into electoral gains. He launched his **Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf** (PTI) in 1996 but it wasn't until the 2013 general election that it emerged as a serious player nationally. Five years later a swing of epic proportions propelled him to power. The PTI made huge gains in his rivals' Nawaz and Shahbaz Sharif's bastion, Punjab province, which held more than half of the directly-elected National Assembly seats. Mr Khan was seen as a '**candidate of CHANGE**', whose promise to raise a whole new class of clean politicians chimed with voters disillusioned with the old political order.

However, Mr Khan was also widely viewed as the favoured candidate of the military which - despite denials from both sides - was accused of being inquisitive to turn opinion against his rivals. Many sane observers held saying his biggest problem was that he had lost the support of the army Generals - especially the Army Chief and the ISI. Then the PTI leader found himself short of political friends. Far from cleaning up 'TWO POLITICAL DYNASTYS', he was accused of sidelining opponents, with many jailed on corruption charges during his tenure. Ultimately, his enemies got united to send him home un-ceremonially.

After seizing the premiership, Imran Khan, by contrast, proudly proclaimed he and the army were '**on one page**' when it came to policy decisions. The first few months of his rule made nervous the civil society activists, with a spate of attacks and abductions targeting journalists and commentators critical of both Mr Khan's government and the intelligence services. They both denied involvement, but no one other was ever identified. However, Mr Khan focused on improving governance, and he made some impressive expansions to the social welfare system; introducing a health insurance scheme for the poor in two provinces of the country. He pursued a more independent foreign policy seeking closer ties with countries like China, Russia while also pursuing to improve relations with India and Afghanistan - (but) against the whims of the army wishes; he ultimately had to pay for it.

The said civil-military relationship became strained in the last months of 2021 and early 2022 because of Khan's Hardline anti-west Foreign Policy. Mr Khan's ill-timed visit to Moscow had just taken place days before the no-confidence motion in the parliament against him (9th April 2022). Since his removal In April 2022, the PTI claimed that Khan was being charged in 85 cases, including sedition, corruption, and terrorism; Mr Khan though denied all the charges and accusations brought against him.

Mr Khan as the PM ignored the calls from Washington and an open letter from emissaries of the European Union when Pakistan was asked to condemn Russia's aggression in Ukraine at the UN General Assembly. He made a provoking statement '**Are we your slaves**' at a public Meeting. The European Union had been Pakistan's largest trading partner and a major source of much needed assistance for the country's faltering economy, so such statements fueled up tensions on both sides.

Once more going back, since Mr Khan's first day in saddles, he seriously faltered in some areas. **His decision to appoint an inexperienced and underqualified political newcomer, Usman Buzdar, as chief minister of Punjab**, the country's most populous province, was widely ridiculed. At a loss to explain why Mr Khan refused to replace his appointee, Usman Buzdar, despite overwhelming criticism, rumours spread that the prime minister's wife, a spiritual guide of sorts, had warned Khan that Mr Buzdar was a good omen and - if he were to be sacked - his entire government would collapse - which ultimately collapsed due to the same goof administrator.

*[Imran Khan, besides his multiple qualities suffered from certain temperamental defects which are suicidal for a politician. For a good politician, one should have a generous heart and mind, should proceed with a spirit of accommodating his political rivals, and give them due weight as long as they do not run counter to his own program, and try to take them along through the thick and thin of their political journey for the common good of their people. Unfortunately, Mr Khan publicly declared that **he would not sit with the opposition party to consult and resolve important national issues**. This mood alone went against the democratic working, bureaucratic norms of the status-quo ridden society and establishment's domination of the Pakistan-politics.]*

As a politician Imran Khan publicly upheld liberalism, but at the same time appealed to Islamic values and anti-West sentiments. On his watch, there was a significant rise in Islamist militancy in Pakistan, and religious extremists strengthened their position. He was amply criticised as sympathetic towards the Taliban, and branded '**TALIBAN KHAN**' by opponents. *In 2020 there was an outcry after he called Osama Bin Laden a martyr.*

Imran Khan often made hasty-cum-solo decisions without deliberation or logic. This was true about his postings and transfers to fill important slots. For instance:

- The selection and posting of Usman Buzdar as the CM Punjab was very unpopular decision Mr Khan made. Mr Buzdar was neither an old PTI member nor did he have any experience of administration at any level, nor he was a public speaker, nor could face people or journalists. His decision to appoint an inexperienced and under qualified political newcomer as Chief Minister of Punjab received backlash and overwhelming criticism.

Being an introvert and inarticulate persona, he always brought embarrassment to Imran Khan's government which the latter eschewed with good humour, much to the embarrassment of his own party. Nobody on earth could ascertain the reasons for his appointment to such a post of high responsibility except a reference to his virtuous and pious new wife. Both the PM & CM earned enough unpopularity for the regime whatsoever.

- Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan's selection as SAPM {Special Advisor to the PM} for information remained questionable throughout her stay in the PTI government.
- Mehmud Khan's appointment as CM Khyber PK, instead of much experienced Perwaiz Khatak, was another derogatory choice. Mehmud Khan couldn't deliver at all and Mr Khatak remained unconcerned with the PTI's manifesto & state-performance due to grudge and inner bad feelings.

PM Khan's other political blunders also included the removal of Asad Omer from his finance portfolio. Filing a presidential reference for the removal of Supreme Court's Justice Qazi Faez Isa was another negative point. This reference forced Justice Isa and his wife to face unjust inquiries about the means of their wealth. Mr Khan later confessed that he was misled but by whom – no one else but his religious mentor – his wife.

Under Khan's premiership, Pakistan - a longtime ally of the West, however continued strengthening ties with China. Tense relations with neighbouring India, Pakistan's historic rival, did not improve during his tenure.

KHAN vs ARMY - FACTS ON FILE:

Till mid-2021, Imran Khan enjoyed full covert support and backing of the 'Establishment' but then the things started deteriorating. The dynamics changed dramatically in ending of that year; the army began to grow increasingly frustrated with Mr Khan's failure to deliver good governance, particularly in Punjab, and perhaps at how they were being publicly blamed for bringing him into power by the opposition. Most crucially, a rift began to appear between Gen Bajwa and Lt Gen Faiz Hameed, who was widely seen as hoping to become the next army chief. Lt Gen Hameed was apparently so confident of his prospects that he had even told officials in neighbouring Afghanistan he would be the next man in charge of the army.

{However, the retired military Generals had the opinion that while Lt Gen Hameed was seen as someone who could handle 'dirty jobs' effectively, a reference to manipulating politicians or silencing critics, he was not seen as someone fit 'to lead the institution'; BBC News dated 9th April 2022 is referred.}

The tension between the two powerful figures was noticed during a private interaction with influential commentators in summer 2021. One journalist asked a question, only to be told by the head of the ISI that time had run out. *"I'm the chief,"* interjected Gen Bajwa curtly, *"and I'll decide when we're done,"* before proceeding to take the question and answer it at leisure.

As said earlier, Imran Khan suffered from certain temperamental defects, which were suicidal for a Pakistani politician. His initial promises after he assumed power were that he would create 10 million jobs, and make five million homes, but throughout his tenure of nearly four years, he failed to give them a single job or home. Instead, he created more instability and millions of people were laid off due to the economic instability.

- *Mr Khan had declared with a fanfare that he would rather commit suicide than go asking other nations for aid, but later he went to every single country with the same begging bowl in his hand and yet could not muster the requisite funding as had been expected by him.*

In October 2021, the dispute with Gen Bajwa and his team escalated and enveloped PM Khan. Gen Bajwa was understood to want a new man in charge of the intelligence services, and the army announced a change in roles. Till that time Mr Khan had developed a close relationship with Lt Gen Faiz Hameed, thus resisted, apparently wanting him to stay on until elections had taken place - assuming that Lt Gen Hameed could once again help ensure Mr Khan's victory. He held off issuing a formal notification approving the change of posting for nearly three weeks before eventually relenting.

The then visible cracks between the military and Imran Khan's government emboldened the opposition. When the opposition began plotting a vote of no confidence, and sounding out potential defectors from within his party and coalition allies, the military made clear that they were going to be **'neutral on the occasion'**. One defecting member of Mr Khan's party told the **BBC News** [ref: date cited above]:

'....he and other parliamentarians used to receive "calls" from the intelligence services, directing them on what to do'. "We used to be manhandled," he said indignantly. However, once Lt Gen Faiz Hameed left office, the "calls" stopped. "Now the army is not interfering"..... that the military had been involved in "managing" Imran Khan's allies and slim majority in government. "Once that support was missing, his downfall was inevitable."

Further differences have emerged between Mr Khan and the army, too, notably on foreign policy. Although he defended visiting Moscow on the day Russian troops crossed into Ukraine and abruptly rejected attempts by Western officials to issue a condemnation of President Vladimir Putin's behaviour, Gen Bajwa said a week after that **"...the (Russian) invasion must be stopped immediately"**.

Mr Khan, however, repeatedly indicated he would not give up the fight. He alleged he was the victim of a US-led attempt to affect **'regime change in Pakistan'**, because of the anti-Western tilt in his foreign policy, which had included criticism of America's war in Afghanistan. Most analysts, however, had dismissed this plea as a deliberate exaggeration of a diplomatic cable sent by the Pakistani ambassador in Washington. Basically, it was a narrative that appeared to be resonating with Mr Khan's supporters, tapping into a reservoir of anti-Americanism in Pakistan. After a short while, his opponents were seen becoming increasingly vocal in their opposition to the military, naming the army chief, Gen Bajwa, and the head of the intelligence services (ISI), Lt Gen Faiz Hameed, as being responsible for *'selecting'* Imran Khan to office.

Imran Khan was elected just three years before (in July 2018) for promises of fighting corruption and fixing the economy but those pledges went unmet and Pakistan landed in financial crisis immediately after. Just under four years after being elected, he was ousted as prime minister by his opponents in the parliament. Mr Khan spent his time out of power addressing large rallies of supporters angry at his removal from office.

Politically, PM Khan, in all his speeches and interviews, had lambasted ***the opposition leaders as 'dacoits and thieves'*** who looted the wealth of this country and stacked their assets in foreign countries. *This allegation could be true, but its too much repetition by the PM, while doing nothing to prosecute them, was likely to cause defamation on the integrity and impartiality of the premiership.* Moreover, the assertion of Mr Khan that he would force them to vomit their hidden wealth, was another example of his political innocence. Not a single penny was recovered. His chosen Chief Minister Punjab, Usman Buzdar, couldn't even investigate the so-called bogus medical reports of that **'corrupt former PM'** and FIRST TIME IN THE HISTORY OF PAKISTAN, that a convicted person got released on bail with Mr Khan's special permission to fly abroad.

In fact, Mr Khan's Government itself had strengthened his rivals to come together by targeting their top leadership, through the cases they had in the National Accountability Bureau [NAB]. To achieve the common goal of ousting Imran Khan from premiership through constitutional means, PMLN and PPP formed an alliance in which they also included the joint opposition Fazul-Rehman's Jamiat-Ulema-e-Islam [JUI] and other smaller parties to threaten his survival in the office. At this point Khan knew what was coming next but he couldn't react calmly, thus suffered more loss.

Imran Khan had hoped for a full five-year term, something no other prime minister had ever done in Pakistan due to their own corrupt practices of one kind or the other. The Pak-Army had to interfere to save the people from mismanagements, poor economic agendas and poor governance; see the history of coups and military rules in Pakistan. But by late March 2022, a series of defections had deprived Mr Khan of his parliamentary majority and the opposition ambushed, tabling a motion of no confidence which met success by 2 votes only.

Imran Khan sought to circumvent the move by having parliament dissolved and calling immediate elections, but the Supreme Court of Pakistan [SCP] ruled this was in breach of the constitution. He had claimed that his political opponents were colluding with the US to bring about regime change because of his policies on Afghanistan, Russia and China – commonly known as **CYPHER CASE**; Washington strongly denied any foreign interference and he couldn't provide any cogent evidence in that regard.

Here are the **achievements** which could be attributed to Mr Khan. Pakistan's Covid record had been the best in South Asia, and a poverty-alleviation program making progress. He also provided universal healthcare in two provinces, Punjab & Khyber PK - perhaps his most notable achievement. While this could help Mr Khan in elections due nearby, all eyes were on the pseudo-corruption allegations against him. A simple conviction, even declared false later, was enough to disqualify him from running for public office.