

Scenario 272

THE 9TH MAY 2023 **A DARK DAY OF PAKISTAN'S HISTORY**

THE 1ST EVENT: KHAN ARRESTED:

A little details of some earlier days...

On 5th March 2023: The PTI chairman managed to escape being arrested when Islamabad Police arrived at his Lahore residence in Zaman Park to serve him with court summons for his persistent non-attendance at Tosha-khana court hearings. Despite the Islamabad police chief's earlier declaration that they wouldn't return without making the arrest, the presence of a larger number of PTI supporters compared to the police contingent prevented the arrest from taking place.

On 14th March 2023: Police made a second attempt to arrest Imran, but were met with stiff resistance from his supporters. They threw petrol bombs over police, fired slingshots and wielded clubs while police fired volleys of teargas and employed water cannons against them, but to no avail. Eventually, the Lahore High Court ordered an end to the operation.

On 21st March 2023: The Lahore High Court (LHC) granted PTI Chairman Imran Khan protective bail in two terrorism cases registered against him in Islamabad following last week's clashes at the Federal Judicial Complex (FJC). The first information reports (FIRs) registered at the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) and the Golra police stations in the capital accused the PTI chief and party workers of being involved in attacking police and creating unrest outside the FJC in Islamabad during the hearing of the Tosha-khana case on 18th March instant.

A two-judge LHC bench comprising Justice Shehbaz Rizvi and Justice Farooq Haider granted Imran protective bail in the terrorism cases till

27th March. Imran Khan arrived at the LHC at around 1pm; the ex-premier's vehicle entered LHC via the Mosque Gate.

On 9th May 2023: Pakistan's former Prime Minister Imran Khan was arrested while appearing for hearings at the Islamabad High Court. The arrest was the latest twist in a months-long political crisis that had followed some unsuccessful attempts to apprehend the PTI's Chief Imran Khan, including a police raid in March at his residence in Lahore that went unsuccessful. Khan was charged in a number of cases that his party said were politically motivated, including allegations ranging from corruption to terrorism to rioting – allegedly unfolded only since he was ousted from power in a no-confidence vote in April 2022.

In a shocking turn of events, Imran Khan was arrested from the Islamabad High Court's premises earlier that day where he was present for two hearings in afternoon hours. Soon after the arrest, Islamabad police released a statement quoting Inspector General of Police Akbar Nasir as saying that Imran had been arrested in relation to the case which alleged that the PTI chief and his wife obtained billions of rupees from a real estate firm for legalising a laundered amount of Rs50 billion that was identified and returned to the country by the UK during the previous PTI government [commonly known as AL-QADIR TRUST CASE]

The then Federal Interior Minister Sanaullah, while providing further details during a press conference in Islamabad, said that Imran was arrested by officials of the **National Accountability Bureau** (NAB) specifically in the Al-Qadir Trust case, adding that there were dozens of other cases with corruption inquiries in progress against the former premier. Also confirmed that the PTI chief was in NAB custody then. The interior minister said a laundered amount of 190 million pounds or around Rs: 50 billion belonging to a property tycoon (Malik Riaz of Bahria Town fame) was caught in the United Kingdom - while that property tycoon was definitely a beneficiary in the case but the crime was of Mr Khan. Further that:

"According to the law, this amount rightfully belonged to the people of Pakistan. It was to be deposited in the national treasury and the UK government had contacted the Pakistani government regarding the amount's return. Allegedly, the former accountability czar Mirza Shehzad Akbar had gotten involved and 'an agreement was then realised, as a result of which an Al-Qadir Trust was made'.

...that subsequently property of 240 kanals in Bani Gala and another 458-kanal property in Sohawa were registered in the trust's name.....that Al-Qadir Trust was made by him to hide this corruption and bribery; Imran and his wife Bushra Bibi were the only two trustees in the matter."

The Interior Minister further lamented:

*"The 240 kanals in Bani Gala are registered in the name of Farah Gogi. The total worth of this property is around Rs5-7bn - that Akbar had also taken Rs2bn for '**his services**'. Instead of bringing that Rs50bn amount in the national treasury (of Pakistan), it was adjusted in the Supreme Court account of the property tycoon whose case was under trial in the apex court. Meaning his amount was returned back to him.*

...that not even the Supreme Court had taken notice of the matter as to the source of the amount, who it belonged to and why it was coming to Pakistan. It was a matter of shame that during the time this corruption was committed and permission was taken for Akbar to go to a UK court and give a statement on behalf of the Pakistani government for the amount to be adjusted in the property tycoon's account – (and) at that time he (Imran) was making false corruption cases against his [political] opponents."

The interior minister said evidence was there with the government for all of the above developments. It was necessary for him to present himself before NAB (the investigating agency) and give answers but he did not do so. He challenged those notices in the high court and ultimately the high court said that '*...the [legal] process in accordance with law cannot be stopped and he should become a part of the investigation and submit his response*' but despite that, he did not feel it appropriate to become a part of the investigation.

- *The interior minister had further said in the same press conference that the Toshakhana case against the PTI chief was also '**proven**', saying that Imran was committing theft when false cases were being filed against PMLN supremo Nawaz Sharif and his family.*

On the other hand, the PTI's lawyers had attempted to condemn Imran's arrest from the Islamabad's Court but the forces present at the IHC premises got implemented the arrest in a smooth way. The interior

minister stated that the arrest had taken place in accordance with the law, adding that NAB was an independent institution and the government had no control over it, nor had it attempted to do so.... *I as the interior minister can say on oath that I have never met a NAB officer nor have I taken a briefing on this case.'*

THE 2ND EVENT – DEADLY PROTESTS:

Next day, as an accountability court in Islamabad handed over the custody of their leader Imran Khan to NAB for eight days in connection with the ***Al Qadir Trust case***, *protests broke out all over the country. At least eight people were killed, as many as 290 were injured, and over 1,900 enraged protesters were rounded up in running battles with law enforcers across the country.*

The violent protests provoked by the PTI chairman's arrest entered the second day, as police and PTI supporters engaged in bloody clashes throughout the day that resulted in damage to several government installations, including police stations and army buildings. Later during that night, PTI Senior Vice President Fawad Chaudhry was arrested hours after PTI's Secretary General Asad Umar taken into custody. In a bid *to control the worsening situation, the government called in the military in Punjab, Khyber PK, and Islamabad.* The deployment came a day after protesters stormed the residence of the corps commander in Lahore and tore down one of the gates of GHQ in Rawalpindi.

Pak-Army's media wing, ISPR, issued a harsh statement over the attacks on army property, with its spokesperson calling out the ***'hypocrisy of a political group'*** that used the public for its limited and selfish interests. Nevertheless, a police office in Islamabad, a police station in Lahore, Radio Pakistan's building in Peshawar, and Scouts Fort in Chakkdara, Lower Dir, were set on fire by the local crowds, to mention some whereas everywhere there were reports of clashes and arson. .

As his supporters rallied for Imran Khan outside Police Lines in Islamabad, an accountability court was temporarily moved to the police HQ which handed over the custody of Mr Khan to the NAB officials for interrogation. The media persons were not allowed to witness the proceedings of the case. NAB got the remand to interrogate Mr Khan in the sub-jail; under the National Accountability Ordinance (NAO), the chairman could designate any place as sub-jail to detain suspects. Mr Khan

was arrested on the high court's premises a day before and taken to the NAB Rawalpindi office in G-6.

- *The IHC chief justice on the petition of Mr Khan held that the arrest was not per se illegal but he questioned the manner in which the former prime minister was taken into custody. The high court also commenced contempt proceeding against the secretary of interior and the IG Islamabad.*

In Islamabad and Rawalpindi, protests continued throughout that day. In Islamabad, more than 17 law enforcers were injured in clashes with protesters whereas the mob set on fire the office of the SP Industrial Area and damaged Ramna police station. The protesters also uprooted a railways track in Tarnol as well. The Islamabad police registered a number of cases against PTI supporters and detained more than 200 party supporters in the federal capital. In Rawalpindi, the police booked more than 1,500 PTI supporters and detained over 190 workers – 52 were sent to Adiala Jail after they were produced in an anti-terrorism court.

In Lahore, the mob besieged Shadman police station and damaged furniture and official vehicles. The situation in Punjab, particularly Lahore, remained tense in light of violent clashes between police and PTI workers. A group of PTI supporters attempted to storm the Governor House and CM Secretariat, but they were pushed back by the police. At least 25 government vehicles were burnt while 14 government buildings were stormed by them. Meanwhile, the police claimed to have arrested over 1380 protesters across the province in a crackdown on the former ruling party. The reports claimed that ***nearly 150 police personnel, including Lahore DIG Operation Nasir Rizvi, three SPs, and dozens of SHOs, were injured in the clashes that erupted with the PTI workers.***

In Gujranwala, unknown persons started firing during protest as a result of which one person named Rashid was killed and several people were injured till late night.

- *In Lahore, a murder case was registered against the top leadership of the PTI, including Imran Khan, and more than 1200 people at the Gulberg police station. The case was registered in connection with arson at Askari Tower wherein a person reportedly died in the fire.*

In Khyber PK, violent scenes were abundant, with protesters burning down the building that housed offices of Radio Pakistan and the Associated Press of Pakistan. Peshawar witnessed pitched battles between the police and protesters who were trying to force their way to Khyber Road where key installations were located. ***The violence in the province left at least seven dead and more than 122 injured.*** The police arrested 274 persons across the province in connection with those violent protests. Three people were killed and 81 others were injured in clashes in the provincial capital while two others were killed in Kohat. Another protester died and 11 more were injured in Chakhdara where protesters had stormed an FC fort.

Sindh remained relatively peaceful, as Karachi police dashed the PTI protest. At least 20 people were arrested in Karachi in addition to several arrests in Mirpur Khas. ***In Baluchistan***, police arrested over 60 local leaders and party workers in Quetta and Chaman a day after violent demonstrations in the provincial capital. The PTI provincial leadership and important leaders went into hiding to avoid arrests. Police teams conducted raids on the residence of Qasim Suri, but he was not present at home; police arrested his brother Bilal Suri. Police also raided the house of ex-PTI governor Zahoor Agha and arrested his two brothers as he was not found at his residence. No protests were witnessed in Quetta City against the arrest of PTI Chairman Imran Khan; however, people staged a demonstration in Chaman and Qila Saifullah.

Referring to the **REUTERS** dated 10th May 2023 - Pakistan's government called in the army on the day of protests to help end deadly unrest amongst the masses - warning protesters against any further attacks on state installations. It further said:

"Khan - Pakistan's most popular political leader according to polls - was arrested in a land fraud case on Tuesday the 9th May 2023, prompting supporters to storm military buildings and ransack the residence of a top army General in the eastern city of Lahore.

Other state buildings and assets have been attacked and set ablaze by protesters, and the government said on Wednesday it had approved requests from two of Pakistan's four provinces - Punjab and Khyber PK, both Khan strongholds - and the federal capital Islamabad to deploy troops to restore order."

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres had also urged Pakistani authorities to '**respect due process and the rule of law in proceedings against Khan**'.

- *Another court had indicted Khan on 10th May 2023 on charges of selling state gifts during his four years in power, a day after his arrest in the unrelated fraud case. The indictment followed a decision by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in October (2022) that found Khan guilty of illegally selling state gifts between 2018 and 2022, and as a result barred him from holding public office until the next election due in November. He has denied any wrongdoing.*
- *The corruption cases were two of more than 100 registered against Khan after he left office in April 2022.*

Mobile data services were shut for a second (next) day, the 10th May 2023, as street protests continued, with federal ministers accusing Khan's supporters of torching several buildings and vehicles.

KHAN's ARGUMENTS WITH MILITARY:

The **REUTERS** of 10th May 2023 is again referred for the event that:

"Khan was arrested a day after the military rebuked him for repeatedly accusing a senior military officer of trying to engineer his assassination and the former armed forces chief of being behind his removal from power last year. The military has denied Khan's allegations."

After being derailed from the premiership echelon to getting shot in the leg (on 3rd November 2022) at a rally in Wazirabad to force snap and impulsive polls, here is timeline of the events that led to Khan's arrest:

- **10th April 2022:** Khan was voted out of office in a no-confidence vote.
- **25-26th May 2022:** Khan led his **Long March** into Islamabad; the protest was called off suddenly to avoid confrontation which could end in huge bloodshed.
- **18th July 2022:** Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party swept Punjab province in a by-election.

- **22nd Aug 2022:** Khan was charged under an 'anti-terror law'; charges were later dropped.
- **21st October 2022:** Pakistan's Election Commission (ECP) disqualified Khan from running for public office for five years.
- **28th October 2022:** Khan launched his second **Long March** from Lahore to Islamabad to force the PDM government for early elections.
- **3rd November 2022:** Khan was shot in a protest convoy while passing through a town named Wazirabad in Punjab province; the firing was aimed to kill him but luckily Khan survived after having a deep bullet-wound in his leg.
- **5th March 2023:** Police attempted to arrest Khan by court orders; the ex-PM evaded arrest in Lahore.
- **9th May 2023:** Paramilitary security officials arrested Khan in a case filed by the anti-corruption body – titled as AL-QADIR TRUST Case; that arrest was NOT linked with the notoriously known **9th May Protests by the PTI** till then.

Amidst the turmoil over his arrest, Pakistanis were reeling from the worst economic crisis in decades, with record high inflation and weak growth, and the country was then facing acute threat of default. An IMF bailout package was delayed for over six months even though foreign exchange reserves were NOT enough to cover a month's imports.

On 24th May 2023: A court in Lahore handed over custody of 16 civilians to the military for trial over their suspected involvement in violent protests on 9th May 2023 following the arrest of former Prime Minister Imran Khan. The military officials said the suspects handed over would be tried in the 'Military Summary Courts'. [*In Pakistan, Military Courts operate under a separate system from the civilian legal system. Trials are closed to outsiders, and no unconcerned is normally allowed.*]

[Imran Khan was arrested on 9th May 2023. His supporters allegedly rampaged through cities, setting fire to buildings, blocking roads and clashing with police especially outside military installations during unrest in which nine people were killed. Khan walked free from three days of custody after the Supreme Court of Pakistan (SC) declared the arrest illegal. Mr Khan was facing nearly 140 cases related with Law & Order disturbances in various courts spread all over Pakistan.

The protests of 9th May 2023 coincided with Pakistan's worst economic crisis in decades with record high inflation, zero-like growth and IMF funding delayed for months, prompting con-

cerns that the country could default on its external payment obligations.]

On 19th May 2023, Imran Khan himself condemned mob-attacks of 9th May on state properties saying that: ***'....everyone in Pakistan has condemned the attacks on military installations during the deadly protests over his arrest last week. Who isn't condemning the attack on the Lahore Corps Commander House? Tell me one person in Pakistan who is not doing that.....'*** he said it during a news conference at his Zaman Park residence in Lahore.

The ruling PDM government detained thousands of supporters of Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf [PTI] party since days of street violence erupted over his arrest. A dreadful fear persistently hanged over Khan's supporters following the arbitrary arrests of many opposition leaders under ***'vague anti-terrorism laws'*** to justify its crackdown.

PTI LEADERS JUMPED OUT OF SINKING SHIP:

Mr Khan was ousted from PM's office in a vote of no confidence in April 2022, since then the 70-year-old politician waged an unprecedented campaign of defiance against the military Generals in saddles. He accused the top brass of orchestrating his downfall and even plotting a November assassination attempt in which he was shot in the leg. *The said allegations were vehemently denied in official press releases and on media channels by the ISPR wing of the Pak-Army;* **AL-JAZEERA** dated 25th May 2023 is referred.

A day earlier, on 23rd May 2023, Mr Khan was granted bail until 8th June in eight cases related to violence at the court complex in March 2023 by an anti-terrorism court in Islamabad. But a great setback for Khan: ***Till that day's evening, more than two dozen leaders from the PTI had left the party, which blamed the continuing government crackdown for the exodus; the quit-process started from Shireen Mazari, Asad Umar, Fawad Hassan Chaudhry and other notables.*** As more politicians jumped out of the ship, Imran Khan tweeted: *'We had all heard about forced marriages in Pakistan but for PTI a new phenomenon has emerged, forced divorces.'*

The PTI's official version was that:

"The defections will not affect the PTI in upcoming general and provincial elections, calling Khan the most popular leader in the country. All that has been happening in the country is being done to avoid elections because the government fears the PTI will sweep it. If it is democratic society, let people decide who will rule over them."

In Pakistan, defections from political parties were not a new phenomenon; the political careers in that country are usually built around '**opportunistic and not ideological lines**'. The intelligentsia held that some politicians abandoning the PTI ship were known for their '*toxic brand of politics*'; their decision to remain in politics should be decided by their voters. The voters should have the right and the opportunity to throw such politicians out of the political arena. But it never happened in Pakistan. In the given scenario, such defections were expected to have a dampening effect on PTI's performance in the next elections. No doubt that Khan had massive support among the people, but he needed strong candidates, too.

- ***It was alleged that the defections happened at the behest of the 'establishment' – which the military forcefully denied.***

Mr Khan's wife Bushra Bibi was also granted protective bail until 31st May (2023) instant in AL-QADIR TRUST CASE built up by National Accountability Bureau [NAB] court in Islamabad. Khan had promptly denied the charge, saying they both were not involved in any wrongdoing.

There were media opinions on 'DEFECTIONS' on the same day. Since his controversial arrest and the violence that followed it, more than two dozen leaders of the PTI had quit the party, which blamed the continuing government crackdown for their exodus. In the biggest setback for Khan's party since the exodus began, Shireen Mazari left the PTI after the former human rights minister was detained several times since she was first arrested on 12th May 2023 over the deadly protests that followed Khan's arrest. Addressing a news conference at her Islamabad residence on that day, the 57-year-old politician condemned the violence, including the attacks on military installations; saying:

"The constant release and arrest and the ordeal it put my daughter Imaan under had an impact on my health, too. Due to these reasons, I have decided I will quit active politics. And I want to add that from today onwards, I will not be a part of PTI or any other political party."

As more politicians jumped PTI-ship, Mr Khan again tweeted the earlier phrase: ***'We had all heard about forced marriages in Pakistan but for PTI a new phenomenon has emerged, forced divorces.'*** He was then battling more than 100 legal cases and was trying to avoid being rearrested. Khan alleged his party leaders were being coerced to leave, without saying who was doing it – *'People are not quitting, they are being forced to leave the party at gunpoint. Political parties cannot be dismantled through such tactics.'*

All that was happening in the country was being done to avoid elections because the government feared the PTI would sweep it. Had it a true democratic society, the people would have allowed to decide who would rule over them.

AL-JAZEERA dated 24th May 2023 noted that:

*"...according to experts, due to the Pakistani military's oversized role in domestic politics, defections from political parties are not a new phenomenon. Such defections happen at the behest of the establishment – a euphemism for the army. Political careers in Pakistan are usually built around **'opportunistic and not ideological lines'**.*

*Their decisions on when to stay and when to quit is shaped not by party leanings, but by political logic or dynamics in their constituencies and their prospects for power. This is why we see politicians switching towards the party with the best chance of winning national or provincial governments. While some politicians abandoning the PTI ship were known for their **'toxic brand of politics'**, their decision to remain in politics should be decided by the common people."*

Lahore based media analyst of **GEO TV** Benazir Shah commented that:

"The voters should have the right and should be given the opportunity to throw such politicians out of the political arena. But as of now, it seems the establishment is making that decision for them, deciding which political party can and cannot contest elections.

It was not easy to predict how politicians leaving the PTI will affect the party in future. The establishment has in the past tried to break up political parties such as the PPP and the

PMLN. But the plan rarely ever worked. These political parties proved to be resilient due to a loyal party base, which was willing to endure long jail terms and court cases for the leadership - these defections can have a dampening effect on PTI's performance in the next elections.

There is no doubt that Khan has massive support among the people, but he needs strong candidates who bring their own vote bank with them."

THOUGHTS FOR SURVIVAL:

A little earlier, from the University of Bath [UK], Asha Amirali's research article about Pakistan appeared in **AL-JAZEERA** of 22nd May 2023, saying that:

"Crisis is now outdated in Pakistan. Admittedly, the current standoff between the authoritarian populist Imran Khan and the military has an element of novelty to it, but even in the most dramatic scenario, it will likely end with not much more than regime change and some further weakening — though not annihilation — of the military's outsized political role.

There have been bigger crises in this country of 240 million people. Long wars have been fought inside and outside its borders; prime ministers have been assassinated and sometimes sent to gallows. But one thing never changed through all this; the vision of development held by Pakistani elites and the international development establishment. This status-quo and the corresponding lack of alternatives – proved to be a much bigger crisis than the inter-elite warfare one sees today.

*Pakistan's Vision 2025 sets itself the goal of making Pakistan the 'next Asian Tiger'; meaning thereby increasing both the quantum and value of production and consumption through a top-down. **BUT there is no progressive approach in sight whatsoever**; not a single field touched yet. The social and ecological impact of this lethargic and family oriented business-rule has been distressing and demoralizing for the coming generations too.*

Pakistan's elite and family rulers often cry that 'Pakistan is a victim of Western greed - paying the price without having

eaten the cake'. Might be little truth in it but the state records clearly showed that the effects of climate change were significantly enhanced by the physical, social and political criminal compromises during the past 75 years of intellectual and financial corrupt Pakistan. For instance, two large hydrological projects contributed to recent flooding: "Sindh's Left Bank Outfall Drain built in the 1990s and the Chashma Right Bank Canal in Southern Punjab; but no one tells details of such follies to the public – that which canal blocked the course of the western hill torrents channelling rainwater to the riverbanks."

Without doubt, Pakistan needs new plans. The real crisis in Pakistan is that no one is thinking about new-era achievements and alternatives. It is extremely likely that there are better ways of organising and managing large-scale societies like ours. Whether the PTI, PPP or the PDM collectively would be able to show wisdom to take Pakistan towards new heights or the populace would continue to grind old mantra of Status-Quo with no twinkling light.

See also the notable paragraphs of the **BBC's Analytical Notes** dated 27th May 2023:

"For many years, Pakistan's military establishment believed that in Imran Khan they had found a saviour for the country. But, writes author and journalist Mohammed Hanif, after only a year out of power he is threatening to become their nemesis - and the military is using its might to save itself from Khan's wrath."

As Imran Khan and his party face a country-wide crackdown, Pakistan seems to have come to a standstill. The nation is facing crippling inflation and the hottest summer in history, with constant power breakdowns, and yet the whole country is consumed with what Khan will do next, and what our military establishment can do to contain him.

After he was removed from power more than a year ago, his supporters said Khan was their 'red line' and that if he was arrested, the country would burn. After a number of failed attempts, a contingent of paramilitary forces did just that on 9th May... The country didn't quite burn, but Khan's supporters took the fight to military cantonments."

The Pak-Army's headquarters, popularly known as GHQ in Rawalpindi, the most secure place in Pakistan, was breached and people trampled

on the signboards with military logos; allegedly, one of the gates of the GHQ was also broken through. A senior General's house in Lahore was ransacked - while setting its furniture and cars on fire. One protester walked away wearing the General's uniform, another made away with his pet peacock.

- *It had all the symbols of a revolution, except that it wasn't. Imran Khan was first loved by the army, then shunned by them, now his supporters were settling their scores. It was less of a revolution and more of a lovers' spat. It's almost a rite of passage for every prime minister to fall out with the Pakistan army.*

[Pakistan's first elected Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was hanged, his daughter Benazir Bhutto was dismissed twice as a prime minister and her assassination, by a teenage suicide bomber, was never fully investigated. Nawaz Sharif was dismissed, jailed, exiled - then again in (self) exile; he ruled by proxy via his younger brother Shehbaz.]

After Imran Khan's arrest his supporters did what no mainstream political force had done before. Instead of taking to the streets in protest, they invaded the cantonment areas and showed the citizens how Pakistani Generals live. Before that he had called the former army chief Gen Bajwa (who was instrumental in bringing and sustaining him in power) a traitor. He also named an ISI General for being responsible for a failed assassination on him. He and his supporters repeatedly called the accused General Dirty Harry in public rallies.

Many Pakistani politicians in the past have named and humiliated the army as an institution but Pakistanis were not used to seeing the images of a Corps Commander's house on fire, women protesters rattling the gates of GHQ, and the statues of decorated soldiers being toppled. This was exactly what the then PDM government, a coalition of almost all the political parties opposed to Khan, needed to hit back. The government was trying to get out of an awaiting national election, which according to many opinion polls Khan was likely to win. Many government politicians were calling for an outright ban on his party PTI.

Why so that Imran Khan, despite facing dozens of charges then, was still roaming free? The perception remained that he had polarised the establishment itself. There were officers and their families within the army who were charmed by him. There was the judiciary which had been extending his bail. After spending one day in the lock-up, Paki-

stan's highest judge called him to court, saying **'happy to see you'**, and put him in a state guest house. The next day another judge released him. Imran Khan had won over a massive constituency in Pakistan that hated politics and ruling politicians before him.

His message of clean governance and justice made popular appeal - ***although when Khan was in power corruption actually increased and he put many of his political opponents in jail***. But his removal from power reassured his supporters, many of whom were women and young people who had never voted before and never attended a political march.

PTI supporters were often accused of political inexperience, taking an ahistorical view of the then prevailing crisis and claiming that what was happening then had never happened in the history of Pakistan. They considered themselves part of a reformist movement that wanted to rid the country of all corrupt politicians who had been playing havoc with the country since seven decades. Like Khan, they once loved the army; then they held the army responsible for everything. Despite Khan's repeated attacks on the army leadership, many believed that he didn't really want to curtail the army's powers, he just wanted the Generals to love and support him and his party like they did before when they brought him in power.

In the aftermath of the riots on 9th May 2023, the army high command started thinking that **'enough is enough'**. Gen Asim Munir, the army chief, had called it a **'black day in the history of Pakistan'**. Imran Khan might have escorted in a new kind of populist politics in Pakistan, but the army was using the same playbook to bring him down that it had used against his predecessors. Dozens of corruption cases, mass arrests and a clear message that by attacking the army, Khan had crossed the red line. The army also celebrated a **'respect for martyrs' day** in response to the attacks on military installations on 9th May (*though critics pointed out that no soldiers were martyred that day, just a big & posh mansion ransacked by an angry mob – many say they were PMLN-planted activists*).

REACTION MANAGED TO OPPOSE PROTESTS:

Then cropped up state-sponsored rebuttal. Main roads in the major cities were lined with posters praising the army and pledging eternal loyalty. The army also brought into play religious parties that had attacked it

in the past - they were out on the streets, declaring their love for the army. Pak-Army was also looking within its own ranks for Khan's sympathisers. One woman that law enforcement agencies were pursuing for her alleged involvement in the 9th May riots was the ***fashion designer turned political activist Khadija Shah - who was also the granddaughter of a former army chief and a third-generation cantonment child***. She denied committing any crime, but it was clear Khan had mesmerised some of the 'army brats' to such an extent that they were willing to set their own house on fire. By arresting Shah and putting her behind bars, the army sent a clear signal to army families to stay away from Khan's politics; veteran writer ***M Hanif's observations*** are referred through the **BBC's** analysis dated 27th May 2023.

The army also tried to dismantle Khan's PTI party through mass arrests and by deciding to hold military trials of workers and leaders who were involved in cantonment attacks. Many of Khan's senior party leaders were under immense pressure to leave his PTI party. Some actually left, claiming that they couldn't condone Khan's confrontational approach towards the Pakistan army.

Historically, Pakistan's army always managed to have its way when confronted with civilians. Imran Khan had asked his workers to choose death over a life of slavery. In that deadlock, it's the ordinary Pakistanis who suffered - and would continue to suffer for many years to come.

At the end of discussions; one would like to see a plausible analysis in the following lines from ***Brig [R] Mehboob Qadir*** appeared open on most social media pages dated 31st May 2023:

*"From this entire political and deep state agitation about 9th May implosion, one thing clearly stands out – (that) It is neither love of the army nor any respect for Jinnah' heritage or his person by Coalition particularly by Nawaz League. In fact, **the trade union of thick thugs** felt mortally threatened by rising popularity of Imran Khan thus they hatched a perfectly evil plan which was helped by IK's careless talk about popular reaction if he was arrested or killed. **The Chankyas in Nawaz League conspired even against their fellow charioteers; the GHQ.***

They pushed forward Rangers into IHC who very roughly arrested IK in full view of media. Interior Minister promptly disowned the foolish action diverting public anger towards the Army, Rangers being a force commanded by GHQ. Agitation

*broke out and **Coalition saboteurs infiltrated the PTI crowds and indulged in arson and destruction.** It is known with certainty that Radio Pakistan was destroyed by Nawaz League men. Regrettably plausible video and eyewitness accounts suggest certain serving Army officers were involved in arson at Flag Staff House Lahore.*

*One was identified as son (allegedly an army officer) of Ahad Cheema, PM Shehbaz Sharif' chum civil servant. This is a weird coincidence which links two major partners of the formidable array against Imran Khan. **The real plan was to crush PTI. Over ten thousand PTI men and women have been arrested and houses of leaders broken in or completely destroyed in some cases**.....*

One hopes the outlines of the evil plan have been sufficiently highlighted."