

Biden's Generals in Pakistan

By [Junaid S. Ahmad](#)

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As the world, and especially Muslims, correctly has been focused on the Zionist genocide in Gaza, we seem to have forgotten President Biden's criminality in another part of the world.

Indeed, just as Israel's savagery has been wholeheartedly supported by the Biden Administration, the regime change operation in March-April of 2022 in Pakistan was also on Biden's watch. More and more Pakistanis, especially in the largest and politically dominant province of Punjab, have come to recognize the venality of the military establishment. Though the other provinces of Pakistan had no illusion of the nefarious and violent role of the generals in Pakistani social and political life, people in Punjab had to experience the torturous wrath of the military top brass after the removal of **former Prime Minister Imran Khan** - to realize the cold-bloodedness of the military high command.

Khan has been languishing in prison since August of last year on various trumped up and farcical charges. And now, he and another senior member of Khan's political party, former foreign minister **Shah Mahmood Qureshi**, have been sentenced to a ten-year jail sentence because of the ostensible cypher-gate scandal. The 'cypher,' a secret diplomatic cable sent to Islamabad by Pakistan's ambassador in Washington in March of 2022, stated quite explicitly the American desire to oust Khan from power. The task was left to Washington's old Cold War friends in Pakistan's praetorian guard to fulfill the mission.

After Khan was removed from power by a military establishment-US embassy.in-Islamabad engineered vote-of-no-confidence in parliament, he made it very clear to Pakistanis that this was a regime change conspiracy involving the US on the one hand, and Pakistan's generals and kleptocratic politicians on the other. At the time, sadly, those who had historically opposed the role of the military in Pakistan's politics, refused to believe Khan - essentially considering him a conspiratorial nutcase. After more than a year after Khan's ouster, the

American online publication, The Intercept, confirmed that the official diplomatic cable that Khan referred to was in fact real, and that its content laid out in no uncertain terms the American insistence on removing Khan from power. By now, even the most ardent 'cypher deniers' have had to acknowledge the veracity of Khan's claims at the time of the successful regime change operation in the country. The tragedy was that the big media houses in Pakistan acceded to state pressure to erase the name Imran Khan from any public discourse, and that it took a foreign publication's stellar investigative journalism to expose the treacherous collaboration between Washington and the generals in Pakistan - in particular, the Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Gen. Bajwa - in subjecting Khan and his political party, PTI, to the most totalitarian forms of repression.

After two decades of the 'War on Terror' having created some friction between the American and Pakistani military-intelligence apparatuses, both came to realize that, ultimately, they will always be joined at the hip. The Pakistani military is one of the most vicious relics of colonialism. It transitioned quite smoothly in its neo-colonial relationship with Washington throughout the Cold War. Pakistan's generals never lose sight of the fact that they make billions from American machinations in West and Southwest Asia. Other than excelling as a satrapy of the American empire, the powerful Pakistani armed forces are good for nothing but extreme levels of repression, torture, disappearances, and murdering its own population.

However, throughout the past two years, Pakistanis have been somewhat bewildered at the extent of the vendetta and ferocious repression targeted at Khan and his political party. It seems to be the case that the military establishment has never felt as insecure as it has after Khan's ouster and the subsequent massive outpouring of support for him and his party. The well-understood arrangement between any civilian government and the COAS and the military-intelligence establishment was that the former agrees to cede full control of 'national security' and foreign policy to the latter. The generals increasingly felt that Khan began to violate this 'code of conduct' by positioning himself as the one who would carve out the direction of the country on the world stage. In addition, the generals' Western patron-masters saw Khan as a thorn in their control of Muslim despots in West Asia, most of whom were on the path of normalization with Israel, turning a blind eye to Hindutva fascism in India, and engineering a pro-Empire- friendly Islam. On the contrary, Khan spoke passionately about justice for Palestinians and Kashmiris, rejected the imperial categories of 'moderate' or 'extremist' Islam, and denounced the rise of Islamophobia and its dreadful social and political impact throughout the world. His popularity among, and keen desire to bring together, nations such as Malaysia, Turkey, Indonesia, Iran, and Qatar was correctly seen as a counter-hegemonic bloc to the Saudi domination of the Muslim world. And finally, Khan's praise of China's ability to lift more than 800 million out of poverty and the lessons it offers for developing countries like Pakistan, as well as remaining neutral in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, convinced the US national security state that this man must be eliminated.

It's important to note that generals' detestation of Khan was not because he was some revolutionary. But he did help to politicize significant chunks of the population, young and old, and especially in the military establishment's base of support - the province of Punjab. Punjabis protesting en masse against the military establishment was something unforgivable for the generals. Punjabis were supposed to love or at least respect their military leaders, not despise them as they did following Khan's ouster.

Comparisons are often made with the popular leader of Pakistan during the 1970s, Zulfikar

Ali Bhutto - who certainly had a revolutionary character in his rhetoric. But two key differences are often overlooked. Bhutto came to power on the backs of Bengali blood, the genocidal campaign of West Pakistani generals against the population of East Pakistan - which became Bangladesh after winning its war of liberation. Bhutto's party, the PPP, would have lost to the Awami League political party in East Pakistan had it not been for the merciless military assault on the future nation of Bangladesh. In a cynically transactional manner, Bhutto repaid the favor by effectively rescuing and rehabilitating a humiliated and defeated Pakistani military. In fact, Bhutto would go on to rely on that same military to target political opponents, especially in the provinces of NWFP (now renamed KPK) and Balochistan. Of course, none of this is to deny that Bhutto was a very popular leader.

But secondly, Bhutto's own shortcomings and political authoritarianism while in power ultimately led to disillusionment within his support base, resulting in a fairly reticent popular response to his ouster by the military dictator, Gen. Zia-ul-Haq - and, as in the case of Khan, a regime change completely supported by Washington.

One can claim that Khan also came on the backs of the military establishment's very temporary squabble with the other two major dynastic political parties. But like Bhutto, no one can claim that Khan was not immensely popular. The major difference, of course, is the massive outpouring of support for Khan after his ouster, in rallies across the country sustained for more than a year until the barbaric military crackdown began in May of 2023. In fact, the surprise for many was that despite a rather lackluster performance in his period of governance, still Khan was popular as ever, if not more.

The saga of the cases, charges, and convictions against Khan are seen by virtually all of Pakistan's 240 million people as a politically motivated clown-show. Specifically, the recent convictions in 'courts' for which the term 'kangaroo court' would be way too generous, deferential, and respectful, are intended to further demoralize and terrorize the population before 'elections' to be held on Feb. 8th. Some think that these elections would give Saddam Hussain's and Hosni Mubarak's forms of elections good competition.

While Pakistanis in and outside of the country continue to witness one travesty after the next, to see the totalitarianism of the generals and their favored political mafias reach newer and more ruthless heights, the hope remains that, just like in Gaza, the people's resistance and international solidarity may be able to mount a serious impediment to Biden's generals' torture chambers imposed on the country. And the perennial palace intrigues and squabbles of the political and military elite have a tendency to derail all major plans of coordinated and disciplined perpetual punishment of the population.

Nevertheless, one underreported story during the past two years has been of the many officers and overwhelming majority of soldiers who've had nothing but revulsion for the shenanigans of the bloodthirsty high command, causing many of them to be 'disappeared' or forced to resign, or just resigning on their own, without pension.

Absent the ability of the people to, at this point, initiate an effective and formidable challenge to Washington's comprador military and political elite, a progressive officers' coup may not be a bad idea.

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Prof. Junaid S. Ahmad teaches religion, law, and global politics and is the Director of the Center for Islam and Decoloniality, Islamabad, Pakistan. He is a regular contributor to Global Research.

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