



## Briefing Paper

### **PAKISTAN** **Political Crisis and the New Cabinet**

**Lakshmi Venugopal Menon**

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## Introduction

On April 19, Pakistan's new Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his [34-member cabinet](#) (thirty-one federal ministers and three ministers of state) took the [oath](#) which was administered by Senate chairman Sadiq Sanjrani. Pakistan's President Dr. Arif Alvi has supposedly approved the nominations. Rumors of [disagreements](#) amongst the ruling coalition regarding the portfolios were rife. However, the new federal government claims to have resolved the reservations with the new cabinet.

Later, on April 22, the National Security Committee (NSC) said that [no evidence](#) of "foreign conspiracy" against Imran Khan's government and that sought his ouster was found. The United States [welcomed](#) the NSC's statement. The US Department of State Principal Deputy Spokesperson Jalina Porter said, "There's absolutely no truth to those rumors". Meanwhile, former PM Imran Khan [blamed](#) his law minister Farogh Naseem for causing discord in PTI's relations with the judiciary. He referred to the Justice Qazi Faiz Isa case as a 'government mistake' that led to the ruining of relations between PTI and Pakistan's judiciary.

## A Short Re-cap of the Crisis

On April 6, Pakistan's Supreme court [resumed the hearing](#) of petitions that challenged the former Prime Minister Imran Khan's decision to dissolve the existing parliament and call for a snap general election. The court, which has been hearing petitions since April 4, is expected to rule on the [legal validity](#) of Khan's dissolution decision. On April 3, the Pakistan's deputy parliamentary speaker dissolved Pakistan's National Assembly to circumvent a no-confidence motion that Khan was certain to lose.

Meanwhile, the Cabinet Division [de-notified](#) Imran Khan as the prime minister; Khan had [nominated](#) Gulzar Ahmed as the caretaker chief executive; and [President Arif Alvi](#) has directed the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to decide on a date for holding fresh elections, stating that it was mandatory to hold fresh elections within 90 days of the assembly's dissolution. However, the ECP dismissed the possibility of holding elections in the upcoming three months.

## Issues in the background

First, the Speaker dismissed the no-confidence motion calling it unconstitutional and a part of a [foreign conspiracy](#). PM Khan has directly accused the United States of trying to meddle in Pakistan's domestic politics. The PTI government accused the US of instigating a regime change in Pakistan; a [retribution](#) for the relatively neutral stance Pakistan has taken on the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and PM Khan's Moscow visit on the eve of the Ukraine invasion.

Second, the Opposition alleges the 2018 elections that saw the victory of Imran Khan was rigged. PM Khan has denied any wrongdoing. Imran Khan has previously been accused of being the Deep State's puppet. The military helped Imran Khan consolidate power but no more.

Third, increasing tensions and stark discrepancies between Khan and the military. The unsettling [remarks](#) by Foreign Minister Qureshi regarding the delayed OIC's FMs meeting on the matter of Kashmir was one such instance in 2020. FM Qureshi's comments soured Pak-Saudi relations. Immediately, Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff Qamar Javed Bajwa made a high-level [visit to Riyadh](#) to make amends. Similarly, soon after PM Khan accused America of meddling in Pakistan's politics,

the [COAS Bajwa](#) made a statement that reiterated the need to uphold the close ties between Pakistan and the United States. The Army realizes that Pakistan could become a casualty in great power politics. Hence, in order to avoid perilous consequences, the Army has been steadily mending the failing relationship with the West. Another instance was when Khan and Bajwa disagreed on the appointment of Pakistan's powerful intelligence agency chief. Additionally, while Khan visited Putin in Moscow, Bajwa was publicly condemning the invasion.

Fourth, prior to the no-confidence vote, the Military had called upon Imran Khan to discuss "[agreeable options](#)" as a "face-saving" attempt. Considering the later developments, the meeting does not seem to have been fruitful. PM Khan said the Establishment gave him [three options](#): resignation, no-confidence or elections. Furthermore, he claimed his life was in danger.

Last, no prime minister has ever completed the full five-year term in Pakistan. In fact, only three prime ministers have ever made it to the four-year mark and only two elected assemblies have been able to complete their terms. This shows the dire state of the country's democracy. Legal experts have warned that Khan's move could have major implications on Pakistan's democracy – a democracy wherein the military has ruled for over half of the country's history.

In Pakistan, now the Opposition has come to power and nominated its prime minister. The new cabinet will be in power until August 2023, when the scheduled round of next elections is expected. However, one can expect legal action against Imran Khan and members of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) if the court later agrees to the Opposition's claims that the PTI are guilty of undermining the constitution. This could possibly lead to the disqualification of Imran Khan from the next elections. Imran Khan's attempts to mend ties with Pakistan's judiciary might be to avoid such a scenario.