Imran’s India Outlook

What is the issue?

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- Emergence of Imran Khan as the lead contender for Pakistan’s Prime Ministership is being seen as a setback to Indo-Pak ties.
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- Notably, neither he nor the Pakistani military establishment that backed him are serious about bettering relationship with India.
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How have the ties been historically?

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- Several issues account for the dismal state of India-Pakistan relations.
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- Prominent among them are the wounds of Partition and the chronic Kashmir issue, four armed conflicts, and jihadi terrorism against India.
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- Increasing radicalisation in Pakistan, Indus water dispute, the military-civilian equation in Pakistan are other trouble points.
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- While Pakistan has experienced bouts of both civilian governments and direct military rule since its independence, ties with India have always been inimical.
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- Nonetheless, there have been periodic détentes at the highest level with signing of agreements, declarations etc…, but nothing has been sustainable.
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What is the context in which Mr. Khan’s reaped victory?

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- The Pakistani military and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) is said to have paved the way for Mr. Khan's victory.
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- This was done by tacitly supporting Mr. Khan's street protests against former PM Nawaz Sharif on alleged corruption charges.
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- Subsequently, the judiciary was visibly coerced to proceed swiftly against Mr. Sharif and his sentencing (1o years imprisonment) was secured.
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- Further, the military worked to divide the conservative support base of Mr. Sharif by propping up several extremist religious groups in the electoral fray.

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- More importantly, media houses were allegedly subjected to immense pressure to render a positive coverage for Khan.
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- Despite all this, Mr. Khan couldn't secure a full majority, making him implicitly depended on the military for steering his government.
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What could India expect from Mr. Khan's rise?

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- Pakistani military has almost always displayed an India bashing attitude, as that helps it sustain considerable public clout.
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- Considering the extent of Mr. Khan's dependence on the Pakistani Military, there is little hope for any betterment in ties.
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- Notably, even the former PM Sharif, who had a pro-India inclination, had to downplay it considerably to survive against the military's affront.
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- In fact, Mr. Sharif even launched tirades against India on Kashmir, displayed a lack of will to investigate Pakistani jihadi attacks on against India.
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- He even failed to crack down on extremist elements that were responsible for the Mumbai terror attacks and also didn't deliver on trade issues.
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What are Mr. Khan's assertions?

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- Mr. Khan has stated that his government would be proactive in wanting to solve the Kashmir issue in accordance with UN resolutions.
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- While what his actions in this regard would be is uncertain, India has set the crackdown on terrorist elements as a pre-condition for talks.
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- This is unlikely, as Mr. Khan is known for his association with extremist elements and anti-Indian fundamentalists for strategic reasons.
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- Mr. Khan’s Afghan policy is also likely to be at odds with India’s, as he seeks to usher in an economic model intertwined with an Islamic outlook.
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- Mr. Khan’s swipes at Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his belief that India favoured Mr. Sharif over him will only complicate matters further.
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Source: The Hindu

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