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WORLD

## A requiem for Imran Khan's aspirations

April 11, 2022, 6:37 PM IST / Jagdish Batra in Cultural Inputs, World, TOI

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**Jagdish Batra**

Dr Jagdish Batra is a senior academic, currently working as Professor of English at O.P. Jindal Global University, India. He has nearly four decades of

No tears need be shed over Imran Khan's ignominious exit as the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

The world saw his obduracy in clinging on to the chair despite losing majority in the Parliament.

Now that he is expected to sit in the opposition, his party has decided to en

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masse boycott the National Assembly. His assumption of office had evoked much hope but the dominance of army in Pakistani power structure put paid to whatever little he hinted at doing. His own political immaturity also queered the pitch.

In fact, the charge of foreign conspiracy was no more than clutching at a straw in a deluge. It was too tenuous to stir what Imran believed was the sleeping spirit of the qaum. The Indian subcontinent has seen ample reference to the shibboleth of 'foreign hand' behind many a political move, so much so that it has become a cliché. Our own Prime Minister in the 1970s, Indira Gandhi, often quoted it to explain even totally unrelated happenings at home. The charge of Russian hand behind elections in America is something that goes on and on without any resolution in sight. Add to this the drama that Imran raked up while explaining to the whole country the secret code of the letter his envoy to America had sent him – it simply showed his naivety.

That said, Imran's "farewell speeches" in the last few days surprised many in India when he lavished praise on his bete noire P.M. Modi's foreign policy. Of course, there also, nothing was new, since every nation determines its foreign policy in keeping with its own interests. Imran only



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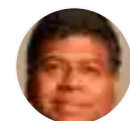
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changed the wording to pro-people, in a bid to imply his allegiance to the voters in Pakistan.

It did not cut much ice as the analogy was to an “enemy” nation and he had done little to mend fences with India when he had the power. Trade embargo put by him in the wake of scrapping of Article 370 by India and his reiteration of support to militancy in Kashmir could not have helped befriend India. Imran’s opponents, instead, reminded him of the graceful way in which Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the former Indian Prime Minister had accepted the democratic traditions and bowed out of office.

Rather than any solid achievement, Imran Khan would be remembered for his tokenism –

remember his travel in the metro in the US when he went on an official visit to the US and the sale of buffaloes belonging to the Prime Minister’s house to salvage the national economy! But that could not have and did not help improve matters. Solid measures like continuing trade ties with India and saving from the spending on sponsoring terrorism could have helped but then he was not the master of the show even as he suffered from bouts of megalomania. His last-ditch efforts, what he termed as “playing to the last ball” in terms of invocations to the youth

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to rise and come to his rescue, envisioned probably a la storming of the Capitol Hill in Washington D.C. did not come through either. All that was disappointment enough for the leader who harboured self-image of a prodigy and spoke in his televised address of his “two decades of life in Britain.”

Imran’s self-assessment of being popular enough to take on the army proved to be his nemesis.

Sure, his party has a large number of M.N.A.s but as Pakistan’s history shows, the army controls tightly the levers of power. It is the army that brought him in and when the protégé rebelled, he had to be replaced! However, his resistance to army domination must be appreciated even though his calculations went wrong. Pakistan’s track record in sponsoring terrorism epitomized by the denial of hosting Al Qaeda chief Osama Bin Laden on its soil and its growing proximity to China had already upset equation with the US. Imran’s visit to Russia proved to be the last straw.

America-Pakistan army links are too well-known and were duly reiterated by the Pakistan army chief Qamar Bajwa recently. The only thing positive that emerged out of this sordid political drama was the steller role of the Pakistan Supreme Court which, even though took

time, yet set the record straight. One hopes the army hand was not working there too!

Right now, Pakistani political scenario seems to be in action re-play mode. The Prime Minister designate Shahbaz Shrif, as usual, proclaimed no vendetta even as instructions were issued well in time to check exit from the country of the dislodged prime minister. In a façade of bravado, Imran pretends digging in heels to fight the battle ahead staying in the country but this is more out of compulsion than conviction. The Pakistan army will continue to call the shots behind the scene and the political puppets will continue to play out the roles assigned to them. The army has not brooked any challenge to its unconstrained power. For India, things are as usual. Even when Imran or Kayani talked of not being against India, the terrorists continue to throw grenades and kill people in the Kashmir valley.

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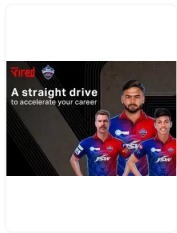
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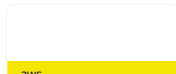
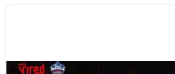
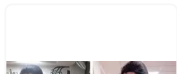
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