

Imran Khan: US Leaked Cable on Pakistan Fits a Pattern

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Pakistan's former Prime Minister, Imran Khan, has been found guilty of corruption, sentenced to three years in prison, and arrested. In 2022, amid a constitutional crisis, he was removed from office after the April 10 no-confidence motion. In August the same year, after accusing the judiciary and the police of detaining and torturing his close aide, Imran Khan was charged with anti-terror laws for allegedly making threats against state officials in Islamabad. This year, on May 9 he was arrested by paramilitary forces – and this sparked nation-wide protests.

Khan has always accused the Pakistani military of having played a role in his 2022 removal from office, and his followers, once again enraged, claim his recent sentencing is far from unbiased. To add fuel to the fire, it has come to light that a month before the no-confidence motion, the US State Department encouraged Islamabad on March 7, 2022, to remove Khan as Prime Minister over his neutral stance on the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. This stance was indeed reversed after his removal.

A secret Pakistani diplomatic cable (a "cipher", as it is called) which was obtained by the Intercept discusses the meeting between Asad Majeed Khan, the Pakistani ambassador to the US at the time, and American State Department authorities, including Donald Lu, Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs. The meeting between the US officials and the Pakistani ambassador had long been the subject of speculation and controversy, in the context of Pakistan's power struggle between the former Prime Minister supporters and the country's military.

According to the leaked cable, during the meeting Lu said:

"people here and in Europe are quite concerned about why Pakistan is taking such an aggressively neutral position (on Ukraine)." He added: "I think if the no-confidence vote

against the Prime Minister succeeds, all will be forgiven in Washington because the Russia visit is being looked at as a decision by the Prime Minister.” “Otherwise,” he went on: “I think it will be tough going ahead”, adding that Pakistan could face “isolation” by the US and by European powers.

The day before the meeting, Khan basically called for a non-aligned stance and sovereign pragmatism. He said: “we are friends of Russia, and we are also friends of the United States. We are friends of China and Europe. We are not part of any alliance.” On the same occasion, rhetorically addressing Western powers, he asked: “What do you think of us? That we are your slaves and that we will do whatever you ask of us?”

The document basically shows that, amid a heated Pakistani crisis, Washington pressured Islamabad to go ahead specifically with a no-confidence motion (which it did), threatening the country with isolation. So far one can only speculate on how much weight such pressure carried in the eyes of Pakistani political elites. It is not too far-fetched to assume it carried some.

Donald Lu’s incredibly arrogant tone (“all will be forgiven in Washington”) is reminiscent of US diplomat Victoria Nuland’s infamous 2014 [leaked phone conversation](#) with US Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt. During the exchange she uses the F-word to disdainfully refer to the European Union. If that 2014 leak exposed a certain Washington attitude towards its transatlantic European allies (and such an attitude does not seem to have changed much at all), one can only imagine how the US sees Pakistan – and the rest of the world, for that matter. Washington has of course a well-known record of [betraying](#) its most devoted [allies](#).

Even if one condemns the Russian military campaign in Ukraine, which started in February 2022, one should at least acknowledge the fact that far from being an “[unprovoked](#)” aggression, it was the result of an escalation of frictions, involving border tensions – a tale in which the US [played a major role](#). Ukraine itself had been in a civil war since 2014, and Kiev has, for nine years now, been bombing the Donbass region and committing a series of [human rights infringements](#) largely related to [far-right](#) Ukrainian nationalism.

When the US crossed the sea to invade far-away Iraq in 2003, there was no immediate danger or a near border. No Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, the American main claim to legitimize the occupation, were ever found. For 8 years, Washington carried on a [neocolonial](#) policy, including a so-called Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) which, from the very start, was created and funded as a US Department of Defense division, in a [failed](#) American attempt to “democratize” and to “reconstruct” the Middle-Eastern nation.

Under the tremendously corrupt CPA rule, over \$8 billion destined for the country’s reconstruction disappeared and remain unaccounted for to this very day. Up to 1 million deaths, according to ORB International, an independent polling agency located in London, are estimated as a result of the war and American invasion. And yet no international movement arose to sanction or isolate Washington – nor American companies, for that matter (which greatly profited from the war). To this day, former US President George W. Bush is a popular speaker in the US. All of this, once again, whether one condemns the Russian military campaign in neighboring Ukraine or not, goes to show an immense degree of Western hypocrisy, to say the least. And many non-Western leaders see it this way.

To sum it up, the recently leaked document is yet another blatant instance of American

“[alignmentism](#)” and its cold war mentality – an approach that can only further alienate potential partners and allies, especially in the Global South.

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