**[Hopes and fears](https://www.dawn.com/news/1430260/hopes-and-fears)**

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RULING over people is not a privilege; rather it is a trust and responsibility. Prime Minister Imran Khan’s tenure is likely to be full of challenges, as he has succeeded leaders who appea­red more worried about their own interests than those of the country.

In his [first address to the nation as prime minister](https://www.dawn.com/news/1428064) on Aug 19, he started with his vision of a welfare state, a Medina-like polity with equal rights for all, including minorities. Hopefully, the allusion was to a modern interpretation of a Western liberal democratic model with the welfare paradigm followed by Scandinavian countries. His ideal is Iqbal who conceived the idea of a separate nation based on a modern, Western interpretation of religion. One hopes he sticks to this vision despite the pull of the religious right that the July polls proved had a substantial vote bank.

Quoting the example of the Prophet (PBUH), he cited the principles of governance and the qualities of a ruler, one who upholds the rule of law, promotes merit in appointments of public office holders, ensures accountability for all, and avoids conflict of interest. Above all, he must be truthful and trustworthy. This is a tall order that requires the qualities of a statesman like Jinnah who Imran Khan wants to emulate, and raises hopes and expectations of him.

*One expects the prime minister to choose the right people to head institutions.*

In his choice of the federal cabinet and advisers so far, there are signs of compulsions of statecraft rather than statesmanship. While there are glimpses of merit being promoted, some assignments and portfolios raise fears of compromise and expediency. The selection of advisers raises hope of reform barring the induction of some who change political parties like a chameleon changes colours. However, Imran Khan’s promises of good governance will be tested in appointments of civil servants and heads of key departments, agencies and government institutions. His choice of secretary to the prime minister has raised hopes that he means business and will select the right persons to head institutions.

The main challenges are the economy, security, justice and rule of law. While he has picked a competent finance minister and a professional adviser to tackle economic challenges, his governance criteria will soon be clear in the areas of national security and administration of justice. Let us see who he picks as national security adviser (NSA). It is unfortunate that despite the creation of the National Security Division, the activation of the National Security Committee of the cabinet and appointment of a fine retired army general, the PML-N government failed to provide a comprehensive national security policy. It should be the priority of the present rulers to deliberate and announce a national security policy in which all elements of national power are on board.

Hopefully, the prime minister will appoint an experienced retired diplomat as NSA, preferably one who has been foreign secretary as well as our ambassador in China and India.

In the context of the civilian law-enforcement departments, the real test will come in the selection of heads of key institutions. It is heartening that the prime minister has selected a professionally competent, senior police officer as DG IB as it is a cadre post for the Police Service of Pakistan. There was speculation that someone from the armed forces could be appointed to head this key civilian intelligence agency. It is hoped that previous exceptions, made in violation of the service cadre rules, will be avoided as this single appointment sends a message that the prime minister believes in strengthening civilian institutions to meet internal security challenges.

The next key appointment is that of the DG FIA. Having served in this position, I would like to say that in the context of combating corruption, economic crimes, money laundering, terror financing and crimes with international implications, the FIA must be depoliticised and made a highly professional outfit. While selecting a police officer of exceptional competence and unimpeachable integrity, the prime minister must give the DG a free hand to inquire into and investigate complex cases that would require collaboration with Interpol. I got the impression that he has retained the interior ministry to oversee accountability of the corrupt, bring back looted money stashed abroad and be the driving force against money laundering. While these are laudable objectives, my hopes are that he does not get involved in micromanagement of the agency and its investigative processes. He should not even be perceived to do so as no one, not even the Supreme Court, can interfere in the process of criminal investigations.

The next key appointment is that of the national coordinator of the National Counter Terrorism Authority. Imran Khan has selected a competent senior police officer to implement the National Action Plan along with CT and CVE strategies. Nacta should be placed under the prime minister, as per the law; the previous two governments had placed it within the interior ministry. Like IB and ISI, Nacta should report to the prime minister. Its head should be included in NSC meetings.

Imran Khan has rightly mentioned criminal justice sector reforms. This is part of the interior ministry’s mandate that he will head. So, the appointment of DG National Police Bureau will be crucial. A senior police officer has to head the bureau to bring about reforms in the justice sector. It is hoped the Police Order 2002 is immediately promulgated in Islamabad; as per the law, it was to be enforced along with the introduction of the local government system in the capital. With that, hopefully, the institutions of the National Public Safety Commission and an independent Police Complaints Authority will be established.

Last, the prime minister should select outstanding IGs to head provincial police departments. In his address, he made his intentions clear by appointing as adviser a former IG of the KP police who pioneered police reforms depoliticising the institution. One hopes police reforms will be pursued, not only in Punjab, but in other provinces too.

We hope that the prime minister’s statesman-like post-victory July 26 speech and the Aug 19 address will be translated into a good governance framework in the days ahead. Good luck to him!

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*Published in Dawn, September 1st, 2018*