



Taking a chance with Imran

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Imran Khan is India's best bet in years to ensure a durable peace with Pakistan, including on the Kashmir issue

- In the recent firefight between India and Pakistan following the Pulwama attack, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan showed a maturity rarely displayed by any of his predecessors.
- However much we'd like to believe that Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman was repatriated because of international pressure, it is entirely possible that Mr. Khan, overruling his army, ordered his release to establish himself as a voice of reason.
- India lost the chance to gracefully accept its downed pilot's release by Pakistan and loosen just a bit of the grip of Pakistan's generals over Mr. Khan.
- Instead of viewing Mr. Khan as a stooge of the Pakistan army, India must start working with him to achieve a durable peace by notching up a series of small successes that could lead to bigger ones.
- Each of these, like the steps taken to open the Kartarpur corridor, will likely build up Mr. Khan's capacity to be his own man and stand up to an army that in the past has always scuttled any peace move with India.
- Just one State in India, Uttar Pradesh, has a population than is larger than Pakistan's.
- India is about four times bigger than Pakistan area-wise.
- And its GDP, in PPP terms, is about 10 times greater.
- To Pakistan it is India that is a formidable enemy, one at whose hands it has suffered violent vivisection and a monumental military defeat.
- It is no wonder then that Pakistan is paranoid about India and has always leveraged its only strength, a much more strategic location, to corner it.
- In Mr. Khan India now has a popular Pakistani leader it should engage with and he is India's best bet in years to ensure a durable

peace with Pakistan, including on the Kashmir issue.

- It is in India's interest to reach out to Mr. Khan boldly and with hope.

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