

IT is deeply unfortunate that the security of millions is potentially being put at stake over the persistent antipathy between the PTI and the government. And yet, instead of resolving their differences and setting some rules of engagement, both sides continue to cross lines that should not be crossed. In jail and with the walls seemingly closing in, former prime minister Imran Khan has taken an increasingly [combative position](#) against the authorities. It appears that the recent arrest of his [nephews](#), who have since been released on bail, has greatly provoked him. In [statements](#) attributed to him and shared from his X account on Thursday, the jailed PTI leader has [directed](#) the KP government as well as provincial lawmakers to resist the [military operations](#) being conducted in the province to clear it of terrorists. This is a dangerous and problematic position to take, especially given the social sensitivities involved. [Mr Khan](#) seems to believe that the military operations are merely a tool to politically hurt his party, which rules the province. He has also asserted that they are being conducted “merely to please foreign powers”. However, these positions are contradicted by the ground realities in KP, where militancy is visibly [resurgent](#) and [repeated attacks](#) by terrorists have claimed many lives and spoilt what hard-fought peace had been achieved in previous years. There is, indeed, strong [local opposition](#) to security operations as well, because kinetic operations invariably entail the [displacement](#) of civilian populations and subsequent economic losses due to disrupted livelihoods. However, the citizenry seems equally wary of the growing influence of terrorists and other violent actors and does not want them to gain a foothold either. In such a situation, a national leader should propose a middle-ground solution that protects citizens’ interests while [recognising](#) national security imperatives. Unfortunately, [Mr Khan](#) seems to be letting anger get the better of his judgement. It would be amiss not to point out the failings on the other side as well. Perhaps due to the way politics, [justice](#) and governance have shaped up under the present regime, the powerful seem to be operating under the assumption that their will can be imposed on the people without consequences. This is a dangerous presumption. Decisions that can drastically affect citizens’ lives cannot be taken behind closed doors. There needs to be political ownership of such choices, which can only happen if those who are to be affected by them have been adequately heard and their concerns accommodated. Pressing ahead without public consent can prove disastrous in case unforeseen challenges end up complicating operational aims. Hence, there should be a much greater focus on attaining political buy-in, and if making certain concessions can help achieve it they should be considered. There needs to be some give and take.

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Politicised National Security

At a time when the militancy is on its peak, the head of the ruling party in KP, seems to be on his uncompromising position on the issue of military operation in the province. Even though the terrorist attacks are happening routinely, the PTI Head branded the military merely attempts to please foreign powers. It is unfortunate as true leaders, on such a juncture, are supposed to put their own political agendas aside and come on table for national security. On the other side, the powerful corridors want to go ahead without the public consent which can prove disastrous as these operation directly affect the people on ground and people are already opposing military operations fearing mass displacement. So, it is essential that both sides should come to a give and take position to end the standstill.

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