

# South Asia Analysis Group

Published on *South Asia Analysis Group* (<http://www.southasiaanalysis.org>)

[Home](#) > Pakistan Army's Next Chief of Army Staff?

---

## Pakistan Army's Next Chief of Army Staff?

Submitted by asiaadmin2 on Mon, 08/08/2016 - 11:10

**Paper No. 6157**

**Dated 08-Aug-2016**

By Dr Subhash Kapila

Pakistan Army's current Chief of Army Staff, General Raheel Sharif is due to retire in end-November 2016 and though he had declared in January 2016 that he would not seek extension, the grapevine has gone silent thereafter leaving utter suspense.

Pakistan's internal dynamics and its external security environment has undergone a sea-change since January 2016 and it remains to be seen as to whether General Raheel Sharif firmly sticks to his publicly announced decision to retire on November 28 2016 or engineers or let it be engineered on his behalf that in view of Pakistan's challenging security environment he should be given an extension of his tenure for another three years. The Pakistan Army Chief has remained silent on this issue after January 2016 and there has been no speculation visible even though only three months are left.

The Pakistan Army Chief's selection is the prerogative of the Prime Minister of Pakistan but having learnt lessons from his past mistakes on this issue, Prime Minister Nawaz seems to be holding his cards on the issue close to his chest. The Prime Minister recommends the name to the President who then issues the proclamation. The outgoing Chief does recommend a list of Generals suitable for Pakistan Army Chief to succeed him.

The Pakistani Prime Minister presumably would like to keep his selection to be revealed closer to the date of retirement of the current Pakistan Army Chief.

Ordinarily, in any other country the selection of the country's Chief of Army Staff does not make headlines or even speculation a year in advance of the changeover. But in Pakistan, this is not so. In Pakistan, the Pakistan Army Chief determines and dictates Pakistan's foreign

policies on the United States, China, India and Afghanistan and therefore becomes a key player in the dynamics of Pakistan including military governance of Pakistan when the Pakistan Prime minister is vulnerable or weak and beset with internal turmoil.

Taking the external actors first vitally interested in the selection of the next Pakistan Army Chief, it is the United States which heads the list, chiefly arising from its military embedment in Afghanistan. The United States has made no secret of its displeasure that Pakistan has not been able to bring the Taliban on the table for peace talks. The Pakistan Army and its notorious intelligence agency, the ISI, control the Taliban and therefore the Taliban not cooperating in Afghan peace talks, the blame should go to the Pakistan Army Chief General Raheel Sharif.

Logically, therefore, the United States should be looking forward to a new Pakistan Army General to succeed the present Chief. Surprisingly, US Senator McCain was in Pakistan a few weeks back and besides meeting Pakistan Army Chief General Raheel Sharif, Senator McCain was quoted in Pakistan media as having advocated that General Raheel Sharif should be given an extension. Whether the US Senator was airing his personal views or was he sent to air US preferences in Pakistan, is not clear at this stage.

China has not made any statements publicly on the issue nor likely to do so. But gleaning the media reports of the Pakistan Army Chief's visit to Beijing and his strong advocacy of China's flagship project in Pakistan, the CPEC, and General Raheel Sharif's assurances in Beijing that the Pakistan Army would ensure the project's successful completion, it would be a fair assumption that China would prefer that General Raheel Sharif's tenure is extended. However, it needs to be remembered that the Pakistan Army is completely beholden to China and China would be rest assured that whosoever becomes the Pakistan Army Chief, China's interests will be eternally secured.

Afghanistan on all current accounts would like to possibly welcome a new Pakistan Army Chief to assume office. The Afghanistan President and the Afghan policy establishment have been critical of the ISI and their terrorist outfit protégés for the spate of bombings in Kabul and intensification of Taliban activities within Afghanistan during General Raheel Sharif's current tenure.

Coming to India, it really does not matter as to who is the next Pakistan Army Chief or whether the incumbent is given an extension. All Pakistan Army Chiefs have been rabidly Anti-India in their words and deeds. All Pakistan Army Chiefs have a single-point agenda to whip up frenzy on the Kashmir issue and stoke and intensify militancy and terrorism in the Kashmir Valley. India has coped up with all Pakistan Army Chiefs in the last six decades and with their military misadventures from all-out wars, to limited war, to border clashes escalation and the full spectrum of proxy wars to include suicide bombings, terrorist attacks, and stoking violent unrest in Kashmir Valley. Is it a mean coincidence that in the three to four months run-up to General Raheel Sharif's retirement violent unrest in the Kashmir Valley has intensified? Is it linked to his extension plans?

In terms of Pakistani internal dynamics, the incumbent Pakistan Army Chief was alleged to have engineered a 'soft coup' within Pakistan against PM Nawaz Sharif through the PTI month long siege of Islamabad and also through the Canadian Pakistani cleric. Recently, within

Pakistan, posters have appeared advocating that General Raheel Sharif should effect a military take-over of Pakistan as the state was failing. General Raheel Sharif perceptibly gained wide public acclaim by going hard on Pakistan's indigenous terrorism, though not against outfits like the Lashkar-e-Toiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammad which are Pakistan Army affiliates to be used against India and Afghanistan.

Politically within Pakistan, political leaders across the spectrum hailed Pakistan Army Chief's public announcement in January 2016 that he would retire on the due date.

Logically, therefore, PM Nawaz Sharif should be looking forward to appoint a new Pakistan Army Chief with whom he has a 'comfort zone' to ride out his remainder tenure as Pakistani Prime Minister.

Within the Pakistan Army military hierarchy, there should be an urge for a new Pakistani Army Chief as any extension to the incumbent Army Chief General Raheel Sharif could upset the chain of promotion to higher ranks within the Pakistan Army from Brigadiers upwards.

If command of a Corps and other high-grade professional criteria are the determinants for selection of Pakistan Army's sixteenth Chief of Army Staff, then the following three Lieutenant Generals figure higher up in the selection process:

- Lt Gen Zubair Mahmood Hayat
- Lt Gen Ishfaq Nadeem
- Lt Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa

Lt Gen Zubair Mahmood Hayat is the senior-most serving General and with him having held appointments of DG Strategic Plans Division, Chief of General Staff and having commanded the Bahawalpur Corps, should be the frontrunner. Pakistan's nuclear arsenal and nuclear doctrines are handled by DG Strategic Plans Division.

Pakistan Prime Minister's task could become easier as one day prior to Pakistan Army Chief's retirement the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff also would be retiring. Hence, two Generals would be due for promotion to rank of full General.

For India it would be fair to assume that whosoever be the next Pakistan Army Chief things are not going to change for the better for India. India has to be strategically alive to the reality that no Pakistan Army Chief would be powerful enough to 'reverse the tide' of Pakistan Army's traditional animosities towards India including Pakistan Army's fixated obsession to wrest Kashmir from Indian sovereignty. Contextual circumstances would force the new Pakistani Army Chief to intensify its proxy war against India and escalate tensions on the borders by intensified border clashes and sabotage.

Concluding, it needs to be observed that should the incumbent Pakistan Army Chief, General Raheel Sharif retires on November 28 2016 as firmly declared by him it would be a great day for democracy in Pakistan and for a welcome positive change in the civil-military relations template in Pakistan.

**Tags:**

Pakistan [1]

Pak Army Chief [2]

**Category:**

Papers [3]

**Countries:**

Pakistan [4]

**Topics:**

Strategic Affairs & Security [5]

Political [6]

Copyright ©2012. All Rights are Reserved.

---

**Source URL:** <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/node/2038>

**Links**

[1] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/taxonomy/term/71>

[2] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/taxonomy/term/375>

[3] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/papers>

[4] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/pakistan>

[5] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/strategic-affairs-and-security>

[6] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/political>