

May 2023

PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST

*A Selected Summary of News, Views and Trends
from Pakistani Media*



Prepared by

Dr. Zainab Akhter

Dr. Nazir Ahmad Mir

Mr. Afroz Khan

Dr. Ashok Behuria



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST

May 2023

*A Select Summary of News, Views and Trends
from the Pakistani Media*

Prepared by

Dr. Zainab Akhter

Dr. Nazir Ahmad Mir

Mr. Afroz Khan

Dr. Ashok Behuria



**MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE STUDIES
AND ANALYSES**

1-Development Enclave, Near USI
Delhi Cantonment, New Delhi-110010

PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST
May 2023

CONTENTS

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS	07
ECONOMIC ISSUES	09
SECURITY SITUATION	11
URDU & ELECTRONIC MEDIA	
Urdu.....	16
Electronic.....	20
STATISTICS	
BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES.....	21

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Difficult choices, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 03 May¹

Pakistan belongs to the eastern or the western camp is an irrelevant debate. The country is off and on unnecessarily dragged into an altercation over it, and is compelled to make its stance clear. This is so because of two primary reasons: one, Pakistan sits at the crossroads of a geo-strategic conclave; and, two; it is too important to be ignored by major powers, as well as the movers and shakers in the region and beyond. There is nothing wrong if Pakistan, like any other country, is inclined towards one major power or the other. After all, it is national interests that derives such a policy, and definitely it is substantiated with a plethora of do's and don'ts. Islamabad's new synopsis in its foreign affairs is a sense of neutrality, but with the express intent of being alive to new realities in inter-state relations. *There are few fundamentals such as taking a stance against aggression and repression, upholding each state's sovereignty and the principle of non-interference that is dear to heart.* This benchmark apparently goes on to justify a shift in stance, if any, at any stage of bilateralism. Thus, if Pakistan had tried to stay aloof from the crisscross of Moscow-Kyiv row, and the US meddling in the region, it has every reason to do so. Likewise with China, Pakistan has a long-term strategic as well as an imminent neighborhood bondage that spans economic, military and geopolitical spheres, as is the case with the US in counterterrorism and extra-regional security affairs. Thus, no point in making Pakistan draw the soft lines of engagement and estrangement.

At the cliff, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 11 May²

Law and order situation is at the cliff. Protests by PTI supporters against the arrest of Imran Khan seem to have gone overboard. Unprecedented scenes of violence and vandalism were witnessed, which included torching of the Governor and Core Commander's residences in Lahore, and Radio Pakistan office in Peshawar. *Hundreds have been arrested countrywide by police, as pitched battles between police and activists continue unabated. The intensity is yet to come as a NAB court granted eight days' remand of the PTI chief that corresponded with the government's calling in of Army for civil aid under Article 245.* The scenario is wayward with several reported dead, leading to fears of more turbulence as there is no recourse at work to pacify the situation. The country is on tenterhooks and it is in dire need of a political solution. The pattern at work suggests that the government wants

¹ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2414730/difficult-choices>

² <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2416054/at-the-cliff>

to browbeat the opposition by submerging it in litigation. Khan's indictment in the Toshakhana case seems to be the tip of the iceberg. But the million-dollar question is whether this provocative strategy enables the beleaguered dispensation to overcome anger on the streets, and stabilise the situation. *What is unfortunately evolving is a clash among state institutions, and suppression of political voices is leading to more confusion and chaos. Likewise, measures such as cracking down on media reporting and closure of Internet services is in no way addressing the problem, and rather compounding it to the core.*

The aftermath, Editorial, *The News*, 11 May³

*With ISPR statement, a government already increasingly being seen as the B Team of a much more powerful stakeholder, may have to defend the indefensible. Is it up to the task? Is the 'one page' being scotch-taped back into existence? Has the PTI's foolishness become the PDM's healing balm? How will the Faustian bargain made today help or hurt the democratic and political process in the country in the long run? For now, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif spoke to the nation on Wednesday night, calling Imran's arrest lawful, condemning the mob riots that took place on Tuesday and Wednesday, and warning that strict action will be taken against anyone taking any illegal step. Perhaps for all parties (and others) it is time to step back, take stock of what has happened, let the law take its natural but fair course, and then talk to all political stakeholders. Students of politics say there is a lesson for PTI to be learnt in all this: always give more value and weight to your political opponents than those who bring you to power through undemocratic means. **Students of our tainted democracy say there is a lesson here also for the government parties: be careful who you make friends with.***

Where from here? Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 17 May⁴

It seems nobody is listening. Political polarisation is at its zenith and is dangerously coupled with impulsive reactions. *This does not bode well for the country, and is in instant need of a political correction. The rioting and vandalism witnessed in the wake of PTI chief Imran Khan's arrest on May 9 is in need of a thorough investigation. Arson and attacks on sensitive installations, and desacralizing of national monuments is reprehensible and condemnable.* It is necessary to bring the culprits, their instigators and facilitators to book. This is so because the country is on the tenterhooks and shocked to the

³ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1069024-the-aftermath>

⁴ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2417109/where-from-here-1>

core. The Special Corps Commanders' Conference, presided over by Army Chief Gen Asim Munir, was on the spot as it resolved to go after all those involved in the nefarious activities, and try them under relevant laws, including Pakistan Army Act and Official Secret Act. There are no two opinions as political parties across the board shun violence, and are united in exterminating terrorism. At the same time, the role of the armed forces is held in high esteem and any malicious campaign to undermine their sacrifices is contested tooth and nail. *This is why the PTI too has called for an independent probe under the Chief Justice of Pakistan, as it vehemently denies any role in the weekend riots. The wheat must be separated from chaff.* The common denominator is very much there, and the need of the hour is to erect a regime of confidence over it, and nip the unscrupulous elements, if they are in the rank and file of politics.

IK's arrest: days of future past, Syed Mohammad Hasan, *The Express Tribune*, 22 May⁵

The politics of vendetta came full circle when paramilitary forces stormed IHC to arrest former PM Imran Khan on May 9. And with this, PDM has demonstrated a preference for political retribution over allegiance to the nation and its citizens. *The turn of events left thousands of PTI supporters disgruntled, manifesting their discontent through fervent street protests. As a result, sporadic outbursts of violence emerged nationwide, and clashes with law enforcers resulted in unfortunate fatalities. Unwilling to succumb to public pressure, the government responded hastily by imposing a broadband internet and social media blackout in affected areas, alongside implementing Section 144 across multiple provinces and curbing the media from broadcasting protests.* This not just violated the law and basic human rights, but also had disastrous effects that reverberated across multiple sectors. Telecommunication companies in particular incurred a revenue loss of around Rs2.46 billion, translating into a decrease of Rs861 million in tax revenue for the government. Despite the measures, continued escalation on the streets necessitated the deployment of army personnel in Islamabad, Punjab and K-P to control the ensuing chaos. The country was seen rapidly descending into civil unrest. No country can survive for long under a constitutional, political and economic crisis. Atop this, Pakistan is witnessing the worst of all: an institutional crisis in which deep divisions are created between and within them. *The very pillars of a democratic state that are supposed to work like a well-oiled machine are now pitted against each other — and at this point everyone's hands are soiled. Moving forward, all stakeholders need to engage in thoughtful introspection if they don't want to find themselves on the wrong side of history*

⁵ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2417910/iks-arrest-days-of-future-past>

Pakistan's judiciary: a new era, Haroon Rashid Siddiqi, *The Express Tribune*, 23 May⁶

Pakistan's political landscape is undergoing a tremendous change after more than seventy-five years of existence. For the first time in the country's tumultuous history, the Supreme Court has declined to serve as a subordinate or facilitator to Pakistan's powerful establishment. *Chief Justice Umer Ata Bandial has demonstrated considerable character strength by defending the Constitution despite the severe consequences that have already shaken the judiciary's foundation. The judges' chambers and courtrooms are feeling the heat.* To many, it seems that the regrettable and deplorable attacks on the military facilities occurred when PTI supporters got unrestricted access. It's believed that unidentified individuals were tasked with inciting the crowd to vandalize and set the Corps Commander's house on fire. The real truth will likely remain a part of the vast conspiracy theory graveyard. *Regardless of the truth, the PDM benefits significantly as a deep rift of animosity and mistrust between the security establishment and PTI leader Imran Khan and his party is clearly widening.* Although the vandalism and burning of the Corps Commander's house were equally reprehensible, the government has conveniently highlighted the Jinnah House narrative to harvest substantial political gains. Moreover, the establishment is fully aware that the ruling parties, now armed with obstinacy, will also target them if given a free hand to dismantle PTI, oust the Chief Justice, and dictate from the constitution's womb the National Assembly. *Every member of this institution is currently playing a dominant role. The real issues of the country have been postponed for another day. It's important to remind all stakeholders that we're all aboard a sinking ship, so what is the struggle really about?*

Banning PTI, Editorial, *Dawn*, 25 May⁷

The idea would be unthinkable in any self-respecting democracy, yet here we are again. The government is considering banning the PTI over the events of May 9 and 10, according to Defence Minister Khawaja Asif. It is true that PTI's senior leadership has displayed a remarkable lack of spine by preferring to leave the party or relinquish their post within it – unlike so many politicians of other parties who have, at one time or another, fearlessly faced the establishment's wrath. *Clearly, this is the season for bad ideas, and the government appears to be tempted to test another one out. It ought to remember, though, that banning parties cannot win it votes. If anything, the move would likely further antagonize a large section of voters and weaken the legitimacy of whatever government*

⁶ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2418039/pakistans-judiciary-a-new-era>

⁷ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1755624/banning-pti>

takes the reins from the current one. Yet, the state's tactics have been criticised by even those without sympathy for PTI and Imran Khan. Insisting on severely punishing the PTI for its mistakes is no answer. *Banning the PTI tells its support base that there is no space for them in the Pakistani political system. If these people are not to be allowed to express themselves through the ballot box, which forum will they turn to?* The PML-N exalted democracy when it was down and out. The 'vote ko izzat do' slogan that kept it alive after 2018 resonated with the public because it called for respecting the vox populi. Its leaders should now not appear so willing to sacrifice their principles at the altar of political expediency. The government has been repeatedly warned that it may be going too far — to its own detriment. It should heed those warnings and reconsider the path it plans to take.

ECONOMIC ISSUES

Record inflation, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 02 May⁸

Bringing Pakistan back to a sound financial footing is top-most priority, but it is equally essential to consider collateral damage i.e. who takes the brunt of it all. This is no secret as inflation has hit record-levels, the rupee has dipped considerably, and unemployment coupled with poverty has surged. *According to the latest estimates, inflation is hovering around a record-shattering 38%, primarily driven by hikes in food and energy prices. Present economic policies are there to support the rich, but middle- and lower-income household are left hanging without a safety net. Further conditionalities of the IMF will make matters even worse.* The government must stop ignoring the plight of the people and start prioritising their needs. Over the years, successive governments have failed to invest in and develop the agriculture sector, which has taken multiple hits through economic woes and climate change. Focus should be made on improving the agricultural supply chain by providing better incentives for farmers, investing in technology, and introducing better farming practices. *Similarly, the government must address the rising energy prices by promoting renewable energy sources and investing in energy-efficient infrastructure. Bold steps must be taken to overhaul the system and promote economic justice for all.* Moreover, utmost importance must be given to fair distribution of wealth and resources, and an end to the corrupt practices.

⁸ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2414504/record-inflation-1>

Current account surplus, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 19 May⁹

*The current account situation appears to be stabilizing somewhat, with two consecutive months of surpluses being reported. The figures for March show a nominal \$18 million surplus after a windfall \$750 million surplus in March. The March figure, the first surplus in over two years, was revised up by almost \$100 million, as the government's belt-tightening to avoid default continues. Successive surpluses have shrunk the deficit for FY23 to date to just \$3.26 billion, compared to a whopping \$17.5 billion for the whole of FY22. Analysts say the surpluses should continue through the end of the fiscal year and bring the annual deficit below \$3 billion and put us on course for balancing the current account next year as well. But while it is worth noting that Pakistan could avoid default if we keep running surpluses or at least balance the current account, the cost to the local economy of a prolonged austerity policy would be disastrous. Local industry is contracting as it struggles to import raw materials, and multinational commercial and industrial entities are struggling to remit their profits. **Prolonged austerity could force some critical businesses to close shop, creating new stresses as the loss in production would have to be met by imports. Economic growth projections have already collapsed, with 0.5% growth being among the more optimistic estimates.***

Spending spree, Editorail, *The Express Tribune*, 26 May¹⁰

*There can be little argument with the fact that Pakistan's economy is in dire straits; as most economists of repute have observed, unless the state takes immediate and decisive steps for course correction, default and financial chaos will be our lot. Yet the PDM administration seems to be living in some alternative universe where the financial management of the state is concerned. Instead of belt-tightening, the government is lavishing funds on lawmakers, most likely with an eye on the elections. As reported, the cabinet's Economic Coordination Committee on Wednesday approved an additional amount of Rs 20bn for lawmakers in the name of the Sustainable Development Goals Achievement Programme. Under this scheme, ruling coalition lawmakers get Rs500m each, ostensibly to implement civil works in their constituencies that will contribute to the SDGs. But instead of sustainable development, these lavish handouts will sustain many a political career among the ranks of government loyalists. **Effectively, only lawmakers belonging to the PDM and parties allied with it will get the funds, which means that rather than focusing on development, the government is trying to ensure that with the transfer of***

⁹ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2417438/current-account-surplus>

¹⁰ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1755886/spending-spreed>

cash, many an electable and 'influential' will stay loyal come election time. In addition, there are serious questions of transparency where the money is concerned, as there is no strict monitoring of how and where such funds are being spent.

A steep price, Editorial, Dawn, 29 May¹¹

*Recent State Bank report on the state of the economy during the first half of the present fiscal year admits that macroeconomic fundamentals are deteriorating, but it understates the severity of the painful crisis the country and its people have been contending with for the last one year just as Finance Minister Ishaq Dar does when he contends the country is not on the verge of a financial crisis and will "absolutely not" default. To prove his point, he has pointed to the current account surplus of \$570m and \$18m recorded in March and April, respectively. But he did not say that the government achieved this surplus at the cost of GDP growth, which is forecast to stay flat this fiscal year amid widespread industrial closures and productivity cuts, and tens of thousands of lost jobs. At least the State Bank has been more forthcoming than Mr. Dar. **The latter's mismanagement of the economy over the last eight months proves that he is part of the problem. No wonder, Princeton economist Atif Mian has tweeted: "To thump your chest and say, 'see we have not defaulted' means nothing if you continue to ignore the underlying crisis."** The only thing worse than indecisiveness in the face of a crisis is incompetence, he added, warning that cutting GDP to sell cheap petrol "will make it more difficult to pay off the debt, leading to more devaluation, more misery, and higher petrol prices in terms of purchasing power". **The situation has come to a point where any step taken to stabilise the economy actually exacerbates the crisis. For example, administrative curbs to improve the external account and increased interest rates to address currency devaluation and inflation are threatening to further destabilise the high-deficit budget.** The people should brace themselves for more misery as the government doesn't have a credible plan to deal with the crisis.*

SECURITY SITUATION

An unlikely nexus, Editorial, Dawn, 08 May¹²

Despite a spike in violence by both TTP and Baloch separatists across the country, no concrete evidence has yet been presented on such an alliance taking shape, let alone an instance being cited where the two militant actors have cooperated in any capacity. **Baloch separatist groups have maintained a tactical silence on possible collusion with the TTP;**

¹¹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1756581/a-steep-price>

¹² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1751548>

after all, why debunk claims that make them appear a more formidable foe? The TTP, meanwhile, has been actively promoting the claim that it has forged a nexus with Baloch militant outfits. In December, it announced that a group led by Mazar Baloch had pledged allegiance to the TTP chief Mufti Noor Wali Mehsud and that this would strengthen the TTP in Balochistan. Since the umbrella organisation announced the end of the ceasefire agreed with the government, there has been a perceptible shift in its narrative towards a more political and nationalist rhetoric — likely an attempt to gain more acceptance among the Pakhtun population. Its appeal to Baloch nationalist sentiment also fits into the same strategy, as a propaganda tactic. *Experts at the aforementioned consultation in Islamabad also noted that the TTP and other local militant groups were filling the vacuum left by mainstream and nationalist political parties in KP.* The Baloch separatists, notwithstanding their demonstrated capacity for violence, are on the opposite end of the ideological spectrum. One common factor, however, is that Afghanistan has become a safe space for both these adversaries of Pakistan.

The Generals' Dilemma, Raza Rumi, *The Friday Times*, 17 May¹³

Pakistan's friends must also be worried. The Saudis have a defense pact with Pakistan, whereby they rely on Pakistan's military for the defense of the Kingdom in case it is threatened. *The Chinese, whose primary engagement in Pakistan is with the military, must have wondered as to how their "good old' boys" might be losing control. And of course, Uncle Sam and the Western bloc must have been aghast, seeing their longtime partner entity under serious domestic political threat.* But the international image, howsoever important it is given Pakistan's bankrupt economy, is perhaps secondary to the domestic chaos. Intra-elite contestation has reached its climax now. The Parliament has already discarded the Supreme Court's orders setting wrong precedents. The politicians in power have targeted the judges, and vice versa. *The Supreme Court is also at loggerheads with the military, and the historic alliance between the two stands broken. This chaos certainly favors Imran Khan and his invincible image as the challenger of the old establishment. Sections of the junta, a few judges, the middle classes, and segments of the media are keen to get Imran Khan back into power with a sweeping majority.* The generals find themselves in an existential dilemma. If they allow Imran to return, they will have to brace for a Pakistani Erdoğan who would reset the contours of the military's hegemony. If they stop him through means fair or foul, they risk explosion of fissures within, leading to unmanageable crises. Both scenarios put Pakistan's very existence in extreme peril. Mass arrests, and media and internet blockades, have already created an authoritarian environment which is both unconstitutional and untenable in the current circumstances.

¹³ <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/2023/05/16/the-generals-dilemma/>

The recent announcement to try the perpetrators under the Army Act is another red flag. It is time for the military and the government in power to undertake a reassessment and open a channel of dialogue with Imran Khan, unless they too want the country to burn.

URDU MEDIA

Serious talk's necessary, Editorial, Jang, 29 April¹⁴

In recent years a new political culture has emerged in Pakistan that has logically resulted in tension between state institutions, an economy on the brink of collapse, and the regrouping of terrorists. Despite that, *it cannot be denied that the solution of the situation can be provided by the political parties.* It is clear that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) wants to hold elections in Punjab within 90 days according to the national constitution; the PDM government on the other hand is of the opinion that the economic and administrative situation of the country cannot afford repeated elections. It would be better if the process is carried out in October, it says. The Supreme Court has ordered elections to be held in Punjab on May 14, on which the PDM government has filed a review appeal and presented its stand. *Given all this situation in the country it is better to talk to each other in a feasible environment, create a consensus, listen to each other, and find solutions to the problems.* Keeping this consideration, the Supreme Court has asked for holding such talks and inform the court of their decision about possible election dates after talking to each other. According to the sources, *the PTI has set three conditions on the top of which is that both the national and other assemblies should be dissolved in May (2023) and the constitution should be amended for simultaneous elections, for which Tehreek-e-Insaf will have to undo the resignations of its members in the national assembly. The PTI also demanded that the elections should be held for the national and four provincial assemblies in July 2023.* The second round of negotiations was scheduled to be held on Friday at 3:00 pm. In the light of the talks held on the first day, regardless of the position of the government and PTI, Yusuf Raza Gilani is right to say that the ice is starting to melt and that some acceptance and some persuasion need to be agreed upon. In these situations, *when threats hover over the law and order and the country is in the worst economic situation, common people are facing extreme inflation and the country is surrounded by all other kinds of problems, international organizations and friendly countries can help Pakistan from going bankrupt. But the solution to the problems must be found within, as a nation.*

¹⁴ <https://e.jang.com.pk/detail/429367>

Flour crisis despite good production, Editorial, *Daily Dunya*, 03 May¹⁵

On the one hand the government is praising itself for having good production of wheat in the country this season; on the other hand the second largest province of the country Sindh along with many areas of Pakistan are facing a serious flour crisis. In Sindh, flour is not available at various flour mills. The mills are being closed. The government of Sindh had set a target of procuring 14 lakh ton flour which it, despite the fact that the harvesting season has ended, has failed to do. Because of the wheat crisis, flour is unavailable in the market and at places its prices are skyrocketing. *Despite the fact that this year the production of wheat is better, 1.6 percent more than the previous year. What is the point of having such good production if the people do not get flour for daily consumption?* It is necessary that instead of bragging about having better wheat produce this year, flour should be made available in the market. Flour-mills should be provided wheat so that the flour crisis can be addressed.

Where are we? Editorial, *Jang*, 05 may¹⁶

It would have been better if the entire Pakistani nation was united in the context of the ongoing economic crisis and international challenges, and all institutions were focused on development. *Nations face difficult moments also during which there is only darkness. However, then that ray of light emerges from the darkness, which illuminates the entire environment and the nation starts to develop at a high speed.* Issuing a survey, Ipsos Global Trends brings out important trends based on surveys and data whose report was released at a seminar organized under the Overseas Chamber of Commerce in Karachi. The survey shows that 8 out of 10 Pakistanis want the "old Pakistan"; 83 percent want the country to be like before; 86 percent of Pakistanis think the country is going in the wrong direction; and 76 percent Pakistanis are unhappy. However, 53 percent of Pakistanis are optimistic about the future of the country. *The current situation is like that whether domestic and foreign media, reports from national and international organizations or the situation emerging from the chatter in the street market, it would be to simplify it by calling worrisome.* It is not just about inflation. It is about maintaining the relationship between the body and soul of the extraordinary majority who have reached below the poverty line, among whom the increase in unemployment is dangerous. A look at the newspapers of just one day, 4 May 2023, reveals a picture of non-uniformity in the country that is enough to demoralize a man. ... A headline read that a political party has requested the Supreme Court to take action due to non-agreement on the election date.

¹⁵https://e.dunya.com.pk/detail.php?date=2023-05-03&edition=LHR&id=6722365_39837880

¹⁶ <https://e.jang.com.pk/detail/434273%22>

Pakistan cannot afford a crisis! Editorial, Ummat, 10 May¹⁷

Finally Imran Khan has been arrested. The government has said that Imran was arrested by NAB in the Al Qadir Trust case. It is surprising though that instead of NAB police, Imran was arrested by the Rangers. Imran would be present in the NAB court today. It needs to be mentioned that Imran Khan was arrested just one day after the DG ISPR had warned Imran from leveling “baseless” allegations against a senior military officer. ISPR said that provocative propaganda was being done against the military and intelligence agencies for political benefits. *After Imran Khan levelled allegations against the officers of the institutions, it was being said that the government had given green signal for arresting Imran Khan and other Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders.* It was headlines in some newspapers while referring to local TV channels. One unfortunate incident regarding the arrest of Imran Khan is the attack on the house of a Corps Commanders. It was unprecedented. The leadership of the PTI should control its workers. Protests are allowed but no one can cross the line. *After the arrest of Imran Khan, arrests (PTI members) continued across the country. Arrests were carried out the whole night under the patronage of the government. In many areas social media has been banned and many are not able to contact their loved ones. This is a painful situation as it is a tactic used by “Indian occupation” forces in “occupied” Kashmir.* The government should adapt an apt way to deal with the situation. To stop protests Section 144 has been imposed in Punjab. In this dire situation all need to act sensibly as Pakistan cannot afford a crisis!

9 May a “Black Day” (Youm-e-Siah)! Editorial, Daily Dunya, 11 May¹⁸

The arrest of the Chairman of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Imran Khan was legal, and related to a case in the NAB. This has been verified by the Islamabad High Court in its order. But in reaction to the arrest, the way mistreats have run amok, set buildings and property on fire, it appears it was a planned conspiracy. *The day on which the head quarter of the Army in Rawalpindi was attacked and the house of a Corps Commander in Lahore were burned, 9 May indeed would be remembered as a “Black Day” in the history of Pakistan. The strong reaction that has come from the army is understandable that in 75 years no enemy of the country could do what a political party has done.* Political parties make the future and develop a country. But it is unfortunate to see that in the lust of

¹⁷ <https://ummat.net/epaper/news.php?date=2023/05/10/&p=idr1.gif>

¹⁸ https://e.dunya.com.pk/detail.php?date=2023-05-11&edition=LHR&id=6735081_41927593

grabbing power, neither there is any sign of national pride nor is shown any respect for one's own words. At one moment, the same element expresses solidarity with the armed forces; and the next they invoke people against the same institution. *The respect and love of Pakistanis for their armed forces do not need any validation; but by brainwashing youth and provoking them against armed forces for political interests is a conspiracy against national stability and the existence of Pakistan. Now there is no doubt that the whole purpose of all this is to throw the country in a civil war.* It is now getting clear that all this was getting done or done according to a sophisticated plan. These incidents of violence are meant to create anarchy in the country. But the apt and mature response from the national institutions have almost foiled the attempt. The word "foiled" is being used because in some parts of the country the still sporadic incidents of violence reported.

Do not convert differences into personal war, Editorial, Ummat, 17 May¹⁹

Pakistan at this moment is not facing as many external challenges as it faces internal challenges. The lust for power and their conflicts with each other politicians have divided the nation. It is a serious situation that if continues can lead to a civil war in Pakistan. *The state institutions are fighting to dominate each other; no one institution is ready to listen to the other. The sensitivity to the situation would be better assessed by the fact that the government itself is playing the role of the opposition. One of the alliance parties of the ruling alliance, JUI-F has violated the section 144 and gheraoed the Supreme Court.* The way the ruling alliance brought its support for this dharna can be called storming of the Supreme Court with thousands of supporters. And this was made clear by the President of the PDM when he said that if the Supreme Court acted against the government then there would be consequences. *It seems that the ruling alliance and the "hidden powers" are using Maulana Fazlur Rehman adroitly. The Maulana is directly challenging the Supreme Court, its senior judges and the Chief Justice particularly. The people behind and supporting the Maulana know it well that he enjoys the support of the students of his madrasas that he runs across the country and their administration.* They always play frontline roles in such situations. That is why it is appropriate to make the Maulana the president of PDM for some days through which he is sued for such dirty things which would have serious implications for him and his party and his politics.

¹⁹ <https://ummat.net/epaper/news.php?date=2023/05/17/&p=idr1.gif>

The “Maula Jatt” of politics showing changes, Hashir Azeem, *Ummat*, 19 May²⁰

Once there was a rise and now there is fall. The journey from a rise towards fall is always humiliating. But no one takes lessons from history. *“The old Maula Jatt of politics is now showing signs of weakness.” The function that was on in Zaman Park is petering out.* The rooms of Imran Khan’s house seem sad. The “revolutionary” leader who had set “madness” against the state has now discoursed the small and big tiger forces by issuing one video after another. The people who had committed crimes (on 9 May) are now shaking and asking for mercy! In this background the person who used to say that “We have not to fear”, the so-called Che Guevara of Pakistan has become lonely. *Imran’s advisors and comrades are running away like nomad birds of Siberia one after another. The situation says that when the action begins according to the Army Act, by then half of Imran’s supporters would have run away. The other 50 percent would walk away in the court process.* The young who were provoked are now confused whether they should express their anger or come on their knees. The “revolutionary” meanwhile has given up and is pleading that someone should talk to him. After getting some relief from the country’s courts yesterday, the “Che Guevara” got an opportunity to pay tribute to the country’s martyrs and condemn the attacks on the military installations and correct some unpardonable crimes. But he seems to have missed the chance. *It needs to be accepted that Imran Khan’s provocative speeches and manipulation led the youth to see him as their savior. He became popular because some of his companions knew the art of presenting a lie as truth. The purpose of using social media was to brainwash the minds of the 60 percent of the youth of Pakistan. This strategy made the “revolutionary” the populist leader of Pakistan.* Now this whole structure is shattering. In history, many such leaders, like Hitler had also become popular. But finally he said had to witness a humiliating fall and he committed suicide. It is also being said that Hitler had changed a lot in his last days.

Conflict in banned TTP, Editorial, *Jang*, 30 May²¹

According to some media reports, many terrorists, including the ones who carry bounties on their heads, have been killed or injured in fights. Most of them belong to the outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and its affiliates. It is a bitter truth that thousands of innocent civilians and security personnel and officers were martyred and many injured in suicide and targeted attacks by the outlawed TTP during the last two decades. In order to eliminate terrorism from the country, the security forces launched two operations, “Zarb-

²⁰ <https://ummat.net/epaper/news.php?date=2023/05/19/&p=story2.gif>

²¹ <https://e.jang.com.pk/detail/454440>

e-Azab” in 2014 and “Radal al-Fasaad” in 2017 and destroyed shelters and training camps of terrorists and killed many of them. But a number of them crossed the border and went to Afghanistan. During the withdrawal of the American army from Afghanistan, these terrorists could get modern weapons worth billions of rupees. Taking advantage of the ceasefire during the negotiations with the outlawed TTP of the Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government, a large number of terrorists came to Pakistan and reorganized with the terrorists hiding in the country and started targeting the security forces and police. This destroyed the peace established after long operations and countless sacrifices. *Due to some disputes over the unfair distribution of financial resources, a series of riots and killings have erupted among terror groups. According to some reports, terrorists reportedly threatened their commanders, who lead luxurious lives that if their financial problems were not resolved they would surrender.* This situation is encouraging in the context of the successes achieved by the security forces in the last two months. It would not be wrong to assume that the time has come for the complete elimination of terrorism from the country, which may require another operation.

ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Harf-e-Raaz with Orya Maqbool, Chairman PTI Imran Khan’s Exclusive Interview? 02 May²²

The anchor pointed out that today the politics, judiciary and establishment are falling further apart and the politics of the country is trapped in a closed. He also added that Judiciary should see that its orders are implemented and those who do not obey should be punished otherwise the courts should just shut. The government has no other way but to go towards a free and fair election, and the establishment is fighting a war to save the image of the army). Introducing PTI chairman Imran Khan on the show Orya Maqbool labelled him as the most relevant personality of Pakistan at this point of time. *Q: If there is no elections on 14 May, will the Supreme Court (SC) of Pakistan Punish the culprits for not following its orders? A: There is no if and but as it is clearly written in the constitution that when assemblies are dissolved, there should be elections within ninety days, therefore we dissolved the Punjab and KP assemblies on basis of this, hoping for an early election. We took legal advice too before dissolution and readied our MPA’s. But the federal government along with the establishment weaved a propaganda and also divided the*

²² https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_6lHy-gjjvc

judiciary. On what basis the caretaker government will function in Punjab and KP as they have exhausted their term and adding to it they are saying that the elections will only take place in October, the caretakers have no legal right to continue so long. The only aim of the government (especially PML-N & PPP) and the establishment is to not let Imran Khan come back to power again. **Q: Your views on the division among the judges of Supreme Court & governments' demand of a full bench? Is Martial law an option?** **A:** The division in the SC is alarming and it is sad that the judiciary is been further been split and in all these our demand of elections is lost somehow. A military takeover is equal to destroying the country and is not required. We don't need an enemy to destroy us if there is a military takeover. He also added that even the military will be destroyed and at this point we need them the most. **Q: What about 'Nawaz Sharif project', is it still continuing?** **A:** The Nawaz Sharif Project has destroyed the country in a very bad manner. In order to make him a leader, all institutions were destroyed and if the army want to continue the same project it will further destroy the country. The need of the hour is rule of law and that can be brought only with democracy and elections. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and the one heading it is favouring the same project and has put hurdles to stop elections. The ECP has stopped the EVM machines which the PTI government wanted to introduce and later it was made to light that General Qamar Bajwa was also giving directions to the ECP. I don't understand why the establishment is siding with this government.

Capital Talk with Hamid Mir, Imran Khan arrested from the premises of IHC?, Geo News, 09 May²³

The PTI chief was arrested from the premises of the Islamabad High Court (IHC), specifically from the biometric room which was later broken to arrest him. Just before leaving for Islamabad Imran Khan in his last *message to the nation* replied to the statement of ISPR and underlined that the army officer named by him tried to kill him two times and whenever there is investigation I will prove that and with this officer there is a *tolla*. He underlined that an ex PM cannot even file an FIR against this officer. He also said that I am ready mentally to go to jail. Hamid Mir underlined that it is not the first time an ex PM has been arrested from the premises of the court, even Shehbaz Sharif was arrested in a similar manner and many other politicians. Mir underlined that the reaction to his arrest burn and surround by the supporters of Imran Khan is also deeply worrying. Will this not push Imran Khan further into troubled waters? He pointed out that Imran Khan when he was on one page withy army use to criticise Nawaz Sharif for been critical of the

²³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_43ju1GpcE

establishment but from few weeks he has done the same thing pointing out names of army generals saying they are trying to kill him. He asked will the politicians not learn from the past experience. *Eye witness account of Barrister Gowhar Khan who was with Imran Khan at the time of arrest. He is the lawyer of IK.* He narrated that he was present with Imran Khan in the biometric room along with his security when the rangers forcefully broke the two lawyered window and sprayed pepper spray on them including IK. Later IK was attacked by rod on his head and legs and was then arrested/kidnapped and 14-15 rangers took him away from that room. *Guests:* Waseem Sajad-ex chairman Senate, Hamid Khan-ex chairman Supreme Court bar association (PTI) & Ahsan Iqbal-PML-N *Waseem Sajad* pointed out that the way he was arrested and it is said force was used to arrest him, it is not allowed by law. Courts are a safe haven and anyone has the right to take relieve from the courts. The way the PTI workers are attacking the houses of the army people, it is not legal. The case will go into remand and there will be investigation. Now it depends on the court for how many days it will give remand. After that it will be handed over to judicial court and IK will put behind bars and then after that he can apply for bail. If the case is for further inquiry then IK will get bail. *Hamid Khan* pointed out that the way IK was arrested from the court is not legal at all, it is a trap that was laid to arrest IK from the IHC. It is true that the public is angry and are on the streets but using violence again on the streets by the PTI workers are also not permissible by law. *There is a feeling among the PTI that until Imran Khan is disqualified there will be no elections and the way the government is building cases against IK is indicating to the same thing.* *Ahsan Iqbal* pointed out that it is not a new thing that a politician is arrested in this manner but it is condemnable.

Red Line With Syed Talat Hussain, I don't Know why the establishment is angry with me: Imran Khan, SAMAA TV, 18 May²⁴

The host starts by informing that in the latest media interaction Imran Khan pointing to the establishment said they have no fight with the establishment, they are angry and believe me I don't know why?. Talat Hussain taking stock of the statement and the current political crisis underlined PTI. This is proved from Imran Khan's statement, despite of criticizing the army from left right and centre now he has the guts to say I don't know why they are angry with me. It looks like the 9th May incident has not happened in Imran Khan's calendar. How will this statement of Imran Khan play out politically? Also business community of Pakistan has come forward to negotiate between army and Imran Khan. *It is*

²⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RJmNpxpITvw>

reported that Karachi based influential businessman with strong link both in establishment and political parties- Aqeel Karim Dhedhi meets Imran Khan for backdoor negotiations. The host asked what is the interest of business community that it is meeting all stakeholders. Guests: Senior Journalists/analysts- Musharaf Zadi, Nusrat Javed and Sadiya Afzal. Musharraf Zadi pointed out that Imran Khan is famous for taking U-turns and his latest statement that he does not know why the army is angry with him indicates is the latest example of his U-turn. He knows it very well that why the army is angry with him and what he has said to bring the wrath of their anger on him and his party. He now looks under great pressure to give some favorable statement for the army if he want to survive in Pakistan and politics. IK has created an eco-system of a lies and propaganda and has misdirected the public emotionally and fooled its workers. *The narrative/analogy of 9/11 and comparing 9th May to it is very dangerous.* Nusrat Javed pointed out that Imran Khan does not remember that he cannot fool people all the time, it is a pathological problem. Imran Khan is aware that his cadres and leaders are leaving but he has justified that by saying that these leaders are under pressure and everyone cannot take this kind of pressure The questions and anger among the workers and leaders of the PTI has suddenly increased after the 9th May incident because the violence cannot be justified. The wife of tall leader Fawad Chaudhary has tweeted asking Imran Khan why he has not taken the name of his husband. Sadiya Afzal pointed out that Imran Khan is now in a closed alley and can't see any clear path. After he was uprooted from power, in the last one year, Imran Khan has changed lots of statement be it on the army or US etc. Many things have changed after 9th May especially for Imran Khan and PTI, and supporters are asking questions and PTI leaders are leaving the party slowly. PTI is fighting an existential battle and the institution (army) is saying that 9th May was the 9/11 of Pakistan.

On The Front with Kamran Shahid, Imran Khan versus the Army: what is the way forward? *Dunya News, 22 May* ²⁵

Imran Khan who use to say that he do not beg inform of anyone except Allah is now begging to a US congresswomen (senator not on any official position) to save him and his party and give a statement in favour of PTI in media. In the audio leak Imran Khan can be heard reaching out to a United States congresswoman, seeking her assistance. The leak has caused a stir, as it offers a glimpse into the behind-the-scenes interactions of prominent political figures. The host pointed out that in an article *titled The quiet Pakistan general waging war against Imran Khan* published in Telegraph it mainly underlined that Mr.

²⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z3eDCnA3650>

Khan's long tussle with Pakistan's government and military leadership increasingly resembles a personal duel with Gen Asim Munir. The host underlined that there is an outright war between the present COAS and Imran Khan and the former is trying to topple the party and weaken it. In the aftermath of the 9 May incident, a significant development has taken place within the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party. Several members have made the decision to leave the party, citing their dissatisfaction and concerns regarding the incident. This incident, which occurred on 9 May, has evidently had a profound impact on the party's internal dynamics. ***Army Chief Asim Munir vows to prosecute May 9 attackers under Army Act as per Constitution.*** Army Chief Asim Munir has made a resolute commitment to prosecute the attackers involved in the May 9 incident under the Army Act, in accordance with the Constitution. ***His firm statement emphasizes the military's determination to hold those responsible accountable for their actions.*** NA adopts resolution to try miscreants under army, anti-terrorism laws. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has reaffirmed his commitment to ensuring that those responsible for the May 9 incidents are brought to justice. The host asked, what is the solution now? And what is the way forward? **Guests:** Senior analyst/journalists- Amir Zia, Murtaza Solangi, Mazhar Abbas, & Aamir Ilyas Rana. **Amir Zia** pointed out it is true that in the world media an image is going that PTI is clashing with army and this is not good for the country. ***There is a need to step back from both sides, Imran Khan should not come out in the media or give any statement.*** Additionally government also needs to ceasefire and take stock of events. It is true that there is anger in army over 9th May event but everything should be under law and civilian court. There is no need to invoke army act at this point of time. **Murtaza Solangi** pointed out that peaceful protests are the right of the people, even during the martial law under Zia we never attacked the army. **Mazhar Abbas** informed that the message of former DG-ISI was taken by a businessmen to Imran Khan. There should be a summary trail of the people involved on 9th May and action should be taken. How can we say Imran Khan is the planner of the 9th May? It is a big thing. Imran Khan should have been present physically in the streets to plan things. If IK is the planner or master mind (as PM is saying), then why there is no FIR against him? **Aamir Ilyas Rana** it is true that Asim Munir, the COAS (then DG-ISI) talked about corruption in the family of Imran Khan. If Imran Khan is saying things against the army then he should provide the proof. We have to think that if we talk about jail term, Imran Khan has not been behind the bar for a week as compared to other PML-N leaders like Nawaz Sharif. There is a need to keep politics within the Parliament, today Imran Khan is struck and only have judiciary behind him but slowly the CJP will also get tired helping him. IK needs to cool down for some time and come back and talk to sane voices in the PTI.

BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES

(Select incidents culled out from the Pakistan media)

Place	Date	Description	Killed	Injured
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa				
North Waziristan ²⁶	24/05/2023	Two soldiers, policeman martyred in suicide attack in North Waziristan	05	00
Balochistan				
Muslim Bagh ²⁷	13/05/2023	More than a dozen dead in Balochistan attack in Pakistan	13	06 22

²⁶<https://www.radio.gov.pk/24-05-2023/two-soldiers-policeman-martyred-in-suicide-attack-in-north-waziristan>

²⁷ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/5/13/pakistan-more-than-a-dozen-dead-in-balochistan-attack>