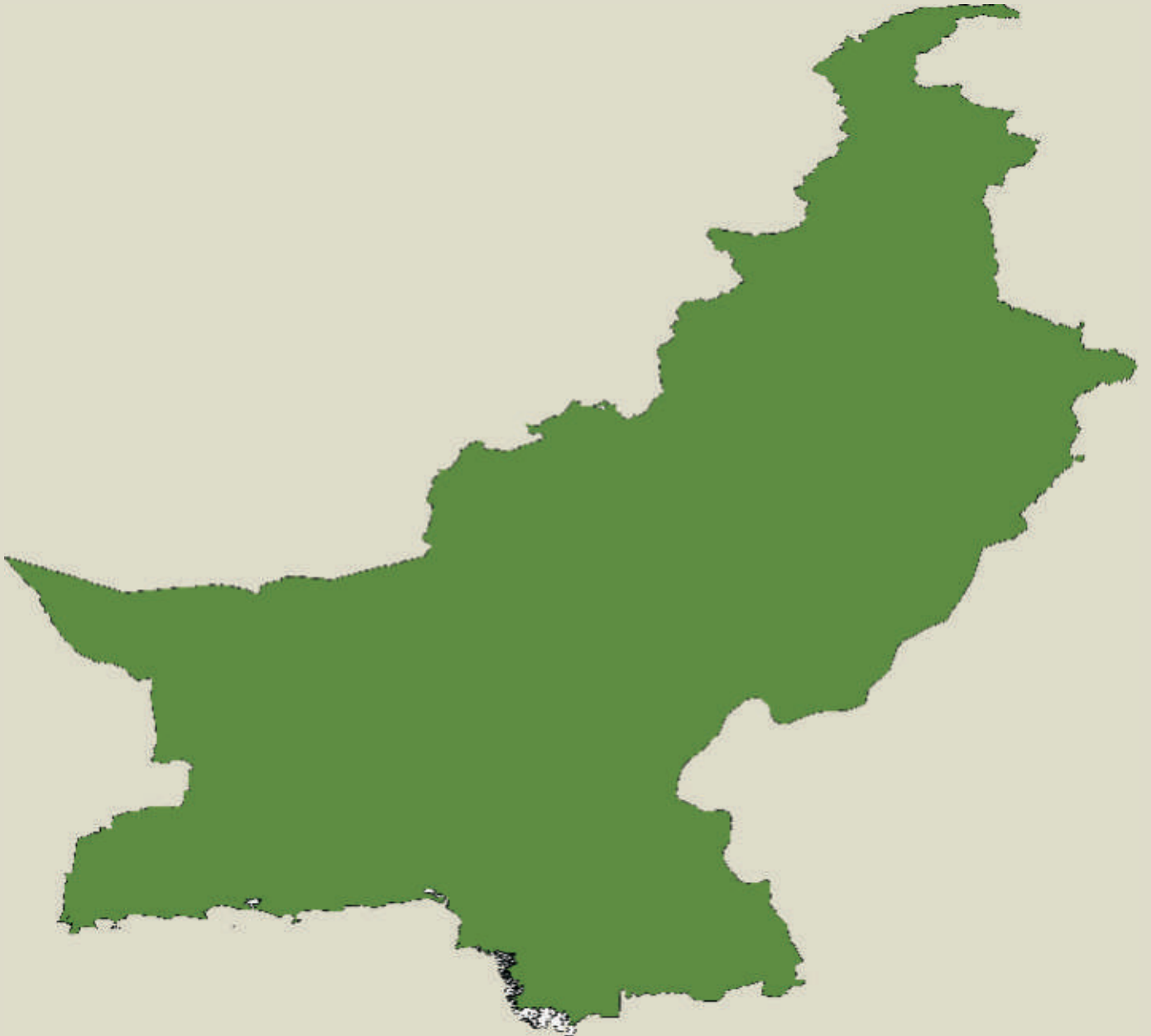


October 2021

PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST

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



Prepared by

Dr. Zainab Akhter

Dr. Nazir Ahmad Mir

Dr. Mohammad Eisa

Dr. Ashok Behuria



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर परिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Crossroads again, Najam Sethi, *The Friday Times*, 01 September¹

The Miltabishment's selected partner, Pakistan Tehreek Insaf, has come a cropper, in the process discrediting the Miltabishment for hoisting, protecting and sustaining it. Its attempt to replace the two party system with one party over lordship has only succeeded in breathing new life into its nemesis, Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz. In order to stave off defeat in the next elections that could challenge the civil-military imbalance, the PTI is fumbling with new laws to pressurize not just the opposition parties but also certain institutions of the state to heel. The dismay in these developing crises is all the greater when we examine them in the context of what seemingly matters more to policy makers in the Miltabishment and government. In the former, it is perceived to be decisions about tenurial extensions, promotions, postings and transfers rather than to finding sustainable solutions to pressing national security issues. In the latter, it is on how to eliminate the opposition, control the media, manage the judiciary and rig the next elections. Today, however, we are at a crossroads where, instead of dollops of American aid as in the past, we are faced with the threat of isolation and sanctions by the international community in the midst of serious economic, political, institutional and constitutional crises at home, even as we see no respite from the backlash of terrorism emanating from Afghanistan.

Pandora revelations, Editorial, *Dawn*, 05 October²

The Pandora Papers have created a stir, but have not triggered a political earthquake like the Panama Papers. The list of Pakistanis featured in the Pandora Papers includes politicians many among them close aides of Prime Minister Imran Khan as well as retired military officials, businessmen and media owners. Since the publication, many of those named have offered explanations which may or may not hold up to scrutiny. The prime minister is said to have ordered that all people named should be investigated. Those who were expecting sensational disclosures like the Panama leaks may be disappointed, but the Pandora Papers provide enough material for the government to probe deep and determine which Pakistanis among those named can justify their ownership of companies and who must be placed in the dock. Many among those named are associated with the government including Finance Minister Shaukat Tarin and they must be made to face the full glare of

¹ <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/crossroads-again/>

² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1650219>

official scrutiny. As Prime Minister Imran Khan has argued so often while in opposition, such scrutiny can never have the desired impact as long as those who are being probed remain in their official positions. *It is therefore in the fitness of things that the prime minister ask all the people in his government who figure in the Pandora Papers to step down from their offices till the investigations are complete.*

Unwarranted tussle, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 07 October³

Political heat is evident in the corridors of power. The government and the opposition are in a verbal duel over the nomination of anti-graft watchdog's next chief. Prime Minister Imran Khan, after chairing a high-powered meeting, has apparently decided to extend the tenure of the sitting NAB chief, and at the same time promulgate an ordinance in an attempt to avoid consulting the leader of the opposition, which is mandatory by law. Nonetheless, the ruling hierarchy seems to be divided over this critical issue. A section of opinion, which has managed to prevail over the decision-making, has advised the PM to avoid consulting with the opposition leader, as he is an accused and facing cases of alleged corruption before NAB. The doves believe that the chief executive should go by the book, and hope that the desired consultation will be forthcoming. *But one thing is for sure: the government has unnecessarily opted for a bumpy road by undermining the spirit and requirement of the Constitution.* It is inadvertently making the highest prosecution body and its head controversial by bypassing the law in vogue. *The point is: why is the government shying behind exigencies, and what prevents it from having a word with the opposition leader?* This bizarre exercise to bypass a mandatory provision of the Constitution is uncalled for. We have been here.

One big mess: election of DG ISI, Editorial, *Dawn*, 14 October⁴

The much-vaunted 'one page' appears increasingly frayed. It has been a week since matters have been in a slow-burn mode between the military and the government over the posting out of Lt Gen Faiz Hameed as DG ISI and the appointment of a new army officer in his place. Simply put, Prime Minister Imran Khan does not want Lt Gen Hameed transferred; in fact, he told the federal cabinet on Tuesday that the precarious situation in Afghanistan demanded that the ISI chief stay on for some time. A routine procedural matter has now escalated into a lack of consensus over whom to appoint in his place, and how to do so. Defence analysts tend to agree that it is indeed the prime

³ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2323572/unwarranted-tussle>

⁴ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1651928/one-big-mess>

minister's prerogative to select one among three options the COAS puts to him as the potential DG ISI. *At its core, the prevailing tension is the result of the almost unprecedented blurring of institutional boundaries witnessed since the PTI government came to power.* Breaching of constitutional limits weakens the state by sowing suspicion and division amongst its various organs. It is high time the ISI narrowed its scope of work to its original mandate that of external security. Equally, civilian governments must stop looking to the 'third umpire' for reinforcement, even survival. Not many will be taken in by Mr. Khan's contention that he wanted the same DG ISI to remain in office because of the Afghan situation. It is worth asking why a prime minister who claims to be elected by millions of his countrymen and women believes his destiny and that of his government are so closely linked with a single individual.

Opposition's chance? Editorial, Dawn, 19 October⁵

As the PTI government struggles to resolve the issue revolving around the appointment of the DG ISI, the opposition parties appear to be sensing an opportunity worth exploiting. The PDM leadership has announced that it will be launching a public protest campaign starting with public rallies and jalsas aimed at tapping into the discontent triggered by rocketing inflation and its impact on the common citizen. ... The opposition parties believe that the perfect storm created by the combination of a perceived rupture between Prime Minister Imran Khan and the establishment, combined with the effects of back-breaking inflation can produce the momentum needed to send the PTI government home and reshuffle the political cards of the present set-up. ... *What the opposition can do – and there are reports that it is aiming for this – is to take advantage of the cleavage between PTI and the establishment, perhaps even widen it, and then attempt to leverage this rupture to amplify the popular discontent over inflation and misgovernance. ...* The opposition parties have an opening to exploit that they did not a few weeks back. But these parties are afflicted by their own internal divisions and struggles which may dilute the impact that they would want to have on the political situation evolving in the wake of these new emerging fault lines. ... These complexities are coming into play as the PTI government struggles to retain its footing on a slippery political surface. It is a challenge that will not get easier.

⁵ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1652911/oppositions-chance>

Target: the journalist, Editorial, *The News*, 22 October⁶

In a country that was ranked last year as the second most dangerous place in which to be a journalist, the messenger continues to remain under attack. From threats of violence to actual violence to online bullying, Pakistan's journalists face it all. However, the most disturbing is when state and government representatives and political parties take to outright public attacks against a journalist – leading to even more bullying and trolling of the journalist online. *And things become much worse when the journalist happens to be a woman. We have over the past few days seen some of the most vile social media trends against senior journalist Asma Shirazi.* We have seen the official social media accounts of the ruling party attack one respected journalist for an opinion piece. We have seen, on top of it all, a dangerous press conference by Special Adviser to the PM, Shahbaz Gill – all 10 minutes of it containing direct attacks on Ms Shirazi. Much has been written – time and again – on the right to freedom of expression being a basic right of all citizens in the country – enshrined in the constitution under Article 19. Unfortunately, the PTI government has consistently shown clear disquiet over a situation where people can express views that may not fall in line with the party's interpretation of events. We have also been pointing out that women journalists in the country have been facing intense harassment online these past few years.

Balochistan CM's exit, Editorial, *Dawn*, 26 October⁷

After two months of protests by the opposition both in the provincial assembly and on the roads, resignations of cabinet members, interventions by federal ministers and his resolve to fight the demands for his resignation to the last, despite having read the writing on the wall, ex CM Balochistan Jam Kamal finally caved in to the pressure being exerted from all sides. If anything, the revolt against the Jam of Lasbela is just the start of a new crisis and not the end of it. It may also see the Balochistan Awami Party start to unravel in the near future over power-sharing issues. *The BAP, created by the establishment to dislodge the coalition led by the PML-N to keep it from winning a majority in the 2018 Senate elections, comprises a hodgepodge of politicians mainly from the PML-N and PML-Q, who have little in common other than their strong desire to stay on the right side of the powers that be.* At best, it remains a patchwork of a political party a tool for its creators to use occasionally to put 'uncooperative politicians' in their place as was the case with Jam Kamal. His exit from the scene is being billed by his opponents as the end to the 'political crisis in Balochistan that has been rocked by years of militancy, both nationalist

⁶ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/902064-target-the-journalist>

⁷ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1654064/balochistan-cms-exit>

and religiously inspired. But is it? History shows that what happens in Balochistan doesn't stay in that province for very long. *Sooner or later, it may spread to the rest of the country since political change in the province is often taken as the first indication that the powers that be may be moving against central governments.*

ECONOMIC ISSUES

Trade deficit grows over 100pc in Q1, Editorial, Daily Times, 06 October⁸

Nobody expected any pleasant surprises from the first quarter's trade balance, but the fact that it has widened by more than 100 percent is really shocking. *This means that whatever measures have been taken to stimulate exports are not working, considering the overwhelming need and demand for imports, so something extraordinary will certainly have to be done to keep this fiscal's expansionary budget on track.* That these figures have come out just as the government has started negotiations with the IMF, to get back into the \$6 billion bailout facility, only makes matters worse. In all likelihood, the Fund will not like what it sees and want us to tighten screws even more on the spending side. That alone should ring alarm bells in the finance ministry because keeping the current account deficit around the target of two percent of GDP will not become very difficult. *The deficit needs to be controlled, or other stats like exchange rate, inflation, growth, etc., will also suffer.*

No Chinese debt, Editorial, The Express Tribune, 08 October⁹

The goodwill between China and Pakistan, as well as their unanimity of views, has been irritating a section of realpolitik for long. *This is why confusions are concocted to undermine one of the world's most promising developmental projects, named BRI-cum-CPEC, which connects more than 2.5 billion people from Central Asia down to Africa via Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. A report from a think tank says that CPEC funding to Pakistan lacks transparency, and the country will be burdened with loans sought on an exaggerated and secretive decorum.* Moreover, it interprets sovereign guarantees as hidden debt. This is an utterly misinterpreted impression as well as fudging of figures to paint CPEC in bad light. It has political connotations too. ... *Contrary to propaganda, CPEC loans for private power projects are comparatively cheaper than loans from other international agencies. While Pakistan for decades has been struggling to service its unproductive international debt, Chinese loans are a whiff of fresh air as they generate employment opportunities in industrial and*

⁸ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/825673/trade-deficit-grows-over-100pc-in-q1/>

⁹ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2323737/no-chinese-debt>

agricultural sectors. The loans from Beijing don't have skeletons in the cupboard.

Current Account Deficit crops up in IMF talks, Editorial, Daily Times, 11 October¹⁰

It's no surprise that the bloating current account deficit as come up in ongoing technical level talks with the IMF because there has been increasing concern, ever since the last couple of months of the last fiscal year, that CAD might be getting out of control once again. The IMF certainly thinks so, believing that it will likely cross the budget's target of 2pc of GDP and settle somewhere around 4pc, and the economy is overheating barely a quarter into the new fiscal, which means screws would have to be tightened on both fiscal and monetary policy. The government should have expected to hear this even if it did not want to. *The finance ministry spent all day before this news trying to play down an assessment of the World Bank, which expressed similar concerns and revised this year's expected growth rate down to 3.4pc, very different from the government's own projection of 4.8pc. In a few days the finance minister, SBP governor and finance secretary are going to hold conclusive talks with the Fund in Washington, and there are already signs that the ambitious, expansionary budget is going to feel the heat.* For if it does not accept any progress unless electricity and gas tariffs are increased, interest rate is also increased, and subsidies sprinkled by the finance ministry are rolled back, then expansionary plans all the way to the next election have had it.

Debt time bomb, Editorial, The Daily Times, 13 October¹¹

Also mentioned in International Debt Statistics in 2022, released by the World Bank, is the fact that FDI inflows to Pakistan fell five percent year-on-year in 2020. That means we're losing non-debt creating foreign exchange just when our debt burden is becoming among the largest in the world. *So far Islamabad is doing what it can to downplay the urgency of dealing with the debt phenomenon, at least for public consumption, but the kind of loans we have to pay back and the quantity of foreign exchange in the SBP's vaults should have already sounded very loud alarm bells there.* All that the government has had to say on this issue so far is that G20 should extend the DSSI and completely write off some if not all of the debt of poor countries. *Suffice to say, of course, that such wishful thinking will get us nowhere. Because there is no way that even a dollar of our debt, or anybody's debt for that matter, can be erased no matter how much we beg and plead.* In fact, unless there is a very serious effort

¹⁰ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/827383/cad-crops-up-in-imf-talks/>

¹¹ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/828612/debt-time-bomb/>

to do something about this problem, the debt time bomb will tick all the way to an eventual default.

Dollar hoarding, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 14 October¹²

In the wake of the recent changes in the geopolitical situation in the region, transfer of huge amounts of money through illegal channels of Hawala/Hundi has registered a sudden rise. *Currency mafias have also resorted to smuggling US dollars out of the country and hoarding the greenback to create an artificial shortage of the currency by spreading rumours of a devaluation of the rupee.* These machinations recently contributed to a decline in the value of the rupee in relation to the US currency. The government soon realised the harmful effects of smuggling dollars out of the country and their hoarding and lost no time in cracking down on elements engaged in illegal transfer of money and the illegal trade in currency. *The ministry of interior, customs department and the central bank are jointly acting against those involved in illegal trade of dollars and illegal transfer of money. The FIA has so far arrested 88 people on a charge of hoarding and smuggling out dollars.* Under new SBP regulations, biometric verification is necessary for those purchasing more than 500 dollars. The Hawala method leaves no record of money moving in a country and out of it.

IMF program in jeopardy? Editorial, *Daily Times*, 18 October¹³

The failure of Pakistan-IMF talks to reach a staff level agreement for completion of the 6th review of the bailout program despite trying twice, first in June and then now, means that the ambitious budget for the ongoing fiscal is already in trouble. And while it's true that it's simply too early to draw a curtain on the whole Extended Fund Facility (EFF), it's also not unrealistic to fear much harsher requirements if the program is to be salvaged. What else would the finance secretary prolong his trip in Washington for if not to find out what more can be done to greenlight the next \$1 billion tranche? Clearly differences over macroeconomic policy and the overall direction of the economy stretch far beyond upfront conditions like increasing power tariffs and petrol prices. That was not the case last year, when the PM's rejection of these conditions led to the program being suspended. And though the question of why the government agreed to these terms now and not then is best left for another time, it is worth questioning just what was achieved by not playing along when the time was right for it. Either way, these latest developments put the government in a very awkward position. *On the one hand it won't go*

¹² <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2324672/dollar-hoarding>

¹³ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/830683/imf-program-in-jeopardy/>

beyond a point to accommodate the Fund because it does not want to dilute its expansionary budget, yet on the other it does not have the (fiscal) muscle to implement the budget without the IMF's money. Still, this disappointment is more a bump on the road than a fatal accident

Crisis looming, Khurram Husain, Dawn, 21 October¹⁴

Rarely have I seen a ruler so oblivious to the tsunami heading his way. While the prime minister is busy preaching family values to the country on a daily basis, *the spiral of inflation that is heading in our direction once the combined impact of the petrol and power price hikes work their way through the system will set off a chain of consequences that even the most devoted 'spin masters' would struggle to contain.* And that's just the beginning. There is no telling how the talks with the IMF are going but it is easy enough to see that they are not progressing smoothly. Is there effective messaging happening? No, all we are seeing is individual ministers trying to save their own skins while the prime minister appears preoccupied with swatting away the swirling talk that he makes decisions through recourse to 'magic'. *When faced with questions about people's growing difficulties in the face of price hikes, all we hear are defensive arguments that 'this is global' or promises of subsidies.* One particularly committed gentleman loudly proclaimed that the people are willing to bear petrol at Rs200 in their love for Imran Khan! *It would be a terrible mistake for the prime minister and his acolytes to underestimate the strength of the wave that is about to hit them in the months that come.* Being prepared will be critical to survival.

Financial crisis, Editorial, Dawn, 25 October¹⁵

Despite having progressed to 'very good step' and being 'close to concluding the agreement' a few days back, the talks between Pakistan and the IMF for the resumption of the \$6bn programme seem to have hit a deadlock. Pakistan's entire finance team that had been negotiating the revival of the loan facility in Washington since early this month has had no option but to leave without finalising an arrangement that is considered crucial to mitigating the emerging risks to our balance of payments. Yet a finance ministry spokesman has dismissed reports of a breakdown in talks, insisting that these were continuing and a statement would be issued as soon as discussions concluded. Earlier, he had refused to give a definite time frame for the agreement. The reasons for the 'failure' remain unclear but the IMF is expected to soon issue a statement to explain how its reforms programme can be revived. *The question now is*

¹⁴ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1653130>

¹⁵ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1653838/financial-crisis>

whether Islamabad has any fallback plan as the State Bank's liquid foreign exchange reserves have already begun depleting on the rising trade deficit, putting pressure on the exchange rate.

Escalating prices, Editorial, Dawn, 27 October¹⁶

One question being asked by almost every Pakistani today is: for how long will we have to suffer food price inflation and how far will it go? Based on the data signifying the linear upward movement in prices, especially of food and energy, over the last three years, these questions are valid. *The government, on the other hand, seems quite oblivious to the extreme difficulty the vast majority of citizen's face in making ends meet. That the purchasing power of most households continues to erode because of the sustained and steep increase in prices barely begins to describe the people's financial hardship.* Double-digit food price inflation in Pakistan remains much higher than experienced in other regional countries like India and Bangladesh, even though both are net importers of basic food items and energy like us. *In recent years, inflation in Pakistan has become a structural issue. The government cannot absolve itself of responsibility by dismissing the hike in domestic prices as a phenomenon of the international commodity cycle.* Nor will its claims of passing on only part of the global price increase to people make the impact of its reckless consumption-based growth policies ahead of the 2023 elections as well as poor governance lessen its contribution to inflation.

Saudi support, Editorial, The Express Tribune, 28 October¹⁷

Saudi Arabia has provided another lifeline to the Pakistani economy, promising a \$3 billion loan and \$1.2 billion worth of oil on deferred payments. The cash will reportedly be parked with the State Bank for three years, while the deferred oil facility will run for two years. The assistance will be critical in easing the current cash crunch facing the government as talks with the IMF continue to drag on. *The loan will carry 'roughly' the same interest rate as money lent by the IMF, World Bank, and other international financial institutions.* It is, however, not yet clear if the money is a substitute for the IMF deal, where it appears increasingly unlikely that Islamabad will implement the harshest policy measures required by the international lender. There is speculation that this may be the case because, despite the bad current account situation, Pakistan still has significant foreign currency reserves about \$17.5 billion. *Still, despite solid reserves, the rupee has taken a massive hit in recent weeks, partly because of the government's failure to reach an agreement with the IMF.* But the new deal is also a reminder of the continuing dependence on

¹⁶ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1654308/escalating-prices>

¹⁷ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2326714/saudi-support-1>

foreign assistance to stabilise the economy a simple delay on a \$1 billion loan instalment helped cause the current instability, *despite several other loan and deferred payment deals to reduce stress on the current account in the short term. Even without further hiccups, these loans will come due, and the cycle will inevitably repeat itself unless policymakers get their acts together.*

SECURITY SITUATION

Talking to TTP, Kamran Yousaf, *The Express Tribune*, 04 October¹⁸

In an interview with TRT World, Prime Minister Imran Khan revealed that Pakistan was holding talks with different factions of the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). The talks, he said, were taking place in Afghanistan and the Afghan Taliban were acting as mediators. The Prime Minister said certain TTP factions approached the government of Pakistan to sort out matters through negotiations. The Prime Minister said Pakistan would “pardon” those laying down arms. *The PM’s statement immediately sparked a debate in the country with people questioning how the government could forgive those who were involved in heinous terrorist attacks including the APS Peshawar massacre.* It was evident from the statement that he was reading from the script and each word was carefully written. This means that the Prime Minister’s statement was not off the cuff but a new policy seeking reconciliation with the banned TTP. *The rationale given by the information minister was that TTP terrorists, who were misguided, should be given a second chance.* The minister said the state of Pakistan had gone through an enormous ordeal as it sacrificed thousands of lives in the war against terrorism. *Now the question is: what has prompted the government to seek reconciliation with a group that was driven out of the erstwhile tribal areas successfully?*

Appeasing butchers, Usama Khilji, *Dawn*, 04 October¹⁹

Clearly, the life of Pakistani citizens is not worth much to the PM who has continued to advocate for negotiations with terrorist groups Pakistani or Afghan Taliban. Some Pakistani militant groups have offered ceasefire, but their crimes must never be forgiven by the state. Where are the anti-terrorism laws? What are the anti-terror courts doing? What happened to the victory of the military in former Fata where terrorists were said to be defeated and millions were displaced for this purpose (they became internally displaced persons). Terrorism wreaked havoc in Pakistan for nearly a decade, killing over 80,000 Pakistani civilians, policemen, soldiers, and children. What gives the PM

¹⁸ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2323170/talking-to-ttp>

¹⁹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1650035>

the right to forgive butchers so easily? *Forgiving the TTP sets the wrong precedent. It sends out the message that those who commit crimes against the state and its citizens can be forgiven.* Then what's stopping others from taking up arms against the state and its citizens? Will the same gratuitous amnesty also be extended to other groups opposing the state? *Will at least peaceful movements be allowed to function or will elected MNAs such as Ali Wazir who lost 17 family members to TTP attacks continue to be imprisoned for their speeches while murderers and butchers are allowed to roam free?*

Establishment's role, Editorial, Dawn, 08 October²⁰

The change of command at the ISI has become a subject of intense media coverage and discussion. The military on Wednesday notified a number of important transfers and postings that included the appointment of a new director general of the ISI. Lt Gen Nadeem Ahmad Anjum has replaced Lt Gen Faiz Hameed who will now command the corps in Peshawar. ... *The new chief at the ISI has his work cut out for him. There are major challenges facing Pakistan around its borders and the agencies should be focusing all their attention, energies and resources on scuttling such external threats to the country. The volatile situation in Afghanistan in wake of the Taliban takeover, including the deadly threat from TTP, demands that all relevant institutions, including the ISI, do everything in their power to pursue hard national interests and objectives on the western and eastern front, while leaving the domestic front to those mandated to deal with it. This is no easy task given the chequered history of the establishment's involvement in politics. But now is as good a time as ever to start making a change so that all institutions can fulfil their constitutional obligations and collectively strengthen Pakistan.*

Civilian control of the armed forces, Inam Ul Haque, The Express Tribune, 21 October²¹

There is a prevalent political sentiment across political parties that want the military to be hands-off from internal affairs of Pakistan. But paradoxically, they want military to intervene in the ongoing political process, only once they cannot take on the might of the incumbent political party/government through political process. So, where does the debate of civilian supremacy of the armed forces boils down to? The politicians' viewpoint first. They complain that the military is too intrusive and controlling; it does not allow them a free rein; it engineers scenarios and manipulates domestic environment to serve 'military-preferred policy' options; it jealously guards its security turf when it comes to policy towards India, US and/or Afghanistan etc. in particular. That democracy as any opposition complains is 'guided' at best. *Military feels (without me*

²⁰ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1650785/establishments-role>

²¹ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2325608/civilian-control-of-the-armed-forces>

claiming it to be institutional input whatsoever), like most common Pakistanis, that the politicians win elections through filibustering and demagoguery promising moon to the electorate and raising unrealistic expectations; that political cadre barring very few, has no real appreciation and/or team to deal with Pakistan's myriad complex issues. Forcing an error on the military then asking for the process to be followed and, thereafter, keeping the summary and making the DG ISI appointment controversial in the process, is not helping the civilian supremacy of the armed forces. It further erodes it. COAS is never a person.

TLP seesaw, Editorial, Dawn, 29 October²²

The TLP threat refuses to abate because every government insists on mishandling it by combining ineptitude with lack of will. As the TLP workers numbering in the thousands force their way from Lahore to Islamabad by overcoming all resistance by the law-enforcement agencies, it is becoming clear that the PTI government has successfully landed itself into yet another self-created crisis. *The confusing approach towards the TLP betrays a mindset in denial essentially kicking the can of a difficult decision down the road and hoping that the situation will resolve itself.* The PML-N government had buckled under the pressure of the TLP and the PTI had made little effort to hide its support of the TLP at that time. *Now it is the PTI that is on the receiving end and its leaders must be realising that actions of the past have a nasty way of boomeranging on the perpetrators.* There are no convenient answers to this challenge, as the PTI government can now see. Branding the TLP as a militant organisation and cracking down on it may not be as easy as it sounds because the party is now a bona fide political entity with large support among sections of the electorate. The government may want to be more nuanced in its approach and not rush to judgement either way.

PROVINCES & REGIONS

Balochistan

Discontent in Balochistan, Editorial, The Nation, 08 October²³

Baluchistan's provincial government is in crisis. *Infighting within the political administration has been rampant since June when the budget was passed with*

²² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1654699/tlp-seesaw>

²³ <https://nation.com.pk/08-Oct-2021/discontent-in-balochistan>

deep contentions from many sides of Balochistan's political makeup. Coupled with growing infrastructure problems, and a fear of rising terrorism, discontent against the leadership is high, even among one of the ruling parties. The past month has been a show of poor leadership from all politicians involved in Balochistan, as events betray a back and forth of allegations, calls to resign and refusals, causing a stalemate. The blame lies on Chief Minister Jam Kamal Khan Alyani for being unable to manage his own party members and negotiate effectively. ... *The Chief Minister cannot ignore the deadline and go about his role, as he has been doing so far. He must urgently negotiate with at least some party or group if he wants to stay on as Chief Minister. He must find a way to talk to his own cabinet and party members. Otherwise, the group has the numbers to pass a no-confidence vote, which will only usher in more instability for the Balochistan government.* The last thing the province needs is political strife when development must remain a priority.

Crisis in Baloch politics, Editorial, Dawn, 11 October²⁴

Disillusionment with Balochistan Chief Minister Jam Kamal Khan Alyani has been increasing within the ruling BAP and his allies. Mr. Alyani has been accused of an authoritative approach, which precludes consultation on important matters such as the distribution of development funds even within his cabinet. The recent resignations of provincial ministers, advisers and parliamentary secretaries from their positions underscore the anger among his colleagues who appear quite determined to oust him through a no-confidence motion. It seems that BAP leader and Senate chairman Sadiq Sanjrani's efforts to defuse the crisis are proving ineffective. *Mr. Alyani himself appears unfazed by the rebellion against him and determined to lead the province in his typical style, ignoring all threats of a no-trust motion.* Two of his ministers had quit the cabinet a few months back while the opposition is also trying to topple him. Much will depend on how the powers that be want to influence the crisis to reset future political alignments ahead of the next election. *That said, we must point out that the perpetual political instability in Balochistan is deeply embedded in the manner that provincial politics are controlled by non-political forces.* Unless politicians are given a free hand to handle their disputes with each other themselves, Balochistan will continue to be rocked by periodic crises.

²⁴ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1651274/crisis-in-baloch-politics>

Confessions of an American general, Editorial, Jasarat, 01 October²⁵

American top military officer Gen Mark Milley has accepted the fact that the war in Afghanistan could have never been won. *The chairman of the American Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee gave this in black and white to the Committee on Armed Services. Gen Mark said that the result of the Afghan war is a failure of US' defence policy. The result is a consequence of the 20 years of the Afghan war, not of the last 20 days or so, he said.* Gen Mark said that even after the fall of the government in Kabul, America could have stationed its troops in Afghanistan but that would have been costly. He further said that it was also discussed to start a war against the Taliban but that required 25,000 more troops in Afghanistan. And in the process many American troops could have got killed. *The details coming from the American foreign and defence ministries show that how angry the members of the Congress and the Senate are from the US' humiliating defeat in Afghanistan.* The debate now is who is responsible for America's defeat in Afghanistan? Is it that for the American military, civilian leadership and the intelligence whatever has happened was unexpected? *That is not the case. They knew it well that once they withdrew the Taliban would overtake the control of Afghanistan. But perhaps they did not expect that the Afghan security forces would lay down their weapons without putting up a fight.*

First Pakistan should recognize the Taliban, Editorial, Daily Jasarat, 04 October²⁶

What has happened to Prime Minister Imran Khan? He is obsessed with the word Taliban, Taliban! *A few days ago he had said that talks were going with the Taliban for forming a broad-based and inclusive government in Afghanistan. However after that it was not known through whom the Prime Minister was talking to the Taliban and what was the progress?* Now the Prime Minister has issued a statement saying that talks were going with the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). *Whoever among the TTP members surrenders, he would get an amnesty. But it is known which group is being talked to? The one which is in control of America or the one which is in control of India.* The group that is being talked about is it the same that was involved in the attack on the Army Public School in 2014? No one has been given amnesty in Pakistan so easily! *America is being asked that it has to recognize the Taliban government in Afghanistan. But to recognize the Taliban itself, it is being said that the neighboring countries are being consulted.* If the prime minister wants

²⁵ <https://www.jasarat.com/2021/10/01/211001-04-3/>

²⁶ <https://www.jasarat.com/2021/10/04/211004-03-2/>

the US to recognize the Taliban then he should be proactive in recognizing the Taliban along with China, Russia and Iran, making it easy for Washington to do the same. Such statements are also meant to divert attention. The government should focus on taking concrete measures instead.

IMF and Pakistan's dilemmas, Arif Bahar, *Jasarat*, 05 October²⁷

After the US defeat in Afghanistan, *suddenly reports of America sanctioning Pakistan are coming out of that country. While discussing the reason for its defeat in Afghanistan, America is trying to come up with a bill to sanction Pakistan. With the reports of such a bill in making, the stock market in Pakistan has crashed and the inflation is skyrocketing, creating further problems for the poor.* If imposed, the sanctions from the US would take a heavy toll on Pakistan's economy and the future would appear bleak. It was expected that after the release of advisor on finance Abdul Hafeez Sheikh and others some new face would be brought in to deal with the crisis with some better policy and become a messiah for Pakistan's economy. But one after another face reminds only of the past. *After seeing the 'actions' of Shaukat Tarin people have started singing to remember Hafeez Shiekh that 'We remember you after you left'.* Asad Umar is seen as a visionary person who had delayed the IMF for many months! Finance minister Shaukat Tarin is high on confidence and has said that he was not anywhere. He has said that the country's economy would be better soon. How soon? Nobody knows! *It is true that the IMF is a tool of the West and it cannot not bypass these countries and the Western countries are unhappy with Pakistan which has turned into a serious situation. The situation in Afghanistan has added fuel to the fire. Being under influence from the countries that are unhappy with Pakistan, the IMF wants impose more taxes on the Pakistanis to defame the government to take the revenge.* But still the government will have to control inflation. People are unable to buy. Just by describing inflation will not resolve the problem. Either measures are not being taken or all steps are failing; in both cases the concern among the people is fair!

The economy of debts, Editorial, *Jasarat*, 07 October²⁸

Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had raised the slogans of paying debts, improving the country and being self-sufficient in his political career. The current prime minister also came to power by showing the dream of freeing the country from the chains of the IMF. *But both the popular leaders failed in their efforts. Pakistan is so deeply tottered in the imperial powers that economic freedom looks like apparently impossible.* The debts of the country have made

²⁷ <https://www.jasarat.com/2021/10/05/211005-03-5/>

²⁸ <https://www.jasarat.com/2021/10/07/211007-09-2/>

the life of the common man difficult. According to a report, total debts in 2018 were 249 trillion and 53 billion PKR which has increased to 398 trillion and 59 billion PKR. To pay the foreign loans and their interests the prices of essential commodities are raised consistently. Given the situation, an economic expert Akbar Zaidi has said that the reality is that 'we are indebted and these debts increase on daily bases. The IMF does not help but gives loans which it then takes back with interest.' *The debts have made the rulers corrupt and because of which they have lost their political freedom as well. They have become slaves because of which they are not able to come up with a solution to address the existing problems.*

Gen Nadeem Anjum new DG ISI, Editorial, Daily Ausaf, 08 October²⁹

According to ISPR some major transfers and appointments have been made in the Pakistan Army. Lt Gen. Faiz Hameed has been made Corps Commander Peshawar and Lt Gen. Nadeem Anjum DG ISI. *The Pakistan Army is a united institution. Its biggest power is its faith, unity and the organization. The military as an institution is the guardian of the nation.* The changes in it at the top posts is a routine practice. Because of its discipline and professionalism the Pakistan Army is considered one of the best in the world. There is no doubt that Pakistan's defense is in strong hands. The armed forces are resolved to protect every area of the country. Pakistan is a responsible nuclear power in the Muslim world. *As a nation Pakistan needs to free itself from the clutters of interest based foreign institutions to make the country economically stable so that the army can procure defence weapons that it requires.* It is expected that the newly appointed Corpse Commander and DG ISI would further enhance the country's security and defence system. *Some sections who because of some internal and some external media reports try to cast a slur upon the Pakistan Army should know that the whole nation stands with the Pakistan Army.* To deal with all dangers and threats, especially from India the Pakistan Army is alert.

Exemplary civil-military relations Editorial, Daily Dunya, 13 October³⁰

Federal minister for information Fawad Chaudhry has said that civil-military relations are exemplary. He said that neither the prime minister would do anything that would tarnish the image of the army nor would the army do any such thing. These statements coming from the federal minister are welcome. Good civil-military relations are needed for development and maintaining a balance in the country. *Any difference or imbalance in the civil-military relations creates chances for external powers to exploit the situation. In*

²⁹https://www.dailyausaf.com/epaper/popup.php?newssrc=issues/2021-1008/145805/p8_01.gif

³⁰ https://e.dunya.com.pk/detail.php?date=2021-10-13&edition=LHR&id=5806949_63229882

Pakistan examples can be given to prove that whenever there was any strain in the civil-military relations consequences for the country have never been good. Not only democracy in the country was undermined but it also damaged the image of the country. When the country is completing 80 years of its formation, it is better that the nation also takes it seriously and doesn't repeat the past mistakes. *It is a good sign that the political parties and national institutions are also realizing that a balance in the national affairs is essential for securing national interests. Given the geopolitical location of the country, there is very little space for any mistake.* In the past, arrogance and confrontational approach have had adverse implications for the country. Now no such mistake can be repeated. Preferring individual/personal interests over the national and rules and regulations is not an option. Fortunately the government knows and accepts the need for it. In this background the statements made by the federal minister imply that there are no differences between the civilian and military leadership and that they are on the same page is welcome. It is needed that if there are any doubts or questions they need to resolve amicably.

Formation of Rahmatul Lil Alameen Authority Editorial, Jang, 12 October³¹

At a time when the West is doing misinterpretations and portraying arrow message of Islam and promoting Islamophobia, *to highlight the important aspects of the Prophet Muhammad's life and doing research on the various aspects of the State of Madinah Prime Minister Imran Khan has set up Rahmatul Lil Alameen Authority.* While speaking in a conference in Islamabad on a program on the Prophet Mohammad, Imran Khan said that the body would not only monitor school texts but also social media. The prime minister would be the head of the authority and some renowned interpreter/expert of the Quran would be its chairman. Above that, there will be an International Advisory Committee Commission. The authority will show the world the true face of Islam. The Prime minister also said that the children should be introduced to local culture, instead of showing cartoons and serials made in the West. ... *The reasons given by the prime minister for creating the Rahmatul Lil Alameen Authority remain undeniable. But it should be made sure that if the institution is created there should be no hurdles while delivering its duties.* It should be a permanent institution which should not just become a symbolic one with the passing of the time. Its scholars should be appointed with a lot of care because they will be dealing with an important and sensitive issue.

³¹https://jang.com.pk/news/996853?_ga=2.65677550.1361886503.1633932226-835994399.1598849708

Pandora Paper Leaks: Second episode of Panama? The Najam Sethi Show, 24 News, 04 October³²

Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid has said that the *Pandora Papers leaks* are nothing big, it's like khuda pahad nikla chuha (making mountain out of a mole). Najam Sethi in this episode gives his reaction to this statement and analyses the recent Pandora leak and its impact on the politics of Pakistan.

Analysis: The Panama leaks that exposed the offshore companies of 400 persons from Pakistan in 2016 had a political effect but mainly Nawaz Sharif was targeted by the opposition, especially Imran Khan. This time the *list* is bigger 700 from Pakistan on the Pandora list that also includes serving ministers of the PTI government. It is a big expose, but the question is what action will be taken? In a way Sheikh Rashid is right, there will be no output or result of the Pandora case and it will be put in cold storage sooner than later. *The point is that the list of the people with offshore companies in Pandora expose are almost same (second episode of Panama) as that of Panama but this time the name of few generals are added.* After the Panama leaks there were amnesty schemes that dry-cleaned the black money and turned them white. There will not be any sensational output of the Pandora leak and the people on the list will say we have already declared the money and asset. *Panama Leaks were used to target Nawaz Sharif only. No investigation & legal action was taken against the others. 700 Pakistanis appearing in Pandora Leaks won't be investigated as the Generals themselves & their handpicked super corrupt politicians top the list.* The inspection cell made by the Imran Khan government to probe the Pandora leak will send notices but the cases will be delayed especially of PTI ministers who are on the list. The only solution is to close the offshore companies but the ruling elite, which also includes the army, they will not take any action as they are benefiting out of the process.

Pakistan-US Relations: US Deputy Secretary visit Pakistan, Analysis by Imran Khan, 10 October³³

US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman was in Pakistan on a two day visit to Pakistan (07-08 October) during which she met the Foreign Minister of Pakistan Shah Mehmood Qureshi, National Security Advisor (NSA) Moeed Yusuf and also the COAS General Qamar Bajwa. The host underlined that *the visit is taking place at a very critical time, both in the context of Afghanistan and developments in the wider region.* US focused on four major points in its

³² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9j1yozqvCLU>

³³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xyBMU2uxFz0>

talks with Pakistan this time, first recognition of the Taliban government in Kabul, second international sanctions on Afghanistan, third access to Afghanistan and last counter-terrorism cooperation. *According to sources US does not want Pakistan to recognize the Taliban regime before the rest of the international community. Instead, it wants Pakistan to continue its efforts for softening the Taliban position on controversial issues, such as inclusive governance, human rights, girls' education and allowing women to work.* The analyst pointed out that despite of this crucial visit the Pakistan-US relationships will not be the same as it used to be in the past. The US is not happy with the current political setup in Pakistan. It has to be noted that whenever there is a high level US delegation visit to Pakistan, it always first visit India and from their gives and anti-Pakistan statement. US might place sanctions on India for the deal. The US blames Pakistan for the rapid growth of China and Russia in the region. *Although it's true that US provided monetary support to Pakistan but it has done more harm than good in the region. In the coming days the Pakistan-US relations will not improve but with India it can have good relations if India cancels the deal with Russia.*

Taliban is not a Pashun Movement? Analysis by Saleem Safi, 13 October³⁴

For some time PM Imran Khan has been talking to the national as well as international media about the Taliban and Pashtuns. He has linked the Taliban to the Pashun nationalism and the larger Pashun movement. *In this episode Saleem Safi demystify the fact that Taliban is a Pashun movement and pointed out that by giving such statements Imran Khan is slowly becoming a part of a dangerous game/conspiracy.* Saleem Safi pointed out that the Taliban movement be it Afghan Taliban or the TTP is and never has been about the Pashun nationalism and it is completely wrong of Imran Khan to compare the two as equals. He is totally neglecting the history of the Taliban and Pashtuns by giving such statements to the media. Safi underlined that Taliban is a ideological movement based on sharia, Islam and Jihad. He pointed out that Taliban movement was started by Mullah Umar in Afghanistan who was a Pashun but later it was carried forward by likes of Osama Bin Laden who was an Arab and later Uzbeks and Tajiks joined the movement. They were attracted to the movement on ideological basis. In Pakistan if you notice most of the Pashtuns in the FATA are critics of TTP and Afghan Taliban. Post 9/11 the Afghan government was run by Hamid Karzai, he was also a Pashun. So the bottom line is that if the Taliban is a Pashun movement, why the Taliban in the past have been waring with Pashtuns in Afghanistan and Pakistan? Why Arabs, Tajirs, Punjabi's etc. Sympathize with Taliban. Taliban never talk about Pashun nationalism but Islam and Sharia. The new Afghan Taliban

³⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ixb15cUxtxM>

government in Afghanistan is trying to make an inclusive government by bringing in Hazara's and Uzbeks in its government, that itself proves Imran Khan's statement about Pashtun nationalism and Taliban wrong. In a recent notice dated 06 October, the TTP has reacted to Imran Khan's statement and has rejected it calling it completely wrong and bizarre to compare Pashtun nationalism and Taliban and calling Taliban a movement of the Pashtuns. *It has underlined that the Taliban is an ideological, Islamic and a movement based on sharia and Jihad. It also added that it is a movement also of the of the Balochi's, Sindhis and Punjabis etc. which can be gauged by the fact that TTP is spreading fast in all provinces of Pakistan.*

BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES

(Select incidents culled out from the Pakistan media)

Place	Date	Description	Killed	Injured
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa				
N. Waziristan ³⁵	04/10/2021	Pakistan Army sepoy martyred in exchange of fire with terrorists in North Waziristan: ISPR	01	00
Bajur ³⁶	21/10/2021	Five security personnel martyred in two KP attacks.	02	00
Lakki Marwat ³⁷	27/10/2021	Four K-P policemen martyred in Lakki Marwat ambush	04	00

³⁵ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1650082/pakistan-army-sepoy-martyred-in-exchange-of-fire-with-terrorists-in-north-waziristan-ispr>

³⁶ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1653090>

³⁷ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2326622/four-k-p-policemen-martyred-in-lakki-marwat-ambush>

