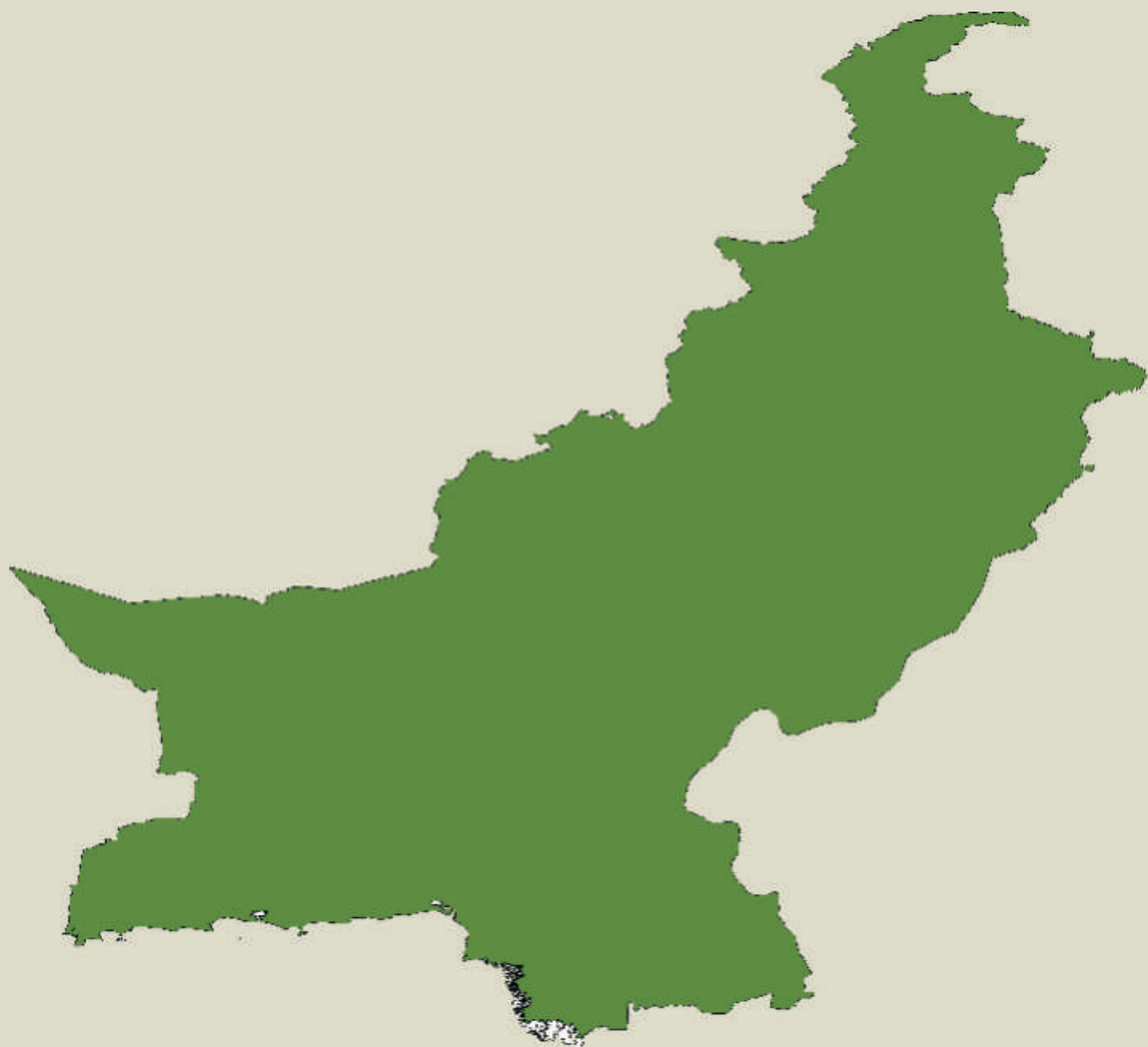


August 2020

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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PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST, August 2020

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POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Khan and his 'advisers', Arifa Noor, Dawn, 04 August¹

In the middle of hard negotiations over NAB and FATF-related legislation and the opposition's bluster, the PTI still managed to make it all about the chaos within the government by abruptly removing two advisers Tania Aidrus and Zafar Mirza. All in a day's work, for the ruling party. From petty politics Aidrus was a Tareen inductee and now that he had fallen out, her fate could not have been any different to allegations of *wrongdoing allegedly allowing drugs in from India in Mirza's case and the registration of Digital Pakistan with SECP without the prime minister's knowledge in Aidrus's case myriad reasons have been given*. The most obvious conclusion to be drawn is that the prime minister still does not know whom to place where; his cabinet choices are a case of trial and error, and this game of musical chairs is likely to continue. People will come and go and the departure will be abrupt and unceremonious, perhaps because removal from cabinet is rarely ever dignified. However, the leaks to the media will make it worse in the PTI's case. Second, is also the issue of the elected and unelected members of the Imran Khan cabinet and what the departure of Mirza and Aidrus will mean for this balance? *Some, who had highlighted the domination of the unelected people in the cabinet are now concluding/predicting the elected led/ would lead the charge against the former and would overshadow them*. Islamabad is replete with rumours about how the prime minister is trying to keep abreast of the possible corruption by those around him

The Maryam factor, Fahad Hussain, Dawn, 13 August²

It was as if someone had hurled a big rock into still political waters. *Maryam Nawaz Sharif has created ripples. Again. What happened outside the NAB office in Lahore on Tuesday may have been planned for a certain outcome by both sides, one may add or it may have just acquired a life of its own, but the outcome is fairly clear: Ms Nawaz retains the ability to shake things up in a blink of an eye*. NAB got bullied? When was the last time this happened? For an organisation that strikes fear in the hearts of mortals (mostly in the opposition), this must have been an alien feeling. Was it planned by the PML-N? *Insiders say the decision to take a large number of supporters with Ms Nawaz was aimed to create the right populist optics and thereby inhale some much-needed media oxygen*. The PML-N therefore was smart enough to

¹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1572527/khan-and-his-advisers>

² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1574118/red-zone-files-the-maryam-factor>

leverage the opportunity provided by NAB to generate some sound and heat. *But what happened was a surprise. The heavy police deployment, the aggressive crowd-management, the fueling of tempers — these created a situation that PML-N could only have dreamt of.* But the real gift from NAB was offered when it issued a statement saying it would call Ms Nawaz at a later date because the situation had spiraled out of control. *After Ms Nawaz's power show, those arguing for street action would have a stronger case in the APC.*

OIC & Saudi Arabia, Dawn, 13 August³

Shah Mahmood Qureshi has issued a hard-hitting statement *against the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation's (OIC) lukewarm response to Pakistan's repeated requests for convening an OIC meeting on the Kashmir issue.* The statement was also against the OIC's inaction on the annexation of occupied Kashmir and the citizenship issues meant only to target Kashmiri Muslims in particular and Muslims across India in general. *The very next day our foreign office endorsed our foreign minister's statement as a policy statement. We have to analyse this in the light of the events taking place since Imran Khan took over office.* Imran Khan floated the idea of establishing an organisation outside the OIC of like-minded Muslim countries. *The idea was to provide Muslims a better and strong platform to send the world a message that member countries would not keep mum anymore and would take action against countries where Muslims were abused and targeted.* This idea cropped up owing to the fact that the OIC appeared to be dormant. After the UNGA event, Pakistan constantly asked the OIC to act, but owing to many OIC countries' economic relationship with India, Pakistan's request was ignored. The Saudi king also asked Imran Khan not to take part in a tripartite meeting between Pakistan, Turkey and Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur, and, as reported, even a thinly veiled threat was given to our prime minister of the consequences if Pakistan participated in the mini summit. *Imran Khan has been playing smartly and that day does not seem far off when Muslim countries will start boycotting trade with India and raise their voice in favour of the Kashmiri people.*

Fait accompli, Zarrar Khuhro, Dawn, 17 August⁴

Israel-UAE have had not-so-secret contacts and cooperation for many years now. This 'normalization' of relations simply formalizes the existing ground reality, and comes as no surprise. Stranger still is the framing of this as a 'peace' deal as these countries were never at war. *In fact, they share a common*

³ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1574169/oic-saudi-arabia>

⁴ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1574879/fait-accomplis>

adversary in the shape of Iran and it is Iran that is almost certainly the main target of this alliance. That then means that the UAE deal will likely be followed by similar deals being signed between Israel and Bahrain, Oman and then perhaps Saudi Arabia, though there is silence on that front so far and perhaps the UAE has stolen the initiative from its larger partner here. However, while an eventual formal recognition by Saudi Arabia is not imminent by any means, it is not off the table either as there has been a growing thaw for over a decade between Saudi Arabia and Israel, again spurred by a shared anxiety over Iran's influence. The kingdom may, in fact, prefer to keep the relationship informal to avoid serious criticism. In this dynamic, while lip service will certainly be paid to the Palestinian cause, it will be a distant concern when compared to the need by the Gulf states and Saudi Arabia (a goal shared by Israel) to contain and roll back Iranian influence and though this is a secondary priority — undercut Turkey as well.

Naya Pakistan at two, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 18 August⁵

The Naya Pakistan of Imran Khan Turns two today. It was on August 18, 2018 when the cricket legend and philanthropist had taken oath as the 22nd Prime Minister of Pakistan. The Khan government is caught up in one of the toughest and most serious diplomatic challenges Pakistan has come across. *The government finds itself in a tricky situation where it has to preserve its historic relations with Saudi Arabia alongside ensuring that its Kashmir diplomacy is able to maintain its recent momentum and its principled stand on the Israel-Palestine conflict is not compromised.* Well, foreign policy is not the only challenge. *Economy, governance, service delivery, and political stability are among the major issues too.* Governance remained a disaster and the government's pledges of reforming bureaucracy, depoliticizing police, and tackling corruption only complicated with time.

The two-year record, Zahid Hussain, *Dawn*, 19 August⁶

The irony is that the PTI and its supporters genuinely believe that the government's handling of the pandemic was an example for the world to emulate. *With such self-praise, there is no room for introspection that could help rectify mistakes. The selective application of anti-corruption laws has exposed the government to the allegation of a political witch-hunt.* The government's so-called drive against graft is, in fact, seen as a cover for its incompetence. There is as yet little evidence of corruption. The claim of a clean government is also questionable. There is not much for the PTI government to show as it completes its second year in power. *Six months on, it will be midway*

⁵ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2259961/naya-pakistan-at-two>

⁶ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1575210/the-two-year-record>

through its term, but yet there is no sign of the 'naya' Pakistan beyond the official rhetoric. It remains to be seen whether the PTI delivers on the promise of change. The stakes are also high for the establishment to see this project does not fail. Pakistan's experiment with hybrid rule doesn't seem to be succeeding. The PTI government may survive in power, but the real issue is what kind of political legacy it is creating.

Is it time for Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to part ways? Imad Zafar, *The Express Tribune*, 21 August⁷

Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa, in a bid to normalize relations with Saudi Arabia, flew to Riyadh. *But even his visit was not particularly fruitful as not only did the Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman reportedly refuse to meet him but the Saudis also did not extend any olive branch to Islamabad. General Bajwa was only given access to the Saudi military establishment, and one could argue that relations between Riyadh and Islamabad have reached a historic low.* In Saudi Arabia, unlike in Pakistan, the establishment does not call the shots and, historically speaking, whenever an army chief visits Riyadh he has always been given time by the king or the crown prince. *Hence this is another embarrassment for Pakistan on the foreign policy front, and one wonders why Prime Minister Imran Khan did not travel himself, and it is also worth questioning why the foreign office or those who advised General Bajwa to go to Riyadh to mend fences did not make an appointment with the crown prince.* Saudi Arabia, contrary to Pakistan, has a foreign policy based on trade and investment policies. *It is the fourth largest trading partner of New Delhi, and if anyone in Islamabad was thinking that Riyadh will raise a voice for the Kashmir issue then they were gravely mistaken.* As far as General Bajwa's trip is concerned, the lack of a tangible achievement can be termed as a blessing in disguise. *There is an opportunity for Islamabad here to say goodbye to the old policy of simply saying "Yes boss!" to Riyadh and Uncle Sam. Instead, Pakistan should try to build mutually beneficial relations with Beijing, Ankara and Moscow. It is time for Islamabad to stop becoming a proxy for Riyadh or Washington.*

Israel's outreach in the Gulf, Editorial, *Daily Times*, 28 August⁸

You can bet that the first thing US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo when he jetted from Israel to Saudi Arabia a few days ago, on his so called landmark Middle East tour, was that Riyadh was ready to shake hands with Tel Aviv and get on with the trade deals, arms sales, intel sharing and all that. That is, after all, what pretty much everybody else in the world was thinking as well so he

⁷ <https://tribune.com.pk/article/97138/is-it-time-for-pakistan-and-saudi-arabia-to-part-ways>

⁸ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/660114/israels-outreach-in-the-gulf/>

can be forgiven for going a step further. *But the Saudis tied any movement on the matter of formally recognizing Israel, even though they have maintained all sorts of covert contacts for years just like the Emiratis did ahead of their deal, to a final and peaceful settlement of the Palestinian problem Pompeo must have felt like he literally hit a brick wall.* And, of course, the boss would not have taken it well back at the White House. Bad as that was, there was still hope since the US secretary of state was headed to Bahrain next, the tiny country that was the first among the Arabs to welcome the UAE-Israel deal. *Yet Manama, too, not just brought in the Palestinian question again but said in no uncertain terms that normal relations with the Jewish state would only come when the two-state solution is a reality and East Jerusalem is the capital of an independent Palestinian state.* That, if anything, is one step forward to steps back for the US. And what seemed, from Washington's point of view at least, like a major foreign policy scoring point so close to the election seems fast running out of steam. *The reason is that the cleavage in the Middle East is very deep and it takes more than an erratic president with an unpredictable foreign policy and a son-in-law heading everything about the Arabs to settle the Israeli-Palestinian blood feud. Still, who knows, we might still be in for a few more surprises between now and the US election in November.*

Winter of discontent, Najam Sethi, *The Friday Times*, 28 August⁹

Prime Minister Imran Khan wants the PTI's "Tiger Force" to keep an eye on government offices, markets, educational institutions, excursion places, police stations, courts, land records, electricity theft, hospitals, etc. He has instructed SAPM Usman Dar to gear up the Tigers through an appropriate e-surveillance system for this purpose. The plan also envisages a vigorous Tiger Force membership drive on education campuses. The ostensible aim of this project is to improve local government efficiency and root out corruption. *Will it succeed? For a government that has been selected and propped up by the powerful Miltabishment and hence considered "safe" it is strange to find it obsessed by insecurity and conspiracy theories to such an extent that it has abandoned all efforts at good governance and public service and is only focused on hounding opposition leaders.* In fact, as the country's top legal eagle Aitzaz Ahsan has pointed out, some of its ministers have descended to such low levels of personal abuse and threats of violence against the Sharifs that they may have inadvertently spoilt their own case with the UK courts and authorities for extraditing Nawaz Sharif et al. A winter of discontent is approaching. *The Miltabishment has given Imran Khan until the new year to get his act together, or else. It simply cannot afford*

⁹ <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/winter-of-discontent-2/>

any longer to stake its own credibility and reputation on a failing government that has impoverished both economy and politics. Sensing that the time is fast approaching for a confrontation, both opposition and government are girding up their loins for the coming heave-ho.

Classless education up ahead? Pervez Hoodbhoy, Dawn, 29 August¹⁰

In its eagerness to bring madressahs into the fold of public education, the PTI government is lowering standards and thus damaging Pakistan's national interests. It knows that madressahs had resisted reforms in the years after 9/11. In fact, some were pinpointed as sources of jihadist fighters, a fact that they did not deny. Under American pressure, reform plans were made by Musharraf's government. They flopped. Most madressahs refused his government's entreaties and enticements knowing it would lead to their disempowerment. So why have madressahs accepted a deal now? First, the changed situation on Pakistan's borders, together with FATE, has hugely reduced the need for extra-state fighters as well as their funding. Second, the government welcomes madressah education as ideologically desirable. Public schools will henceforth teach much more religious content than before. In fact the amount exceeds that presently taught in madressahs. Readers can check by comparing the published SNC document with curricula on various madressah websites. A classless education system isn't just a beautiful ideal. Approximations exist in parts of the world. A government that's serious about leveling the playing field for all Pakistani children should not go for cheap shots like single national curriculum.

ECONOMIC ISSUES

Economy report card, Rashid Amjad, Dawn, 10 August¹¹

What is worrying is that the IMF programme, though not abandoned, has begun to stall with the second tranche payment now long delayed. The government recently entered a World Bank reform programme of \$500 million Resilient Institutions for Sustainable Economy to strengthen its capacity to undertake economic reforms promised under the IMF programme. Borrowing more is not going to help if the political will to carry out reforms essential to sustaining macroeconomic stability is missing. The government has floundered much more in its day-to-day economic management causing considerable hardship to ordinary people as they face frequent spikes in prices and frequent

¹⁰ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1576987/classless-education-up-ahead>

¹¹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1573406/economy-report-card>

shortages of essential items. These have occurred mainly at the provincial level where inexperienced and inept leadership and poor administration with allegations of corruption are mainly to blame. Even more serious have been the revelation that some of its own high-ranking party members have benefited unfairly from the government policy decision on giving subsidy on sugar exports.

CPEC; a boost for economic recovery, Long Dingbin, *The Nation*, 25 August¹²

Despite the negative influence by the pandemic, bilateral cooperation on CPEC has made a stride forward and the all-weather strategic cooperative partnership has been further enhanced. Over the past few months, CPEC projects have been accelerated, projects both under construction and completed are going well, with remarkable fruits. Pakistan's Railway ML-I Refurbishment and Expansion Project was approved by the Central Development Working Party (CDWP). *The Karakoram Highway (KKH) Project Phase II Project was opened to traffic.* Both projects have aroused attention from various circles of Pakistan's society. I have a staunch belief that successfully pushing forward the CPEC projects will be an important carrier and breakthrough of economic resurgence. CPEC cooperation has been adhering to the principle of openness and inclusiveness, which serves as a good example illustrating win-win cooperation advocated by the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). *Under the joint efforts by China and Pakistan, difficulties caused by the pandemic during CPEC construction could be overcome, cooperation over various sectors has been moving forward against adversity, all of which contribute to Pakistan's work resumption and economic rejuvenation.* The Chinese Consulate General in Lahore, along with the Punjab government and the people, will continue facilitating the projects including the Industrial City, people's livelihood and agriculture cooperation, giving all-round impetus to Punjab economic recovery and prosperity.

Economic stability, S A Zahid, *Jang*, 28 August¹³

Like the rest of the world, the economy of Pakistan has been damaged by the Coronavirus pandemic. *However, the damage in Pakistan has not been severe. It is because the spread of the virus in Pakistan has been contained soon. That makes it possible that it might not take much time for Pakistan's economy to recover.* If we, as journalists or analysts, try to identify some policies of the government and analyze them, it should not be seen necessary as criticism of the government. It is the job of the media. The government should look into all aspects. It is true that the constructive policies of the government seem to be

¹² <https://nation.com.pk/25-Aug-2020/cpec-a-boost-for-economic-recovery>

¹³ https://jang.com.pk/news/813810?_ga=2.110987141.1606927721.1598596786-1172285561.1585539487

paying off now. The economy seems to be returning to track. Policies like austerity drive and spending less have helped. These policies of the government have maintained a balance between the imports and exports. *Budget deficit seems to be reducing. FBR had set a goal of 398 million rupees for June 2020. It collected 411 million rupees. The inflation has come down from 14.6 percent in January to 9.3 percent in July 2020. The imports have come down by 4.2 percent while the exports have increased by 5.8 percent. Other indicators also show positive signs. It is expected that the economy would do better in future.* China has put the largest amount in Pakistan's foreign reserves account in the State Bank of Pakistan. It allowed Islamabad to use \$1 Billion of the amount to meet its budget requirements. Strong economy is good for the country and the people. It has nothing to do with politics. Pakistan has better avenues for investment and they should be explored. The efforts of the government in this regard are exerting a pull on foreign investors to invest in the country. Given these signs, it seems Pakistan's economy is on the right track.

SECURITY SITUATION

Beyond FATF, Editorial, Dawn, 01 August¹⁴

Having further tightened its anti-terror financing laws, Pakistan appears to be much better placed for its next assessment by the Financial Action Task Force. *However, the manner in which the laws were passed is a matter of concern. The bills and amendments to them suggested by a Senate panel were discussed in a behind-the-scenes meeting by the government, the PML-N and the PPP.* The National Assembly then promptly rubber-stamped what was placed before it its usual response to FATF-related bills. Such quiescence is jarring. *The legislation pertains to national security, and the people's representatives would be expected to have robust opinions on it. It is also alarming, and highly unethical, for the government to have attempted to sneak in a draconian 'economic terrorism' bill under the umbrella of the FATF-related legislation.* The proposed law would have allowed any citizen to be detained for up to 180 days, on instructions by committees manned by intelligence agency personnel. Fortunately, the opposition shot it down. *While FATF can be said to have forced Pakistan's hand and compelled it to crack down on the violent extremist groups that had long insinuated themselves into the warp and weft of society, this is the only viable path ahead for this country.*

¹⁴ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1572262/beyond-fatf>

Banning books: dread of what challenges the unchallenged, Mushtaq Sufi, Dawn, 10 August¹⁵

It's not that states and regimes are afraid of books per se. They in fact dread certain type of books that on the one hand critique, oppose and reject their worldview and on the other offer an alternative vision. The bill recently passed by the elected members of Punjab Assembly is not aimed at eliminating books but rather controlling their production, distribution, selling and dissemination in the face of advanced technology which makes the intellectual, academic and creative assets from the past and present easily accessible. *Punjab government's recent move to ban the books which are not to its liking and its announcement to control the whole process of knowledge generation and dissemination fits in with the historical trend of non-democratic regimes which fear the power of dissent and creative chaos of plurality of views. All they want is something standard that shuns deviation and reinforces in some way what is within the prevalent ideological mainstream.*

A tragic murder, Editorial, Dawn, 20 August¹⁶

Extrajudicial killings, often in the form of staged encounters, are a stain on this country's reputation, belying its claim to be a democracy with constitutionally protected rights to security of person and due process. Hayat's murder created an uproar largely because the image described above went viral. Usually, however, most victims of this crime remain mere statistics. Not only do extrajudicial killings take place with impunity in the sparsely populated reaches of Balochistan, but elsewhere in the country too, including Karachi a consequence of the carte blanche certain sections of law-enforcement have been given in the name of fighting against militant/separatist groups. Who can forget former SSP Rao Anwar under whom, according to the police's own record, at least 444 people were slain in fake encounters? A public furor similar to the one over Hayat's death finally led to Rao being indicted for Nageebullah Mehsud's murder in January 2018. But the now retired cop remains free on bail while his trial drags on and key prosecution witnesses turn hostile. Such is the bitter reality of how the state, more often than not, treats extrajudicial killings.

Militancy concern, Editorial, Dawn, 21 August¹⁷

When terrorist organisations splinter, it often bodes well for law-enforcement agencies: such divisions result from internal rifts that can be exploited to

¹⁵<https://www.dawn.com/news/1573534/punjab-notes-banning-books-dread-of-what-challenges-the-unchallenged-part-i>

¹⁶ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1575398/a-tragic-murder>

¹⁷ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1575610/militancy-concern>

weaken the adversary. *However, when splinter groups rejoin their parent organisations, or merge with other groups to form larger outfits, it is a worrying development. In an online post, Mohammed Khurasani, the main spokesman for the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan, announced that Jamaatul Ahrar, its breakaway faction, and Hizbul Ahrar, a splinter group of the JuA, have been dissolved and merged into the TTP.* The leaders of both, he said, have sworn allegiance to TTP chief Mufti Noor Wali Mehsud. Efforts to bring about the rapprochement have been underway for some time, and reports indicate that the former TTP and later JuA spokesman Ehsanullah Ehsan who inexplicably escaped from the security forces' custody in early 2020 may have something to do with it. *However, much of the TTP, along with the two groups that have returned to its fold, remains comfortably ensconced in that country, mostly in Kunar, Nangarhar and Khost provinces.*

Banning groups, Editorial, Dawn, 25 August¹⁸

There is no shortage of banned militant groups in Pakistan, and with the proscription of a heretofore largely unknown outfit called Khatam-ul-Ambia by the state; the grand total of such organisations comes to 77. *According to the government, the aforementioned group is an offshoot of Ansarul Hussain, a Shia set-up reportedly formed to recruit fighters against the militant Islamic State group. Today, the list of banned groups is more varied, as it also features Baloch and Sindhi separatist outfits.* While the changed geopolitical situation in the aftermath of 9/11 made Pervez Musharraf take action against some violent outfits, the general failed to take measures to totally uproot these groups. *That is why banned groups remained active, mostly by changing names. As has been frequently stressed in these columns, action against violent actors needs to be holistic.* Leaders and cadres of terrorist outfits need to be tried and convicted in court, while their financial and other assets must be seized to cut off sources of funding. *While action has been taken to meet FATF requirements, and measures against militancy have weakened terrorist structures, stepping up its pace in this direction would be very much in Pakistan's own interest.*

Afghan Taliban visit, Editorial, Dawn, 27 August¹⁹

The news that the Taliban delegation visiting Islamabad has had productive discussions with the Pakistani side led by Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi has raised expectations of an early start to the intra-Afghan dialogue. *Pakistan has played a constructive role in bringing the Taliban to the negotiating table and Washington has acknowledged this role. The foreign*

¹⁸ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1576278/banning-groups>

¹⁹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1576632/afghan-taliban-visit>

minister's optimism suggests sufficient headway has been made in the Islamabad talks in terms of the Taliban's approach to finding a way out of the prisoner release impasse. The key challenge now is to bring the two Afghan sides together to start negotiating a power-sharing agreement. After Afghanistan, no other country has a bigger stake in peace in the war-torn country than Pakistan. It goes to the credit of the Pakistani leadership that it has steered the Taliban to the negotiating table and managed a terse relationship with the Kabul government well. Afghanistan now has a genuine shot at a peaceful settlement of the decades-long conflict. Islamabad and Washington should now lean on both sides to fulfil the obligations agreed upon earlier.

PROVINCES & REGIONS

GB

Diamer Bhasha Dam: Many a slip between the cup & the lip, Hassnain Javed, Daily Times, 16 August²⁰

Pakistan finds itself in somewhat similar confusion when it comes to decide on national issues. The Diamer Bhasha Dam (DBD) project “most critical for food security in Pakistan, was a high priority project for Pakistan.” It experienced decades of delay owing to lack of political will and conspiracies crafted by enemy’s false propaganda. *The construction was originally scheduled for completion in 2016 and then in 2019. But work never progressed; as a result the cost is going up due to persistent hindrances in starting the project. With a struggling economy, Pakistan knocked on the doors of the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and Western allies for financial help.* Most of these efforts failed to make any headway in arranging finances for the mega project, authorities decided to defer its construction at a time when Pakistan entered an acute level of water scarcity. It was China’s Belt and Road Initiative under concept of “Community of shared Dreams” that turned Diamer Bhasha Dam into a tangible reality. *It was decided in Pakistan-China Joint Economic Group (JEWG) meeting in Beijing that two countries should speed up investment in energy. Though government acknowledges failures to execute construction of the project on time. It is yet to be seen how serious they are in providing a*

²⁰<https://dailytimes.com.pk/654897/diamer-bhasha-dam-many-a-slip-between-the-cup-the-lip/>

speedy work environment. Biggest looming danger is of the growing threat of militants targeting Chinese interests and workers. India's diplomatic opposition against the project is also a major concern. *Moreover, what steps government ensures to satisfy grievances of the indigenous people of Gilgit Baltistan would direct the pace for the completion of the project?*

URDU MEDIA

“People like Gazi Faisal and Mumtaz Qadri will keep coming”, Bashir Awan, Ummat, 06 August²¹

In an interview with *Ummat* father of Mumtaz Qadri, Mulk Bashir Awan said that *“Gazi Faisal acted on the orders of Allah and his prophet. This is a blessing from Allah upon some people only. If there is no sharia in the country then people like Gazi Mumtaz Qadri and Gazi Faisal will rise to the occasion to punish blasphemers.”* Bashir Awan said that this time the blessing was bestowed upon Gazi Faisal. He said that governments in Pakistan have never punished any blasphemers. These heroes have taken it upon themselves to punish such blasphemers. *Bashir Awan said that the laws in Pakistan are the same that were made by the British. These laws are not fair to the Prophet-hood and cannot give justice to people. He said that Pakistan would keep producing people like Gazi Faisal and Mumtaz Qadri unless and until there was an Islamic system in place.* The current English laws do not punish blasphemers and set them free. There would be no blessings on Pakistan until the practice continues, Basher Awan added. Many blasphemers have been sentenced but none has got the punishment. If one of them was beheaded that would have set an example for others, he emphasized.

Pakistan's new, complete and beautiful map, Assadullah Ghalib, Nawa-i-Waqt, 06 August²²

Issuing a new map from Pakistan on 5 August has changed whole history and geography. Kashmiris started their freedom movement by shedding their blood. The struggle of Kashmiris has given Pakistan its true borders. *Prime Minister Imran Khan took an important initiative by releasing a new map of the country which showed Kashmir, Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan and FATA all parts of Pakistan.* Syed Afzal Haidar would say that Pakistan was created on 14 August 1947 but there were no boundaries. After three days, a bogus

²¹ <http://ummat.net/2020/08/06/news.php?p=story3.gif>

²² <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/lahore/2020-08-06/page-10/detail-3>

announcement about the geographical boundaries was made. India sent its forces to Kashmir to occupy it. Pakistan did not give up and started a movement to free Kashmir. After witnessing the resolve and commitment of Pakistani army, Jawaharlal Nehru took the matter to the UN and said it would be resolved under the UN supervision. But nothing happened. It was in the background of the radical changes that happened around the world in the later 1980s, Kashmiris rose against Indian state and started a movement. *Till now, over a lakh Kashmiris have laid down their lives. The movement has survived and strengthened with time. From Syed Ali Shah Gilani, Yaseen Malik, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq to Burhan Wani, they have all kept the movement alive. Pakistan, meanwhile, has provided diplomatic and logistic support to the movement.* But India's atrocities do not seem to end.

Pak-Saudi relations, Editorial, Jang, 13 August²³

Some sections in Pakistan are implying in the background of a report published by *Arab News* that after Pakistan's strong criticism of the OIC's stand on Kashmir, Saudi Arabia has stopped supplying oil and offering loans to Pakistan. *Information and broadcasting federal minister Shibli Faraz rejected such speculations in a press conference and said that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has stood with Pakistan through thick and thin. Reality is that Saudi Arabia and OIC have always supported Kashmiris in their struggle.* OIC in its statements strongly criticized India's abrogation of Article 370 by violating all UN resolutions and international laws. *If these statements are not upto the expectations of Pakistanis and it wants that Islamabad should be allowed to represent Kashmiris diplomatically at OIC to raise the Kashmir issue, it should not be an issue. This should not be seen as questioning the role of OIC or the intentions of Saudi Arabia.* On the Kashmir issue, the silent policy of the UN is always criticized. So has been OIC criticized for not doing enough. OIC has 57 members but the report in *Arab News* talks only about Saudi-Pak relations. Like Palestine, whole Muslim world considers the Kashmir issue as a matter of great concern and all Muslims are united on that it needs to be resolved.

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, A Khaliq Sargana, Daily Khabrain, 19 August²⁴

Saudi-Pak relations are deep and strong. Saudi Arabia remains of great importance for the Muslims across the world for its role as the guardian of the two holiest places: Mecca and Medina. For Pakistan, Saudi Arabia has been there in times of need. Our ties are historical. Still there is some tension between

²³https://jang.com.pk/news/808286?_ga=2.131588303.1566276561.1597298420-460028543.1581912604

²⁴ <https://dailypakistan.com.pk/E-Paper/lahore/2020-08-19/page-9/detail-4>

the two because of which the people in Pakistan are a bit worried. *The relations have been seeing some unease for some time. One of the reasons for that is the change in leadership in both countries. In the case of Saudi Arabia, earlier leaders were experienced. The new leadership of the country is young, lacking experience. The international situation is also affecting bilateral relations. The role of big powers is playing its role. Saudi Arabia has good relations with India because of the size of the latter. Trade between Riyadh and India is \$33 billion, Riyadh's total trade with Pakistan is only \$3.5 billion. Though the foreign minister is a veteran politician, he seemed to have given an emotional statement recently against the Saudis. First, to think that by discussing at the OIC, the Kashmir issue would be resolved is wrong. Second, even if it was to be discussed, diplomatic ways should have been used. There was no need to be aggressive in public.* Also, federal minister Dr Shireen Mazari has given details of the failures of the foreign ministry. It shows that there are differences of opinions in the government and it is not good. It should be expected that the relations between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan would normalize soon. The question would remain whether the relations would be the same as before? Can Pakistan deal with the reaction from Saudi Arabia? Or are we going to join some new block?

Pak and KSA's statements on Israel signal unity in the Muslim world, Editorial, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, 21 August²⁵

Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia, Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud said in a press conference that Riyadh could establish relations with Israel if the latter were to sign a peace deal with Palestinians. Faisal bin Farhan said that Israeli's policies are a big obstruction in restoring peace in the region. The statement from Saudi Arabia has silenced many speculations which were there after the Israel-UAE was signed recently. The deal was facilitated by President Trump. *Trump had asked other Muslim countries to follow UAE. Iran and Turkey had strongly criticized the agreement. While in Pakistan, there is debate going on whether Islamabad should recognize Israel or not? However, Prime Minister Imran Khan has clearly ruled out any possibility of recognizing Israel (unless and until the Palestinian issue is resolved). Though every state pursues policies according to its national interests, for Muslim countries it has been difficult to establish relations with Israel because the state has been formed by occupying the land of Palestinian people.* Israel, with the support of the US, was formed in 1948 according to a resolution passed at the UN. At that time whole Arab world was against the formation of the Zionist state. Slowly, America divided the Muslim world and the Camp David Accord were passed. *For Pakistan, it is also not possible to accept Israel's occupation of Palestine because of our*

²⁵ <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/lahore/2020-08-21/page-8/detail-10>

position on Kashmir where we do not accept India's occupation. It is possible that if the Muslim world recognizes Israel, Riyadh can establish relations with every Muslim country. But recognizing that country would be betrayal with the blood of the Palestinians who have sacrificed their lives for that land.

New trends in foreign policy of Pakistan, Editorial, Jang, 25 August²⁶

Foreign policy of Pakistan is a reflection of national interests of the country. It also has incorporates the tenets of the UN resolutions, international agreements, Geneva conventions, unity of Islam and good neighborhood. *In particular, with its neighbours, Pakistan has been seeking nothing but good relations. The best example for that is Pakistan-China friendship. Because of the narrow vision, religious bias and anti-Muslim hatred of Indian rulers, the case with India is entirely different.* Jammu and Kashmir is a disputed issue according to the UN resolutions. But because of India's "occupation", atrocities and human rights violations, it is yet to be resolved. China supports Pakistan on the Kashmir issue. Same was reiterated at the end of the foreign minister's strategic dialogue in China. The response from India was critical of the declarations and said that Kashmir was an integral part of India. FO of Pakistan snubbed India's reaction and said that India's claims were historical and fictitious. India is also doing propaganda against CPEC. *World knows that India is spreading fake information. Because of the efforts of the current government, the international community is better informed about the real situation in Kashmir. European Union, OIC and other international organizations remain well informed about the efforts made by Pakistan for regional peace and stability. Prime Minister Imran Khan has been harsh on terrorism and banned 77 persons recently which were according to the FATF conditions. In Afghanistan, Pakistan has been active to restore peace and stability.* In this regard, a delegation of the Afghan Taliban reached Pakistan on Sunday to discuss regional situation and to establish good relations with all neighboring countries. Pakistan has been trying play its role for unity among the Muslim countries as well. UAE's decision to establish diplomatic relations with Israel created a lot of pressure on Islamabad. But the decision to not to recognize Israel is a sign that Pakistan wants the Palestine issue to be resolved. Pakistan has good relations with all regional countries except India. It shows that Islamabad's foreign policy has been successful and it should continue.

Nawaz Sharif's return: reality or political drama? Nasim Shahid, Daily Pakistan, 27 August²⁷

²⁶https://jang.com.pk/news/812635?_ga=2.51247465.1334993231.1598247145-460028543.1581912604

²⁷ <https://dailypakistan.com.pk/E-Paper/Lahore/2020-08-27/page-9/detail-6>

Despite all the talking, nobody believes that the Imran Khan led government wants Nawaz Sharif back. There has been a lot going on in this regard. A report said that in a cabinet meeting, many cabinet ministers exchanged heated arguments why Nawaz was not brought back? On the Nawaz Sharif issue, there is a lot of churning within the government. On that governor Punjab Chaudhry Muhammad Sarwar said that Pakistan has no extradition treaty with Britain. Therefore it is not possible to bring Nawaz back. *The question is what has happened that suddenly Imran Khan along with his cabinet wants Nawaz Sharif back? The story behind all this hullabaloo is that political activity started by Nawaz Sharif. I have written earlier that Nawaz Sharif's political role in Pakistani politics cannot be eroded entirely. PML-N is still united and its members are active. What happened at the time of Maryam Nawaz's appearance at NAB has surprised many. It is unlikely that NAB would summon Maryam again soon. It is not clear whether Nawaz Sharif had asked Maryam to go to the NAB court in a rally form. Furthermore, it is said that Nawaz held telephonic conversation with Bilawal Bhutto. This was the second "act" that has created tension in the government. Then came the news that Nawaz had also talked to Maulana Fazlur Rehman and assured him PML-N would participate in the All Arty Conference. Nawaz Sharif's active politics has not only given PML-N leadership but also gave a new lease of life to the opposition. Shahbaz Sharif has resumed his political activity and he met Maulana Fazlur Rehman. They decided to start an anti-PTI movement.* Only possible counter that the government could think of is to put Nawaz Sharif behind the bars. By this it would also silence Maryam. The issue of Nawaz Sharif leaving Pakistan has become a complicated one. No one is ready to owe it: neither the Islamabad High Court nor NAB. The government defended itself by saying that it was told if Nawaz was not let go, he would die soon. Nawaz Sharif is a powerful and veteran politician. It is not easy to bring him back. The whole drama orchestrated to build pressure on Nawaz, show him a bad light and save one's weakening political image.

Nawaz Sharif cannot be brought back, Wajahat Ali Khan, Jang, 30 August²⁸

The Government of Pakistan will never be able to bring Nawaz Sharif back. Nawaz would return only when he wants to come. *It seems the Prime Minister wants to divert attention and spend billions of rupees on something which is never going to happen. Pakistan has no extradition treaty with Britain. Plus, Nawaz Sharif has no bad record in Britain and London does not act against such people.* Even if the institutions of Pakistan are able to convince London that Nawaz was involved in corruption and forgery of documents. That would give rise to many questions on the credibility of the institutions. Second, Britain would ask Pakistan to prove that the trial

²⁸ https://e.jang.com.pk/08-30-2020/lahore/pic.asp?picname=09_005.png

against Nawaz would be fair and not interfered by different actors. Unlike in Pakistan, in Britain, there is no pressure on the judiciary or judges. *There were rumours last year that the two countries have reached a mutual understanding on extraditing Ishaq Dar. But after a year, nothing has happened on that front either. Pakistan has tried earlier to bring back people like Altaf Hussain, Ali Imran or Hamza Sharif but failed. Britain has issues with Pakistani laws like the death sentence, London is also aware about the flaws in the judiciary of Pakistan. Islamabad needs to accept the fact that if the state institutions were fair and operating without any interference, these fugitive people would have never left the country.* Even the arguments that the bail of Nawaz Sharif has ended and he has been declared a fugitive by the court are not going to make much difference.

ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Clash with Imran Khan, Can Opposition run a *Tahreek* (Movement)? GNN, 03 August²⁹

In this episode the media analyst and columnist discuss on the above topic. **Imran Yaqub Khan** argued that the two main prominent opposition parties are passing the responsibility buck to one another which was very well visible in the meeting between Bilawal Bhutto and Shahbaz Sharif in Lahore. He informed how when Bilawal Bhutto reminded Shabaz Sharif that now he is out of Corona and should take the lead for opposition and suddenly Sharif said, *ab is inqalab ko ek young kando ki zarurat hai* (this inqalab now needs a young shoulder). **Shahzada Chaudary** underlined that there was a chance for the opposition to come together during the budget session against the government but unfortunately they could not do anything. *He pointed out that in the politics of Pakistan there is a "signal" to go ahead with a movement and they assure it will be successful but this time still that signal has not come yet (ek ishara hota hai tahreek ke liye).* There is no clarity within the opposition and this *tamasha* will fizzle soon, he added. **Hafizullah Niyazi** on the other hand argued that *ishara tu mil chukka hai* (the signal has come) otherwise there won't be so much hustle and bustle among the opposition. It can also be gauged from orchestrated programmes on TV. *He reasoned that there is so much frustration due to PM's support for Usman Buzdar in Punjab as he has completely failed as CM.* But the truth is that Imran Khan knew that Buzdar won't be able to run Punjab when he selected him as CM.

²⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fr6cWe3JftE>

Jirga, Saleem Safi, Jihad is a doctrine of war & Faraz for Muslims: Sardar Masood Khan, Geo News, 09 August³⁰

Saleem Safi's Analysis on Kashmir: Saleem Safi argues that Imran Khan has missed many opportunities to take the Kashmir issue to the next level and has failed the people of Kashmir as well Pakistan on many levels. The reasons of Imran Khan Government's failure according to him are *first*, during the Parvez Musharraf, Zardari and Nawaz Sharif era, terrorism was on its peak so they could not concentrate much on Kashmir issue but When Imran Khan formed government *tu kafi had tak dehasatgardi ka jin kabo mai ho gaya tha* (the menace of terrorism was controlled to a great extent). *Second*, post Burhan Wani, the internal militancy and locals joining militancy for Kashmir increased in Kashmir valley and it was much easier to market the issue of Kashmir on the World stage as a specific Kashmiri problem. *Third*, it also failed to unmask the Hindutva policy of the Modi government and BJP and the increasing atrocities to the Muslim minorities in India. Imran Khan wrongly guessed the intentions of both Modi and Trump and the final blow was when Modi scrapped article 370 from Kashmir with the blessings of Trump. *Fourth*, post 9/11 for the first time US was in need *of Pakistan on the issue of Taliban, Pakistan could have easily used this as a bargaining chip on issue of Kashmir and to contain India but due to inexperience of Imran Khan, bad judgment skills and most importantly the choice of his core team, he was unable to do so.*

Interview of Sardar Masood Khan (President of Azad Kashmir)

Q: What is your view on the governments Kashmir policy and what went wrong? ***A:*** The most important thing is the attitude of the government towards Kashmir and if continues like this, then the day is not far when J&K will completely slip out of our hands one day. Kashmir is burning, lands are been taken away from the locals and Indian government has started a mission to settle Hindus in the valley and what Pakistan does is release a political map proclaiming Kashmir as our part (it has been said from long time). Hum ne already bohot derr kar diya hai and if India continues its policy like this, forget Kashmir, the Kashmiris will be soon lost somewhere and will become minority in its land.

Q: What are the options for Pakistan henceforth? ***A:*** Jihad is Faraz for Muslims. Jihad is a doctrine of war and probably the most humanitarian doctrine of war in the Word. If we look into history not a freedom has come out from only speeches (no speech has won a war). Jihad for the right of people is justified (jihad ek maksad ke liye hota hai). India has stationed 9 lakh army in valley and they are the terrorist who are killing innocent people in fake encounters and not the Kashmiri people. He underlined that US, Russia, France

³⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pyq53pcmbdU>

and UK are on the Indian side and we need to respect countries like Iran, Turkey, Malaysia and China who support Pakistan on the issue of Kashmir.

The Reporters, Pakistan Army Chief visit Saudi Arabia, ARYNews, 17 August³¹

Army Chief General Qamar Bajwa and DGI ISI Lieutenant General Faiz Hameed has landed in Riyadh airport and the *ISI head is seen holding a thick file in his hands that contains issues to be discussed with Saudi head post the Fiasco created by SM Qureshi's speech on OIC and Kashmir*. The analyst Sabir Shakir and Chaudary Ghulam Hussain discussed the Pakistan Saudi issue on the latest episode of reporter. *Sabir Shakir* informed that the process of normalization started when Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan, Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki has a round of meetings first with army chief Bajwa, then CM Punjab Usman Buzdar and governor Punjab. Recently he also met Sadiq Sanjrani, chairman Senate, Shakir informed. *He informed that both political and military leadership of Saudi has officially come out and has underlined that Pakistan and Saudi have historical relations and it is not so weak to break due to some misunderstandings*. He argued this gives a clear message that the Saudi and Pakistan will not let the relations to be spoiled. *Chaudary Ghulam Hussain* underscored the importance of Saudi as the center of Islam as the most holy place Mecca is situated there. Also he informed that Pakistan and Saudi has a history of military cooperation (that cannot be discussed in public), *Raheel Sharif is the advisor for Saudi military. He argued that Pakistan has the right to voice for the issue of Kashmir but it should be done diplomatically*. He believed that the SM Qureshi incident was blown out of proportion by some section of media. *Sabir Shakir* also refer to an article written by *Dr. Ali Awadh Asseri* (Former Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan) in *Arab News* titled "Saudi Arab and Pakistan: A partnership too important to fail", that emphasised the significance of Pakistan-Saudi relations and underlined that *"the Saudi-Pak historic partnership is too important to fail. It will blossom in future, just as it did in history, defeating any attempt to sabotage it along the way, with the love and devotion of our two peoples"*. *Ghulam Hussain* underlined *jo b kiya hai chura tu buka hai mulims ke cause pe UAE ne* (UAE has backstabbed the cause of Islam by this deal). He underlined that if Son in Law of Donald Trump has to be believed he has said that Trump, MBS has worked hard for the deal and that Bahrain, Morocco and Saudi can follow suit. Saudi is in Talks with Israel under the efforts called "step up cooperation".

³¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15AZ21cYI_A

Off The Record with Kashif Abbasi, The Politics on Nawaz Sharif: ARYNews, 24 August³²

Is government trying to bring back Nawaz Sharif? Will it be able to bring him back from London? Sheikh Rashid, the Railway Minister on 22 August during a media interaction had said that the PTI wish to bring Nawaz Sharif back (*PTI ki kwaish hai*) to Pakistan and put him under trail but the problem is we could not bring back other leaders (Ishaq Dar, Salman Shehbaz) from outside then how can we bring Sharif back he questioned? He also revealed that Nawaz Sharif has guaranteed five year government for PTI as part of a deal for his exit to London. On this episode the host asks, If this is so why the PTI is now making noises to bring him back and what is the deal? **Guests:** Faisal Vawda (PTI) and Mohsin Shahnawaz Ranjha (PMLN). **Faisal Vawda argued that he along with Fawad Chaudhary of PTI were against sending Nawaz Sharif to London from the first day however the government will put all its efforts to bring him back and work with the UK government on the formalities.** Nawaz Sharif has exhausted his term of stay and bail too and he was not in the country during the pandemic when the people needed him the most and even then if the public talks in his favour that will be a disaster. When asked if the medical reports of Nawaz Sharif were forged to send him out, the minister replied yes it was and when asked why no case has been put on the ones responsible for forging, he said *karwahi ho rahi hogi* (some case might be charged against them). About the deal he underlined that this is a trend in Pakistan to say deal howa, *koi deal nahi howa* (there was no deal). **Mohsin Shahnawaz Ranjha** informed the time his doctors in London will advise him that he can travel; Nawaz Sharif will definitely come back. The reports of the doctors will be submitted to the courts in Pakistan he added. *He argued that initially all the doctors and medical teams including Showkat Khanum Hospital staff has said that Nawaz Sharif is ill and need medical attention and now they are questioning the primary health workers and saying that reports might have been forged by them. That means the medical science is a failure in Pakistan.*

Capital Talk with Hamid Mir, Shehbaz Sharif meets Maulana Fazlur Rehman, Geo News, 25 August³³

The political temperatures are rising once again as PML-N president Shehbaz Sharif met Maulana Fazlur Rehman in Islamabad and appeared in a joint press conference together. At the same time PML-N has released a *white paper* on two years performance of the PTI government. *On this episode the host interviews Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, ex-PM & senior leader PML-N on these new developments. Q:*

³² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWXzIgR3Oq4>

³³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UMO38wiC9yo>

The government is talking about bringing back Nawaz Sharif, don't you think Nawaz Sharif should come back on his own now? A: Nawaz Sharif was sent for medical treatment and the PTI government paved the way for it and today if they say medical papers were forged then the blame should fall on the government, it also proves that they are fraud. *Today if the government thinks that the biggest problem of Pakistan is Nawaz Sharif and that the country cannot run without him, and they want him to come back, then just say it.* As far as I know three major surgeries had to happen, everything is closed due to pandemic, *ilaj kara k wapis aa jaye ge* (he will come back after the treatment. Q: *Why there was no major announcement after Maulana Fazlur Rehman and Shehbaz Sharif meeting?* A: The meeting was the extended effort to remove doubts of JUI head and to bring him back as a strong voice of opposition and to great extent this has been achieved, therefore there was no major announcement. *There will be an All Party Conference (APC) after Muharram and the Maulana has asked Shehbaz to head the meeting.* Q: *The government has passed twelve bills related to FATF with the support of PML-N & PPP, Now when the new session has started, the opposition has not supported the government to pass a new bill related to FATF, why?* A: We have also rejected two bills, one on economic terrorism (it was very dangerous) and another was to amend Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC). Rest other bills were really weak in legislation, we amended it and passed it. *In the new session there were two bills, one among them was anti money laundering bill on which we had already suggested amendments but the government brought the bill as it is and therefore we did not approve it.* He underlined that FATF is a sensitive issue as Pakistan was on black list first, then it came on grey list (*and how we know*), the government do not think twice before talking about such an issue of national importance.

Jirga with Saleem Safi, Interview of Noor-ul-Haq Qadri, Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Inter-faith Harmony, Geo News, 30 August³⁴

Q: For a religious scholar like you, was it the right decision to join PTI?

A: In the two years of my ministry in the religious affairs I have tried to maintain peace and harmony between all the religious groups be it bareveli, Sunni, Shia etc and I have a personal view point which will not change and if someone thinks I am *wajibul katal* (worthy of killing) due to that, I can't help it. I have also tried to maintain good relations with our Muslim neighbours and tried to frame policies on basis of religion. *This is the first government who had meeting with the Ulema's of these Muslim countries on a regular basis be it on SOP's for Ramazan or Eid.* On our part we have suggested the government to maintain peace between various religious groups and come out with polices in this regard.

³⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KTXVO3wLiws>

Q: in Pakistan there is a culture of Fatwa that any Ulema or Madras stand up and pronounce some as *Wajibul Katal* does anyone/organization has the right to do so? What is the religious ministry doing in this regard?

A: *Ye jo Pakistan mai Fatwabazi ka bazaar garam kar ke rakha hai, ye galat hai* (in Pakistan the trend to pronounce Fatwa is fashionable but is wrong). No religious group or Ulema or organisations/Mufti or Alam can be given the right to give fatwa or to announce someone as *Wajibul Katal*. *We had in the past, organized a programme called Paigame Pakistan in which this kind of acts were criticized and renounced. A written declaration underlining no one has the right to declare some one kafir or wajibul katal was brought out after that in which thousands of Ulema were signatories.*

Q: Paigame Pakistan was a great effort for religious harmony, why not PTI government makes an effort to pass it as law through parliament?

A: Yes, we are working on this to bring law on the act of declaring someone kafir or wajibul katal, we are working on the draft and in future will take it to the Parliament after consulting to all religious groups. *We will look towards making an Islamic nazrayati (ideological) council that will take forward the work in this regard. The council will decide on the issues related to religion.* When asked what about the religious sentiment that is connected to some cases and then they take personal decisions? The minister underlined that the judiciary system is to be blamed for the same, if it takes one to two years for them to take decisions on these sensitive affairs then it is an issue. Therefore judicial reforms are also important.

Q: Political polarization is at peak under PTI, the government has said that opposition is wajibul katal, your views on this?

A: It is part of politics and if some politician or TV anchor talks about wajibul katal it is not so dangerous as compared to some ulema or alami or mufti dean who declare someone wajibul katal, then it is very problematic. For katal we need prove. *The trend of giving religious decree has taken a grave turn as it has come out of the reach of the Ulema's and now come among public and especially the social media has made it a grave issue, there are social media decrees to kill or declare someone kafir.* He pointed out that for this matter the religious debates should not be brought out in the media and should be kept in the barrier of the religious leaders. Hate speeches has increased in social media and we are trying to control the IT wing. We have kept educated people in this wing who knows religion. We have sent 10, 000 links to FIA.

BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES

(Select incidents culled out from the Pakistan media)

Place	Date	Description	Killed	Injured
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)				
Chaman ³⁵	10/08/2020	At least five killed, 10 injured in Chaman blast	05	10
South Waziristan ³⁶	31/08/2020	Three soldiers martyred, four injured in South Waziristan operation	03	04
Balochistan				
Mastung ³⁷	15/08/2020	Pakistan: Blast injures five in Balochistan's Mastung district August 13	00	05
Punjab				
Lahore ³⁸	11/08/2020	Murder accused killed in front of courtroom in Lahore	01	00

³⁵<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2258834/at-least-five-killed-10-injured-in-chaman-blast>

³⁶<https://dailytimes.com.pk/661113/three-soldiers-martyred-four-injured-in-south-waziristan-operation/>

³⁷<https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/369391/pakistan-blast-injures-five-in-balochistans-mastung-district-august-13>

³⁸<https://www.dawn.com/news/1573726/murder-accused-killed-in-front-of-courtroom-in-lahore>