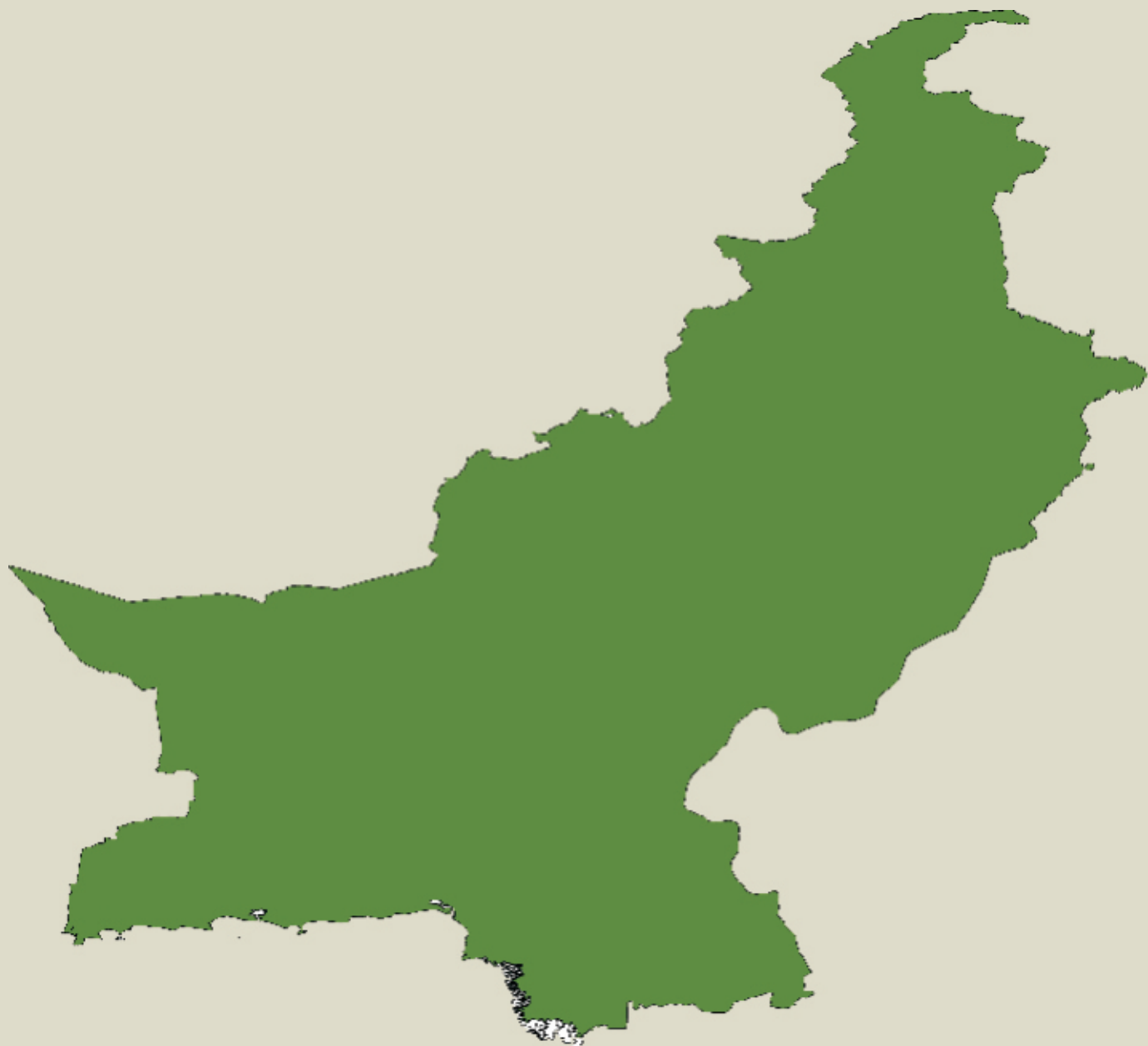


June & July 2023

PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST

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



Prepared by
Dr. Zainab Akhter
Dr. Nazir Ahmad Mir
Mr. Afroz Khan
Dr. Ashok Behuria

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DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES
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PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST
June & July 2023

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POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Forward bloc? Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 01 June¹

For the past week now, we have been seeing a rather successful dismantling of Project Imran, and with that a party completely in disarray – with scores of big and small PTI leaders having jumped ship. Many are speculating where all those who have left the PTI or are in the process of leaving will end up. The much-talked about Jahangir Tareen party seems to be the natural destination for many of them while the PML-Q could also be a new home for PTI deserters. In the midst of all this came a rather abrupt press conference on Wednesday by former information minister Fawad Chaudhry along with Imran Ismail and Mahmood Moulvi. Fawad Chaudhry talked to the press outside Adiala Jail where the three men had gone to see Shah Mahmood Qureshi. *The rumour mill has naturally taken this as a sign that efforts may be afoot to form some sort of forward bloc within the PTI.* Ever since the vote of no-confidence, Khan has built a narrative that this is a fight between ‘good and evil’, to the extent that we saw rallies where workers and supporters were asked to take ‘oaths’. He has called his fight a ‘jihad’ against his ouster through a foreign conspiracy – even though most of his workers did not even know when the jihad against an alleged US conspiracy that started with Donald Lu ended with an alleged Bajwa-Haqqani ‘nexus’. Post May 9, there have been call-outs on what his critics say is him hiding behind his supporters and using them as human shields to avoid arrest. *At a time when there is an economic crisis, when there are clear divisions within the judiciary, when politicians are refusing to sit together, some are wary if elections will actually take place on time in October or whether we are going towards a national government or a long technocratic setup. It is imperative – even now – for there to be genuine dialogue between all political stakeholders, including Imran Khan.* For that to happen, he will need to learn how to play with others. Unfortunately, his previous history does not bode well for him agreeing to do that.

Acute food insecurity, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 05 June²

A recently released UN report has sounded the alarm on the acute food insecurity in Pakistan, predicting that the situation is likely to worsen in the coming months if the economic and political crisis deepens. *Political instability and lagging reforms, coupled with a shortage of forex reserves and a depreciating currency, have severely limited the country’s ability to import essential food items and energy supplies,*

¹ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1075884-forward-bloc>

² <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2420244/acute-food-insecurity>

leading to skyrocketing prices and nationwide energy cuts. Adding to these challenges is the aftermath of the 2022 floods, which caused significant damage and economic losses to the agriculture sector. While on the one hand, local production has dwindled and finances are slim to curtail shortages through import, on the other hand the declining purchasing power of citizens has further reduced the ability to buy food items at inflationary rates. Food insecurity is a wicked crisis that must be tackled on multiple fronts. It is of utmost importance to initiate capacity building measures for national and provincial disaster management authorities to incorporate forecast and risk assessment into their disaster management plans. This can help mitigate the impact of future disasters and enhance preparedness. The government must take immediate steps to address the acute food insecurity crisis. *This requires a comprehensive approach that combines short-term emergency relief measures with long-term strategies to enhance agricultural productivity, improve infrastructure and promote economic stability.* Support from the global community is equally vital. Pakistan cannot become another Somalia or Sudan.

Not the first time, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 27 July³

Despite being elevated to senior statesman status by PML-N supporters and some in the media, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif maintains his reputation for using crass and sexist language on the floor of Parliament. Asif's recent horrible comments came as an unnecessary diversion from a more legitimate critique of how the PTI conducted legislative business while Imran Khan was prime minister. Instead of sticking to the point, he went after female MNAs in a manner that has now become second nature to him. Asif's repeated use of such language also raises serious questions over his apologies for previous foul-mouthed attacks. PML-N supporters also regularly point to the language used by Imran and other current and former PTI leaders. *The problem with this argument is that the use of such language on the floor of the elected house should never be considered acceptable or justified, even if it is in response to someone else's use of gutter language at political rallies.* It was also surprising that leaders from the PPP — which has arguably the highest number of women leaders in prominent roles — refused to criticise Asif's speech, with footage from the assembly suggesting that at least one prominent PPP leader was actually laughing during Asif's speech. Whether it was at Asif's speech or something unrelated, the optics were unacceptable for a leader or a party that claims to fight for women's rights.

³ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2428021/not-the-first-time>

ECONOMIC ISSUES

Shadow markets and volatility, Editorial, *The News*, 02 June⁴

There are multiple PKR-USD conversion rates that exist. There is an interbank rate, the rate which is controlled by the central bank through various means, at which different banks transact amongst each other, and conduct transactions. The stability in that rate is provided by the central bank, which can provide foreign currency liquidity as and when required, or shut things down, or use other not-so-subtle tactics to keep the market orderly. The existence of three different rates, and significant spreads relative to the interbank rate suggests existence of a broken market. Such wide spreads imply that there is insufficient supply of foreign currency in the formal market, due to which availability can only be guaranteed at a higher rate. *The recent announcement by the State Bank to move credit card settlements in foreign currency from open market to interbank alludes to this, such that demand in the open market can be reduced and the spread can be reduced.* The spread has reduced to a certain extent – but the structural problem of there being a shortage of foreign currency continues to exist. Due to restricted supply of foreign currency, imports continue to be rationed, while import coverage for the country is close to its lowest point in two decades. This is a signal that suggests that foreign currency problems are far from over till we are able to arrange sufficient foreign currency to meet critical requirements, and are able to shore up our import coverage. Till the time that happens, we will continue to see volatility, wide spreads, and existence of multiple rates for the same currency.

Populist budget? Editorial, *Dawn*, 06 June⁵

There couldn't have been more challenging times than the present ones for preparing the national budget. *The uncertainties related to elections and foreign funding required to cover the massive external account financing gap of about \$25bn during the next financial year, amid deepening domestic political crises and unfavourable global economic circumstances, mean that our fiscal authorities would be budgeting this year on hope rather than tangibles.* With the country confronting stagflation marked by flattening economic growth, soaring unemployment and spiking inflation there has never been a more compelling case for a budget that focuses on fiscal, governance and structural reforms for longer-term economic recovery and sustainability. *Pakistan needs foreign financing, including loan rollovers, of more than \$77bn to meet its*

⁴ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1076231-shadow-markets-and-volatility>

⁵ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1758239/populist-budget>

external debt payments over the next three years. That will not be possible without the IMF on board. A fiscally irresponsible budget can make a new deal with the Fund even more difficult. Domestic revenue resources also remain scarce they are insufficient to cover debt-servicing costs, let alone finance development, defence, salaries, pensions, etc. That makes the proposed fiscal stimulus and 'relief' to the common man, aimed at wooing back voters, impractical unless the government is prepared to throw all caution to the wind and resort to drastically increasing domestic borrowing and accumulating more debt, bringing greater misery to the public. The upcoming budget will be more a test of the government's resolve to stay the course and restructure the economy to steer it through uncertain conditions rather than provide temporary relief to people and businesses for short-term political gains. Sadly, the indications so far are that the government is more likely to follow the fiscally imprudent path rather than follow through with the reforms it has promised its lenders to ensure longer-term economic stability.

Skewed tax policy, Editorial, Dawn, 24 July⁶

Most additional revenue measures were announced on the day parliament approved the budget to satisfy the Fund after the latter's criticism of Mr. Dar's original budget that the government had 'missed' the opportunity to broaden the tax base. Though the tax target was eventually revised upwards, the minister tiptoed around the broader tax policy goal of effectively taxing undertaxed sectors such as retail, agriculture and real estate especially incomes from these sectors. *However, this did not come as a surprise. The PML-N or any party for that matter and the powerful civil and military bureaucracy are averse to taxing incomes from retail, real estate and agriculture, the economy's three largest segments, because of their own vested interests.* Former FBR head Shabbar Zaidi has narrated how he was prevented by the previous army chief from taking steps to document the massive 'file' business in real estate. This government's tax policy was set by a tweet from PML-N chief organizer Maryam Nawaz last year when she indicated to then finance Minister Miftah Ismail through Twitter that he should revoke a nominal tax he had dared to impose on the electricity bills of the party's core support group, ie, retailers. The narrow tax base and low tax-to-GDP ratio means that the documented corporate sector and salaried classes will bear the burden of any increase in the tax target. The last two budgets are evidence of this skewed policy. *Though the new IMF loan deal commits the government to expand the personal income tax base by adding 300,000 persons, few believe the rulers have the political will to meet this condition.*

⁶ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1766463/skewed-tax-policy>

Pakistan opens gates for Gulf investment, Shahbaz Rana, *Dawn*, 29 July⁷

In a major development, Pakistan's new Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) a hybrid civil-military forum has in principle approved 28 projects worth billions of dollars that would be offered to Gulf countries for investment, including the construction of Diamer-Bhasha dam and mining operations at Reko Diq in Balochistan's Chagai district. *The list of the approved projects suggests that if all the schemes are picked up by countries, including Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain, the quantum of investment under the SIFC banner can be greater than the \$28 billion under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).* Initially, the approved schemes are in the food, agriculture, information technology, mines and minerals, petroleum and power sectors. They include cattle farms; the \$10 billion Saudi Aramco refinery; explorations of copper and gold in Chagai; and the Thar Coal Rail connectivity scheme. The Diamer-Bhasha dam has also been offered to China for investment under CPEC. In order to give legal cover to the SIFC working, parliament this week had approved a host of amendments to the Pakistan Army Act and the Board of Investment (BOI) Ordinance. Amendments to the Election Act have also been introduced to ensure the continuity of work on these schemes during the tenure of the caretaker government.

SECURITY SITUATION

Lawyer's killing, Editorial, *Dawn*, 08 June⁸

The shocking murder of Supreme Court lawyer Abdul Razzaq Shar on a Quetta thoroughfare on Tuesday raises a number of disturbing questions, especially with the accusations and counter-accusations that have emerged after the killing. *The fact that the slain advocate had filed a petition in the Balochistan High Court calling for a treason case against PTI chief Imran Khan has also added to the mystery behind his murder.* Razzaq Shar was headed to court when assailants sprayed his vehicle with bullets. Some members of the legal community believe the late lawyer was shot due to a family feud. However, PML-N leader and aide to the Prime Minister Attaullah Tarar was quick to level serious allegations against the PTI, holding the party chief responsible for the crime. The PTI shot down the allegations, and levelled charges of its own, blaming the prime minister and the interior minister for the lawyer's murder.

⁷ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2428452/pakistan-opens-gates-for-gulf-investment>

⁸ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1758592/lawyers-killing>

Meanwhile, it was reported on Wednesday that the advocate's son had nominated the PTI chairman in the murder case. The state should make it a priority to uncover the facts and bring the killers of Razzaq Shar to justice. *Mr Tarar's jumping the gun and blaming the PTI in great haste is not the way to go about; without a fair investigation, it will be taken as political point-scoring on his part. It is unfortunate that, despite a heavy security footprint in the province, violence is never far from the surface in Balochistan, including Quetta.*

Terrorist threat, Editorial, Dawn, 27 July⁹

The fresh wave of terrorism confronting KP needs to be addressed to prevent further bloodletting. Far too many security personnel have fallen in the line of duty, while local residents demonstrate for peace, and demand that their areas be cleansed of violent extremists. *Hundreds of tribesmen took out a peace rally in Tirah valley on Tuesday calling for an end to targeted killings and extortion in their area; they lamented the fact that militants were moving around "freely" in Khyber district. This is not the first of such gatherings; numerous others have been held in various parts of KP over the past few months, as incidents of terrorist violence have grown after a tenuous ceasefire with the banned TTP fell through.* Whether it is the TTP, JuA or similar outfits, they cannot be given any space to operate, particularly in the former tribal areas. Security operations must be stepped up so that terrorist groups cannot expand their malign activities. Where militant havens in Afghanistan are concerned both the TTP and JuA are believed to be active in the Afghan provinces bordering Pakistan Asif Durrani, the government's special representative on Afghanistan, has only recently returned from Kabul after holding talks with the Taliban rulers. From what is publicly known regarding these meetings, Taliban officials have repeated the rhetoric that their soil is not being used for terrorism, though evidence strongly suggests otherwise. While it is the state's responsibility to secure Pakistani territory, the counterterrorism effort will suffer if militants continue to have sanctuaries across the border.

TTP is regrouping, Editorial, The Express Tribune, 31 July¹⁰

A report compiled by a United Nations committee that monitors terrorist activities has come out with some candid on-ground observations. It says that the fugitive and outlawed TTP is regrouping, and is trying to seek refuge under the umbrella of the dreaded Al-Qaeda. *The document officially stipulates before the UN Security Council*

⁹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1767051/terrorist-threat>

¹⁰ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2428519/ttp-is-regrouping>

that Pakistan's fears are well-founded, and the militia is a real threat for the region at large. This revelation should be taken as an SOS and member states of the world body should prevail over the beleaguered government of Afghanistan to act promptly to flush out all such elements from its soil. The Taliban are in a fix, as they seem to be clueless in acting against the non-state actors who had penetrated so deep into the body-fabric of the strife-torn country. Though the regime in Kabul sincerely believes in eradicating terrorism, as they have themselves been a victim for years, the proposition is that they have exhibited undue compromise in calling a spade a spade. The Taliban, perhaps, fear a backlash taking into account the well-knitted aspects of religious influence in the society and the inroad these elements have made in it. *They need to understand that appeasement is no solution to it. The rude manner in which the Taliban leadership had snubbed Pakistan recently, by asking it to enter into talks with the TTP is nothing but an immature analysis of the grave situation. These disgruntled souls are out there for nuisance, and no amount of persuasion has helped in striking a relationship of sanity.*

URDU MEDIA

What will happen to Imran Khan? Hamid Mir, Jang, 01 June¹¹

A person went missing and for several months his wife and children did not know where he was. One day it came out that he was being tried in a court created under the Pakistan Army Act? This court sentenced the civilian to fourteen years of imprisonment for working against national security. *This civilian, Idris Khattak was sentenced by a military court during the reign of Imran Khan and is languishing in Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi. Now the stories of Imran Khan and many of his associates are also going to be like the story of Idris Khattak. It is being reported that Imran Khan along with many other members of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) will be tried in military court. Many people ask: What will happen to Imran Khan? Those asking questions should find out what happened to Idris Khattak? They would get the answer.* Idris Khattak received his PhD in humanities from St. Petersburg University in Russia in 1994 but came back to Pakistan to raise human rights issues in tribal areas. He worked with the Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch (HRW). *He kept meeting foreign diplomats and journalists. These meetings did bode well with the people who would disappear Pakistani citizens but were brought under the law. Those who demand the recovery of missing persons are declared as foreign agents.* So Idris was also put in jail by declaring

¹¹ <https://e.jang.com.pk/detail/455797>

him as a foreign agent. After being arrested on 13 November 2019, *Justice Waqar Sethi asked that Idris Khatak should be produced in the court and on 16 June 2020, the Ministry of Defense admitted that Idris Khattak is in its custody and action was being taken against him according to Pakistan Army Act. Meanwhile, Justice Waqar Seth died mysteriously. In 2020, Latif Afridi became the president of the Supreme Court Bar Association and wrote a letter to Prime Minister Imran Khan that civilians should not be tried in military courts. But he did not receive any response from Imran.* In December 2021, the military court sentenced Idris Khattak fourteen years of imprisonment on the charge of espionage just on the charges that in 2007, he had a meeting with MI6 (British Secret Service) agent Michael Sample. ... Latif Afridi filed an application in the Peshawar High Court (PHC) against the decision of the military court; But Justice Qaiser Rashid Khan and Justice Arshad Ali upheld the decision of the military court. After some time, Latif Afridi was killed inside the PHC bar. The killing was declared as a result of family enmity.

PML-Q calls All Party Conference, Editorial, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, 02 June¹²

On the one hand political instability in the country is at its peak; on the other hand efforts of making and breaking continue as well. In this regard the leader of the Pakistan Muslim League-Q, Chaudhry Shujat Hussain has called an All Party Conference (APC) to control political instability and to discuss various affairs of the country. The spokesperson of the PML-Q said that all parties, including the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) have been invited for the APC. At the same time, some former PTI members and ticket holders announced joining the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in South Punjab. In this regard, Asif Ali Zardari and other PPP leaders met those new joiners in the Bilawal House in Lahore. On the other hand, some defectors from the PTI, Fawad Chaudhry, Imran Ismail and Mehmmud Moulvi met Shah Mehmood Qureshi in Adalia Ajil. After the meeting these leaders said to the media that after many days they were speaking to the press. Condemning the incidents of 9 May, they said the situation has changed after the fateful day. However, things would move forward. They said that Pakistan is a country of 250 million people and a population of 250 million people cannot be left at the mercy of Asif Zardari, Nawaz Sharif and Maulana Fazlur Rehman. They said that there was political, economic and social uncertainty in Pakistan. They were in contact with all former PTI leadership. However, many PTI leaders have refuted Fawad Chaudhry's claims. It is understandable to start political activities as the elections may be held sooner or later. But the political leaders should keep in mind that they should make such decisions for the welfare of the people and the country that would bring

¹² <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/02-Jun-2023/1709694>

political stability so that economic challenges can be addressed with proper strategy. The kind of situation that exists at the moment one can hardly find any possibility of a stable economy. Now is the time that the political leaders show their vision to address the matters.

PTI after break up, Muhammad Asgar, *Ummat*, 08 June¹³

The events of the last few weeks have changed the political scenario of the country. The tension between the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and the establishment has reached new heights. The process of desertion is going on at high speed and many of its senior leaders like Asad Umar, Pervez Khattak, Shireen Mazari, among others have left the party. *On 9 May former Prime Minister Imran Khan became a rebellion and challenged his "selectors" The establishment answered the challenge with appropriate measures. Thousands of the PTI workers have been arrested and most likely they would be tried according to the Army Act or Terrorist act. Although some leaders of the PTI are getting some relief from the civilian courts and they distance themselves from the PTI in the subsequent press conferences,* the workers are facing the music consistently. Some years ago Imran Khan had boldly said that "We are the only option for the establishment." Today the game has taken a complete U-turn and the same establishment is not even ready to talk to Imran Khan. *Even the ruling alliance has turned its back on Imran Khan. Imran Khan had thought that by taking the battle in the courtyard of the establishment, he might force it to backtrack.* But the 9 May incidents provided an opportunity for the establishment to go against Imran Khan, his party and workers. Although Imran Khan condemned the attacks on the military installation, the establishment is not ready to let it go. The ongoing confrontation between the establishment and Imran Khan has given support to the ruling PDM alliance/PPP. A broad media campaign against the PTI has given the PDM/PPP chances to seek ban on the PTI. Or at least disqualify Imran Khan from fighting elections. Although the minus-1 formula has been tried in the past and failed, Imran Khan has played a role in ending his own politics.

Ten years of CPEC: What is the roadmap? Kashif Ashfaq, *Roznama Jang*, 23 July¹⁴

Pakistan and China's deep friendship is an example for the whole world. To strengthen this relationship further, *China initiated the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project ten years ago. The purpose of this project was to enhance the economic ties between both countries. With an initial investment of \$64 billion, the project has*

¹³ <https://ummat.net/epaper/news.php?date=2023/06/08/&p=idr2.gif>

¹⁴ <https://e.jang.com.pk/karachi/23-07-2023/page6>

successfully connected the Chinese city of Xinjiang to Gwadar in Pakistan through roads, railways, and pipelines, facilitating the transportation of cargo, oil, and gas. Furthermore, to address Pakistan's ongoing energy crisis and curb load shedding, several power projects have been initiated, including setting up multiple power plants and bottling excess electricity. Some other projects are also nearing completion. The most crucial aspect of this industrial cooperation project is the establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in various parts of Pakistan. These SEZs prioritize Chinese companies, allowing them to invest in industries, transfer technology, and create employment opportunities in Pakistan. Four of these SEZs are being fast-tracked for completion. Overall, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has significantly strengthened the bond between the two nations and has brought about substantial economic benefits for both sides. Under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Punjab's only exclusive economic zone is being established in Allamah Iqbal Industrial City, Faisalabad, where more than 25% of the work has been completed. Additionally, there are Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with Rashakai SEZ being 30% complete, in Balochistan with Bostan SEZ being 20% complete, and in Sindh with Dhabeji SEZ being more than 5% complete. Originally, all these economic zones were expected to be completed by 2020, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been delays. However, it is hoped that these economic zones will be completed soon, ushering in a new era of progress for Pakistan. The primary objective of these priority Special Economic Zones is to attract Chinese industries to relocate to Pakistan and promote economic cooperation between the two countries. Additionally, it is expected to boost Pakistan's revenues and lay a strong foundation for industrial development through technology transfer. It is estimated that the completion of these SEZs under CPEC will create 2 million jobs and add one trillion rupees annually to business activities. Furthermore, these economic zones will play a crucial role in increasing industrial production, technology transfer, and promoting alternative sources of income.

Amendment of the Army Act, Editorial, Roznama Jang, 29 July¹⁵

The Senate of Pakistan has approved the Comprehensive Bill to amend the Army Act of 1952, under which any action based on hostility or animosity against Pakistan, or the armed forces will be considered a punishable offence and appropriate penalties have been established. Minister of Defence, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, presented the bill in the

¹⁵ <https://e.jang.com.pk/karachi/29-07-2023/page6>

Parliament. In total, 18 amendments have been incorporated into the Army Act, and *those found guilty of maligning the armed forces or spreading hatred against them will face a two-year prison term and fine.* Under the bill, anyone who discloses information about Pakistan's security and interests in an official capacity without the permission of the Army Chief or authorized officer will be subject to five-year imprisonment. *Any retired, resigned, or discharged military personnel cannot participate in political activities until two years after their departure. Similarly, for officers assigned to sensitive duties, this restriction will be in place for five years.* The Army Act also prevents any questioning of these amendments. The purpose of the amendment bill is to take action under the Official Secrets Act and the Army Act against those who expose Pakistan's and its armed forces' interests negatively. The amendment bill also states that the control of the military will remain with the federal government, while the Army Chief will handle its administrative matters. *Foreign nationals or those holding dual citizenship and citizens under 18 years of age will not be eligible for commission in the armed forces. The Army Chief has also been given the authority to delegate their powers and responsibilities to any officer under him. During the discussion and approval of the bill, opposition members from the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) were also present but did not oppose it.* Reacting to the bill, Minister of State Mosaddeq Malik said it would reduce interference in politics.

ELECTRONIC MEDIA

On the Front with Karman Shahid, Imran Khan will be tried under military act, *Dunya News*, 01 June¹⁶

The host pointed out that there is no two views that economic is directly linked to the politics of the country. The internal politics and crisis in politics impacts the economy of the country vastly. If there is a political instability in the country just like in Pakistan currently, it adds to the challenges of the country. Today's guest is Finance Minister Ishaq Dar who promised that he will bring the value of dollar down and take rupees up. In this episode he asked why he was not able to control the dollar and the economy of the country. *Guest:* Federal Finance Minister Ishaq Dar. Kamran Shahid engaged in a debate with Federal Finance Minister Ishaq Dar on Pakistan IMF Deal and Budget 2023.

¹⁶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OIvZHT_-7Ic

Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, the Minister for Finance, highlighted the achievements of the current government in meeting all the necessary conditions set by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). He commended the government's success in fulfilling its obligations to the IMF. Additionally, *Minister Dar expressed his concerns about certain forces that appear to have ulterior motives, as they do not seem to support economic and political stability in Pakistan. He emphasized the importance of these elements being identified and addressed to ensure the country's progress.* Furthermore, Minister Dar mentioned that the national economy suffered a decline during the four-year tenure of the Chairman of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party. He attributed the economic deterioration to the policies implemented by the PTI leadership during their rule. **On Politics:** The government has announced that the Chairman of the PTI party will face trial under the Army Act for allegedly being involved in planning and executing the May 9 attacks. The government has taken this decision to hold the Chairman accountable for his alleged role in the incident. The government has evidence against the PTI and its senior leaders and this crisis in politics is impacting the economy and investment in the country. 9th May mayhem was insisted by Imran Khan and other PTI leaders. The instructions of the leader were followed blindly. The diplomatic community is thinking that this military court is for the first time against Imran Khan, but this is not true and it is going on from long time and it has to be conveyed to the international community. This law was withheld in case of Kulbhushan Yadav. We will invite key western countries and will be briefed about the case and army act (it just like 9/11). It has been decided that if there is any attempt to destroy the military installations in the country he will be charged under military act and there will be military trial.

Capital Talk with Hamid Mir, Army Act Passed in Senate: PTI silent? *Geo News*, 28 July¹⁷

The host informed that the army act amendment 2023 bill to amend the army act of 1952 was passed in the Senate. *Under the newly-inserted Section 175-E (national development), it has been proposed that the "Pakistan Army may, upon direction or with the concurrence of relevant authorities of the appropriate government in the prescribed manner, directly or indirectly, carry out activities related to, inter alia, national development and advancement of national or strategic interest"*. The opposition party PTI that use to strongly criticize the same did not utter a word against the same during the process. While on the other hand leaders of the government allies especially from the PPP stood against the bill. The host pointed out that it seems that the PTI has different policies for the court and the Parliament. The host asked why the PTI was silent. Does the

¹⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eqgtEUc2W4s>

SC has the right to reject the army act amendment bill 2023? *Guests:* Senator Musadiq Malik-PML-N, Senator Kamran Murtaza-JUI & Barrister Gowhar Khan-Lawyer PTI. **Senator Musadiq Malik** while talking about the army amendment bill 2023 pointed out that if the PTI did not say anything about the passing of the bill, then they should be asked why they have different policies. He added that everyone wants that there is no interference of army in the politics and making it criminal is a way to bind it. *When we talk about criminalization of the act, we also need to think about the 9th May event and the country is no longer only attacked by terrorists.* We have to make it sure these events does not take place in the country once again and for that we have to make strict laws, army amendment 2023 exactly take care of the same. **Kamran Murtaza** pointed out that the PTI leaders were in maximum number in the Senate while the army act was passed and if they voted against the bill it could not have in no way passed the bill. He added that it looks like all the PTI leaders are fine-tuned. He also added that all other bills were passed by the government in sync with the allies but this amendment bill 2023 of the army act raises certain questions and needed to be raised, so we did. **Barrister Gowhar Khan** informed that in Senate the leaders are not bonded and they can vote any ways. But instead of all these if these Parliamentarians vote according to phone calls then it is the failure of the Parliament. *We have challenged the military courts in the Supreme Court and this bill has just come.* In the act they cannot make anything offensive or criminalise, it will not sustain. In fact they can use the word ban and not make it a crime. When asked how SC can reject the amendment bill 2023 of the army act, he replied that the SC has certain rights and if the case come in the SC it may take note.

BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES

(Select incidents culled out from the Pakistan media)

Place	Date	Description	Killed	Injured
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa				
Bajaur ¹⁸	03/06/2023	2 killed in remote-controlled bomb blast in Bajaur: police	02	00

¹⁸ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1757731>

Peshawar ¹⁹	05/06/2023	Shootout between Pakistani troops and insurgents in border region kills 2 soldiers, 2 militants	04 01	00 02
Peshawar ²⁰	08/06/2023	Another Sikh trader gunned down in Peshawar	01	00
Peshawar ²¹	18/07/2023	6 Frontier Corps personnel injured as convoy attacked in Peshawar's Hayatabad: police	00	06
Peshawar ²²	20/07/2023	2 policemen martyred, 2 injured in late-night attack on Peshawar checkpoint	02	02
Khyber ²³	20/07/2023	3 policemen martyred, civilians among 9 injured in blast in Bara Bazaar in KP's Khyber district	03	09
Bajaur ²⁴	21/07/2023	4 injured in blast in KP's Bajaur district	00	04
Bajaur ²⁵	24/07/2023	Three of family shot dead in Bajaur	03	00

¹⁹<https://apnews.com/article/pakistan-taliban-shootout-soldiers-killed-c9432bde016b50ef8aa67d5493d1e911>

²⁰ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2423415/another-sikh-trader-gunned-down-in-peshawar>

²¹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1765450>

²² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1765784>

²³ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1765787>

²⁴ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1765985>

²⁵ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1766488>

Khyber ²⁶	25/07/2023	Bomb blast at mosque kills police officer, injures others in Khyber	02	05
Bajaur ²⁷	31/07/2023	At least 54 dead in suicide bombing at political rally in northwest province	54	200
Balochistan				
Quetta ²⁸	24/06/2023	Separatist group claims suicide bombing in southwest Pakistan, 1 police killed, 5 wounded	01	05
Sherani ²⁹	02/07/2023	4 security personnel martyred after checkpoints in Balochistan's Sherani come under attack	04	00

²⁶ <https://arynews.tv/bomb-blast-at-mosque-kills-police-officer-injures-others-in-khyber/>

²⁷ <https://news.sky.com/story/pakistan-explosion-at-least-40-dead-in-blast-at-political-rally-in-northwest-province-reports-12930662>

²⁸ <https://apnews.com/article/pakistan-suicide-bomber-11cd95d4ab2169eadb51bc3bb313afa0>

²⁹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1762571>