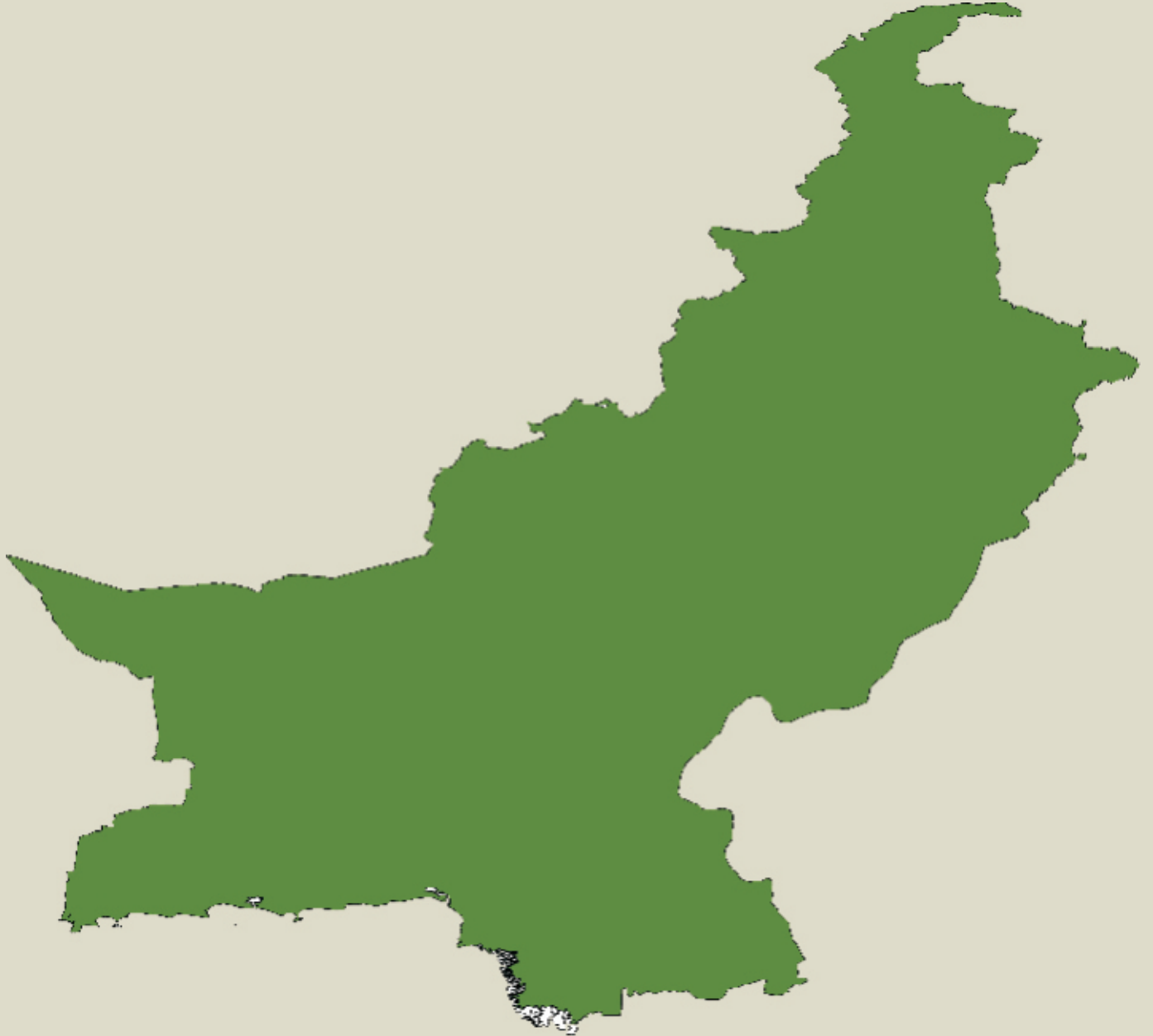


May 2022

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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POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

IHC stops govt from acting against PTI leaders, *The Express Tribune*, 02 May 2022¹

The IHC told the interior secretary to make sure that the PTI leader was not harassed by the police or any other investigation agency. It also stopped the government from taking further action against the PTI leader till the next hearing of the case. The court also sent a copy of the orders to the National Assembly Secretariat. In a comment on several cases against the PTI leaders, Chaudhry said as per a ruling by a seven-member bench the police could not register multiple FIRs regarding a single incident. He said the incident happened at Masjid-e-Nabwi, Saudi Arabia, while FIRs were registered in Pakistan.

Pakistan needs a PTI 2.0, Daud Khan, *The Express Tribune*, 17 May 2022²

The jalsas being held in various cities across the country confirm the crowd pulling power of Imran Khan. The ex-cricketer, ex-playboy, ex-fundraiser, and now ex-PM, has always had huge appeal. His religious-nationalist-anticorruption narrative has been popular among many marginalised and disillusioned sections of the population, in particular the youth and the urban middle classes groups who felt that their aspirations and ambitions were blocked by the corruption and nepotism of the previous regimes. Imran promised them a new Pakistan and they believed him. After three years in power, and little to show for it, Imran's popularity was being seriously eroded. ... **However, his ouster and the institutional crisis that accompanied it seem to have given PTI a new lease on life.** ... But what is PTI trying to achieve with his mass mobilisation campaign? Will it do any good to the country? And what are possible scenarios after the next election? ... **But there is an alternative future possible. A future where PTI and its leader 'grow up' and realise that parliamentary democracy requires a strong and articulate opposition that is critical, but constructive too — an opposition which acts as a check on government, disagrees and provides alternatives, but which can, when needed, also provide help and support to the government. Pakistan needs such a PTI Version 2.0.**

Pakistan, US ties, Kamran Yousaf, *The Express Tribune*, 16 May 2022³

Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is undertaking a visit to the US this week. He is going there primarily to attend the ministerial meeting on Food

¹<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2355096/ihcstops-govt-from-acting-against-ptileaders>

² <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2356887/pakistan-needs-a-pti-20>

³ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2356751/pakistan-us-ties>

Security being hosted by the US and the UN in New York, but will also meet his American counterpart on the sidelines. The conference is taking place against the backdrop of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict that has disrupted the supply chains raising prices of commodities in the international market. The invitation of the visit was extended by Secretary of State Antony Blinken in a telephone call to Bilawal – the first between the two since Bilawal joined Shehbaz Sharif’s cabinet. ... **The Pak-US relationship has remained transactional, meaning Washington only warmed up to Islamabad when it needed its support, particularly for its strategic and security interests. Against this backdrop, what can be expected from the Blinken-Bilawal meeting? The US, despite Pakistan’s desire to expand the ties beyond security, is still primarily focusing on counterterrorism and security cooperation particularly with regard to Afghanistan. The US alone cannot be held responsible for the security-driven ties. The fact remains Pakistan has not done much to enhance its cooperation with the US beyond security prism.** ... Bilawal’s meeting with Blinken may be an icebreaker but is unlikely to lead to any dramatic shift in the bilateral ties.

Situationer: ‘Inconvenient truths’ fuel capital rumour mill, Baqir Sajjad Syed & Amir Wasim, Dawn, 20 May 2022⁴

The federal capital on Thursday remained in the grip of speculation that the ‘establishment’ had started consultations over the formation of an interim government, ahead of possible early elections. **Political circles were also perturbed by the rumours about the possibility of a caretaker set up coming in amid calls for early elections. Perhaps it was in this backdrop that top leaders from the main ruling coalition partners, PPP and PML-N, declared that they would be more than happy to go for early polls.** The conjecturing began after reports emerged that former finance ministers Dr Hafiz Sheikh and Shaukat Tarin, along with former State Bank governor Raza Baqir, had met with senior military leaders. A source confirmed to Dawn that Dr Hafeez Shaikh had indeed participated in a meeting with the military leadership in the presence of at least two other technocrats-turned-politicians, who have held top positions in the Finance Ministry in the past. ... However, Inter-Services Public Relations, when asked about reports of such meetings, said: “These are all rumours and baseless statements which have no truth.” ...

Crisis in Balochistan, Editorial, The Nation, 20 May 2022⁵

Balochistan finds itself in the midst of a political crisis once again as a no-confidence motion has been submitted against Chief Minister Mir Abdul Qudoos Bizenjo in the provincial assembly. **It is important to note that this development comes just seven months after the submission of the same**

⁴ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1690527/situationer-inconvenient-truths-fuel-capital-rumour-mill>

⁵ <https://nation.com.pk/2022/05/20/crisis-in-balochistan/>

motion against the then chief minister Jam Kamal Khan Alyani that compelled him to resign. As per reports, the motion was signed by 14 lawmakers including some ministers of the Bizenjo-led coalition, and was submitted by the Jam Kamal-led group within the ruling Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) along with parliamentary leader of the Awami National Party (ANP) Asghar Khan Achakzai. **None of the opposition members belonging to the BNP-M, JUI-F and PkMAP have signed the no-trust resolution.** ... How can there be any expectation of substantial work or progress being done in a province where the government undergoes changes after every six to seven months? In a scenario where Mr Bizenjo chooses to resign before the voting takes place, he would be the fifth such chief minister of Balochistan. This trend paints a picture of political expediency and power being put in front of the well-being of a province that has been disadvantaged for far too long. The people of Balochistan deserve better.

Bilawal's US visit may lead to Shehbaz-Biden contact, Kamran Yousaf, *The Express Tribune*, 22 May 2022⁶

Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's recently concluded visit to the United States may restore bilateral contacts at the leadership level between the two countries, diplomatic sources familiar with the development said. ... In fact, sources claimed that the invitation for the food security conference was just a cover-up, the real purpose of the visit was to arrange the Bilawal-Blinken meeting. Secretary Blinken agreeing to host Bilawal on short notice was seen as unprecedented given the recent tensions between the two countries. **After former prime minister Imran Khan's visit to Moscow, there was a complete breakdown in the communication between Pakistan and the US. Contrary to PTI's public position, sources said Imran Khan's government tried to pacify the Biden administration over Russia's visit and Pakistani stance on Ukraine conflict.** ... Against this backdrop, Bilawal's visit was seen as significant. Prior to his trip, Director-General Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Lt General Nadeem Anjum travelled to Washington and held talks with relevant US officials including the CIA chief. The visit of the DG ISI went "really well" according to sources. In view of this flurry of engagements, there is now a possibility of contact at the leadership level. ... **After Bilawal's visit to the US, there is a feeling that Washington, which holds a considerable sway on the IMF, will not create any obstacles in the way of international lenders to restore the programme with Pakistan.** ... But the Shehbaz-led government is reluctant to make crucial decisions as it is first seeking a guarantee from the powerful quarters to ensure that the current dispensation will complete the rest of the term. Sources said that the next couple of days are crucial as on one hand Imran Khan is leading a march to Islamabad on May 25 while on the same day talks with the IMF would conclude.

⁶ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2357842/bilawals-us-visit-may-lead-to-shehbaz-biden-contact>

PTI's long march, *The News*, 23 May 2022⁷

The PTI has finally announced its long march to Islamabad, with Imran Khan asking his party supporters to congregate on Srinagar Highway in Islamabad at 3pm on Wednesday, May 25. The message is the same: there's been a foreign conspiracy through which he was replaced by corrupt politicians due to his independent foreign policy. The goal is: the assemblies to be dissolved and the government to give a date for early – and transparent – elections. There is no end-date for the 'march' which could mean it may well transform into a dharna. ... **There had been rumours that the current coalition would succumb to pressure by Khan before he announced the date for his long march – but so far that has not happened. However, there are signs that all is not on the 'same page' within the coalition government parties. Last week, Asif Ali Zardari had a meeting with PM Shehbaz Sharif. Reports indicate that the future of the government was discussed. While Zardari and Shehbaz seem to be in the camp that says the government should complete its tenure, there is reportedly another camp in the PML-N that would prefer early elections.** The idea is that at this moment the PML-N is in a position to get a simple majority in Punjab if elections are held early but this could change if elections are held after the budget is announced. The government may just be waiting till May 25 when our talks with the IMF are to conclude – to get a better sense of which way the economy is headed. Either way, the next two days will hopefully make it clear whether Pakistan goes to the polls this November or not.

Can passion make a nation rise?, Dr. Arif Alvi, *The Express Tribune*, 24 May 2022⁸

... Today, Pakistan is at a crossroads and passions in our country have been ignited like pent-up steam. We can either properly channel these passions and unite our nation to emerge out of crisis or we can polarize our people and scald and burn ourselves. **The choice is ours and responsible leadership matters more than ever. We need to sacrifice to handle the crises facing us, not by the poor alone but by the elite that has been sponging more benefits than is their right. Then we shall build. Guidance can emerge from institutions and political leaders both. Would they actually recognize their role is a question that will be answered soon.** ... I equate our 75 years of struggle to that of Hazrat Musa's nation wandering in the desert for 40 years before reaching the Promised Land. Have we learnt and are close to our envisioned nationhood or are we still in the throes of confusion? Heaven knows, but I see a very visible spark of awakening in the belly of the 5th most populous country in the world. **The crossroads we are finding ourselves in today are God given and such passions that have been ignited in the country are like pent-up steam. Ready**

⁷ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/959920-pti-s-long-march>

⁸ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2357957/can-passion-make-a-nation-rise>

to drive a locomotive if we can unite, or scald and burn the already suffering nation, if we polarize ourselves. Crisis itself carries opportunities and is bi-directional, leading towards a fall into an abyss or to take flight into the skies of tomorrow. ... The time is exactly right today, so let me make an emotional appeal, as without passion the Ummah cannot fulfill its own dream. "Rise my country as the World awaits you and let not the past drag you down."

Imran Khan's march to chaos, Zahid Hussain, Dawn, 25 May 2022⁹

The country seems to be heading towards political confrontation following the government's decision to ban the PTI march on Islamabad. Crackdowns on the opposition leaders and the sealing of the capital have created a highly volatile situation. The government already seems to be panicking. Imran Khan had earlier this week called upon his supporters to storm the capital. He begins what he describes as a 'battle for real freedom' today. He is demanding the immediate dissolution of the National Assembly and the announcement of an election date. ... **Whether or not Khan succeeds in his objective, the situation is becoming increasingly untenable for the present dispensation. The government's actions could set fire to a combustible situation. That's exactly what the former prime minister wants. He has already announced he will defy the government's ban. The impending confrontation could cause the entire political edifice to collapse, raising the possibility of extra-constitutional intervention.** ... The latest development could put the military leadership, which is already under attack by the PTI supporters, in a serious quandary. Imran Khan's warning seems to be directed at the security establishment. While once he himself had been propped up by the establishment, the former prime minister is now on the warpath against his former patrons. This situation has raised the possibility of the military getting mired more deeply in the political power game. It is perhaps the most serious crisis the country has faced in recent times.

The question of neutrality, Syed Sheheryar Raza Zaidi, Dawn, 26 May 2022¹⁰

Never has the English language assumed such significance in Pakistani politics as it has now. Three words lie at the heart of the current political dispensation: 'neutrality', 'conspiracy', and 'interference'. Ironically, if the PTI and its leaders are to be believed, the era of 'neutrality' is what began the untimely slide that spelt the end of their regime, and the words 'interference' and 'conspiracy' were just the means to an end. **Of late, former prime minister Imran Khan and his party have trained their guns on the 'neutrals' and how they stood by as the regime was ousted through a 'conspiracy'. This is part of an apparently concerted campaign of thinly veiled jibes aimed squarely at the neutrality of the knights — i.e. the military establishment. While the PTI continues to call**

⁹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1691417/imran-khans-march-to-chaos>

¹⁰ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1691561/the-question-of-neutrality>

'neutrality' into question, the current government, i.e. the establishment's former detractors, continue to hail 'neutrality'. ... Conversely, sympathisers of the PTI argue that such 'neutrality', ie the need to stay out of politics, should not be seen in a vacuum. The armed forces, much like all other state institutions, have a role to play in safeguarding the interests of Pakistan. ... All said and done, whether the PTI is true in its narrative or not, one hopes that this 'neutrality' continues, not just because it would honour the dictates of the Constitution, but also because it would allow the existing political system to flourish, albeit with hiccups and showdowns along the way.

'Back channel talks going on' to break deadlock with India, Kamran Yousaf, *The Express Tribune*, 30 May 2022¹¹

Pakistan and India have been engaged in "back channel" talks in order to break the stalemate in the relationship between the two nuclear-armed neighbours, according to official sources familiar with the development. ... **Since the new government came to power in Islamabad, there has been a renewed push by the two sides to find some way out. "Call it back channels, Track-II or behind-the-scene talks, I can only confirm that relevant people in both countries are in touch with each other," an official source said.** ... Prime Minister Shehbaz in his maiden address to the nation on Friday asked India to reverse the August 5, 2019 actions so that both sides could engage in talks for the resolution of all outstanding issues, including Kashmir. India, the sources said, is inclined to the re-engagement but reluctant to offer something that would help Pakistan resume the dialogue. **"Our policy is clear. We want to engage with everyone, including India," said a senior member of the coalition government, while requesting anonymity. The government functionary, however, was sceptical if the hardline Narendra Modi government could show any flexibility on the issue of Kashmir.** The sources said that the Western powers, including the United States and the UK, were also pushing for defusing tension and opening some formal channels of communications between the two South Asian neighbours. ... Those who favour the resumption of trade with India believe that this may lead to dialogue on Kashmir. But others say that normalising trade and commercial ties with India without seeking reversal of August 2019 actions would weaken Pakistani stance.

Instability in Balochistan, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 30 May 2022¹²

Political instability is on the cards in Balochistan. The rift between the Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) is now quite categorical, and it seems its political fissures will no longer be restricted to the province. **The rejection of a no-confidence motion against Chief Minister Abdul Quddus Bizenjo on**

¹¹ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2359084/back-channel-talks-going-on-to-break-deadlock-with-india>

¹² <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2358984/instability-in-balochistan>

technical grounds has come as an upset. It has led to crossing of swords among allies, especially the PDM. The no-trust vote tabled by former chief minister Jam Kamal Alyani, the BAP president, could not harness the required support to be formally tabled on the floor of the house. This faux pas is now being studied by quarters in the province and the federal government, and keeping their fingers crossed. ... The country has been in the grip of uncertainty for the last two months – something that does not augur well for its economic health. A glance at the current parliamentary trajectory suggests that when Balochistan sneezes, the federal government sooner than later catches flu. So seems to be the case this time around. What is desired is a period of consolidation so that internal and external factors could be dealt with in harmony. Balochistan's security decorum is too fragile to stand any political upheaval, and this is where stakeholders should huddle for exploring a way out.

ECONOMIC ISSUES

Record remittances, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 17 May 2022¹³

There was a rare bit of good news on the economic front, as monthly foreign remittances crossed \$3 billion for the first time ever in April, breaking the record of \$2.8 billion set a month earlier. According to the SBP, the April 2022 figure stands at \$3.1 billion, an increase of 12% over April 2021 and enough to keep the country on track to beat the \$30 billion remittances target for the ongoing fiscal year — we have already received \$26.1 billion in the first 10 months of the year. While Saudi Arabia remains the biggest source of remittances, the figure for the current fiscal year is just 1.1% higher than last year; while the figure for the UAE, the second-biggest remittance source, actually fell by 3.6%. The increase has actually been driven by US-based Pakistanis and others in 'non-traditional' source countries, including the EU and Canada, which all saw year-on-year increases between 20% and 28%. ... But whatever the case, we must note that despite the healthy increase in remittances, **the ballooning imports figure and rising debt-servicing costs mean that the foreign exchange reserves continue to dwindle. It is also worth noting that no country the size of Pakistan can continue to rely only on remittances to support its economy — heavy reforms are needed to stimulate domestic economic activity and grow exports while keeping imports in check. Unfortunately, no Pakistani government has been able to find a way to achieve all three.**

¹³ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2356891/record-remittances>

IMF talks, Editorial, *The News*, 18 May 2022¹⁴

Whichever government is in power, it will have to desperately find a fix for the currency crisis that has set the economy on a collapse course, with the most likely way out being revival of a stalled bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). **But how? A poorly manned economic front that is devoid of visionary leadership is a bad signal to markets as well as lenders. Pakistan must have them believe it has a homegrown programme that is capable of putting an end to this stalemate on a sustainable basis.** The country's economic managers have now rushed to Doha to convince the IMF to rescue them – in a week-long engagement that starts today. If a consensus evolves, the agreement would be tabled before the Fund's Executive Board for completion of 7th Review and release of a \$1 billion tranche under \$6 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF). The resumption of the suspended IMF programme hinges upon withdrawing the 'unfunded subsidies' on fuel and electricity. ... **The IMF will likely also ask for a viable strategy to build up dwindling foreign currency reserves which had depleted by over \$6 billion in the last eight weeks and now touched \$10.3 billion held by the State Bank of Pakistan.** ... The IMF is expected to also come up with a prescription to present a balanced budget in order to suppress demand for controlling the twin deficits so the government will be asked to tighten fiscal and monetary policies and take additional taxation measures and remove income tax exemptions. There are no easy solutions ahead and the government will have to get its act together to steer the economy out of a perfect storm.

Debt trap, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 24 May 2022¹⁵

As the new government struggles to manage a plethora of economic crises, a new SBP report shows the extent of the debt in which ex-PM Imran Khan's government has left the country drowning. **Pakistan's total debt and liabilities almost doubled during Imran's almost four years in power, rising by Rs23.7 trillion to stand at Rs53.5 trillion by March 2022. The debt also rose significantly in relation to GDP – rising from 76.4% of GDP when Imran took charge to 80% of GDP in March, even though the decision to 'rebase' the economy earlier this year reduced its debt to GDP ratio.** The structure of the new debt shows that it is mostly non-productive, meaning that it will not translate into economic growth that would, in turn, make the overall debt to GDP ratio reduce over time. ... **What we do know is that everything that could go wrong did go wrong – the PTI government regularly failed to meet its tax targets, sent the rupee into a free fall, and failed to reform loss-making state-owned enterprises.** ... The only saving grace for Imran since leaving office appears to be that the new government appears incapable of fixing what PTI broke.

¹⁴ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/958642-imf-talks>

¹⁵ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2357966/debt-trap>

SECURITY SITUATION

The Taliban mindset, Muhammad Amir Rana, *Dawn*, 15 May 2022¹⁶

The Taliban regime in Afghanistan enjoys complete freedom to enforce its political and religious order. They are doing what they believe is right. And in doing so, as suggested by their exclusive governance approach and decisions on women's education and the veil, they are validating the international community's suspicions regarding their ability to govern, deal with security, and ensure human rights. Still, their desperation for recognition of their government by the international community has remained the key reason why they had so far shied away from implementing their real agenda. **Nine months after their takeover of Afghanistan, the Taliban seem to have realised that international recognition is not coming anytime soon, and that whenever it does, it will be at the cost of their ideological dogma for which they have fought for years.** ... The Taliban regime has failed to counter the threat posed by the militant Islamic State's Khorasan chapter, and this factor is now causing Afghanistan trouble in its ties with its neighbours. IS-K has broader regional and ideological ambitions and is creating internal problems for the Taliban regime. ... The Taliban have not made any substantial efforts to contain the TTP or prevent it from attacking Pakistan. ... Pakistan is also concerned about the consequences of the Taliban's failure to deal with Afghanistan's economic and diplomatic challenges. ... **The irony is that the Taliban's approach is failing Afghanistan, but their supporters in Pakistan are jubilant about the imposition of a strict religious code in Afghanistan.**

Pakistan under shadows of hybrid warfare, Imtiaz Gul, *The Express Tribune*, 18 May 2022¹⁷

If consequences of a hybrid warfare had any real life manifestation, it is the present-day Pakistan with acute political discord, crippling economic crisis and simmering but debilitating (in)security challenges. It stands out as the living example of a notion (hybrid warfare) that its military establishment has been touting as the major cause of the country's negative outlook abroad and internal politico-economic instability. The 'unity' government, led by PM Shehbaz Sharif, is at best fledgling because of the intrinsic deep enmity between PPP and PML-N. Forex reserves have alarmingly depleted from \$17b six weeks ago to under \$10b. The current account deficit is expected to be over \$16b. Power and gas circular debt is hovering over Rs3,000b. ... **In other words uncertainty and absence of real structural reform is leading Pakistan down the path of insolvency. Can any number of forces, defence systems or even nukes prevent the specter of bankruptcy? Vested interest has only exploited these fault-lines as part of a possible hybrid warfare. Time is up to review the money-guzzling public governance model and rationalise the hyped-up**

¹⁶ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1689767/the-taliban-mindset>

¹⁷ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2357002/pakistan-under-shadows-of-hybrid-warfare>

but financially overbearing security apparatus. If we don't, the state may sink into a perilous irretrievable situation. Even if the externally-driven hybrid warfare were a reality, this must not deflect from the grave reality. Taliban next door may have enforced an abrupt US withdrawal but Pakistan is certainly paying the price for the perceptions associated with the Taliban return to power. It is a massive cost a country is paying for delusional and questionable 'strategic' conduct.

Deteriorating Security Situation, Editorial, *The Nation*, 18 May 2022¹⁸

Another tragic blast claimed the life of a woman and injured nearly a dozen others on Monday in Karachi. As per reports, the blast occurred in the densely populated Kharadar area of the city and the plan it seems, was to target a police patrol using an IED. ... **The current deteriorating situation merits a reevaluation of the National Action Plan (NAP) so that it is up-to-date with the evolving militant landscape in the country and region. There is a need to track and maintain a database of the new groups that have surfaced recently, in addition to older groups that have been able to revive themselves following the takeover of the Taliban in Afghanistan.** Of course, our counter-terrorism strategy also will have to evolve and cannot just be limited to kinetic measures, as the authorities will have to also target the financial structure that is enabling these groups, as we did on past occasions. This will require improving our intelligence gathering mechanism, which can only be achieved with seamless inter-agency coordination. Vigilance is the need of the hour and we need to act with the utmost urgency.

TTP peace talks, Editorial, *Dawn*, 20 May 2022¹⁹

Another attempt to sue for peace with the outlawed TTP is being made, again facilitated by the Afghan Taliban that rule Kabul. According to a spokesman of the Afghan Taliban, there has been "significant progress" in talks between the government and the TTP that took place in Kabul, with the result that the latter has extended a ceasefire till the end of this month. ... **Primarily, the people of Pakistan need to know what the finer points of any agreement with the TTP are. After all, this is a group that has waged war on Pakistan and has been responsible for some of the most atrocious acts of terrorism the country has witnessed, so there is natural concern whether the TTP's leadership and cadres will be willing to give up the way of the gun.** ... Peace is required, especially in the war-ravaged erstwhile tribal belt, but there must be a difference between peace and capitulation to the demands of the militants. Moreover, it should be remembered that a similar exercise to make peace with the TTP was launched by the previous government last year, which collapsed soon after it began. ...

¹⁸ <https://nation.com.pk/2022/05/18/deteriorating-security-situation/>

¹⁹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1690569/ttp-peace-talks>

Attack on Chinese, Editorial, Dawn, 27 April 2022²⁰

A new wave of terrorism has been unleashed in the country. While the attacks are mostly aimed at our border regions by religiously motivated terrorist groups based in Afghanistan, there are frequent reminders that Baloch militancy, too, is on the rise. Yesterday's shocking suicide bombing that targeted a van carrying Chinese academics near the Confucius Institute in Karachi University was not the first time Baloch militants have attacked Chinese interests in the city. ... **However, with the deployment of a woman suicide bomber, the BLA attack on the university premises has added yet another dimension. It was from the terrorists' point of view a far more effective attack than the previous two had been, as it killed at least three Chinese nationals.** ... While issues such as the underdevelopment of Balochistan, the Baloch missing persons, and the military footprint stamped on large parts of the province must be addressed, these should not provide a pretext to whitewash such violence. ...

URDU MEDIA

TTP declares ceasefire, Editorial, Jang, 02 May 2022²¹

Mufti Noor Wali Mehsud, head of the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), has declared a ceasefire from 29 Ramadan to 10 Shawwal (from 1 May to 11 May) in a spirit of goodwill for the Pakistani people. Taliban have been instructed to strictly implement this decision. In December last year, the TTP refused a one-month ceasefire. Pakistan said the banned TTP used Afghan territory to carry out bombings on the Pakistani border, injuring several security personnel. The Afghan Taliban government had mediated the talks.

However, progress was not possible on the TTP's strong demands, including the release of more than 100 TTP prisoners. Last month, a military spokesman said that no talks had taken place with the TTP and that the operations by security forces are ongoing. The TTP's recent attacks on security forces across the border have escalated, leading to tensions between the Pakistani government and the Afghan Taliban administration. Pakistan has not been lucky in terms of its neighbors. It has neighbors like India and Afghanistan.

Pakistan sank into the mire of terrorism by not setting any boundaries and giving excessive concessions in the "Jihad of Afghanistan". The Taliban declared a ceasefire but it is not a single group. Therefore, the army and other security agencies should always be ready to control terrorism with its National Action Plan.

²⁰ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1687052/attack-on-chinese>

²¹ <https://e.jang.com.pk/lahore/02-05-2022/page7>

Claims of Shahbaz and Imran, Editorial, Roznama Jasarat, 9 May 2022²²

The problem with Pakistani politicians is that they keep changing their statements or claims before or after coming to power. Before coming to power, the PML-N leaders thought that every action of Imran Khan was wrong and they claimed that we will fix everything. Similarly, before him, Imran Khan had claimed that the rulers are thieves. If we come, it will rain in this country from the next day. But when Imran Khan came to power, he too was shown the facts. Now the fourth government of Shehbaz Sharif or the Muslim League has come and as soon as they came, they too have been shown the facts. So now they too have got to weep over the former government and the world situation. Miyan Sahib has recently stated that he will not make false claims..... All these people have been the king of corruption in their own party government, Nawaz Sharif is a thief and there are cases against Shahbaz Sharif, so those who worked with him should not have been kept in PTI but they did it. Therefore, there is no need to pay much attention to the statements and maneuvers of these politicians. There are only a handful of people who have the same style of conversation. Everyone's statements and claims remain the same.

They warm up the political mood, make people quarrel with each other, and change parties at any time. Slogans and claims were made by all. Shahbaz Sahib, take out your clothes and put a price on them. See how much this will affect the price of flour in your home. Focus on the concrete work, not the long and meaningless ones. And Imran Khan, who is gradually admitting that the United States conspired against him, is not anti-American. He should also take stock of his four-year tenure, how much work he did and how much he talked. The nation does not need words.

Another warning from the Pakistan Army to politicians, Sarafarz Saeed, Roznama Ausaf, 10 May 2022²³

Major General Babar Iftikhar, Director General, Pakistan Army Public Relations, ISPR, has once again expressed grave concern and anger that politicians of different parties have openly defamed the Army for their political interests. Social media is being used for this purpose, and open speeches against the army are also being made in the meetings. The Director-

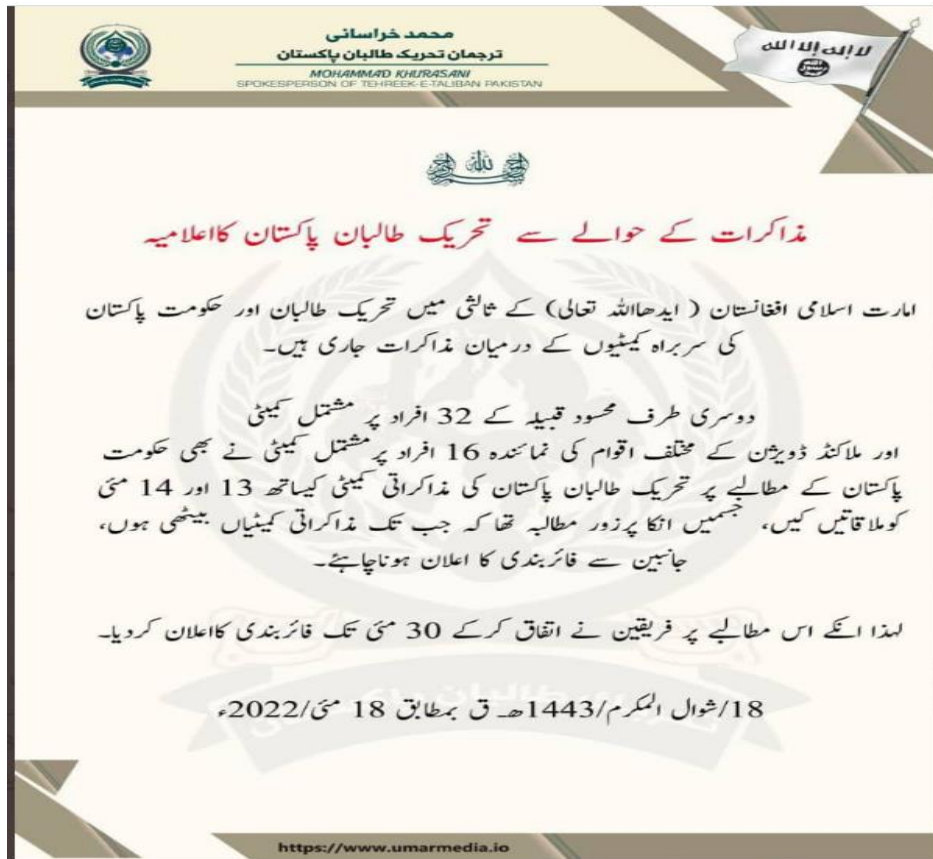
General, as usual, denied the allegations against the army and remained silent, urging politicians and journalists to be cautious. It did not say what the army would do if the attitude of these people does not change. This question is meaningless, obviously, the army will remain silent again! I have been hearing such disturbing statements and denials over and over again for a long time. Unfortunately, every time such a warning is given, the slander and gossip

²² <https://www.jasarat.com/2022/05/09/220509-03-4/>

²³ https://www.dailyausaf.com/epaper/page?station_id=1&page_id=160662&date=2022-05-10

against the army increases. I am giving a few examples of sadness. Asif Zardari, while roaring with an open mouth on television, issued a stern statement about some generals playing brick by brick and closing the country from Karachi to Torkham. The army remained silent. Bilawal Zardari and Maryam Nawaz used to call Imran Khan's government 'selected, selected' as soon as they woke up in the morning. This was an open accusation of selection against the army which was the main slogan of every press conference. In addition to selection the words unseen power, angels, and backers were also used for months and even years. No one took notice. A "brave" journalist announced publicly that he would scratch the face of the generals, in extreme anger! What action was taken against him? He is still working in the same position and repeating the same things. What did anyone do about it? Nawaz Sharif, who has been declared a "judicial fugitive" and a "notorious fugitive", has repeatedly taken the name of Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa in public on television. He has used harsh words. ('Individual guilt!') Everyone remained silent!!

Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan's declaration on Pakistan-TTP talks, 18 May 2022



Facilitated by the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan talks are going on between committees of TTP and Pakistan.

On the other hand, on the demand of a group of 32 people from the Mahsud Tribe and a diverse group of 16 people from Malakand Division met with TTP on the demand of Pakistan on 13 and 14 May 2022. Both these groups

demanded as long as the talks between two assigned committees are going on, both the parties should declare a ceasefire.

On this demand, both Pakistan and TTP have declared ceasefire till 30 May 2022.

Protecting Pak-China Strategic Relations, Editorial, *Roznama 92 News*, 18 May 2022²⁴

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Prime Minister Li Keqiang to increase cooperation to activate economic zones as soon as possible. *This telephonic call comes at a time when international media houses are reporting that work on CPEC projects has slowed down since the new government came to power in Pakistan.*

The CPEC project came at a time when Pakistan was moving away from the United States and its allies. Pakistan was feeling the loss of its interests in the US strategy in the Afghan jihad and then in the war on terror. These armed conflicts have exacerbated many problems in the region. *For the first time, the western border, in particular, appeared more insecure and tense than the eastern border. ...*

Political instability in Pakistan and repeated policy changes have damaged the confidence of international investors. It seems that the credit for the progress in CPEC projects goes to the interest of international investors. ...

PML-N believes that the PTI government was not able to monitor the CPEC projects, so there were many glitches and delays. For a while, relations between Pakistan and China have been one of good neighborliness. ... Although opposition circles have been criticizing the economic aspect of Pak-China relations in the PTI government, Imran Khan made frequent visits to China and praised the Chinese government's efforts to alleviate poverty.....

However, hundreds of Chinese artisans have recently returned to their homeland. The security concerns of the Chinese people are increasing to such an extent that it is beginning to have an effect on bilateral relations.

The Chinese leadership has been appreciative of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's working style in the past. In China, he is remembered by the words Punjab Speed. *Security, political stability, and international investment are the three barriers that are fundamental to advancing Pak-China economic relations.* Whether the current government remains in power or the caretaker government, the works on the CPEC projects should be completed expeditiously.

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https://www.roznama92news.com/efrontend/web/index.php/index2?station_id=2&page_id=7&is_common=Y&n=1000&xdate=2022-05-18

Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is visiting China on the occasion of the 71st anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. *Pakistan was one of the first countries to recognize China's sovereignty from the very beginning. However, efforts to establish diplomatic relations between the two countries began in the early 1950s.*

Over the past 71 years, the two countries have played their part in overcoming all kinds of difficulties and making the friendship stronger and stronger, and the Pak-China friendship has stood the test of time. China openly supported Pakistan in the wars of 1965 and 1971 and provided all kinds of assistance on the diplomatic and military fronts.

It is not a matter of one or two years but of years and generations. Strong ties and friendships between two countries can be gauged only when one of them is facing difficulties. China has given unconditional support to Pakistan in every difficult time and has not shied away from going to extremes. China has always provided practical assistance for the development of Pakistan's economic sector. From the provision of technology to the training of manpower, China has always offered Pakistan open cooperation. China never forgets that Pakistan extended a hand of friendship to it at a time when the world was still in a frenzy about China.

Between Pakistan and China is not a series of projects but a series of development projects under which innumerable projects have been completed. The 3218 km-long corridors under this project are nearing completion. After the completion of this project, a new era of development and prosperity will begin in the region. With the completion of this corridor, China's access to Asia, Europe, and other markets will be possible. China currently transports its oil from Salga to Shanghai in three months, covering a distance of 16,000 KM, but with the completion of this corridor, this distance will be reduced to only 5,000 KM. ...

In this 71-year journey of friendship, China has never allowed Pakistan to realize that it is a big country or a superpower of the world. The cordial and ideal Pak-China relations can be gauged from the fact that the Presidents, Prime Ministers, Foreign Ministers, and other delegations of the two countries continue to visit each other's countries. The nature of our friendship with China is public.

²⁵ <https://dailypakistan.com.pk/E-Paper/lahore/2022-05-22/page-9>

The government and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) are adamant: PTI wants to enter Islamabad at any cost while the government is adamant to stop it. *Though it's a right in democracy to protest, in Pakistan mostly such protests are called long marches and then converted into dharnas.* On the other hand, the government of the day tries everything to stop such a situation. In the whole world containers are used for carrying goods; in Pakistan containers are used for blocking the way of protestors.

Is it possible that the political and apolitical leaders who use every means and resource and the roads for their long marches would assess the implications of such measures? Such protests block roads and create problems for thousands of travelers. To manage the crowd, administration often has to use police and sometimes forces, leading to violence and injury to many people.

Pakistan is a developing country. Stability is a precondition for the country's development which is never met (Hamara mulk tarqi pazeer ma'eshtoon mei shamil hai jahan payeedar tarqi ke liye esta'hkaam bunyadi sha'rit hai magar hum se wohi puri nahi hu pa rahi). Every next day roads are blocked in the name of one or other protest. Adverse implications of such actions can't be overlooked. ...

Politics of protests express itself in intolerable society, instability and collective psychology of mobocracy. *Protests and dharnas have introduced a new change in the country wherein to get their demands met people come together, create havoc or block roads. People have perhaps realized that this is the way to get their demands accepted. In that case the state needs to play its role and stop the society from fragmentation.*

Unfortunately, political groups are pursuing their vested interests and no one cares about taking a fair and constructive view of the situation. Violence is being promoted and youth misguided. ...

There is no doubt that the government bears the responsibility for maintaining peace and stability in the country. It needs to carry out this duty according to the rule of law. Similarly, *protests are allowed according to rule of law. In the case of PTI's long march, if the government and PTI would have communicated about it, the country which is caught in many crises, could have been saved from yet another crisis.*

²⁶ https://e.dunya.com.pk/detail.php?date=2022-05-25&edition=LHR&id=6093133_13238439

State's defense institutions should protect the country, Rehmat Khan Wardag, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, 26 May 2022²⁷

PTI chairman and former Prime Minister Imran Khan announced 'Haqeeqi Azadi March' (True Independence March) and said that his convoy would enter Islamabad through Srinagar highway. Imran issues statements every day. To stop the PTI's march the government took preventive measures and arrested many PTI workers and leaders. The situation is worsening with every passing moment. The government accused Imran Khan of having intention of a 'bloody march' to create disturbance in the country.

In democracy it's the right of every political party to protest peacefully. But the people who talk about 'Long Bloody March' want instability in Pakistan so that their failures are kept secret and the blame goes onto the people ruling the country (Lekin khooni long march ki baat karne waley mulk mei aisa intishaar chhate hain ki jis se inn ki nakamyaan chhup jaein aur ilzaam mulk sambalne walaon per a'ajaye). The government should have allowed the PTI to carry out its march and also taken assurance from it that the march would be peaceful. Now after trying to stop it, the situation in the country is unsettling. ...

In this battle between the government and the opposition, the country's economy has been ignored and is about to collapse. Politicians to seek their interest are using the country towards that situation. In this context the responsible and sensible neutral personalities should come forth and play their role by facilitating talks between the government and the opposition for finding a mutually acceptable solution to the problem. It would be better if a national government is appointed on one common point to bring the country out of the existing economic crisis.

If the current situation continues, it won't take much time for Pakistan to become Sri Lankan. In this one thing is clear that to save the country the defense and security institutions will have to come forward to defend the country. Therefore, the defense institution should make the government and the opposition sit together and think about a viable solution.

One way for development and welfare in the country is to, as was pointed out by Air Marshal Asghar Khan long back, divide the country into a small administrative division. In every division there should be a high court and a bench of the Supreme Court so that people court justices on a fast track basis.

²⁷ <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/26-May-2022/1554193>

Economic challenges and the speech of the Prime Minister, Editorial, Daily Duyna, 28 May 2022²⁸

In his address to the nation Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced a relief package for the poor in which the latter 2000 PKR/month. The announcement was made at a time when the process of energies were raised by 18 percent. Given the rise in the prices of energies it was a huge burden for the poor. However, the relief package for the poor will not meet their needs. Additionally, expect to say that some results of the economic policies of the government will start to emerge only towards the end of the year. How will the people survive till then?

The government should take this in mind: While it is necessary to take measures to address the issues of financial losses in the country, but the thinking that by taking away the limited money from the pockets of the poor is a mistake which was committed by the previous government as well (Ma'eshi estah'kaa ke liye malyaati khasaara kam karna zaroori huta hai magar awaam ke moon'h se niwale' ch'een kar ma'esshyut ko estah'kaam karna ek wa'hima hai jis ka shikaar sabiq hukumat bhi rahi). During the previous regime inflation and budget deficits reached their highest ever.

Despite the fact that in the current financial year the government has made big cuts in the development allocations, most affected remained these very sectors as each government cut funds for these sectors only rather than other less important sectors. Thus, health, education and welfare schemes appeared as the last preferences for each government.

If despite making such big cuts in the welfare schemes there is improvement in the economy, the sacrifices made by people do not yield any positive results. Public welfare is the duty of even the government. The focus of the government should go toward the expenses on unproductive sectors. ... If the income of the government will be less and expenses more, then how can people expect any relief from the government?

The government is saying that in December or January the policies will start yielding benefits. But this will be possible only if correct measures are taken to stabilize the economy. By taking a few billion dollars from the IMF and investing it in the economy will be only a bubble economy which will not survive for too long.

²⁸ https://e.dunya.com.pk/detail.php?date=2022-05-28&edition=LHR&id=6097319_95903316

ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Bolo Talat Hussain kay sath, Neo Tv Network, 12 May²⁹

Syed Talat Hussain, the host of the show began with the issue of appointment of the new army chief of Pakistan. He asked Majid Nizami, a senior journalist, “whose names are at there at the top in the seniority list for the appointment of the new army chief in Pakistan?” To this query, Majid Nizami replied that “all those generals who are in the seniority list are well qualified for this job. They have a balanced career throughout. They have performed their duties flawlessly. The list has the senior-most Lt. Gen Sahir Shamshad Mirza, then the list also has Lt. Gen. Azhar Abbas, Lt. Gen. Nauman Mahmood Raja, Lt. Gen. Faiz Hameed, Lt. Gen. Muhammad Aamer, Lt. Gen. Chiragh Haider Baloch and Lt. Gen. Nadeem Ahmad Anjum Sheikh”. The host asked the journalist, “Does the list change?” To this the journalist replied, “yes, it can change provided something big happens or some big changes take place within the politics of Pakistan”. Turning to Kashif Abbasi, the main analyst of the show, the host asked, “Don’t you think that Khawaja Asif willy-nilly talked about the appointment of new army chief when there are other important issues in the country to discuss like the economic meltdown in Pakistan? But he said that it was true that the only news that was hogging the limelight was the appointment of the new army chief. Don’t you feel surprised on Khawaja Asif’s revelation about the appointment of the new army chief in Pakistan? To this question, Kashif Abbasi replied, “I don’t see any news in this regard. He was true in saying that the process of the army chief’s appointment should be based hundred percent on merit and should not be the subject of political debate. However, I don’t agree with him when he says that the defence ministry or the Prime Minister don’t have the space left to say, ‘send three or eight names instead of five’. This for me is the prerogative of the Prime Minister and whosoever he deems fit for the post will

be our next army chief.”

Off The Record with Kashif Abbasi, ARY News, 19 May 2022³⁰

The host Kashif Abbasi started the show by asking about the possible option available to the government in order to deal with the ongoing economic crisis. He asked his guest *Shahid Khaqan Abbasi (former Prime Minister and current member of the National Assembly PML-N)* what option this government has to solve the current economic crisis? Are they going to take a tough decision or

²⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yLhZbJb65xM&t=13s>

³⁰ <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x8ayj9b>

will they opt for a fresh election to save themselves from the blame of ruining the state?

In reply, Shahid Khaqan said that the coalition (government) has an untied opinion on the continuation of the full term. There is no question of an early election right now. The economic conditions of the country have reached the point where tough decisions are the only option. These decisions will definitely impact the lives of ordinary people. But the economic conditions of the country should improve. These decisions will definitely have political costs to pay. But this cost should not be borne alone by the coalition or the government. *The government should call a meeting of the National Security Committee (NSC) which includes both military and civilian leadership, along with the President, Chairman of the Senate, Speaker of the National Assembly, Chief Ministers, and other leaders of the country. They should discuss the current situation of the country with them and also the possible solutions for it. The government should ask them for their help in saving the country. The decision which will come out of this will not be the decision of the government or any political party but a collective decision to save the country.*

Najam Sethi Show, 24 News HD, 23 May 2022³¹

The host Ayesha Naaz started the show by asking a pointed question to Najam Sethi. She asked, “You said this government will not and should not continue its full term earlier”. What happened in the last two days that changed your whole prediction completely?

Najam Sethi in his reply agreed to this and said yes I predicted this government will not be able to continue its full term because at that time the situations were not favourable. At that time government and most of the leaders in that coalition had this realization that the mess Imran Khan’s government had created will now be put on them. The revival of the economy without increasing prices and removing subsidies was not possible. These kinds of bold decisions would have made them unpopular among the masses. Therefore they decided to dissolve this government and appoint a caretaker government. Nawaz Sharif also expressed a similar view after the meeting with the leaders of the current government in London. In fact, the establishment also had a similar opinion.

Now what changed in these few days is that after discussion with IMF and other international financial institutions as well as allies like Saudi Arabia, China, the USA, and the UAE, the government believes that the economic crisis can be managed with few difficulties. Increasing of petrol prices and ending subsidies is not the only way but with other initiatives, it can be managed. Mifatah Ismail will explain this to IMF. *Another important development was*

³¹ <https://youtu.be/ioUVhsUVVW8>

the role of Asif Ali Zardari. Earlier he played important role in building this coalition and ousting Imran from power. He convinced the coalition partners that dissolving the government at this point will not serve the purpose. It will be looked like a defeat from Imran Khan without even going for election.

Capital Talk (Is Pakistan Going Towards Civil War?) - 24th May 2022, May 25, 2022³²

Hamid Mir, the host of Capital talk, began his conversation with three of his guests: Nasira Javid Iqbal (former jurist and law professor); Ahsan Iqbal (secretary general PML-N); Riaz Fatyana (PTI leader) by saying whether Shehbaz Sharif's decision not to allow Imran Khan to sit in Islamabad was right or wrong.

Nasira Javid stated that if the current political crisis is not addressed, the country may be driven into a war, which she stated would be a threat to the founding principles of Pakistan. She urged political peace between the PTI and the PML-N, emphasizing that the PTI should be allowed to continue its March as a constitutional prerogative.

In response to the host's question about whether Pakistan is on the verge of civil war and how to stop it, *Ahsan Iqbal stressed that contested issues in politics can be resolved through dialogue between political opponents; however, he noted that, for the first time in Pakistan's history, former Prime Minister Imran Khan never engaged the opposition parties on any major constitutional or critical issue affecting the country during his four years in office.* He asserted that Imran Khan ignored and violated the constitutional process by refusing to engage the opposition parties, even when it came to concerns of national sovereignty. ...

Riaz Fatyana stated that the current government uses fascist tactics by selectively attacking their political opponents' constitutional and political right to protest and held Marches. He stressed that the constitution, which guarantees freedom of association and assembly everywhere in Pakistan, is the foundation of the social contract between the people and the state. He emphasized that the current regime is breaking the constitutional guarantee offered to citizens because it is under enormous strain and frustration on both the governance and economic fronts. Riaz Fatyana emphasised that Yasin Malik's wife's appeal to Imran Khan rather than the ruling regime to publicize her husband's case demonstrates the Kashmiri and hurriyat leader's confidence and faith in Imran Khan.

³² <https://www.unewstv.com/224311/capital-talk-is-pakistan-going-towards-civil-war-24th-may-2022>

The host Meer started this discussion by mentioning the rallies of Imran Khan in Charshada and the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's rally in Mansehra. PM Shehbaz Sharif said that "*PKP ko bhi Punjab bana wonga*" (I will make KPK as developed as Punjab in the future). The guest in the show was the senior journalist Salim Bokhari, Iftekhar Ahmed, and Jawed Iqbal.

Salim Bokhari in response said that there was nothing new about Imran Khan's rally. He is still following the same vocabulary to address this government as he was doing for the last few weeks. The new thing in fact added to his political lexicon is the words of revenge. He is openly threatening the senior administrative and police officers with consequences when his government will come to power. He also accused the Sharif family of secretly meeting with Israel and developing relationships with it. He further said what is important today to discuss is not the political rhetoric but the actual situation of the state. And that is, whether this government will be able to complete its term? He believes that if this government succeeds in presenting the budget then only there is a possibility of the continuation of this government otherwise it will be able to complete its full term.

Jawed Iqbal said that the possibility of continuation of the full term for this government is very thin. IMF has clearly said that without ending subsidies on various welfare projects and increasing Petrol and diesel prices they will not consider for release of the funds to Pakistan. A significant number of PML-N leaders are of the opinion that they should not go for budget presentations.

Guest Iftekhar Ahmad diverted the attention from the topic of national politics to regional issues. He discussed the local elections in Balochistan and the violence and irregularities happening at various polling stations.

³³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dTAzAvOk8tw>

BOMBING, SHOOTING AND DISAPPEARNCES

(Select incidents culled out from the Pakistan media)

Place	Date	Description	Killed	Injured
Sindh				
Karachi ³⁴	26/04/2022	4 people including 3 Chinese killed in a suicide bomb attack	4	4

Place	Date	Description	Killed	Injured
Balochistan				
Peshawar ³⁵ Kech district ³⁶	04/03/2022 26/01/2022	At least 30 dead, dozens injured in Peshawar imambargah blast. Ten Soldiers martyred, one militant killed	30 10	50 01

³⁴<https://www.dawn.com/news/1686920/3-chinese-nationals-among-4-dead-in-suicide-attack-at-karachi-university>

³⁵<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2346343/at-least-30-dead-dozens-injured-in-peshawar-imambargah-blast>

³⁶<https://defence.pk/pdf/threads/10-soldiers-martyred-1militant-killed-and-3-apprehended>

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa				
KP ³⁷	April	24 law-enforcement personnel killed	24	26
South Waziristan ³⁸	27/04/2022	SI killed	1	
Peshawar ³⁹	04/03/2022	57 dead, 200 injured in Peshawar's imambargah attack	57	200
North Waziristan ⁴⁰	29/03/2022	Four terrorists killed in North Waziristan operation	04	00

³⁷<https://www.dawn.com/news/1687008/24-law-enforcement-officials-martyred-in-ttp-attacks-since-late-last-month-in-kp>

³⁸<https://www.dawn.com/news/1687110/police-official-martyred-in-south-waziristan-attack>

³⁹<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2346343/57-dead-200-injured-in-peshawars-imambargah-attack>

⁴⁰<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2350051/four-terrorists-killed-in-north-waziristan-operation>