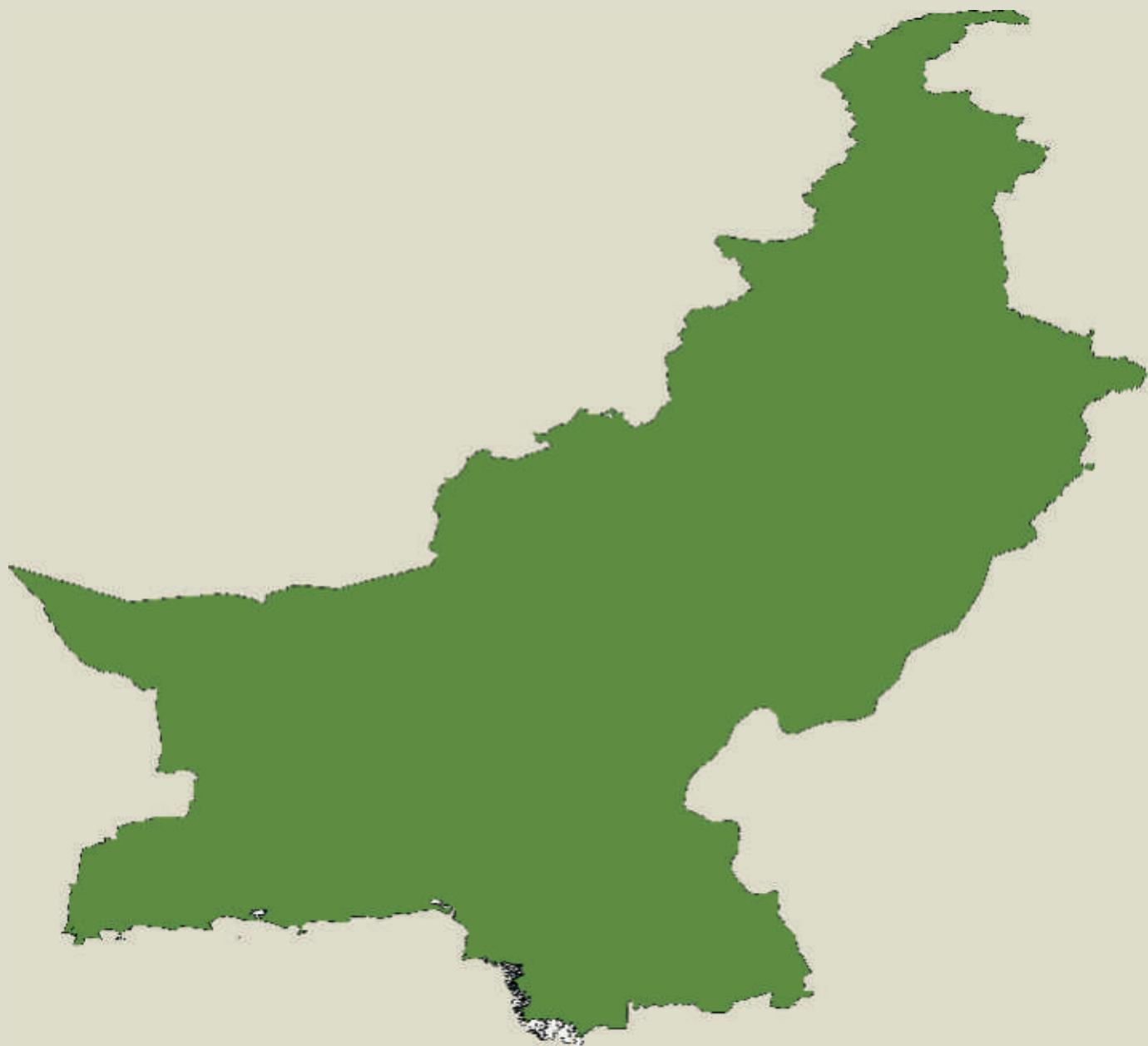


September 2021

PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST

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



Prepared by
Dr. Zainab Akhter
Dr. Nazir Ahmad Mir
Dr. Mohammad Eisa
Dr. Ashok Behuria



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES
मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्द्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Pakistan fulfills another FATF requirement, Editorial, *Daily Times*, 10 September¹

The Pakistani government has fulfilled yet another requirement of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) by providing a list of terrorist entities and individuals, including those proscribed by the UN Security Council, to estate agents. In this way the government has made it impossible for all banned terrorist organizations as well as their representatives to buy any sort of property anywhere in Pakistan. All this has made the government release a 99-page long list of banned outfits, which has been shared with stakeholders. India is, of course, livid that the regional situation is turning out just the way Pakistan had predicted. The Taliban takeover of Kabul, especially, has Delhi going round in circles because it has suddenly robbed it of its outreach that it used to mount attacks inside Pakistan. Therefore it is only natural for it to lean even more on forums like FATF to put as much pressure on Pakistan as possible. So far international capitals that matter have stayed silent as India moved pieces across the board largely because of the pull of its immense commercial market. But since Pakistan is playing the last round very wisely, and the regional calculus is also favouring our position, it seems only a matter of time before Delhi will have nothing to blackmail Islamabad with.

Constitutional Corruption, Najam Sethi, *The Friday Times*, 10 September²

The state of Pakistan is lawful and constitutional and must be upheld. But when some organ of this state indulges in unconstitutional acts and interventions, then it is right and proper to call it out as corruption and challenge it and such challenge is not “anti-state”. Let’s face it. Nawaz Sharif is no angel, never was. He was once a child of an unconstitutional dispensation, like Imran Khan is today. It was right to expose and oppose him then, just as it is right to expose and oppose Imran Khan today. But let’s also face the fact that Nawaz Sharif has “grown up” politically in the last decade or so, as it were, to challenge the unconstitutional encroachments of powerful organs of the state on the life and liberty of Pakistanis at great personal risk and without regard for personal financial loss or gain or undemocratic assumption of power. In other words, he has identified and focused his energies on the principal contradiction between state and society in Pakistan, sought to redress the

¹ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/814261/pakistan-fulfills-another-fatf-requirement/>

² <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/constitutional-corruption/>

balance and paid for it with imprisonment and exile. It is this political narrative against constitutional corruption that deserves our focused support.

Single National Curriculum: A great leap backward, Zahid Hussain, Dawn 15 September³

*The prime minister believes the enforcement of a uniform curriculum will end existing divisions in Pakistan's education system. There can be no two views that the country's decaying education system needs reform. It's also important to bridge the widening gap between various systems of education in the country. But the much-touted SNC doesn't serve either objective. In fact, it is more of a leap backward than a step forward. Instead of improving standards in public-sector educational institutions and madressahs in order to bring them at par with elite schools the SNC does the opposite. What the PTI government has attempted is to lower the bar so as to bridge the gap. That is, perhaps, the prime minister's concept of a uniform education system. **The move has made the SNC controversial even before its implementation. It is not the use of local languages as the medium of instruction in the elementary classes but it is the content of the prescribed textbooks that is problematic.***

Best revenge, Najam Sethi, The Friday Times, 24 September⁴

The waters have been muddied by "Ehsanullah Ehsan", ex spokesman of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, who had earlier declared on his Facebook page that there was a credible threat from the TTP. He has stuck to his guns after the Pakistan government claimed his Facebook page was fake. *Unfortunately, two "threat advisories" of the Punjab government days before the match on 17 September noting security threats to the NZ series have come to light, lending some weight to the fear of the visitors. Since the 'Five Eyes' Intel hasn't been shared, we can only presume that NZ read the various public pronouncements on the media and thought better to be safe than sorry in the event of any actual attack.* Certainly, PM Ardern would have been hauled over the coals at home if the Black Caps had come in harm's way. If NZ had shared Intel in time, or postponed the matches by a few days pending further investigations, we might have been able to prove the authenticity or otherwise of the threat, enabling us to continue the matches or cancel them without acrimony. The decision of the ECB is even more infuriating. The excuse they have made makes a mockery of the rules and rigours of the sporting game. It betrays a lack of decent reciprocity and overdose of arrogant unaccountability.

³ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1646467/a-great-leap-backward>

⁴ <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/best-revenge/>

Intra-party discord, Editorial, Dawn, 28 September⁵

The cleavage between the two camps appears to be widening, as evidenced by the latest public disagreement between two key party leaders on a matter of critical importance. Last week, *Maryam Nawaz Sharif told journalists she had not been part of the "sin" of supporting an extension for the army chief Gen Qamar Bajwa.* However, shortly thereafter Hamza Shehbaz said in a media interaction that the party decision in favour of the extension was the correct one. Still, it remains unclear whether former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is on board with the efforts of his younger brother. *The widening differences within the party show that Nawaz Sharif is taking a back seat and allowing the intra-party tussle to gain traction. His inaction on this front may be linked to some political strategy but the immediate fallout is that the leadership is working at cross purposes while the rank and file grows more confused by the day.* The organizational meetings underway since the last few weeks, and frequently addressed by Nawaz Sharif himself, point to a concerted push towards political mobilization at the local level, but unless the strategic orientation of the party leadership does not become clear, the PML-N will continue to remain distracted fighting its own demons. The sooner the party can untangle these contradictions, the more prepared it will be to go into the electoral battle with its focus and clarity restored.

ECONOMIC ISSUES

The galloping public debt, Editorial, The Express Tribune, 02 September 2021⁶

The federal government's total debt has risen almost 22% in the past two years, according to the latest SBP data. *The biggest contributor to the increase has been domestic debt, although it is worth noting that the SBP did not include IMF loans or foreign exchange liabilities in the external debt calculation.* Excluding those, however, external debt only rose by about 12% over the past two years, compared to the 27% jump in domestic debt. Debt financing now accounts for a third of the country's annual budget. The country's debt to GDP ratio is about 78%, well beyond the 60% legal limit.

⁵ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1648885/intra-party-discord?preview>

⁶ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2318127/the-galloping-public-debt>

Rupee slide: economics vs politics, Hassan Khawar, *The Express Tribune*, 21 September⁷

Underneath the recent wave of rupee depreciation, there lies the timeless story of politics versus economics. Pakistan is a country with high imports and low exports. The difference is bridged through precious foreign exchange, earned from remittances, foreign direct investment and external loans. Historically, the rupee has depreciated against the dollar by approximately 7% per annum to account for the perpetual supply and demand gap. *Pakistan has enough historical evidence to suggest what would have happened next. The imports are already on the rise. A few one-off factors like vaccine imports, Afghanistan situation and the rising commodity prices are also not helping. The rupee has consequently depreciated, but exchange rate is only the first line of defence.* Other policy levers now also need to respond, and economists' prescription is clear. The fiscal and monetary policies need to work in tandem. The interest rate needs to be adjusted upwards. (By the time this article would come to print, the new monetary policy would be out.) The PSDP spending needs to be rationalised. The gas and oil prices have to be increased further. Most importantly, the IMF programme *needs to be put back on track to keep the capital inflows coming.*

CPEC panel Okays ambitious Karachi coastline plan, Imran Ayub, *Dawn*, 26 September⁸

Calling it a “game-changer”, the federal government on Saturday unveiled an ambitious plan to rebuild Karachi's coastline under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) with \$3.5 billion “direct Chinese investment” that aims to overhaul city's seaboard with new berths for the port, a new fishery port and a ‘majestic harbour bridge’ connecting it with Manora islands and Sandspit beach. *The Karachi Coastal Co-m-prehensive Development Zone (KCCDZ) spread over 640 hectares or 1,581 acres on the western backwaters marsh land of the Karachi Port Trust (KPT) leading to revamp one of the oldest city slums Machhar Colony relocating its more than half a million population – is an initiative of the Ministry of Maritime Affairs.* The KCCDZ is the latest addition to CPEC projects aimed at providing Karachi with an ultra-modern urban infrastructure zone, placing it among the top port cities of the world. The announcement came from the top when a key member of Prime Minister Imran

⁷ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2321116/rupee-slide-economics-vs-politics>

⁸ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1648433/cpec-panel-okays-ambitious-karachi-coastline-plan>

Khan's cabinet shared some details of the project and claimed it carried "enormous potential for global investors as well".

The battle for the Pak Rupee, Dr. Kamal Monnoo, *The Nation*, 29 September⁹

The Pakistani Rupee has been on a downward slope for almost 3 years now and needless to say that not only is this tangibly eroding connectivity of an average Pakistani with the outside world, it is also at the same time very punishing for the common man economically. Pakistan's economic system at least in theory works on market principles, is compliant with WTO trading rules and regulations that call for an open economy for imports and is subject to a number of trade agreements that are predominantly politically driven, and therefore it comes as no surprise that imports are relatively inelastic and high as a percent of GDP, and that any devaluation of the Pak Rupee automatically correlates to higher inflation. *Time and again this author has argued that contrary to the general belief, devaluation drives do scant little in sustainably promoting exports. Gains if any are mostly short-term and those too more in quantum than in value terms.* Today the Bangladeshi Taka is twice the value of Pak Rupee and their exports are more than twice ours. Also, we often hear arguments that the natural way of restraining imports is to let the Pak Rupee slide on market principles to a level where imports automatically get priced out. Well, in our case, nothing could be further than the truth, as almost three fourths of our imports are either inelastic, meaning termed as essential unless we bracket them otherwise, *or are of critical-in-nature type that cannot be wished away at least for now, given the external security threats.*

Imported inflation, Editorial, *Dawn*, 30 September¹⁰

That rising global commodity prices are feeding domestic headline inflation is not unusual for an economy like Pakistan that is heavily reliant on imported energy, food, industrial raw materials, capital goods, etc. What is odd is the fact that the government believes that imported inflation is feeding into only urban prices and the situation in the rural areas has been relatively better. It is true that the urban and rural markets in Pakistan largely remained 'segregated' until a couple of decades back, resulting in significant urban-rural price differences. *But the structure of the economy has fundamentally transformed in recent years, with the rural population aspiring to and consuming the goods and services once typically consumed by the urban middle classes.* The transition to the market economy has thus significantly reduced differences between urban and rural prices. Global commodity price changes, therefore, impact rural inhabitants as much as their urban counterparts despite the latter's

⁹ <https://nation.com.pk/29-Sep-2021/the-battle-for-the-pak-rupee>

¹⁰ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1649275/imported-inflation>

much higher consumption of food and energy compared with the former. CPI readings indicate there have been times in the recent past when food price inflation was more rigid and on the higher side in the rural areas. That makes sense because the prices of locally produced agricultural commodities also move up and down in sync with changes in the international markets.

SECURITY SITUATION

Regional Terror, Editorial, *The Nation*, 02 September 2021¹¹

The attacks on Kabul airport indicate the threat that ISIS now poses in the region. *Daesh is not just a danger in Afghanistan or the Middle East; any terrorist group near the borders of Pakistan is a warning to our own security forces that instability could very well seep through on Pakistani grounds as well. The operation carried out in the Mastung district in Balochistan demonstrates the proximity of the threat. The operation, carried out by Balochistan's Counterterrorism Department (CTD) on Tuesday, has claimed to have killed 11 terrorists of Daesh (ISIS) in the Qamar Mazarabad area. ...* Daesh is looking to make strong inroads into this region, and its methods are the most violent. ISIS, taking advantage of the instability in Afghanistan, is a threat to the peace of the entire region. To challenge this regional threat, countries like Afghanistan and Iran need to cooperate with our security forces with the aim to subdue this terror.

Balochistan attack, Editorial, *Dawn*, 07 September¹²

With the regional security situation extremely fluid in Pakistan's immediate neighborhood, particularly next door in Afghanistan, the state must keep a keen eye on subversive elements that may try and take advantage of the situation and destabilise the environment in the country. The martyrdom of at least four Frontier Corps men in a suicide attack on Sunday on the Quetta-Mastung Road on the outskirts of Quetta comes as a reminder that the country cannot afford to let down its guard even for a moment. *While Pakistan can do little to control security threats abroad, the security apparatus must do all possible to prevent militant cells from carrying out their activities here. As noted above, Afghanistan is an area of particular concern.* Pakistan must therefore press the Afghan Taliban to take action against these security threats, while efforts must be stepped up to ensure there is no infiltration into Pakistan by hostile actors. Intelligence-based operations also need to be revved up

¹¹ <https://nation.com.pk/02-Sep-2021/regional-terror>

¹² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1644975/balochistan-attack>

locally, especially in areas like Balochistan and erstwhile Fata, where the security situation has been particularly fragile in the past.

Extremists targeting extremists, Pervez Hoodbhoy, Dawn, 11 September¹³

Extremists targeting extremists; the irony should not be lost. Even if IS-K excels in suicide attacks on large gatherings of Afghan civilians, the Taliban have done their share too. Both have spread fear through beheadings and limb chopping, forced girls into marrying their fighters, and looted ordinary people. One might have expected a close alliance since both have fought America. But, in fact, they are bitter foes. What splits IS-K from Taliban is ideology; they differ on what a true Islamic state is. *To achieve its supreme goal, each considers no sacrifice to be too great. All militant groups strewn across Afghanistan Al Qaeda, TTP, IMU (Uzbek), and ETIM (Uighur) dream their respective sectarian dreams.* Educated in the jihad-focused, intellectually barren Pakistani madressahs like Akora Khattak or Jamia Binoria, Taliban leaders demonstrate no knowledge of Islamic history or matters of Islamic governance such as in the classic works of Al Mawardi and Ibn-i-Khaldun. To avoid a grim future, Afghanistan must learn from Vietnam which also soundly defeated the mightiest of the mighty — and after a much bloodier fight. Compared to a quarter million Afghans, over two million Vietnamese perished.

Amnesty for TTP, Editorial, Daily Times, 20 September¹⁴

First President Arif Alvi and then Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi recently mentioned possible amnesty for TTP militants who laid down their arms and promised to respect the constitution. Since two is a trend, and such senior members of the ruling administration would never have floated such a controversial idea on their own, one can be certain that this thing is being discussed at the level of the federal cabinet. Needless to say, of course, that this is a very controversial idea and it is sure to trigger outrage among the many families who lost loved ones during the TTP's orgy of death, murder and destruction, especially parents of the 132 children so mercilessly murdered in the APS school attack in 2014. *This is not one of those ideas that should even be considered, considering how painful even such debates can be for the tens of thousands of people lost to TTP's violence as well as their families. There is also the fact to consider that our country does not have the kind of institutions that are necessary to rehabilitate troubled individuals that often seek refuge in*

¹³ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1645742/extremists-targeting-extremists>

¹⁴ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/818408/amnesty-for-ttp/>

extremist outfits. Plus, what if other parts of the society other than the ruling party have other opinions about such matters? The government should not be under the impression that it can unilaterally force such choices upon all of society, regardless of their opinions in what is after all a working democracy.

Appeasing terrorists, Zahid Hussain, Dawn, 22 September¹⁵

First, it was the president and then the foreign minister who appeared ready to offer amnesty to the terrorist group which has been responsible for the killing of thousands of people. Curiously, the statements came as the outlawed TTP intensified its attacks on the security forces. Casualties have included scores of soldiers over the past few months in clashes with the increasingly emboldened militants operating from their sanctuaries across the border. *Such statements are more puzzling as there is no indication that the militants are willing to renounce violence. According to some media reports, a TTP spokesman has rejected the government's peace offer and vowed to continue with the group's battle against the Pakistani state.* The amnesty move is certainly seen as a sign of weakness and adds to the confusion in our counterterrorism policy. The TTP has been revitalized in the past few months. Some 4,000 to 5,000 Pakistani militants are reportedly operating from across the Durand Line. Most of them had fled to Afghanistan after the Pakistani military operations in North and South Waziristan. Yet there is no indication that the Taliban authorities would be willing to take action against the TTP sanctuaries in Afghanistan. A Taliban spokesman has reportedly advised the Pakistan government to make peace with the militants. This is certainly not very assuring for Pakistan.

PROVINCES & REGIONS

Afghanistan

Interim Afghan cabinet, Editorial, The Express Tribune, 09 September¹⁶

The victorious Taliban have crossed the bridge as they announced a 33-member interim cabinet, which largely comprises their commanders and peer leaders. Their resolve to govern the war-torn state as per constitutional decorum is most welcome. *While announcing the 'acting' government, just days after the exit of foreign troops, Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid remarked that the cabinet is not complete, and people from other parts of the country will soon be inducted.* This assurance will go a long way in not only providing legitimacy and recognition to Taliban, but in also helping govern the country in an inclusive manner. The new set-up hasn't come as a surprise. It was expected

¹⁵ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1647735/appeasing-terrorists>

¹⁶ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2319227/interim-afghan-cabinet>

that senior clergy would be calling the shots. Thus, the nomination of Mohammad Hasan Akhund as prime minister and Abdul Ghani Baradar as his deputy indicates that Taliban want to consolidate their grip over power before embracing segments from other regions. *Tajiks, Hazaras and Uzbeks are yet to find a berth. Akhund, who is on the United Nations blacklist, will have to reorient himself as a responsible chief executive.* Taliban instantly are in need of addressing two issues: broadening the base by including non-Taliban political leaders to make it a national government; and thinning their ideologue-orientation to help project a liberal working agenda.

Afghanistan—a bumpy road, Ateeq ur Rehman, *The Nation*, 19 September¹⁷

An uneasy calm is prevailing in Afghanistan and the neighbours are struggling to find a solution before another tragedy hits them hard. The world is still waiting and judging how the Taliban leadership will respond to their expectations. Pakistan is on the forefront to find a way out for the Afghans, more on a humanitarian basis and less on the political end. A logical question may be about why Pakistan is taking that much interest and why the political leadership is so active on the issue of some other country? There are several reasons. We are neighbours; anything affecting Afghanistan would have a fallout on Pakistan. Pakistan is already bearing over 4 million Afghan refugees, since 1978. *Any violent situation in Afghanistan would result in more people migrating to Pakistan. As per statistics, more Pathans are living in Pakistan than Afghanistan and are directly affected. Our economy is already struggling and any additional burden would adversely affect us.* Our experience with the west over the issue of Afghanistan has not been praiseworthy. Undoubtedly, Pakistan's Afghan policy is of non-interference. It desires for the interim government to stand on its own feet and rebuild. It's a universal principle that no interference be made from outside in any country and people have the right to choose their representatives.

The Afghanistan shockwave, Imtiaz Rafi Butt, *The Nation*, 23 September¹⁸

The Chinese government, with the assistance of Pakistan, is set to include Afghanistan in the grand plan of Asian economic and regional connectivity. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor can readily include the vastness of Afghanistan and its lands rich with mineral resources and untapped potential. After decades of warfare, a superpower of the world has decided to work with the people of Afghanistan instead of invading them through economic

¹⁷ <https://nation.com.pk/19-Sep-2021/afghanistan-a-bumpy-road>

¹⁸ <https://nation.com.pk/23-Sep-2021/the-afghanistan-shockwave>

incentive and prosperity. *Afghanistan has a potent geographical disposition that can strengthen the Chinese footprint in the region and its connectivity to Central Asia. The One-Belt One-Road project has no alternatives or equals in the world.* There is a long journey ahead for Kabul with its economic, social and infrastructure backwardness but as they say, a journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step. Chinese dominance is on the right path and they are securing their victories while the Americans and its allies are encountering defeat one after the other, even when it is the United Kingdom or India. *Pakistan, China and their new alliance in the form of Russia, Iran and Turkey are the possible answer to the riddle and disaster that is Afghanistan as of today.*

Anti-Taliban US bill, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 30 September¹⁹

Pakistan is directly referenced in the bill. Even though the partisan bill has no chance of passing the Democrat-controlled Senate and House in its current form, the accusations made in it are ludicrous. Democrats would be wise to call for the sanctions to be retroactive and applied to Trump. After all, he is the one who did not insist on a political settlement between the Ghani government and the Taliban as part of the Doha agreement. Many of the 22 Republicans backing the bill also supported the same agreement responsible for the fiasco. As for their anti-terror credentials, none of them has called the January 6 attack on Congress by Trump supporters an act of terrorism. The dirty domestic politics of the Trump era blaming Democrats for the fiasco wholly created by the Republican president are unnecessarily dragging Pakistan through the mud. *Biden's envoys, who will be visiting Pakistan next month, would be wise to clarify the actual position of the US government.*

URDU MEDIA

Taliban's interim cabinet Editorial, *Jang*, 09 September²⁰

It seems it would take some time for a broad-based and inclusive government in Afghanistan. *That is why the Taliban had to take the decision to form an interim government. Three weeks have passed since the Taliban's takeover of Kabul and it was necessary to form a setup to run the state affairs. It was*

¹⁹ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2322546/anti-taliban-us-bill>

²⁰ https://jang.com.pk/news/982080?_ga=2.178942176.573599468.1631175965-835994399.1598849708

*required because the Taliban have been keeping expressing its wish to form a consensus among various groups and communities for forming a new constitution and on other various matters within the principles that the Taliban believe in. On the other hand, they need to convince the international community about the protection of human rights and other matters. It is already clear that following the Iranian model, Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada has been announced as the Supreme leader which will be known as *amir-ul-momineen* (the leader of the faithful). Taliban spokesperson Zabiullah Mujahid announced the members of the interim government on Tuesday ((07 September 2021) with Mohammad Hassan Akhund the interim Prime Minister. Mujahid said that every ethnic group has been given representation in the new set in Afghanistan. *On reacting to certain reactions for the inclusion of certain names in the list, Mujahid said that what type of political system will function in Afghanistan will be decided by the Afghans.* He rejected the notion that Pakistan was behind the Taliban. After announcing the interim government, *it was also announced the country would be set on the track of development for all ethnic/linguistic groups and the media would be allowed to function freely by keeping up the Islamic principles.* It was also said that the Afghan territory would not be allowed to be used against any other country.*

Taliban in position to strike a better deal, Zumrad Naqvi, Daily Express, 06 September 2021²¹

Most of the analysis of Pakistani media on the takeover of Kabul and the US withdrawal is emotional and superficial. The analysis is used to hide the facts. In the past it was the unawareness of the Pakistanis that cost the country 80,000 lives and \$1.5 billion in the American war against the Soviets. According to a report by the New York Times, America is caught in trouble after the withdrawal from Afghanistan: How to deal with the Taliban government in Afghanistan? That is to what extent is it necessary to collaborate with the Taliban to deal with common enemy Daesh or ISKP It is also being asked that would the US release \$9.4 billion Afghanistan's frozen assets so that there would be no food crisis in the country? For America it is important how to save Afghanistan from becoming a sanctuary for terrorists. It also fears that Afghanistan may land up in the group of Washington's enemies. To dispel any threat of terrorism emerging from Afghanistan, Washington needs to have better ties with the Taliban. America can help the Taliban by its air force. Daesh is common enemy of the Taliban and America. The Taliban are trying hard to garner international support. They have also

²¹https://www.express.com.pk/epaper/PoPupwindow.aspx?newsID=1108625566&Issue=NP_ISB&Date=20210906

expressed their will to have better ties with America. *But if America delays a response, the vacuum may be occupied by other countries like China and Iran. These countries want one assurance from the Taliban: Afghan territory should not be used by terrorists. They want to avoid a civil war kind of situation as well.*

Yet another anti-Islam bill? Editorial, Ummat, 14 September²²

The Sindh assembly had unanimously passed a bill in 2016 which prohibited religious conversion below the age of 18 years. But thankfully the governor sent back the bill and it could not become a law. A bill that is to be presented in the national assembly is called the *Prohibition of Forced Conversion Bill 2021. Though the bill is meant to stop forced conversions but in reality neither a forced convert can be trusted nor such practice takes place in Pakistan. Then there is no place for forced conversion in Islam as it is concerned about the inner self of a human being.* Unless and until a person accepts Islam by heart s/he is not a Muslim. A report recently stated that there was some conflict between the ministry of religious affairs and the ministry of human rights. The dispute was resolved by the active participation of the PM office. *The PM office supported the ministry for religious affairs and asked the human rights ministry to send the bill to the former for perusal.* The religious affairs ministry held an in-camera meeting on the draft of the bill the other day which was attended by the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) chief Dr Qibla Ayaz, member of the Minority commission Gulzar Naeemi, and others. It is hoped that the ministry of religious affairs and the CII would present a bill that is in line with Islam.

Pak-US relations and Afghanistan, Editorial, Daily Dunya, 15 September²³

Foreign Minister of America Antony Blinken has said that America would revisit its relations with Pakistan in the coming days and would accordingly decide what role it expects from Pakistan in Afghanistan. *The statements made by the American foreign minister that "Pakistan has different interests in Afghanistan and some of them are in conflict with the American interests" help in understanding what the US means by "revisiting" the ties and the possible new "role" for Pakistan. It is clear from the statement of the American foreign minister that America is not happy about Pakistan's ties with the Taliban and its interest in the future of Afghanistan.* America has every right to revisit its foreign policy. In fact this is the apt time to do that since the failure of its Afghan policy is fresh and it would help America to understand despite spending

²² <https://www.ummat.net/2021/09/14/news.php?p=idr1.gif>

²³ https://e.dunya.com.pk/detail.php?date=2021-09-15&edition=LHR&id=5771166_61726153

billions of dollars and equipped with a sophisticated military, why could it not get desired results in Afghanistan? America needs to ponder over why the system that it had created could not take roots in Afghanistan?

Media and Imran Khan, Saleem Safi, Jang, 15 September²⁴

The media in Pakistan has played an unprecedented and extraordinary role in turning a cricketer Imran Khan into a politician Imran Khan and a politician Imran Khan into the prime minister of Pakistan. Imran was not only a favorite only of the "powerful sections" but of the media as well. His rallies were broadcast live for hours. Imran's one-to-one friendly interviews were conducted and aired. Imran did not spare from his criticism any family, any children or women but still his own personal life was never touched by media. Because of his six constituencies the media went gaga for five years. But it never raised questions on his income tax returns, removing polling agents from booths and his worst political engineering. Imran Khan's party used social media first and misused it for wrong reasons the most. PTI was the only party to have secret media cells in Britain, America, Singapore and Europe. These cells were running fake news to make Imran a messiah. He has come up with a new law called Pakistan media development Authority which in reality is Pakistan Media Demolition Authority. If the law is made it will not be possible to criticize the government. Pakistan will not remain Islamic Republic but will become a North Korea. The latest and the biggest fake news was also spread by a cabinet minister when accused the election commission of taking money from the opposition. If the minister has the proof why is he not bringing it to the Supreme Judicial Council? And if he does not have any, why is no action being taken against him?

CPEC- the real situation, Editorial, Daily Dunya, 19 September²⁵

Federal planning minister for Development, Reforms and Special Initiatives, Asad Umar while addressing a press conference along with special advisor to CPEC Authority Khalid Mansoor that the work was going on fast on various CPEC projects. Maximus investment has been made in the power sector. Infrastructure projects are also the main focus. *Two days ago, however, the chairman of Senate committee on Planning and Development Saleem Mandviwallah had said that the Chinese ambassador in Pakistan had told him that no work on CPEC projects had taken place in the last three years. The way work should have progressed in Gwadar, is not happening.* Such reports

²⁴https://jang.com.pk/news/984716?_ga=2.112649479.266436837.1631684643-835994399.1598849708

²⁵ https://e.dunya.com.pk/detail.php?date=2021-09-19&edition=LHR&id=5775435_59256327

which say that work on CPEC projects was slow have appeared earlier as well. But after the chairman of the Senate committee for planning making such remarks and the special advisor of CPE authority also referring to this, the issue has become serious. *The leaders in Pakistan call CPEC an important feat for the future of Pakistan. But merely issuing statements would not do the job. It is the responsibility of the government to bring facts about CPEC to the light.* If the reports that the work on CPEC projects is going slow steps need to be taken to fasten the work so that the projects would be completed as soon as possible.

Chinese 3-point formula for peace in Afghanistan, Editorial, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, 21 September²⁶

After the US withdrawal from Afghanistan political stability and development are two main concerns. *Rather than doing something about it, only statements are issued by the countries across the world. Some countries even are prepared to act as spectators. In all this Pakistan and China are playing constructive roles for securing peace and starting development in the war torn country.* Regional peace and stability are connected with the political situation in Afghanistan. While speaking at the SCO summit in Dushanbe, *Chinese President Xi Jinping presented a three-point agenda for peace in Afghanistan. These three points include first, respecting sovereignty of Afghanistan; second, continuing the peace process under the Afghan leadership; and third, allowing the Afghans to decide their future.* The Chinese president said that the Afghans should resolve their issue by negotiations and reach to some mutually acceptable solution so that the international community could talk to the Taliban government. Given the situation in Afghanistan the suggestions of Xi Jinping are correct and apt ones. *To see their implementation all the SCO members will have to play their role. As XI said, the SCO members should increase their contacts with Kabul.* The three-point agenda of China is also an answer to the anti-Taliban forces that are engaged in anti-Taliban propaganda. China's Afghan policy can be summed up in one sentence made by Xi Jinping: "being a neighboring country we cannot be indifferent."

IMF demands and the inflation, Editorial, *Daily Dunya*, 29 September²⁷

The IMF has asked Pakistan to end the remaining subsidy on flour, ghee, sugar, pulses and rice along with gas and electricity. It is said that only people enlisted in the EHSAAS program should be given the targeted subsidy. Talks between Pakistan and the IMF will start in early October in which the situation of Pakistan's economy, status of the set targets, subsidy and tax collections would

²⁶ <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/lahore/2021-09-21/page-8/detail-9>

²⁷ https://e.dunya.com.pk/detail.php?date=2021-09-29&edition=LHR&id=5788858_51716175

be discussed. *If the talks go well the IMF would give a \$billion dollar loan. To get this loan, the Pakistan government has already started raising the prices of gas and electricity.* At a time when the economy is in crisis, ending subsidies on basic required items will likely would increase the prices of these products, making them unaffordable for the poor. Though always an issue, the inflation at the moment is unprecedented. People are not able to meet their ends despite all hard work. By ending subsidies on flour, sugar and pulse would affect the poor the most but also the lower middle class. Similarly increasing prices on gas and electricity would raise the prices of other products, making it hard for many to afford them. This would have a negative impact on the economy. *Prime Minister Imran Khan has already said the prices of electricity in the country are too high. Still if the prices on essential commodities are increased because the IMF wants it that would burden the poor of the country and push many in poverty. Instead of taxing the poor, the government should make efforts to bring the people in the tax net who don't pay them.*

ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Journalists protest against proposed media authority, PMDA, Off the Record with Kashif Abbasi, ARYNews, 13 September²⁸

Journalists in Pakistan continue to protest against the government's proposed Pakistan Media Development Authority (PMDA) bill. The protesting journalists had marched on Sunday 12 September from the National Press Club and reached outside the Parliament House. They had been staging a sit-in since and continued the protest till President Dr Arif Alvi's address to the joint session of parliament, which took place after 4pm on Monday 13 September. The anchor Kashif Abbasi underlined that the new bill is hanging like a sword on the media fraternity as it can be used any time to shut any news channel. In this episode he asked *why the PTI government felt the need to bring out an authority like PMDA while Pakistan electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) is already present to regulate the media. Should it not be further empowered?* **Guests:** Afzal Butt-President PFUJ; Shahzad Iqbal-Journalist; & Farrukh Habib-PTI. **Afzal Butt** pointed out that along with the new proposed authority, PMDA, we have other concerns like the security and safety of journalists, any anchor is kidnapped and there is a threat to his or her life. *The*

²⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xBIS5dZOi-8>

Information Minister, Fawad Chaudhary he said made an issue of the PMDA, first he said it was an ordinance, then a bill and when questioned further he said it is just a proposal. He questioned the government and asked if this authority was so useful for the media, then why the government kept it a secret and did not consult with the stakeholders? Why there isn't any transparency? He pointed out that PEMRA is already present to stop the circulation of fake news. *Shahzad Iqbal* pointed out that the new authority will get to decide what is fake and not which is not fair. In that case any channel will be shut down at the behest of the proposed PMDA. He questioned that for the past years the PTI government has done nothing to keep the media free and fair and therefore a huge trust deficit has developed between the government and the media. When anchors are kidnapped removed from the channels, the government has not spoken out against it till now. On top of it the government comes out with such a proposal like PMDA, how the media can trust such a step. *The fundamental flaw he adds is that the media or journalists were not consulted by the government before coming out with such a proposal,* they should have started their homework from zero. *Farrukh Habib* defending the step by the government argued that the new proposed PMDA is for the development of the media and that it will be in the form of a commission where the journalists from both print and electronic can go to resolve their issues. It is needed he added because PEMRA is a council which mostly deals with the electronic media. He *underlined that there is a need of such a media commission and the issues will be resolved within twenty one days.* We shared fourteen points frame work and the law will be formed accordingly he added. There should be no problem to anyone on fake news.

US threatens to review policy towards Pakistan over Afghanistan? The Najam Sethi Show, 24 News, 15 September²⁹

US secretary of State Antony Blinken has said that the US ties with Pakistan over Afghanistan is under review and that in the coming days it will take stock of the situation. The host asked, on what basis US will take decision on the Pakistan-US relations in the coming days? *Najam Sethi:* This statement by the US secretary of state is very significant and has to be listened carefully especially by Pakistan. There are three to four things which he is trying to say to Pakistan through this statement: *First*, the overall approach of Pakistan Vis a Vis Afghanistan in the last twenty years will be reviewed during which sometimes Pakistan worked in collaboration with the US and other times against it. Najam Sethi underlined that it is obvious that the US will definitely review what Pakistan has done against the US and might put some penalty or punishment for the same. *Secondly*, the US is saying that they will decide a role

²⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EaDBpfCoO08>

for Pakistan in the future and Sethi underlined this time it will not be do more, it will be more like do this and not this kind of dictation. *Third*, the US has a slight idea that it will be a hard deal to make Pakistan work according to its wishes, therefore the US will use pressure tactics such as stopping the dollar funds from the World Bank etc. or put pressure through FATF negotiations. Even European Union can put pressure on Pakistan. Fourth, the US will use the *stick and carrot* policy with Pakistan, at one hand showing the dollars but at the same time they might use sanctions. The bottom line is that Joe Biden will only talk to Pakistan when it shows indications of doing what the US wants from them. **On Afghanistan:** The western world will try to find faults with the Taliban government and for the time there are many things going against the Taliban like rights of women, ban on protests etc. They will keep on finding ways to ban the Taliban and in all these Pakistan will face the heat. But before coming to problems of Taliban with outside, there is a power struggle within the Taliban. *There are two kinds of Taliban leaders within Afghan caretaker government, the ones who have fought on the ground and second are the ones who are bit educated and are negotiating with the World on Afghanistan in the last many years (like Mullah Baradar).* The second kind of Taliban knows that the World is changed (in 20 years of rule US has produced a liberal society and youth) and that Taliban 1.0 will not work unless it changes and transforms into a more accepting Taliban 2.0. But, the Taliban government will force its religious agenda that will be a big issue for the future of Afghanistan.

Why didn't Imran Khan himself go to the United States to address the UN General Assembly? Analysis by Saleem Safi, 27 September³⁰

Saleem Safi pointed out that the PM Imran Khan did not travel to the US to address the UNGA rather used a video link to address the session. In this episode Safi tried to answer why he did not travel to US in person, and what blunders he made in the speech addressing the UNGA. ***Blunder on Taliban:*** He pointed out that Imran Khan was point on the portion of the speech which was written for example on Kashmir and India but whenever he talks from his point of view, he makes a blunder and this time he made mistakes while talking about Taliban and Afghanistan in his speech. ***He equated Taliban with Psthun/Pakhtun nationalism and underlined Taliban are Pashtuns. While on the other hand the Afghan Taliban is clear that they want to form an Islamic Emirate and will not be so happy with Imran Khan's sentence connecting them to a national movement.*** **Why he addressed online?** Saleem Safi pointed out that for the longest time Pakistan's foreign office (*including Moeed Yusuf, NSA*), lobbies in US tried hard to make possible a meeting between Joe Biden and Imran Khan but unfortunately Joe Biden seems to be in no mood to talk with Imran Khan. ***On the other hand India's PM Narendra Modi travelled to US and***

³⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-OXv6J6w6Q>

got a good protocol and welcome from US, meeting with Joe Biden and Kamala Harris. These were reasons that Imran Khan did not travel in person because he was afraid that there won't be a warm welcome. Instead he sent Shah Mehmood Qureshi and Shehryar Khan Afridi, Chairperson of the Parliamentary Special Committee on Kashmir to the US. According to internal sources in Pakistan the ISI headquarters had to brief the PM on the latest developments in Afghanistan but Imran Khan's speech was recorded two days before, so it did not had latest input from the ISI headquarters. Saleem Safi underlined that the problem with Imran Khan is that he becomes lawyer of the Afghan Taliban and defend them but in reality they are a state and will not like any interference. *Now whatever action Taliban takes, questions will be asked to Pakistan.*

BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES

(Select incidents culled out from the Pakistan media)

Place	Date	Description	Killed	Injured
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa				
South Waziristan ³¹	29/09/2021	Terror bid foiled as security forces kill 10 militants in S Waziristan IBO	10	00
Dera Ismail Khan ³²	30/09/2021	Captain martyred in Tank IBO. ISPR says militant commander killed in IBO.	02	00

³¹ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2322369/terror-bid-foiled-as-security-forces-kill-10-militants-in-s-waziristan-ibo>

³² <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2322659/captain-martyred-in-tank-ibo>

