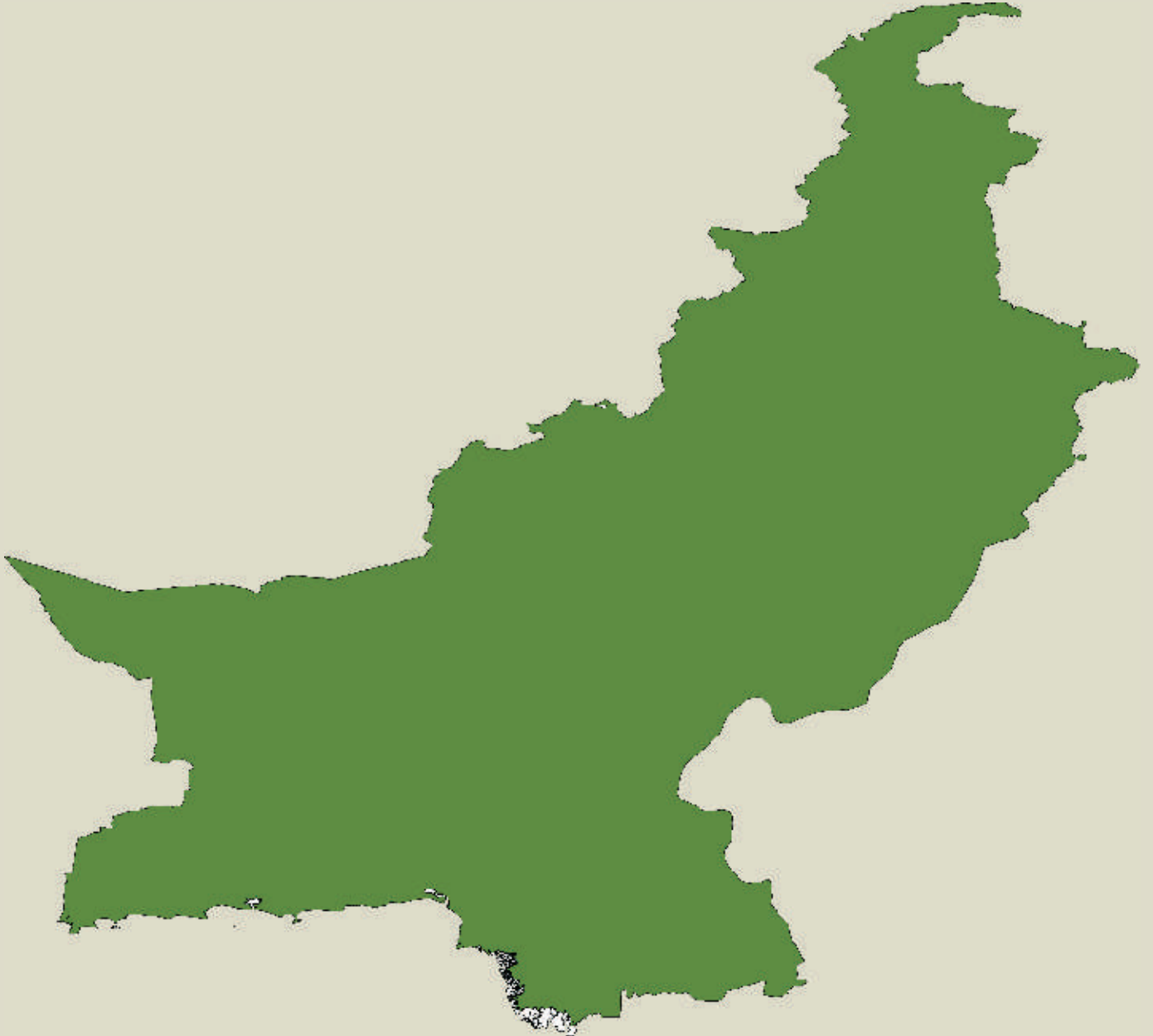


December 2021

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 अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST, December 2021

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POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Ali Wazir's bail, Editorial, Dawn, 02 December¹

It has been a long time coming, but MNA and Pashtun Tahafuz Movement leader Ali Wazir has finally been granted bail by the Supreme Court after he was detained in 2020. *The apex court observed that Mr. Wazir could not be kept in jail as the other suspect in the case was granted bail a correct and just decision which was long awaited by the MNA who is accused of making incendiary remarks against state institutions.* It is only natural to draw parallels between how the government has handled the TLP case and *Mr. Wazir's situation; the extremist group has been coddled while the MNA has languished in custody. Unlike the TLP, Mr. Wazir did not break public infrastructure, block roads or raise slogans that could be considered hate speech.* He is one of the leaders of a movement demanding justified rights. To try an elected politician in an ATC, one who himself has lost family members to terrorism, is a travesty. Unfortunately for Mr. Wazir, this is just one of the cases against him; he still awaits bail in others. The government must rethink its policy of isolating Pakhtun rights activists and address their grievances, instead of punishing them.

We are ashamed, Editorial, The Express Tribune, 06 December²

The nation's head hangs in shame. The brutal, condemnable and disgusting crime by a mob at a garment factory in Sialkot is a blot on the conscience of humanity. It is a great disservice to Pakistan, and certainly un-Islamic in essence. Priyantha Kumara, the Sri Lankan national, who was lynched on Friday will live on in the hearts of Pakistanis, and his unfortunate and tragic end at the hands of radicalised men will continue to pain us for a long time. This is how we must eulogise fallen men at the hands of radicalism, in an earnest attempt to stem the tide of intolerance and ignorance. *The extra-judicial vigilantism of Kumara is a failure of our civil society, and reminds us that there are serious lapses and deficiencies in our retribution system and the capability of the administration to thwart such incidents.* It is utter lawlessness, coupled with vandalism, and exhibits the level to which the society has stooped. It goes without saying that such extremist tendencies run contrary to cogent pursuit of peaceful co-existence, thereby undermining the evolution of a society on the lines of compassion and emancipation. This is, indeed, a negation of the teachings of Islam and the Holy. *This is savagery and confirms the decay of the role of peer leaders and a lawful society. Kumara, unfortunately, may not be the last in the list of people who have met such a fate. This tendency might continue if the state doesn't put its foot down.*

¹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1661465/ali-wazirs-bail>

² <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2332621/we-are-ashamed>

Hollow rhetoric, Editorial, *The Daily Times*, 08 December³

The opposition's alliance has bowled a far-fetched delivery and has lost the momentum. The PDM's decision to kick-start a long march against inflation on Pakistan Day 23 March 2022 is a non-starter. This squarely reflects its hollowness as well as the fact that a great deal of differences are simmering in the anti-government group over the strategy to flex their muscles. *Perhaps, they differ on timing, and the modalities, in showing their cards. Maulana Fazalur-Rehman's thrust to come up with a volcanic agenda of protests, coupled with resignations of legislators from the assemblies, has fallen on deaf ears.* The PML-N and other allied parties in the grand alliance now seem to be namesake participants. They, indeed, nurse their own internal political ambitions with a definite thought-process rendering the PDM platform a Trojan horse status. The opposition should take to the parliament for a hectic discussant agenda. We have been here: the country cannot afford civil unrest, especially at a time when the region is in a flux and the global economy is treading rough waters. *Rather than jotting down an unrealistic timeline to take to the streets in the month of March, the opposition would be well advised to devise a strategy concerning inflation, and come up with a policy perspective on the economy. The premise to settle it on the streets is unnerving.*

Massive rally in Gwadar for demands acceptance, *Dawn*, 11 December⁴

Tens of thousands of people, including women and children, marched on the main roads and streets of Gwadar on Friday in support of their movement launched for the rights of the people of Gwadar. *Led by Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman, Balochistan general secretary of Jamaat-i-Islami, the people of the port city launched the 'Gwadar ko haq do' movement 26 days ago.* The participants of the procession started their march from Seratun-Nabi Chowk, carrying placards and banners inscribed with slogans in support of their demands. They were chanting slogans against the provincial government. Speaking to the participants, Maulana Hidayat said police and other law-enforcement agencies blocked the Coastal Highway at Uthal, stopping buses, coaches and *other vehicles carrying people to travel towards Gwadar as thousands of people from Karachi and other areas of Sindh wanted to join the sit-in in Gwadar.* Maulana Hidayat said "It is the movement of the deprived and oppressed people of Balochistan comprising fishermen, poor labourers and students, which will continue till all their demands are accepted and implemented".

³ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2332891/hollow-rhetoric>

⁴ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1663114/massive-rally-in-gwadar-for-demands-acceptance>

Has Pakistan finally joined China camp? Kamran Yousuf, *The Express Tribune*, 14 December⁵

Prime Minister Imran Khan at a recent event in Islamabad made it clear that Pakistan would not join any bloc. The statement was given against the backdrop of a potential Cold War between the US and China. In a carefully crafted statement, Pakistan politely turned down the US invitation. No specific reason was cited and the Foreign Office remained tightlipped despite the spokesperson's emphasis on the importance of ties with the US. Before taking the decision Pakistan consulted China and it is said Beijing was keen in making sure Islamabad stayed away from the US initiative. For China, Taiwan is a redline that it would never allow anyone to cross. Therefore, it was abundantly clear what China wanted from Pakistan and its other allies. If there was any doubt on what might have played a role in Pakistan's final decision the statement of the Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson cleared it. Using his official Twitter handle, the Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson in a way appreciated Pakistan's decision. "Pakistan declined to attend the democracy summit. A real iron brother!" This time it was China that played a role in the final decision of Pakistan on Democracy Summit. *Pakistan still wants to maintain a balance between China and the US, but for countries heavily dependent on others for economic assistance seldom have choices!*

From APS to amnesty, Muhammad Abdul Basit, *The News*, 16 December⁶

Today marks seven years since the deadliest ever attack against young students in the country by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan. On a bright, sunny, winter morning, 147 children were brutally massacred in the Army Public School in Peshawar. *Giving amnesty to an organized terrorist network, which has the blood of tens of thousands of Pakistanis on its hands and which does not believe in the constitution at all, merely on the idealism that they will become inclusive citizens at once, will not be helpful.* The country needs serious revision of its policies on how to handle radicalization. The least it can do is to refrain from creating monsters like the Mujahideen in the first place for they cannot be disposed of when the urge arises. They are costly liabilities, not assets. Also, make sure the public does not get hyper-radicalised. Radicalisation occurs fast while de-radicalisation takes time and huge efforts. The joint risk of a radicalised population in the form of the TLP exerting its muscular Barelvisim and a militant TTP will be a big challenge for the state. For the most part, the state itself is allegedly responsible. Will it handle the forthcoming crisis responsibly to avoid the blame? One can only hope so.

⁵ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2333618/has-pakistan-finally-joined-china-camp>

⁶ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/917103-from-aps-to-amnesty>

National Action Plan? Najam Sethi, *The Friday Times*, 17 December⁷

Pakistan, meanwhile, is definitely headed in the opposite direction. The resurgence of “Islamism” today is directly linked to policies that birthed the Mujahidin in the 1980s, the Jihadis in the 1990s, the Taliban in the 2000s and now the TLP in the 2020s. In this process, Pakistan has alienated Afghanistan and India and suffered a terrible blowback of terrorism that has laid the state low. These policies have also diverted scarce economic resources away from productive investment, development, education, and health and poverty alleviation and into military defence and physical security. The net result of these misguided state postures is a picture of Pakistan as a financially bankrupt and politically failing state. *The most potentially explosive development is related to state policies of appeasing radical “Islamist” elements. This is manifest in the explosive rise of the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan that is a breeding ground for the sort of violence that erupted against the Punjab police last month or in Sialkot recently; in the misguided Single National Curriculum that brings religion to the forefront of public discourse; in the constant ill-informed references to the “state of Medina” by Imran Khan; and in the plethora of so-called “Islamist” laws and institutions that mock everyday life and freedoms in the modern world.*

Main takeaway from OIC summit, Editorial, *The Daily Times*, 21 December⁸

The single most important takeaway from the OIC summit on Sunday, even more than the Humanitarian Trust Fund and Food Security Program, was the realisation that even the world’s second-largest multilateral forum will only hit a brick wall when it comes to providing financial aid to Afghanistan at least as long as the country’s banking system lies in ruins. Other than the \$265 million pledged by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and the \$30 million committed by Pakistan, no other country has yet talked about money, even though everybody agrees how deep the Afghan crisis is, precisely because there is no real way of translating their concern into tangible, financial help at the moment. It goes to Islamabad’s credit, then, that it mobilized the 57-member bloc in such a way that the international community will now be forced to take note and pressure Washington into loosening its chokehold on Kabul’s finances. Not only should, and most likely will, more voices call for an end to the stiff sanctions, but surely everybody will press for the release of approximately \$10 billion of the Afghan central bank’s money frozen in foreign banks.

Ehsaas fails to win votes, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 24 December⁹

One implication of the results of the first phase of local elections in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa is that social protection in the form of direct, unconditional cash transfers is losing steam

⁷ <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/national-action-plan/>

⁸ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/857500/main-takeaway-from-oic-summit/>

⁹ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2335320/ehsaas-fails-to-win-votes>

as a vote winner. A snapshot was seen in the earlier cantonment board elections. *It was the PTI government that made Ehsaas and the health card a political brand of a prime minister who was already a sports and philanthropic brand.* With economy failing to give any room for manoeuvre, the arrival of Corona was used as an opportunity to shore up resources for Ehsaas and the brigade of the spokespersons went all out to sell it as the PTI brand. It did not work for the PTI, as it did not for PPP and PML-N, but for a different reason. PTI's main voting strength lies not in the poor or the blue collar workers, but in the upcoming white collar professional middle and lower middle class. *Social consumption expenditure like the Ehsaas cash transfers leaves it high and dry. Deindustrialisation has shifted work significantly to the service sector without traditional social protection and with increasing female presence.* This means a different set of social risks. Unfortunately, the post-election soul-searching is focusing on divisions within the party, support on kinship basis and the selection of the wrong candidates. The party will ignore the impact of relative deprivation at its own cost. Now-Senator, Shaukat Tarin ought to indulge in some political economy.

ECONOMIC ISSUES

Pakistan's economic puzzle? Farhan Bokhari, *The News*, 01 December¹⁰

Pakistan's ruling elite have embarked on a mission to downplay glaring gaps in the country's economic outlook only at the cost of further aggravating the government's already tarnished credentials. That being the case, finance adviser Shaukat Tarin's recent claim of a reduction in poverty while Pakistan battles galloping inflation exactly fits in this sorry pattern. His statement followed the controversy unleashed by State Bank Governor Reza Baqir when he reassured expatriate Pakistanis of the gains they must prepared to reap from a weaker rupee in exchange for their remittances from overseas. *Unless the ruling structure successfully reaches out to a range of stakeholders to meet their fundamental needs, Pakistan runs the risk of any future economic upturn remaining far from sustainable.* It is the choice of ignoring this fundamentally vital character of a state and its obligations that together create the risk of ignoring key areas of responsibility. Going forward, decision-makers like Tarin or Baqir may well oversee a success story or two surrounding their areas of responsibility. But can Pakistan turn the corner unless its economic improvement lifts the lives of its people? To that key puzzle, the answer must remain in the negative.

¹⁰ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/913065-pakistan-s-economic-puzzle>

Losing fiscal discipline, Editorial, Dawn, 07 December¹¹

One of the several changes proposed in the Fiscal Responsibility and Debt Limitation Act of 2005, seeking major relaxations in conditions under which the government may “depart from the principles of sound fiscal and debt management owing to unforeseen demands on its finances”, is seemingly in conflict with the very intent of the law. The 2017 version of the Act lets the government temporarily quit the path of fiscal discipline and debt reduction in case of unexpected needs arising out of national security reasons (terrorism, war, riots etc.), projects of national importance and natural calamity (floods, earthquake, drought etc.), or as determined by the National Assembly. *The suggested changes, however, will give the government a free hand to move away from the path of fiscal and debt reduction and accumulate more debt to meet its needs if and when it deems it necessary.* The amendment to the Act has been proposed at a time when Pakistan’s total debt and liabilities have spiked by a whopping 70pc to Rs50.5tr. As the State Bank data for September shows, the public debt alone has grown to Rs41.5tr or 77pc of the nation’s GDP, far exceeding the limit of 60pc imposed by the law.

Combating inflation, Muhammad Yasir, The Nation, 15 December¹²

The new and brutal wave of inflation has taken its toll across the country, following the steep depreciation of the Rupee against the Dollar, high commodities and rocketing petroleum product prices in the global markets. The incumbent government seems toothless to dilute the pressure of global factors which are eventually combined together as a wave of inflation flooding the vulnerable masses of the country, which had already been facing a crunch situation after the Covid-19 outbreak and its related lockdowns. Exports and remittance receipts and multiple socio-economic indicators could be improved once we empower the local masses through the required education and skill based training for the masses. This is the foremost priority area which the state should address on a war-footing basis. Unfortunately, improvements in the system are not possible without political will. *Influential people sitting in the corridors of power for ages have vested interests and the business attached to the present system of exploitation and corruption, and they do protect the present system to protect themselves.*

Flight of the dollar, Editorial, Dawn, 28 December¹³

The Pakistani rupee is expected to end a turbulent year on a depressing note as one of the world’s worst-performing currencies. The rupee has declined by almost 12pc since the start of the year and more than 17pc after having bottomed out to 152.50 to a dollar in mid-May as the country hit balance-of-payment troubles that always follow its ‘growth spurts’.

¹¹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1662386/losing-fiscal-discipline>

¹² <https://nation.com.pk/15-Dec-2021/combating-inflation>

¹³ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1666253/flight-of-the-dollar>

The year 2021 began with the government boasting about a quicker economic recovery in the midst of the pandemic, and saw the rulers aiming for rapid economic growth to pacify a public hit by soaring inflation, shrinking incomes and rising unemployment. However, by the end of the year they had to once again turn to the IMF to put the economy into stabilisation mode. The quick regime change in Kabul last summer also intensified the pressure on the external sector due to the increased outflow of dollars to war-torn Afghanistan as the world turned away from the new Taliban rulers. *Many expect the market to stabilise further once the IMF programme resumes next month and the dollars start flowing in. That still will be a short-term respite unless followed by structural reforms to put the country on a sustainable export-led growth path and lower price inflation.*

Year of economic woes, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 29 December¹⁴

Several major political stories and developments occurred during the course of year 2021. However, the outgoing year will be remembered solely for the economic roller-coaster that Pakistanis have had to endure. Worse still, the ride is still running, and we still don't know if the conductor knows how to stop. It wasn't supposed to be this way. The calendar year started with genuine optimism. Pakistan had managed to get through the initial phases of the Covid-19 pandemic bruised but not battered. The economic impact of the pandemic was significantly less than regional countries and similarly developed economics; IMF funding was coming in; agricultural yields were generally above average; manufacturing and international demand for Pakistani products were on the rise; and we even had some money in the bank, so to speak, as the current account balance hit a record surplus. But amid the swarm of pundits predicting an economic rebound, a handful voiced concern over several underlying problems that were not being addressed. *Meanwhile, a convoluted trade policy left the country with record deficits month after month, leading the local currency to collapse. The rupee has lost about 18% of its value during the last six months.* At the same time, the failure to get Pakistan removed from the FATF grey list is costing the economy tens of billions, according to a new study. The government blames this failure on international conspiracies, just as it blames all of the country's economic woes on past governments.

¹⁴ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2336064/year-of-economic-woes>

SECURITY SITUATION

Dangerous extremism, Khalid Bhatti, *The News*, 07 December¹⁵

The barbaric act of mob lynching on allegations of blasphemy in Sialkot on Friday 03 December is another gruesome reminder that we have become a nation held hostage by hatemongers and religious extremists. *Although small in numbers, extremist groups have made both society and state hostage. The state has failed to check the spread of extremist religious ideologies and the subsequent radicalisation in society.* Hardline religious groups and organisations have been exploiting the religious sensitivities of society to garner public support. Over the years, the state has tolerated such groups and their activities to spread hatred in society – they often use violent means to create fear in society. *How could a state and the ruling elite stop others from using religion for political interests and purposes when they have continuously used religion as a weapon?* Hatemongers spread hatred and jingoism through speeches, writings and sermons using social media and a network of mosques and religious schools. Our ruling elite allowed non-state actors to become the custodians of our faith and beliefs. These non-state actors use one aspect of religious beliefs and faith to gain ground and spread hatred in society. The Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) is the latest example of this appeasement and collusion. We need to seriously think about the policy of mainstreaming hard-liner religious elements. While militant elements can be brought to the mainstream as an integration policy, this policy must not be used to mainstream hate and reactionary ideas.

TTP attacks again, Editorial, *The Daily Times*, 13 December¹⁶

It's no surprise that TTP has taken responsibility for the attack on a polio team in KP's Tank district that killed one policeman and injured a frontier constabulary (FC) officer on Saturday. Just the day before, the terrorist outfit unilaterally ended the ceasefire and peace talks with the government and security agencies should have been ready for something just like this. *Once again TTP hit squads will look for soft targets and security will have to be beefed up. Attacks on polio teams are a very big problem not just from the point of view of terrorism but also because Pakistan is still one of only two countries in the whole world that still haven't completely eradicated the polio virus.* And since the other country is Afghanistan, more is the pity that they are unable to keep a lid on terrorist activities that help polio grow on both sides of the border. Nobody should be under illusions of peace with these terrorists any longer. While the state tried to settle things with them peacefully, skeptics who always believed that they will have to be handled militarily have been proved

¹⁵ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/914629-dangerous-extremism>

¹⁶ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/853791/ttp-attacks-again/>

right once again. Let's not forget that this was not the first time that the state tried to talk things out with TTP. Circumstances demand swift and strict military action to wipe out anybody that takes up arms against the state. *It should help settle matters that the Afghan Taliban have also finally developed problems of their own with TTP and clarified rather forcefully that the latter has nothing to do with the former.*

Talibanising Pashtuns, Qasim Khan, *The News*, 27 December¹⁷

"Taliban are basically predominantly a Pashtun movement," Prime Minister Imran Khan said while delivering the keynote address at the 17th extraordinary session of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation's (OIC) Council of Foreign Ministers to discuss the situation in neighbouring Afghanistan. *It seems that the premier has got it terribly wrong while distinguishing between ethnic movements and religious movements. Although the Afghan Taliban are ethnically Pashtuns, their movement is purely religiously oriented.* Notwithstanding what Pashtun nationalists have been claiming, the Taliban themselves, on various occasions, have countered the claims of being a trans-border Pashtun nationalist movement. They consider their movement a purely religiopolitical one. It may be mentioned here that the Pakistani Taliban do not comprise only Pashtuns, but they have many non-Pashtuns as active members and even leaders of their movement. For instance, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, a Punjab based militant outfit, has close nexus with the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan and many of their leaders have been switching their position *Pashtuns are not terrorists but the victims of terrorism. PM Imran Khan's consistent dubbing of the Pashtuns with an outlawed terrorist organisation has not only received anger from Pashtun nationalists across the country but also triggered disintegration.*

New security policy, Editorial, *Dawn*, 29 December¹⁸

The federal cabinet has approved the National Security Policy after its green-lighting by the National Security Committee and the military spokesman has said that the armed forces will play their role in achieving the vision laid out in the policy. National Security Adviser Moeed Yusuf told the media on Tuesday that it is a "citizen-centric" policy with economic security at the core. The policy took seven years to draft and included consultation with relevant people from all walks of life. *The report comes at a critical time when Pakistan is faced with multiple national security challenges. Keeping economic security at its core is also a sensible approach now that geoeconomics is the central tenet of our larger policy framework.* It is hoped that the national security policy will focus attention on key priority areas and the approach required to realise the stated objectives. In addition, the policy should also bring greater coordination between various government

¹⁷ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/920082-talibanising-pashtuns>

¹⁸ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1666440/new-security-policy>

agencies within the national security domain. *However, there are some aspects of the policy that require prompt action. It was originally presented in the parliamentary committee which the opposition boycotted but this does not mean that the policy does not require proper debate.* Now that the cabinet has approved it, the document should be shared with all parliamentarians and tabled in both Houses so that it can be debated and discussed threadbare. For it to be truly effective, the policy needs to have more input from legislators.

Talking to the TTP: The distinction between enemy and friend, Aima Khosa, Geo News, 29 December¹⁹

The fate of peace talks with the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) remains uncertain after the group ended the month-long ceasefire earlier in December, accusing the Pakistani authorities of failing to honour the promises they made in the initial phase of negotiations.

At this point, it is also unclear whether Pakistan wants to make war or peace with the TTP to decisively settle the conflict which has claimed thousands of lives, displaced millions of people and caused irreparable economic losses to the country. Meanwhile, *Pakistan continues to lobby for Afghanistan and its new Taliban rulers in the international arena, hoping to leverage this support to neutralise the internal threat posed by the TTP.* In the fog of such strategic ambiguity, it is not known whether the TTP are being treated as Pakistan's friends or enemies. While the TTP was being considered a domestic enemy, Pakistan complained that Afghanistan was providing sanctuaries to militants in Kunar and Nuristan after they fled across the border during the operations. Now, Pakistan hopes to use its influence over the Afghan Taliban to negotiate a peaceful settlement with the Pakistani Taliban blurring the distinction between friend and enemy. *This decision to negotiate with the TTP has been taken without any debate in parliament and without any consensus generated among political representatives of the country.*

URDU MEDIA

Threat of a new mini-budget, Editorial, Ummat, 02 December²⁰

With every day, the grip of the international financial institutions on Pakistan is getting stronger. Still the government and the opposition are not ready to reconcile. While they remain engaged in personal vendetta, there is rise in suicide rates in the country because of the increasing unemployment. *This proves that the government along with other parties don't care about the poor people.* The opposition is asking the government to remove unelected ministers who are paid hefty amounts as salary and spend the money on

¹⁹ <https://www.geo.tv/latest/390178-talking-to-the-ttp-the-distinction-between-enemy-and-friend>

²⁰ <https://www.ummat.net/2021/12/02/news.php?p=idr1.gif>

developmental projects. However, *the opposition needs to introspect. Which of these parties, apart from Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) has not been in government? What did they do for common people?* These parties are raising hue and cry as if the development projects during their rule were done by spending their own money, not from the national treasury. Same is the case with the PTI led government. Reality is that all this drama is only meant to get in power. Nobody cares about the tribulations of the poor. *Inflation has reached 11.5 percent. According to some reports, inflation is 12 percent in cities and 10.9 percent in rural areas. Amongst all these sky rocketing prices, a new bomb is going to be dropped in a few days: mini-budget. What havoc would it bring for the people? It is not difficult to guess.* The situation demands that the government and all opposition parties put their differences under the carpet for some time; at least until the threat of complete bankruptcy is avoided. Let the economy stabilise a bit: to pull each other's lags, political parties have a lot of time!

'Time bombs of Pakistan's society' Editorial, Daily Pakistan, 06 December²¹

Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry has said that *the incidents like Sialkot pain us just for 48 hours and then everything becomes normal. Then we wake up again on a similar incident. These incidents are signs of something big. We have set 'time bombs' in the society and they will keep imploding time to time.* The details of the Sialkot incident are gut-wrenching. According to the postpartum report, the body of the Sri Lankan nation was beaten and burnt 99 percent by the employees of his own factory. Amidst the huge crowd, only two people were trying to save the manager. Both political and religious leaders have condemned the lynching. *The widow of Priyantha Kumara has demanded justice from Prime Minister Imran Khan. It should be expected that Pakistan's justice system will be able to deliver justice in this case* the culprits will be punished for their crime. Police has filed terror charges against 900 people and 120 have been arrested. Even then he had apologized to the people who had gotten angry over the removal of posters. *The government bears the responsibility to help the bereaved family and give them as much aid as possible.* The factory owners also should come forward and help the family. Sri Lanka should get a message that not only have the guilty been punished but also the victim's family is given full support. Civil and religious leaders should bring their heads together and defuse such 'time bombs' in the country.

Pakistan-Saudi agreement, Editorial, Jang, 07 December²²

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have signed two bilateral agreement which will be beneficial for both countries. *Not only will they open an opportunity for skilled Pakistani labour in Saudi Arabia; they will also increase remittances from Saudi Arabia to Pakistan which will be good for the economy.* The agreements are meant to regulate skilled Pakistani

²¹ <https://dailypakistan.com.pk/E-Paper/lahore/2021-12-06/page-9/detail-0>

²² <https://e.jang.com.pk/detail/10013>

labour in Saudi Arabia. This will help in protecting rights of these people in Saudi Arabia and also will ensure that the recruitment officers, companies and agencies are held accountable in case violation of basic rules and regulations. *To strengthen its labour market, Saudi Arabia started skill verification practice from July 2021 for labourer to verify their skills to qualify to work in the kingdom. Pakistani labour is also supposed pass the skill verification. More than 2 million Pakistanis are currently working in Saudi Arabia and most of them are either unskilled or semi-skilled labourer.* Most of them are poor who are exploit by recruitment companies are. Some agencies and companies engage these uneducated labour in illegal smuggling of drugs as well. Some of them get arrested and languish in jails. Some workers don't even get paid well. In this background the new agreements are a welcome step.

Gwadar peaceful protests heading towards violence, Najum-ul Hasan Arif, *Ummat*, 14 December²³

Ongoing protests in Gwadar with slogan 'give us our right' (haq doo) will complete one month tomorrow. *A local leader Yousuf Masti was arrested on arrival at the protest site because of which his supporters were enraged.* One leader of Jamaat-e-Islami and main organizer of the protest Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman has also filed an FIR against him j because he had allowed Yousuf Masti to speak at the protest. Talking to *Ummat*, Hidayat-ur-Rehman said that despite the Prime Minister's tweet on the matter, the situation remains the same. The government has not taken any concrete step on the demands of the protestors. Thousands of women also joined the protest on Monday. It was the second time that women in such a large number have joined protests to demand their economic and other rights. *The protestors have called the protest 'haq doo' (give us our rights). Their main demands include protection of fishing rights for the locals, opening of Pak-Iran border and ending deprivation of locals from their businesses and giving benefit to some specific government officials.*

The tragedy of forced disappearances, Editorial, *Jang*, 15 December²⁴

Forced disappearances is an international issue where suppressive or authoritarian governments attack their opponents. Apart from politics, other causes of forced disappearances can be ethnic or religious as well. Forced disappearance is a crime according to the United Nations. Still the number of cases of forced disappearance is increasing. *According to the Defense of Human Rights, the number of disappearances in Pakistan is about 5,000. The number accepted by the government is a few hundreds.* After protests by more than a dozen human rights groups in 2011, the government finally decided to set up an investigation team to look into forced disappearances in Pakistan. The

²³ <https://www.ummat.net/2021/12/14/news.php?p=story2.gif>

²⁴ <https://e.jang.com.pk/detail/13148>

commission had replied that it had got 7,000 applications, out of which it had resolved 5,000. *The reply implied that picking up people without any legal basis and not letting know where and how they are has become a routine in Pakistan.* A similar case of disappearance of a journalist Mudasir Naro is being heard in the Islamabad high Court (IHC). Surprisingly, in regard to the serious issue of missing persons, long marches have been held, meetings held and speeches given, but not a single government has taken the issue seriously. *Most of the disappeared persons in Pakistan belong to Balochistan where some separatist movements are going on. Human rights groups accuse the security agencies for disappearances in the province. It is tragic that when someone is arrested, s/he is neither brought in the court nor any legal action is taken.* There are reports that some people are extra judicially killed and buried in some unknown place. The government should end such practice and answer the court.

OIC holds special meeting on Afghan affairs, Editorial, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, 20 December²⁵

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has full capacity to address the issues of the Muslim countries which no other international organization has. *The organization has not played its role to address some compelling issues of the Muslims across the world is a matter of concern. If OIC had really played its role the Muslims of Palestine, Kashmir, Yemen, Syria, Libya, Iraq and Afghanistan and other Muslim areas would not have suffered.* The issues of Palestine and Kashmir, both over seven decades old, raised serious questions on the role of the UN. It is a positive development though that in the recently held meeting in Islamabad on 19 December that OIC has agreed and expressed its willingness to play a role in addressing the worsening situation in Afghanistan. *The meeting also raised the Kashmir and Palestine issue and also discussed that Islamophobia has intensified aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. The meeting concluded that helping Afghanistan was a religious duty of the member countries and a stable Afghanistan would help in eliminating terrorism in the region.* Speaking at the meeting Prime Minister Imran Khan said that a stable Afghanistan is necessary to end the menace of terrorism. The Afghans need immediate help given the breakdown of the Afghan economy, he added. He said that the Afghans have suffered a lot. Now the matter about their survival. Foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said that the world needs to pay attention to the abysmal economic condition of Afghanistan which can impact the whole region. ... Speaking on the occasion the Saudi foreign minister Faisal bin Farhan said that the situation in Afghanistan needs to be seen as a human issue and Saudi Arabia wants peace and stability in Afghanistan.

²⁵ <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/Gawadar/2021-12-20/page-4/detail-8>

Govt to implement IMF conditions, Editorial, Nawa-i-Waqt, 28 December²⁶

Finance minister Shaukat Tarin has said that the government will start implanting the conditions set by the International monetary Fund (IMF) from the 12 January 2022. He said that he would introduce the Finance (Supplementary) Bill 2021 in the parliament for approval on Tuesday (28 December) because the sixth review of the \$6 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF) is associated with the bill. The measures and policies adopted by the government to bring out the country out of the economic crisis have not borne any fruit so far. In fact with the increase of loans from the international institutions the economic situation is going worse only. If these harsh measures would have been useful the people would have at least gotten some relief. However, until now neither have these policies helped to stabilize the economy nor have they given any relief to the people from deteriorating situations in poverty, inflation and unemployment. Finally the government is implying that the conditions of the IMF will be presented in the form of a mini-budget with the intention to burden the people with more taxes. The people are already worried because of the inflation. The situation has reached the point of starvation. But still the government is concerned about implementing the IMF conditions to make the latter happy.

ELECTRONIC MEDIA

No More Violence in the Name of Prophet: PM, Breaking Point with Malick, Hum News, 08 December²⁷

The Sialkot incident in which a person from Sri Lanka was beaten to death by a crowd in the name of religion is heavily criticised in the Pakistani media. *PM Imran announced Tamgha i Shujaat for moral courage & bravery of Malik Adnan who tried to shelter & save Priyantha Diyawadana from the vigilante mob in Sialkot including endangering his own life by physically trying to shield victim.* Imran Khan also clearly declared that from now on people using religion, especially Prophets name for killing or lynching someone will not be spared and punished. The host asked does PTI government has the courage to take on to these religious organisations like TLP, despite the fact that the government has given into the demands of TLP. *Can Sialkot incident prove to be a turning point in bringing legislations against such organisations and individuals using religion to justify killings? Guests: Fahad Hussain, Zarar Khodu & Mazhar Abbas-Senior Journalists/analysts. Fahad Hussain* pointed out that whatever the PM has said is true and the resolve is important but the point is that if he can walk the talk is a question and for that we have to look back in history where the PM tweeted similar things but nothing happened on the ground. Similarly with TLP the PM initially said that nobody will be allowed to challenge the writ

²⁶ <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/Gawadar/2021-12-28/page-4/detail-8>

²⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NgZjXGoNFOs>

of the state and later how the government gave into the demands of TLP through secret deals is there for everyone to see. Therefore there is a big question mark if the PTI will be able to do what the PM has promised. *Zarar Khodu* pointed out that the PM's speech was as usual very beautiful and passionate but unfortunately there will be no result of the speech. We have heard the words test case, black day so many times and it seems like these are just shallow words. The problem is that when the elections come the political parties will boil down to ask for votes in the name of religion & Prophet Muhammad and also be making amendments with the organisations like TLP that use religion for killings. Point is that just because he was a Sri Lankan such condemnations are coming from government for the international audience, had it been an Ahmadi Muslim, will the reaction would have been same? *Mazhar Abbas* pointed out that the whole government agency is condemning the act because the person lynched is not a Pakistani. It has to be noted that in the past many local journalists were killed in the past no reaction, but when a foreign journalist was killed on Pakistani soil (*Daniel Pearl*) the whole government machinery started talking and the case was resolved and judgment was given in three months. The point is that these organisations are getting stronger and the government is becoming weaker by the day in front of those using religion for politics. Today we cannot build a counter narrative as the environment is becoming hostile.

KP votes against PTI in the recent local body elections? Off the Record with Kashif Abbasi, ARY New, 20 December²⁸

The PTI has almost lost the local body elections first phase in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) which is considered the parties base and also lost the seat of Mayor in Peshawar city, which is considered the strong hold of PTI. KP PTI leaders before local election said PTI is the main party elsewhere if not in Punjab but the results show otherwise. The PTI has to face failure in their home ground in many parts of KP where they swiped the elections in 2018. Surprisingly JUI-F emerged as a winner in many parts of KP. Is Inflation the result behind this lose or PTI is losing its relevance? Are people angry with PTI and using votes as a way to express their frustration? *Guests:* Shaukat Yousufzai, PTI (local Minister Peshawar) & Zia ul-Haq-Bureau chief Peshawar. *Shaukat Yousufzai* pointed out that in the local body elections, the local contacts are very important, the results does not necessarily is a verdict on PM Imran Khan, his popularity is intact irrespective of these results. Although the inflation is an issue but the PTI distributed health cards in KP, Ehsas programme was also started here, after this we are bringing education card. The vote has been split between different parties. The problem is that PTI leaders in KP supported other party candidates and talk against the PTI. They do not have connect with the grassroots in KP. The PTI has supported the local bodies and the local body elections were therefore made possible. It is

²⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ViB8AXEJJE0>

very difficult to organize a peaceful election at the local body and the PTI has done this. *Zia ul-Haq* underlined that the problem with PTI is that it does not learn from its past mistakes, e.g. from the cantonment elections in Peshawar which it lost. There is no political stricture in the PTI and the decisions are made at the top level and does not trickle down. There are many groups in the PTI, which is trying to cut the other in the elections this is said to be one reason for the results of the local body elections in KP. JUI-F was not in the preliminary surveys and the votes of the JUI-F is because of the resentment to the PTI. Inflation and personal issues in the PTI was the reason of the PTI failure in the KP, for example giving ticket within the family.

Exposé by Irfan Hashmi in Rana Shamim Affidavit case? The Reporters, ARYNews, 27th December²⁹

London based journalist Irfan Hashmi made a big revelation that Rana Shahmim signed the shady affidavit against justice Saqib Nisar & Islamabad high court's judge in Hasan Nawaz's office in presence of Nawaz Sharif and that it was premediated attack on judiciary to hamper and influence proceedings against unmasked with revelation that the affidavit was signed in his presence. On this episode the host Adil Abbasi invites the two main analysts of The Reporters and Irfan Hashmi himself who made the expose to answer the questions related to the case which is becoming murkier by the day. *Guests:* Irfan Hashmi, Sabir Shakir & Chaudhary Ghulam Hussain. *Irfan Hashmi* pointed out that although he has written a detailed article about the same in the *Express Tribune* but he underlined that this case has to be investigated and made public otherwise the truth will never come out. If Rana Shamim is true why is he shying away from the media and saying no comments on all questions pointed to him, his silence suggests otherwise. This is a very clear case, notary, Rana Shamim and Nawaz Sharif all were present while signing the affidavit. This is not a counter narrative but an investigative piece of journalism. The timing of the audio release should also be noticed. *Sabir Shakir* pointed out that the whole incident is scripted and there is only one beneficiary out of the whole process, i.e. Sharif Family. Story was written before hand and accordingly the evidences were collected. The problem is that before these kind of issues were not countered, now Irfan Hashmi has rightfully brought forward a counter narrative and he has been able to put his version in front of the public. This is simple they should go to IC and make their case but they know it is impossible to prove and therefore they are not going to the court. *Chaudhary Ghulam Hussain* argued that Rana Shamim was used as chess ball by the Sharif family to clear their image in the UK and Pakistani courts. Irfan Hashmi should answer where the affidavit was notarized, in Nawaz Sharif's office or notary office, this will clear many things. Hashmi has all the

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

truth and evidence and he should bring it in front of the public soon, this is clearly for political mileage.

BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES

(Select incidents culled out from the Pakistan media)

Place	Date	Description	Killed	Injured
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa				
Bajaur ³⁰	20/12/2021	Two killed, four injured in Bajaur blast.	02	00
Balochistan				
Quetta ³¹	20/12/2021	Three killed in Quetta gas leakage blast.	03	00
Kech ³²	24/12/2021	Two security personnel martyred in Balochistan's Kech.	02	00
Quetta ³³		Four killed in bomb attack on workers of JUI faction in Quetta	04	16

³⁰ <https://nation.com.pk/19-Dec-2021/two-killed-four-injured-in-bajaur-blast>

³¹ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/918245-three-killed-in-quetta-gas-leakage-blast>

³² <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2335439/two-security-personnel-martyred-in-balochistans-kech>

³³ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1666756/four-killed-in-bomb-attack-on-workers-of-jui-faction-in-quetta>