

INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

Pakistan

Fortnightly Report

July (16-31) 2016

Prepared by

Dr Ashish Shukla

Dr Ashok Behuria

South Asia Centre, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA)
1-Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg, Shankar Vihar,
New Delhi-110010

FORTNIGHTLY REPORT ON PAKISTAN
July 16-31, 2016

This report is based on the reading of Pakistani media during the last two weeks.

India-Pakistan Relations

Pakistan considers Kashmir as the “core” issue in its relations with India. The history of the subcontinent suggests that it has tried its best to wrest control of the whole of Kashmir through various means and mechanisms including open wars, diplomacy, internationalisation, terrorism, nuclear threat, irregular warfare etc. The ruling Pakistani elites, both civilian and military, have left no stone unturned to exploit the prevailing situation in J&K to their advantage. There is a deliberate attempt to internationalise the issue. Pakistani diplomatic missions, scattered all over the world, have been instructed to show India in bad light over Kashmir. The eulogizing of the Kashmiri militants seems to have become the top priority of the politico-security elites these days. Pakistan has not only stood with the likes of Burhan Wani and other militants, but also observed a Black Day in their support. Whereas the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif termed the separatist movement as “freedom wave” and stated that he would not let Kashmiris down this time, his advisor on foreign affairs Sartaj Aziz has resorted to the old demand of holding a “plebiscite” allowing people of Kashmir the right to self-determination.

Meanwhile, a plea was filed in Lahore High Court against Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In his plea, which was dismissed by the court, the plaintiff had reportedly sought action against Modi for violence in Kashmir. It was natural for India to respond Pakistan appropriately which it did by hardening its stand over the issue. Although, India has not shut the door of normalisation with Pakistan, it has categorically asked it to stop supporting terrorists and separatists in J&K and stay out of internal affairs of India.

The Panama Papers

The panamagate issue, even after several months, is refusing to subside. The joint committee could not come up with an agreed Terms of References (ToRs) to probe the charges of corruption against the Prime Minister and his family members. Although the joint opposition has deferred its plan of street agitation and decided to bring the matter to the parliament, it is in no mood to give any respite to the ruling PML-N leadership over the issue. After an unusually long meeting, the joint opposition unanimously decided to move a bill on Panama Papers inquiry which could be helpful in evolving a consensus over the ToRs.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has, right from the beginning, taken a tough stand over the issue. Recently, the PTI chairman Imran Khan accused Nawaz Sharif of running the country as a Monarch. His party's spokesperson alleged that Prime Minister lied to the nation about his heart surgery in London. Of late, the PTI has announced to hold a protest movement against the federal government. Imran Khan would lead the protest commencing from Peshawar. Pakistan Awami Tehrik (PAT) chief Dr Allama Tahir-ul-Qadri has also announced to lead a separate protest against the corrupt characters named in the Panama leaks. At a time, when the whole opposition was united and jointly moving ahead against corruption related issues, PTI's announcement confirms the largely-held view about the desperateness of Imran Khan. PTI chairman has, right since his entry into the politics, been eyeing the prime ministerial berth. Tahir-ul-Qadri, who is looking for a political base in the country, often joins him either at the behest of the deep state to oppose the government of Pakistan. However, this time round, it has chosen not to join Imran's rally.

Civil-military Relations

The controversy over the posters and billboards inviting military to impose martial law was supposed to subside with the arrest of leaders and activists of Move on Pakistan party. Then came the salvo from the cricketer turned politician Imran Khan who, in a rally in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK), argued that unlike Turkey, Pakistanis would celebrate and distribute sweets if the military were to stage a coup. There were adverse reactions to this, for obvious reasons, from other political parties except the PML-Q, whose leader Chaudhary Pervez Elahi approved of Imran's remarks and argued that there was no comparison between the Pakistani and Turkish situation. Whereas PML-N leader and Defence Minister Khawaja Asif stated that Imran Khan was the 12th man of Pakistani politics waiting for an accident to happen, PPP made it clear that it would stand against any idea of a military coup. Cornered over the issue, Imran did make an attempt to clarify that he was not the one inviting military to take over. He argued that the real threat to democracy was not from the military but from the Kingdom of Nawaz Sharif.

Although Raheel Sharif has categorically stated not to take another term, many analysts believe that something is cooking behind the scene. The appearance of posters and banners across Pakistan, Imran Khan's remarks, the discussion on vernacular media, and a petition in Lahore High Court asking for an extension of tenure for the COAS could not be seen in isolation. Given the history and complicated civil-military relations nothing could be ruled out completely. The latest rumour in Pakistan is that Gen. Raheel may be accorded the position of Field Marshal and allowed to continue in office.

The Afghan Theatre

The tension over the fencing and building of new gates at the official crossing points along the Pak-Afghan border is continuing. The military in Pakistan has forcefully been constructing gates at the official crossing points and fencing the largely porous border without having any approval from the Afghan side. Pakistan accuses Afghanistan of sheltering the TTP leadership from where they are carrying out attacks inside the Pakistani territory. The new and assertive border management strategy is aimed at preventing the movement of the so-called bad terrorists. This was reflected well in Defence Minister Khawaja Asif's statement in the Senate in which he argued that without an effective border management strategy it would be difficult to control the menace of terrorism.

Pakistan officially chants the mantra of Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process in Afghanistan, however, does quite little to resolve the issue. China is a relatively new player in the game which undoubtedly wants to stabilise the situation in Afghanistan for a number of reasons but often either succumbs to Pakistani pressures or collaborates with them to immunise its Xinjiang province from terrorism related violence. Pakistan is always ready to address any issue raised by the Chinese. Recently, both Pakistan and China gave a call for reconciliation in Afghanistan.

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

Pakistan's ruling elite has been propagating CPEC as an effective solution to Pakistan's all economic and developmental problems. One often hears the argument that CPEC would change the fate of Pakistan's economy and make Pakistan a stable and prosperous state. Recently, a controversy has come up regarding the Chinese suggestion of formally roping in Army into the implementation of the project. As per the reports in Pakistani media, the Chinese side is fed up with the delay in implementing some of the projects because of involvement of various ministries at several levels. The idea is to rope in Pakistan Army for smooth execution of the project. Military on its part, has already raised a special security division to protect the entire corridor. It is also providing security to various energy projects and Chinese nationals involved in that. What more the military could do is anybody's guess!
