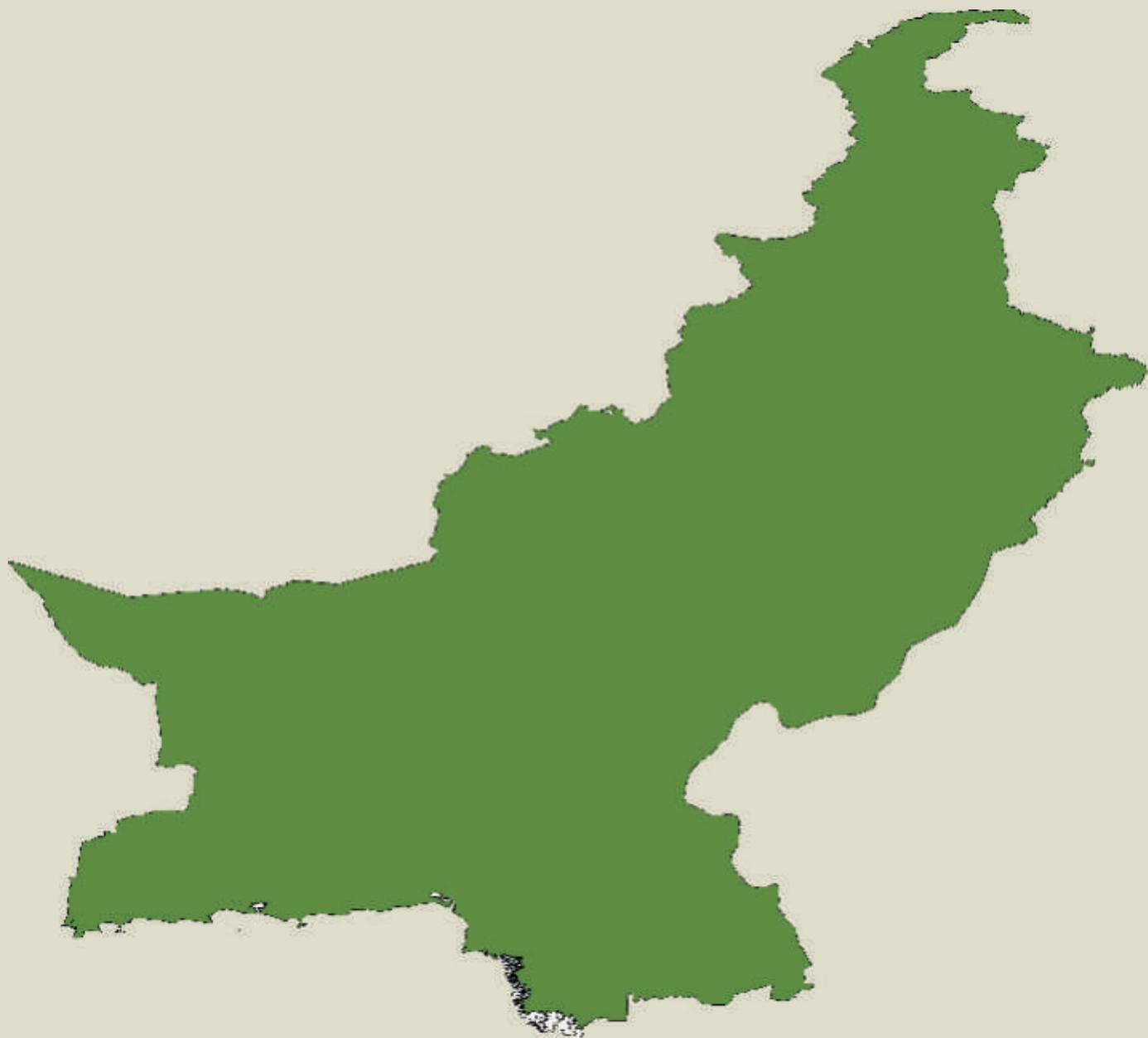


August 2021

PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST

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



Prepared by
Dr. Zainab Akhter
Dr. Nazir Ahmad Mir
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PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST, August 2021

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POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Pakistan asks US not to abandon Afghanistan, *The Express Tribune*, 02 August¹
Pakistan wants the US to remain engaged with the Afghan situation in order to ensure that there is some political settlement after its withdrawal instead of civil war. Prime Minister Imran Khan also recently criticised the US approach and blamed Washington for the Afghan mess. The worry in Pakistan is that the US may abandon Afghanistan altogether leaving regional countries to face the blowback of a potential civil war in Afghanistan. It is because of this reason that Pakistan has been working with regional countries including Russia and China to prevent the civil war in Afghanistan. Both Russia and China are also critical of the US strategy on Afghanistan and publicly blamed Washington for leaving the neighbouring country in a total mess. But given the role of the US, Pakistan, Russia and China are still seeking to engage with the Biden administration. For this purpose senior officials of Pakistan, China, Russia and the US are scheduled to meet in Doha on August 11. The so-called “Extended Trioka” will discuss the current situation in Afghanistan and discuss ways to seek a political settlement. Pakistan and China have been pushing the Afghan Taliban to cut ties with the TTP and East Turkestan Islamic Movement ((ETIM). The Taliban in general have made a commitment that they would not allow Afghan soil to be used against any other country. *But observers are skeptical as the recent United Nations Security Council (UNSC) report suggested that the Taliban still maintain contacts with al-Qaeda and other terrorist outfits.*

PML-N’s dilemma, Editorial, Dawn, 04 August²

There is no doubt that the recent drubbing the PML-N received at the hands of the ruling PTI in AJK and Sialkot has triggered a heated debate within the party on the effectiveness or lack of it of the anti-establishment narrative of Nawaz Sharif which has been advanced by his heir apparent Maryam Nawaz. But it doesn’t mean that the party is ready to change overnight. The erstwhile prime minister did well to step in to end the confusion created by the party president’s interview and nip in the bud any speculation that the PML-N plans to revisit its narrative of civilian supremacy. Given the country’s political history, it’s hard for many observers of politics to imagine a party returning to power without backing from the establishment. Therefore, it isn’t surprising to see many PML-N legislators and ticket hopefuls blaming the party’s anti-establishment stance for its defeat in the recent polls, and ruling out its chances

¹ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2313397/pakistan-asks-us-not-to-abandon-afghanistan>

² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1638707/pml-ns-dilemma>

in the 2023 elections unless it mends fences with the powers that be. *But others have questioned this stance and asked if, going by past experience, making compromises is any guarantee that the PML-N will return to power let alone complete a term in office.*

Narratives, Najam Sethi, *The Friday Times*, 06 August³

There is certainly a strong difference of opinion between the Sharif brothers on how to run the party with a particular narrative, to get back into office. Shahbaz believes Nawaz's obsession with "confronting" or "opposing" the all-powerful Miltablishment over a range of issues is responsible for the PMLN's plight. Therefore he wants Nawaz and heir-apparent Maryam to zip up and cool their heels outside Pakistan so that he can cozy up to the Miltablishment and neutralize it. *But Nawaz says the Miltablishment is part of the problem of Pakistan and not its solution. He says he hasn't sacrificed his government three times in the last thirty years and suffered imprisonment and exile to throw in the towel now just so that brother Shahbaz can make a futile bid to become prime minister of Pakistan.* There are also problems with Nawaz Sharif's narrative. Why should the Miltablishment allow a free and fair election that returns Nawaz to power when it is his avowed intention to clip its wings and put it out of business? *But in the absence of any discernable and credible strategy to put a spoke in the wheels of the Miltablishment-PTI alliance, is Nawaz whistling in the dark? Indeed, if the recent AJK election results are a forewarning of what lies in store, the prospect of the PMLN "losing salience" is very real. Nawaz Sharif will surely return to Pakistan one day. But on whose terms? A good time for a voluntary return to court arrest would be on the eve of the next elections whenever these are held.*

Tareen bloc and PTI, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 11 August⁴

All is not well in the ruling PTI as far as loyalty and discipline of its members is concerned. Inevitably, there is a power struggle and it concerns individuals' personal ambitions. But this disgust has come at a wrong time for the party. Prime Minister Imran Khan is at the zenith of his power, as his PTI rules the entire country, including G-B and AJK. The only exception is Sindh, where it acts as a federal watchdog. Thus, the focus of party legislators and activists should have been on realizing the manifesto of change for which they were entrusted with. But that is not the case. *Infighting and grouping is quite evident, and the polarisation in Punjab is a case in point. Last week, two PTI members*

³ <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/narratives/>

⁴ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2314945/tareen-bloc-and-pti>

namely Firdous Ashiq Awan and Aun Chaudhry resigned from their advisory portfolios with the Punjab government. It is linked to the crossing of swords between Punjab CM Usman Buzdar and the estranged PTI stalwart Jehangir Khan Tareen. This brinkmanship in PTI is already impacting its performance. PM Imran should revisit this Tareen factor with an open head and heart, and come up with a sagacious way out. Tareen's services for the PTI cannot be brushed aside nor should his supporters be shown the door.

What is the PDM's goal? Editorial, Dawn, 13 August 2021⁵

The Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) opposition alliance wants to groan back into life. After remaining dormant for nearly 10 weeks, its leadership met for a consultative session and decided to restart its activities in earnest. The alliance plans to hold a *Jalsa* in Karachi in the coming days in order to build up momentum. PDM leaders Maulana Fazlur Rehman and Shehbaz Sharif also rejected the PTI government's offer on electoral reforms including the use of electronic voting machines. The meeting was also attended via video link by PML-N supreme leader Nawaz Sharif and his daughter Maryam Nawaz. As expected, government spokespersons ridiculed the PDM meeting and brushed it aside as a non-event. *It is now fairly clear that the government is well on its way to completing its five-year term without having to face any credible existential threat.* The only available option is the one that the PPP leadership has often been mentioning about bringing about an in-house change in Punjab. However, the PML-N is not interested in this option and therefore it is unlikely that the PDM will pursue it with any level of seriousness. *The duality of narrative within the PML-N is also weighing down on the effectiveness of the opposition alliance. Unless the PML-N can clear this confusion and speak with one voice, the PDM will also remain unsure of what it really wants.* The alliance may appear re-energized, but it has little to offer by way of an alternative to the PTI government.

History repeating itself in Afghanistan, Talat Masood, The Express Tribune, 18 August 2021⁶

The situation in Afghanistan has unfolded so rapidly that the US administration and the world at large have been taken by complete surprise. The intelligence estimate by the US have fallen by the wayside as they had predicted that the Afghan security forces would be able to hold on for six months and in a worst-case scenario for ninety days. *What is most surprising is that the US intelligence which is known to be one of the world's top agencies was completely off the mark. Was this a miscalculation or a ruse to serve a larger purpose? This would remain a subject of interest to conspiracy theorists*

⁵ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1640392/what-is-the-pdms-goal>

⁶ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2316114/history-repeating-itself-in-afghanistan>

and historians for quite a while. The hasty withdrawal of US forces and the collapse of the Afghan army has been a serious setback to US credibility. Many Afghans are questioning if their heavy reliance on the US was a correct decision. It is most surprising that the US spent over two trillion dollars in the last twenty years on Afghanistan which certainly does not show anywhere. ... But will the Taliban accept and tolerate these transformations and negotiate a new social contract? This would largely depend on the extent to which the Taliban have changed over the years and shed their narrow world view. Being strongly committed to their ideological beliefs it would be difficult for them to change. Equally important is what level of flexibility the new generation of Afghans would show to accommodate the Taliban conservative governance. In all likelihood the process of accommodation is not expected to succeed at least in the near term and the country will remain ideologically torn and unstable.

A reformed Taliban? Pervez Hoodbhoy, Dawn, 28 August 2021⁷

After capturing Kabul the Taliban want to be seen as rulers rather than just as a religious militia. Eager to secure legitimacy internationally and among Afghans — closed door negotiations are afoot for a government inclusive of non-Taliban Afghans. Will these actually work out? And what lies ahead for young, urbanised, internet savvy Afghans seeking to live in the 21st century rather than the 7th? This choice had been denied just a while ago. ... On the other hand, the Taliban have fully trustable allies inside Islamabad. When some days ago the white Taliban flag flew — albeit briefly — from Jamia Hafsa, this sent across an important message from Maulana Abdul Aziz and his likes to their victorious Afghan colleagues: we were with you when you were being bombed in Tora Bora. And we are with you now that you have won. Like it or not, AfPak has become reality. Despised in Pakistan because of its American origin, this term rings true. Geographical proximity is now augmented by the ideological proximity of rulers in both countries. Taliban style thinking is bound to spread through the length and breadth of Pakistan. Now that the Indians have been chased out of Afghanistan, Pakistan's dream of strategic depth stands fulfilled. So have we reached nirvana? Well, almost, but not quite. Fears that the Naya Taliban are no different from the Purana Taliban has made millions of Afghans desperate to flee.

⁷ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1643074/a-reformed-taliban>

ECONOMIC ISSUES

\$50bn in exports by 2023? Editorial, *Business Recorder*, 18 August 2021⁸

People were still in the process of digesting this fiscal year's rather ambitious export target of around \$40 billion, wondering how it would really be achieved, and Adviser to Prime Minister on Commerce Razzak Dazwood has already raised hopes of fetching \$50 billion in 2023, the last fiscal year of the present administration. And while it would have helped if the minister had been a little less vague about just how our exports are going to double in two years, beyond repeating the same old things like "diversification, focus on non-traditional sectors and increasing exports to new markets," it must still be appreciated that the government is always looking for ways to jack up exports. Because without improving revenue from exports there is no way that the economy can stand on its own two feet and shed its reliance on foreign aid to stay functional.

FDI headaches, Editorial, *Daily Times*, 19 August 2021⁹

*No matter how the government tries to explain the 38.7 percent year-on-year decline in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in July, the biggest reason for this slide, which has been pretty noticeable since the last fiscal, is that we continue to rely on China to be our biggest foreign investor. And since Chinese investments have slowed down with the completion of the first phase of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects, so has our net foreign exchange inflow. ... It doesn't help that the same day's headlines also speak of exporters lamenting soaring input costs. When you are aiming to snap the economy out of low growth by forcing GDP to expand, then you can't have export earnings and foreign investment suffering. It's as simple as that. So the government will have to do whatever is needed to calm investors, reach out diplomatically and politically to other countries, and get governments to cajole their investors into coming to Pakistan. That is about the only doable thing in the amount of time the government has to show results and keep the IMF bailout program from collapsing. *The economy needs the kind of foreign exchange in its reserves that does not create debt. And there's no better option on the table than attracting direct foreign investment.**

Slashing the development budget, Editorial, *Daily Times*, 26 August 2021¹⁰

News reports, so far unchallenged by the government, that lack of funds is already causing the Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) to be slashed, just two months into the new fiscal, are very disturbing and indicate that the

⁸ <https://www.brecorder.com/news/40114163/50bn-in-exports-by-2023>

⁹ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/806100/fdi-headaches/>

¹⁰ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/807913/slashing-the-development-budget/>

Balance of Payments (BoP) position might be under more stress than the government is willing to acknowledge. It appears that the ministry of planning, development and special initiatives has written letters to other ministries to exclude non-essential development projects from the Rs900 billion PSDP for the year. It's also being said that the ministry of water resources has already excluded five development projects in Balochistan from the list. ... All in all, then, the time has come when the government starts scratching its head about the way forward. The expansionary budget got the business community smiling from ear to ear, but such sentiment can change very quickly once the money stops flowing. And without adequate development funds, it will not be possible to keep up the momentum of the economy. Therefore the sooner the government clarifies the present situation the better for everybody concerned, especially businesses who had been expanding and spending to take advantage of the expansionary environment.

Ever-changing economic team, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 27 August 2021¹¹

The PTI government continues its record-setting rotation at the helm of the FBR, bringing in its seventh chairman since taking over in August 2018. The quick-fire sackings of FBR chiefs mean that the government is also running out of in-house options new chief Dr Mohammad Ashfaq Ahmad is a Grade-21 officer. *This sacking, however, reportedly ties into the recent hacking fiasco at the FBR rather than failure to implement tax policies or other issues generally associated with the job. Finance Minister Shaukat Tarin was reportedly furious at former chairman Asim Ahmad and others for their failure to inform him of the hack in a timely manner.* ... While it remains to be seen how many more heads roll in the FBR and elsewhere, there are some positives. New FBR chief Dr Ashfaq had a relatively impressive term as member Inland Revenue - exceeding expectations on collection in the previous fiscal year. He seems well qualified for his new job, but recent history suggests he may struggle to hold it for long enough to be effective.

SECURITY SITUATION

Desecration of temple, Editorial, *Dawn*, 06 August¹²

The shameful desecration of a Hindu temple in the town of Bhong, Punjab, has once again exposed how tenuous the rights of minorities are in today's

¹¹ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2317256/ever-changing-economic-team>

¹² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1639076/desecration-of-temple>

Pakistan. *A mob vandalised the place of worship on Wednesday after a nine-year-old Hindu boy, who had allegedly urinated in a local seminary, was granted bail by a local court. In a shocking video of the attack, several men can be seen with rods and a crowbar smashing the glass cases in which the idols were placed and damaging them as well.* This is yet another case that illustrates the dangerous level to which society has become radicalised, and how vigilante violence can be fanned by a few mischief-makers, who often have other, very worldly, agendas. The case was registered against the minor on July 24 under the blasphemy law. *Despite some elders of the Hindu community tendering an apology to the madressah administration, all hell broke loose on the instigation of some individuals when the court granted relief to the boy some 10 days later.* It is often the case that religious disputes are deliberately escalated in order to 'neutralise' differences over money or land, and drive out the 'target', be it a family or an entire community.

Quetta again, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 10 August¹³

At least two policemen were martyred and at least 21 people injured in a terrorist attack in a high-security area in Quetta. The improvised explosive device was planted on a motorcycle and took place at Zarghoon Road, near University Chowk, and appeared to be targeting a police van. According to investigators, the bomb used about 4kg explosives and appears to have been detonated using a timer. At least nine of the injured people were civilians, while the rest were policemen, says a police spokesman. *The outlawed Baloch Liberation Army has claimed responsibility for the attack,* and although the government and security forces have not confirmed their own suspicions on the record, it would be no surprise if they pointed to the same suspects. As their label suggests, the terrorists have very much succeeded in terrorising Pakistan. Jam Kamal and leaders in Islamabad need to get their act together. *They need to stop announcing that the public supports the security forces in their anti-terrorism efforts and actually legislate so as to combat terrorism. Also, while the CM may be arguing that the terrorists achieve their broader separatist goals, the fact is that even they know that.* At this point, it is increasingly clear that these groups are only in operation to destabilise Balochistan. That, in turn, only serves the interests of India, and to a lesser extent, the Afghan government.

¹³ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2314757/quetta-again>

Decision time on Afghanistan, Editorial, *The Daily Times*, 16 August¹⁴

And what is our official policy about the flood of refugees that is already headed our way? So far many government officials, including the prime minister, have issued a number of statements, many of which conflict with each other. Pakistan has said that it would not support a Taliban-only government in Afghanistan, especially if the insurgents forcibly take over the capital, yet it has also very little respect for the elected government of President Ashraf Ghani. *Islamabad favours the kind of shared government that neither the Ghani administration nor the Taliban have much time for.* And while it is perfectly fine to have an opinion on how things should turn out so close to home, prudence still requires concrete, quantifiable policy options in case the scenario that suits us does not materialize. *There's also something to be said about the prime minister's hard line against Washington. Sometimes he almost sounds bitter, and then the foreign office has to put out unnecessary diplomatic fires.* It is understandable that China is our all-weather friend and iron brother, as all Pakistani leaders are fond of reminding everybody every now and then, but would it be wise to put all our eggs in one basket at such a sensitive time and just leave them there? Will China, for example, stand by us if the US turns up the heat on us, or will it be just a spectator? *Pakistan will surely suffer in either case. So perhaps it's better not to try to punch above our weight and prepare for the implosion that is only days away in Afghanistan.*

Taliban's challenge, Editorial, *Dawn*, 17 August¹⁵

The swiftness with which Kabul fell to the Taliban without a shot being fired has taken the world by surprise. The Afghan Taliban now control the entire country and will dominate whatever interim government ultimately takes shape. With former president Ashraf Ghani fleeing Afghanistan, it is not clear how many of the key people who constituted his government would be acceptable to the Taliban in the new set-up. *An important delegation comprising non-Pakhtun Afghan leaders who once belonged to the Northern Alliance, held talks with Pakistani officials in Islamabad on Monday and it is expected that they would engage the Taliban to explore avenues for joining the new government.* This holds great significance because it would be in the interest of the Taliban, and of the entire Afghan leadership, to agree to a broad-based, fully representative government that can bring all ethnicities and factions together to forge a consensus on how to govern together. The world will be keenly looking especially at how the Taliban react towards girls'

¹⁴ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/804698/decision-time-on-afghanistan/>

¹⁵ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1641141/talibans-challenge>

education. So far the level of violence has been low. The Taliban will need to maintain this peace and calm even as they consolidate their position. *The grim images of Afghans crowding departing American aircraft at the Kabul airport, hanging on to the planes as they took off and falling to their deaths will remain etched in the world's memory for a very long time.*

Karachi explosion, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 17 August¹⁶

The tragic death of at least 13 persons in Karachi from an extended family, in what appears to be a truck explosion, is disturbing. Earlier reports, however, pointed out at the hurling of a grenade on the mini-truck which was on its way back after attending a family function in the thickly-populated area of Baldia Town. The incident, nonetheless, needs to be probed so as to ensure that there isn't any act of sabotage. Citizens of Karachi had hardly heaved a sigh of relief from the decades-long fissures of terrorism and economic downslide. Thus every effort must be made to raise the bar of vigilance and root out unscrupulous elements. *The Baldia incident deserves some minute scrutiny. This is so because most of the family members were from the Swat valley of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. Karachi's multi-ethnic populated suburbs have a history of prejudice, and lingual otherness has dominated the political mosaic.* The law and order apparatus is quasi-structured between the federal and provincial authorities, and thus Karachi's 25 million people are found in a hapless mode. Karachi has a serious governance problem too, and its civic infrastructure is in a mess.

FATF: moving goalposts, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 23 August 2021¹⁷

Pakistan has been in the FATF dock for quite some time. The Paris-based regulator on financial transactions, anti-money laundering and terror financing believes that Pakistan has a lot to do in terms of reforming its monetary transactions and, especially, regulations at home against proscribed organizations. Thus, since June 2018, it has been placed in the grey list. The pressure is on to seek compliance on 27 points, initially spelt out by FATF. *They primarily revolve around the guarantees that the state furnishes to the global consortium ensuring that all money flow is documented, and there isn't any pilferage in terms of illegal or suspicious transactions. ... Pakistan has no choice but to comply. This will help in making the world realize its seriousness in fighting terror financing, as well as obstructing money-laundering. The government advocates transparency in financial dealings, and wants to curb the flight of capital. FATF has just furthered that envelope. Islamabad should*

¹⁶ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2315913/karachi-explosion>

¹⁷ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2316756/fatf-moving-goalposts>

build a narrative and demand transparency in auditing by both developed and developing countries. This apartheid of singling out Pakistan is in bad taste.

Anti-China attacks, Editorial, Dawn, 24 August 2021¹⁸

The uptick in attacks targeting Chinese nationals in Pakistan must not be taken lightly by the government and the security apparatus. Firm steps are needed to prevent such incidents from recurring. The latest incident occurred in Gwadar as a motorcade carrying Chinese nationals was attacked on Friday on the East-Bay Expressway. ... With the fall of Kabul and the security situation in Afghanistan incredibly fluid, Pakistan must remain on its toes where security threats are concerned. While the threat from religiously motivated militants having sanctuaries in Afghanistan is very real, Baloch separatists also operate out of Pakistan's western neighbour. The banned Baloch Liberation Army claimed it had carried out the Gwadar attack. Therefore, Pakistan must make it clear to the new set-up in Kabul that it is their responsibility to act against all elements working against this country on their soil. Domestically, intelligence-based operations need to be carried out to neutralise cells that are looking to harm Chinese nationals and interests in this country. Some states in the region that do not want to see Pakistan-China ties prosper will be ready to take advantage of the changing geopolitical situation in the area. Their efforts must be thwarted by the security apparatus so that foreign nationals can work here in a secure and peaceful environment.

URDU MEDIA

Afghan peace and the UNSC, Editorial, Jang, 09 August¹⁹

The Security Council of the UN was created as an international institution to resolve international disputes. The issues at the top of the UN list still unresolved include Palestine, Kashmir and Afghanistan. In terms of violence and killings, Afghanistan is more serious as of now. After a twenty year long war, the America-NATO forces finally had to leave Afghanistan. The American leadership decided to leave without having a political solution or system in place, leading to a civil war kind of situation. In this regard, the UN was expected to come forward for restoring peace in Afghanistan by playing its role as a neutral facilitator in collaboration with countries like Pakistan so that a lasting peace could have been restored in the war torn country. However, *there*

¹⁸ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1642328/anti-china-attacks>

¹⁹ https://jang.com.pk/news/967842?_ga=2.114103175.1076306377.1628486388-835994399.1598849708

is no gainsaying in that like in the cases of Palestine and Kashmir, the role of the UN in Afghanistan has been. The meeting convened on the request of the government in Kabul on Saturday is a sign of that. *India is a member of the UNSC at the moment and also holds the presidency for the ongoing month. That the government in Kabul is under the influence of India is not a secret. Taking benefit of the situation, the Afghan representative at the UN has given provocative statements against Pakistan.* He said that it is like Pakistan's territory is being used against Afghanistan. The Pakistani representative at the UN was not allowed to speak to present his country's view, proving a discriminatory approach against the country. *The Indian president of the UNSC allowed the Afghan diplomat to speak against Pakistan and rejecting the request of the Pakistan's representative to counter the tirade has proved that it was a well-planned conspiracy.* In reality also, not allowing Pakistan's representatives to speak also proved that the Afghan's representative was nothing but hogwash. The dismaying approach of the most important organ of the UN is a matter of concern. The permanent members of the UN need to take notice of the incident and remove the Indian president to restore some credibility of the UNSC.

Appointment of new chairman to CPEC Authority, Editorial, Roznama92new, 05 August²⁰

CPEC Authority Chairman Lt Gen (retd) Asim Saleem Bajwa has resigned from his post. Prime Minister Imran Khan has appointed Khalid Mansoor as Special Assistant for CPEC Affairs. Pakistan attaches importance to CPEC. That is why the government formed an independent authority for it. This authority looks after the affairs of CPEC and resolves the issues on a priority basis. *There is zero doubt that ex-chairman Asim Saleem Bajwa has discharged his duties in a commendable way. Without paying any attention to criticisms of opponents he accelerated the CPEC. It will be challenging for his successor to not let this work get stalled or slow down.* Because CPEC is the lifeline of Pakistan and our development is dependent on it. Any kind of laziness, sluggishness, and obstruction will be tantamount to putting a brake on economic growth. It is imperative for a newly appointed chairman to expand its scope and move it forward with dedication, hard work, new vigor, and determination. His experience is in the corporate sector. *His experience in the corporate sector was sought after to develop an industry zone with CPEC. And the government has fulfilled it. Therefore he has to prove that the government's selection was right.*

²⁰ <https://www.roznama92news.com/%D8%B3%DB%8C-%D9%BE%DA%A9-%DB%8C-%DA%A9%DB%92-%D9%86%DB%92-%D8%B3%D8%B1-%DA%A9-%D8%AA%D8%B9>

Afghanistan an issue of international responsibility Editorial, *Daily Dunya*, 10 August²¹

Pakistan's role in restoring peace and stability in Afghanistan is higher than the other countries. Pakistan's internal security is directly connected with peace in Afghanistan. Additionally, it can also yield some economic benefits. *Despite the fact that Pakistan tops the list to see peace and security in Pakistan, it cannot alone bring out Afghanistan from a crisis that the country has been in for the last 50 years. It is the responsibility of the regional and international actors as well.* Expecting Pakistan to do something that is not in its control will not help. It in fact will harm the efforts that the country is making in restoring peace and stability in Afghanistan. The world needs to understand that *an unstable Afghanistan is not in anyone's interest. A failed Afghanistan can become a sanctuary for terrorists and a threat for world peace. Therefore, the responsibility for restoring peace in Afghanistan should be taken by everyone as an agenda for international peace.* Given the geostrategic location of Afghanistan, the country can help in economic development and welfare of the regional countries and can connect the North, South and the West. ... Better way for the Afghan peace process was that apart from signing the US-Taliban agreement and designing the foreign troops' withdrawal, *a roadmap for intra-Afghan dialogue should have been set. It was a much required agenda and Pakistan had been saying for a long time that there are some spoilers who want to sabotage the peace process. It would have been good for the Afghan to identify such spoilers and avoid being used by them.*

One more attack in Quetta, Editorial, *Jang*, 10 August²²

In a terror attack in an area that is considered extremely safe otherwise, Unity Chowk in Quetta two soldiers were killed and 12 others injured. According to witnesses, while the truck carrying the soldiers was passing on the road, terrorists planted an explosive-laden bike on it and blew it off. *This is the second attack of this sort at this place which puts a question mark on the concerned security institutions. Prior to this, in April a car laden with explosives was blasted in a hotel parking lot, killing five people and injuring 10.* Balochistan is the center of CPEC, for the last few years the CPEC has been under attack from terrorists. Consistently attacks on security forces, bomb blasts and other incidents are taking place in Balochistan. *It has been found that external enemy is involved in such attacks and they want to create a commotion in the province.* Security forces of Pakistan have dealt with such a

²¹ https://e.dunya.com.pk/detail.php?date=2021-08-10&edition=LHR&id=5727081_63926914

²² https://jang.com.pk/news/968341?_ga=2.50852009.1076306377.1628486388-835994399.1598849708

situation in the past and have succeeded in overcoming it. However, the current situation requires further measures to be dealt with successfully.

Afghanistan- news, possibilities and apprehensions, Editorial, Jang, 19 August 2021²³

News from Afghanistan keeps coming and people keep expressing their hopes and apprehensions about them. *Various countries are diplomatically in contact with each on the matter. Since Pakistan has been involved in the Afghan peace process from the beginning, it has increased its diplomatic activities with other countries.* Meanwhile, Mullah Baradar along with other Taliban leaders has reached Afghanistan. Taliban's spokesperson *Zabiullah Mujahid's press conference in Kabul also dispelled many fears. His statements also gave an overview of the Taliban's thinking. Zabiullah said that the Taliban would take the media's criticism but the media needs to maintain decorum of sharia and the system.* It was emphasized that every religion would have freedom and all diplomatic staff and aid agencies would be protected. It was said the Taliban would have good relations with China, Russia and Pakistan but do not intend to be part of any block. The spokesperson also said that women would get all rights according to Islam.

The press conference can be taken as the start of Taliban rule. It also meant that the test of the Taliban would come with a settlement for sharing power with other Afghan factions. *Pakistan as a neighboring country wants peace in Afghanistan. Islamabad sees peace and stability in Afghanistan as precondition of its internal security and stability.* But it thinks that to recognize the Taliban consultation from regional and other players remains essential. ... All political leaders of Pakistan, irrespective of their party affiliation, need to be careful while issuing statements on Afghanistan. The government needs to take the opposition in the loop while making any call on the Afghan matter so that the decision would be the right one.

ELECTRONIC MEDIA

11th Hour with Waseem Badami, UK rejects Nawaz Sharif's visa extension application on "medical grounds" ARYNews, 06 August²⁴

The UK Home Department has refused to extend Nawaz Sharif's stay in the country any further on medical grounds. "However, Mr. Sharif will legally

²³https://jang.com.pk/news/972119?_ga=2.89609307.119408920.1629183695-835994399.1598849708

²⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tQ2V-te960A>

remain in the UK till the tribunal issues its decision on his plea for his stay in the country,” PML-N information secretary Marriyum Aurangzeb informed on Thursday, 05 August 2021. Mr. Sharif has already filed an appeal with the British Immigration Tribunal challenging the Home Department’s decision. The UK Home Department’s decision will remain in effect till the tribunal arrives at a decision. Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Fawad Chaudhry on Thursday said the rejection of extension in visa of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif by the United Kingdom was a welcome development. In this episode the analysts discuss the development, *will this decision weaken the PML-N?* **Guests:** Analysts: Rauf Klasra, Fahad Hussain & Imran Khan. **Rauf Klasra** pointed out that it’s true that the visa extension application of Nawaz Sharif has been rejected by home department in UK but this is no victory for the PTI government and they should stop celebrating this development. He still has 8 to 1 year to reapply for the same and he has already started the process by filing an appeal in the immigration tribunal. *In the meantime there is high chances he will come back to Pakistan at the start of the new election and if that time after one year he is deported from UK, he will come back as a hero to Pakistan and PML-N will also gain the sympathy votes.* **Fahad Hussain** rejected the PML-N claim that the application was rejected because there were few documents missing that were important for verification. Now it’s clear that Nawaz Sharif was not sick as he was seen dining in restaurants and strolling [on London roads], but he had obtained the visa by telling lies to the British authorities about his health. **Imran Khan on the other hand argued that the PML-N has from the beginning controlled the narrative making a case for Nawaz Sharif’s stay in London and also sometimes they made this narrative that there is threat to his life in Pakistan,** if that is taken care of he can return anytime. The PML-N workers can support Nawaz Sharif’s narrative but they cannot help in winning elections. He underlined that Nawaz Sharif will come back when he wants to come back and not according to the UK rules. Fawad Chaudhary has said that the *first option* for Nawaz Sharif was to turn up at the Pakistan High Commission, get travel documents, return home, complete the jail sentence and fight his corruption cases. *Secondly,* he said, the PML-N leader could challenge the decision of the UK authorities. But he had no grounds for the purpose, the minister added.

Jirga with Saleem Safi, Guest: Pakistan's Ambassador to Kabul Mansoor Ahmad Khan, Geo News, 07 August²⁵

The host Saleem Safi underlined that peace in Afghanistan will be most beneficial for Pakistan, while at the same time civil war or unrest will

²⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DH77VsZ-gYI>

negatively impact Pakistan in the worst manner possible. He pointed out that *first*, the refugee crisis will be prominent issue for Pakistan, *second* the world will blame Pakistan for the failure to maintain peace in Afghanistan and *finally* due to this fall out there can be an increase in terrorist activities within Pakistan. Pakistan's dream of connecting to central Asia for trade via Afghanistan will also face a setback in case of an Afghan fall out. There is a lack of clarity and understanding on the issue of Afghanistan in Pakistan, but one who understand it is Mansoor Ahmad Khan, Pakistan's Ambassador to Afghanistan. **Q: *Is peace possible in Afghanistan & what is Pakistan's position on Afghanistan?*** A: Right now Afghanistan is top priority in the list of Pakistan's foreign policy, peace in Afg. Is really important for Pakistan. He underlined that Pakistan's stand is very clear that no one group be it Taliban or any other can alone bring peace in Afg., for that there is a need to work out a political solution involving all the groups. Pakistan has played its part in bringing peace but still much more has to be done, however the withdrawal of NATO and US forces has created a vacuum and an unprecedented situation in Afg. The solution is inclusive broad based political settlement and Pakistan needs to take this to a logical end. **Q: *Despite of all the efforts put by Pakistan why the Afghan government is blaming Pakistan for forcefully implementing Taliban in Afg. & supporting it?*** A: Afg. is a complex issue and has a history, Pakistan's civilian government as well as the establishment has taken a clear position that there is no military solution to the Afghanistan issue and have informed all stakeholders including Taliban. In Moscow along with China, Russia and US, Pakistan signed a paper that underlined that we will not accept a forceful overtake of Afg. We have used all the influence we can with Taliban but we don't have an influence that gives a political settlement. Afg. should consider a Nizam or rule that is in favour of the people of Afg. **Q: *It is blamed that Taliban has sanctuaries in Pakistan used for terror attacks?*** A: Neither Afg. nor Pakistan soil should be used for terror attacks. The issue should be solved through as mechanism, Pakistan will not support cross border terrorism. There are more than 3 million in Pakistan and it's very difficult to differentiate whose Taliban and not. Pakistan air force has at no stage stopped Afghan air force from any operation at the border, they can do anything within their air space. Terror groups in Afg. that attack Pakistan has been supported within the country. China and Russia too are concerned with the situation in Afg. as anti-China and Russia groups are also present in Afg. Therefore Russia is encouraging Troika Plus meetings.

Jirga with Saleem Safi, fall of Kabul: Afghanistan endgame, ARYNews, 16 August²⁶

The host asked despite of the claims made by Ashraf Ghani government, why it could not show resistance and flee the country in a hurry? **Anees Ur Rehman** (*Journalist from Kabul*): informed that Ashraf Ghani was told to resign in the Kabul airport and he was given three choices to flee the country to, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Oman. He added that according to our sources Ashraf Ghani has flown to Oman. Amar Ullah Saleh might go to Tajikistan; right now he is in Afghanistan. He informed that currently Kabul city is silent, markets closed and there is a warning for the local people to stay inside due to law and order issues. The responsibility for security of Kabul right now is under the special force, Taliban has entered the Presidential palace and they are getting it ready for Mullah Baradar who will come to Kabul on Monday (today) or Tuesday, i.e. 17th August and the government will be officially handed to Taliban. *The immediate concern is to hand over the Afghan government peacefully to Taliban and the Commission under Abdullah Abdullah is to ensure a smooth transition briefly and it is not ensured, there could be dangerous consequences.* All embassies are active and the US embassy has decided to reduce the number, the security is with Afghan force.

Zahid Hafiz (*Translator Ministry of Foreign Affairs Pakistan*): There can't be military solution and we have always talked about political solution. A humanitarian and security crisis should be avoided. A delegation that visited Pakistan is part of a wider engagement and that is how we can act as a facilitator. We are in touch with all the factions in Afghanistan. The international community should help in maintaining peace and security situation in Afghanistan.

²⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=duvaa7Jwc7I>

BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES

(Select incidents culled out from the Pakistan media)

Place	Date	Description	Killed	Injured
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa				
South Waziristan ²⁷	09/08/2021	3 Pakistani soldiers injured in blast, firing from across Afghan border	03	00
South Waziristan ²⁸	13/08/2021	Soldier martyred, terrorist killed in South Waziristan operation: ISPR	02	01

²⁷<https://www.dawn.com/news/1639517/3-pakistani-soldiers-injured-in-blast-firing-from-across-afghan-border>

²⁸<https://www.dawn.com/news/1640421/soldier-martyred-terrorist-killed-in-south-waziristan-operation-ispr>