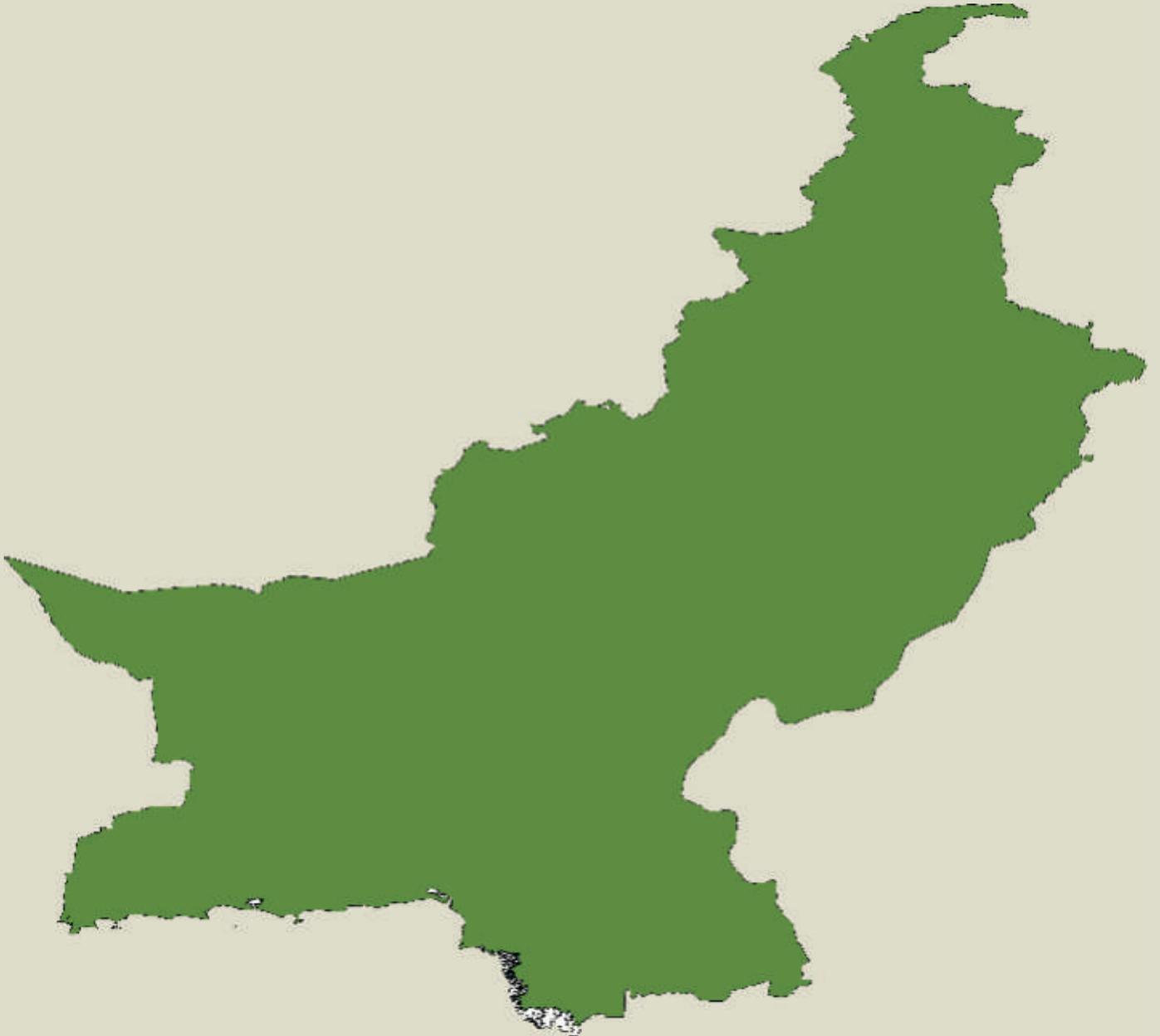


May 2021

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 परिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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1-Development Enclave, Near USI
Delhi Cantonment, New Delhi-110010

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POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Perception management needed, Dr Zia Ul Haque Shamsi, Daily Times, 03 May¹

It has become fashionable to label Pakistan Armed Forces as 'Assassins' 'Land Grabbers' and 'King-Makers' etc. *Be it a 'Journalist' or the 'Judge' or for that matter a 'Politician' the language of the charges is nearly the same. Forum may be a 'Court Room' 'Social Media' or a 'Press Conference.'* I think it is time to put the things in perspective. Pakistan Armed Forces are unique in the performance of their tasks and have been engaged on multiple fronts since their formation with the creation of Pakistan in 1947. ... I do not understand the motives of Army bashers. They are the ones who boast their backdoor contacts with the same Army, come into power with the support of same Army and yet blame them for everything once in Opposition or when not getting any positive response from the same Army.

Electoral reforms, Editorial, Dawn, 04 May²

Babar Awan's specific proposals to the Elections Act 2017 are a step in the right direction, the history of strained relations between the government and opposition means that a constructive debate on this crucial issue will be an uphill task. Here, the government must take the lead, not just in proposing amendments but also in demonstrating its commitment to parliamentary debates. Underpinning this exercise is trust. *The opposition parties have little confidence in the government. Prime Minister Imran Khan on several occasions has talked of electoral reforms, but his party's toxic relationship with the opposition has left little room for engagement on this, or any other, issue.* He and his government must prove their commitment to reforms with a consistent debate in parliament, where the opposition feels it is being heard. For far too long, our elections have been marred by the interference and influence of either the ruling party or the establishment. *The events of the two recent NA bypolls in Daska and Karachi, and the Senate polls this year, are an example of the mayhem that will unfold if political stakeholders do not address electoral challenges*

Reprimanding envoys, Editorial, Dawn, 07 May³

In a dressing-down that was broadcast for the world to witness, Prime Minister Imran Khan this week lambasted the country's top diplomats for

¹ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/751647/perception-management-needed/>

² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1621943/electoral-reforms>

³ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1622498/reprimanding-envoys>

failing to serve the Pakistani Diaspora in their respective countries of residence. A recording of the video meeting chaired by the prime minister showed around 20 ambassadors and high commissioners on a split screen listening as he furnished a damning list of transgressions reported by overseas Pakistanis through a citizens' complaints portal. Mr. Khan chastised the diplomats for having a "bad attitude" towards the labour community. Among other things, he indicated that basics such as working hours were not communicated to the community. Soon after he tweeted a link of him scolding the diplomats, senior ex-officials of the Foreign Service expressed their reservations. A public telling-off will demoralize an already under-fire Foreign Office which is the only institution that is professionally trained to tackle the country's foreign policy matters. There are certainly better ways to improve embassies' public service delivery. Poor performance at certain missions appears to be a perpetual problem, but it cannot be solved with a broad-brush approach that blames the entire institution. Instead of demoralizing the entire service, the prime minister should have engaged with honest and respectable officers to identify how solutions can be found.

Divisive move, Editorial, Dawn, 11 May⁴

The electoral reforms process is off to a bad start. After weeks of wrangling with the opposition, the government has proceeded to issue a presidential ordinance authorizing the Election Commission of Pakistan to go ahead with the procurement of electronic voting machines. The ordinance also authorized the ECP to enable overseas Pakistanis to vote in the next elections while remaining in their country of residence. While there is no arguing that electoral reforms are crucial to make sure that the next elections are accepted as free and fair, the government is approaching the issue in the wrong way. By making the process controversial and politically partisan for no substantive reason, the government is ensuring that the electoral process becomes even more divisive than it already is. The PTI government should abandon this adversarial approach to electoral reform and utilize the platform of parliament to debate each and every proposed item on the list. The mistake of issuing this ordinance can be rectified by letting it lapse. In the meantime, the opposition too should let go of its obduracy and sit down with the government to build a consensus on these reforms.

PM's Saudi visit, Editorial, Dawn, 12 May⁵

Imran Khan has concluded a productive visit to Saudi Arabia at a time when bilateral relations between the two countries required a much-needed boost. According to official accounts, the prime minister held wide-ranging talks with

⁴ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1623244/divisive-move>

⁵ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1623434/pms-saudi-visit>

the crown prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman, and also met a number of other important persons including the secretary general of the OIC. It is important that both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia make a concerted effort to improve their relationship. *Swiftly changing events in the region as well as the ongoing process of withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan require Islamabad and Riyadh to closely coordinate their efforts on all fronts.* Prime Minister Imran Khan has done well to visit Saudi Arabia at this important juncture and it is hoped that his visit can inject fresh vigour into the relationship. *However, at the same time, it is very important that Pakistan take no step, or agree to any demand, that can have an adverse effect on national sovereignty. Pakistan must take independent decisions, free from pressures and expectations, while keeping its national interest supreme.* No doubt Saudi Arabia wields enormous influence on Pakistani policy, and the large number of Pakistani expatriates working in Saudi Arabia contributes a lot to the economy, but Pakistan has always followed a balanced policy in the Middle East and must continue to do so while according a high priority to Saudi Arabia.

Jerusalem calling, Saad Rasool, *The Nation*, 16 May⁶

Continuing with its unconscionable tradition of the past several decades, the 'Muslim World' has shown its callousness to Palestine. Its leaders have for the most part turned a blind eye to the Palestinian plight. *Why should we be involved?* Well, even away from all the religious and moral imperatives, there are two fundamental reasons for why Pakistan should be more assertive in this perennial conflict. 1) *Our stated national policy, since Jinnah himself, opposes Israeli occupation of Palestine. And national policy objectives should mean something. They can't just be empty rhetoric. Nations are known by the principles they uphold and the issues they are willing to fight for.* 2) *The world must know that Pakistanis are a peace-loving people. Yes. But, when a red-line is crossed, they do not shy away from conflict. All nations, worth their salt, fight for what they believe in. Like the United States in the Middle East and Far East Asia. Like Iran, across the murky borders of Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. Like Turkey in Azerbaijan. Like Russia in Chechnya, Ukraine, and Syria.*

The threat within, Editorial, *Dawn*, 20 May⁷

Estranged PTI leader Jehangir Khan Tareen wants his pound of flesh. Even though Mr Tareen insists that he and his group remain a part of the PTI, his decision to nominate 'parliamentary leaders' from among the legislators supporting him in the National Assembly and the Punjab Assembly shows that

⁶ <https://nation.com.pk/16-May-2021/jerusalem-calling>

⁷ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1624638/the-threat-within>

he is prepared to go to any lengths to force the hand of his once close friend Prime Minister Imran Khan. With some 30 MPs and almost 10 MNAs standing 'firmly' with him, he has the magical numbers to turn the tables on his leader both at the centre and in the largest province if the government does not stop the FIA from investigating him and his son on multiple charges of money laundering, fraud and corruption. Mr. Khan appears to have already caved in to the pressure. The speed of the probe has slowed down with the formation of a one-man commission to look into allegations of injustice against Mr Tareen at the behest of some powerful aides to the prime minister. Call it a split or not, the formation of the PTI forward bloc at the centre and in Punjab has exposed the weak foundations of the party and the government. This should send alarm bells ringing in the ruling party since Mr Tareen's actions are clearly meant to send a strong message to both the prime minister and the beleaguered Punjab Chief Minister Usman Buzdar to desist from hurting Mr Tareen's business interests.

Trojan Horses, Najam Sethi, *The Friday Times*, 28 May⁸

Once again, Pakistan is faced with a crisis of political instability and uncertainty. Half-way through its five year term, the PTI hybrid regime is struggling to stay afloat. It has mismanaged the economy, demonstrated a cavalier approach to the pandemic and hounded the opposition without successfully discrediting it. The Miltabishment that engineered the PTI's accession to office is smarting from the popular backlash against it and drawing up plans to get out of the fix. But the nature of this crisis is fundamentally different from apparently similar ones in the past when political parties used to vie with, and conspire against, one another for the favours of the Miltabishment to win office. The Miltabishment is in a hurry to tilt towards "geo-economics" away from "geo-strategy" as the defining parameter of Pakistan's national security. It is wooing the international community, in particular the US and its allies in the Middle-East, to secure this gain. But it is hindered in its quest by the unpopular PTI that is unable to deliver its part of the management bargain and by the popular Alt-PMLN that is in open confrontation with it. Something(s) or someone(s) will have to give way sooner rather than later.

PML-N's dilemma, Editorial, *Dawn*, 31 May⁹

It has become fairly clear after Saturday's meeting of the PDM that the opposition is now going to be operating from two separate platforms. With the PPP and ANP no more part of the alliance, as was made amply clear by both

⁸ <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/trojan-horses/>

⁹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1626653/pml-ns-dilemma>

Maulana Fazlur Rehman and Maryam Nawaz in the media briefing, and Shehbaz Sharif rallying them for unified action inside parliament, a hotchpotch arrangement appears to be taking shape. The PDM will initiate a public movement after the budget, but the PPP will not be part of these rallies, while Mar Sharif as the leader of the opposition will mobilize parliamentary opposition to the budget and the PPP will participate in it. *A large number of influential people in the party do not want a confrontation with the establishment and may be supporting the younger Sharif brother in his attempt to steer the party back towards greater accommodation in order to create space for itself in the next elections.* Matters are now coming to a head and the leadership will have to decide which strategy it wants to adopt. For now, Shehbaz Sharif's narrative appears to be gaining traction both inside his party and outside.

ECONOMIC ISSUES

High-level meeting on budget 2021-22: Development spending under govt focus, *Business Recorder*, 03 May¹⁰

Prime Minister Imran Khan has directed that the development projects be prioritised in the upcoming federal budget 2021-22 and special focus be given forthwith on inflation reduction. *He issued these directions at a top-level meeting on Sunday regarding the upcoming federal budget and overall economic situation of the country.* At the meeting, the PM directed that ongoing/ pending development projects be specially focused in the upcoming budget and their timely completion be ensured, and new development projects be launched keeping in view the public needs, according to Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

PTI govt's economic model: U-turn ahead, Syed Asif Ali, *The Express Tribune*, 06 May¹¹

Shaukat Tarin, the government's new hope on the troubled economic front, has minced no words in stating that Pakistan can no more afford the stabilization policy adopted by PM Imran Khan. To Tarin, a high growth rate is the only way out of the cluttered, mangled mess that the economy has become over the last two and a half years. *The cruellest thing that the PTI government did to the economy as part of its much-trumpeted economic stabilization model was to*

¹⁰<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40089729/high-level-meeting-on-budget-2021-22-development-spending-under-govt-focus>

¹¹ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2298482/pti-govts-economic-model-u-turn-ahead>

agree with the IMF to let go of the exchange rate tool and allow the dollar to fly as high as it can without first taking steps to pave the way for raising foreign exchange earnings. Yes, the sitting government did take off the shuttering without allowing the concrete to solidify. And the ceiling is falling down on us. As Tarin seeks to take an about-turn on the government's economic model, it will be interesting to see what magic wand he is going to wave to lift the growth rate to a desired high level.

SECURITY SITUATION

Freedom of the press? Editorial, *The News*, 03 May¹²

The many perils of practising journalism in Pakistan just seem to grow each year. *From having to contend with governments and political parties that are not above using intimidation and even violence, to dealing with a major financial crunch in an industry that is struggling to maintain independence, to battling online vigilantism and attacks, journalists in Pakistan risk their lives and livelihood every single day to tell stories that matter.* ... The Freedom Network's annual state of press freedom report released on April 30 has highlighted a dramatic escalation in the climate of intimidation and harassment of journalists and the media in the country.

Human rights 2020, Editorial, *Dawn*, 05 May¹³

The human rights situation in Pakistan, almost predictably bleak every year, was deeply impacted in 2020 by an unprecedented factor the Covid-19 pandemic. While the contagion has affected all segments of society, it has exacerbated existing socioeconomic inequalities. No 'great equalizer', this global crisis has dealt a cruel blow to already disadvantaged sections of society. *The recently launched annual report of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan takes into account the ways in which the pandemic led to many of the gains in health and education of the previous decades being rolled back as the economy tanked and people — especially factory workers and private employees lost their jobs.* People suffering from health conditions other than Covid-19 found it difficult to access medical help; and tens of millions of children missed both polio and routine immunizations last year. *Enforced disappearances remained a blot on this country's reputation, and the government appeared no closer to criminalizing the act of 'disappearing' people.* In fact, two major national human rights institutions have been without

¹² <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/829470-freedom-of-the-press>

¹³ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1622127/human-rights-2020>

chairpersons since 2019, which raises questions about the centre's commitment to protecting citizens' rights. The picture is not a heartening one.

Safe havens, Editorial, Dawn, 10 May¹⁴

The pull-out of foreign forces from Afghanistan has security ramifications for that country as well as neighbouring states, particularly Pakistan. *Already there have been recent incidents which have sent up red flags. A soldier was injured when terrorists opened fire in Bajaur district late on Friday from across the border, according to ISPR. The banned TTP is believed to be responsible for the attack. Moreover, a number of troops were martyred and wounded in several recent attacks in KP and Balochistan.* While the TTP claimed responsibility for those attacks, the military said they were also carried out from Afghan soil. *Pakistan must exercise its influence with the Afghan Taliban and let them know that allowing the TTP or other anti-Pakistan groups to use space under their control will not be tolerated.* This point cannot be emphasized enough, especially considering the fact that foreign forces have begun their exit from Afghanistan. *In a recent statement, Pakistan, Russia, China and the US urged both the government in Kabul and the Afghan Taliban not to let their soil be used against any other country.*

Registering madressahs, Editorial, Dawn, 17 May¹⁵

During the past two decades, several attempts by successive governments to standardize and regularize madressahs have met with little success. Religious leaders in the country have staunchly resisted any government attempt to oversee their institutes. The present government too is making an effort to do so, but it remains to be seen whether it is able to achieve this monumental feat. *Though not all madressahs harbour extremists, it takes only a handful to undermine state authority and inflict violence on society, drawing concern both from within the country and internationally.* Secondly, madressah students would be able to avail mainstream education benefits and be more prepared for the professional world. *However, for this exercise to be effective, consistency is needed in pursuing the required changes but in a manner that does not alienate the religious leadership whose cooperation is crucial to madressah reforms.* The education authorities believe there are 35,000 seminaries in the country. However, according to some estimates, their numbers could be as high as 60,000, which we would mean thousands of madressahs would not be under any kind of scrutiny. *The authorities hope that 5,000 more seminaries will be registered with the Directorate General of Religious Education (DGRE) by the end of the year.*

¹⁴ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1623008/safe-havens>

¹⁵ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1623995/registering-madressahs>

Chaman Blast, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 24 May¹⁶

Considering that bomb blasts in Pakistan usually take place on Friday and taking into account that the withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan is underway, the blast of an Improvised Explosive Device in Chaman town bordering Afghanistan might be attributed to several causes. The possibility of official neglect too cannot be ruled out as a government statement says that security alert had been issued every week, but this time around no such alert was issued, even though a rally, under the auspices of the Jamiatul Ulema-e-Islam-Nazaryati (JUI-N), to express solidarity with Palestinians was held. The blast occurred after the end of the rally in which at least seven people were killed and 17 others wounded. *According to officials, the apparent target of the blast was a JUI-N leader, Maulana Abdul Qadir Luni. Fortunately, he escaped with minor injuries.* India has long been trying to strengthen its presence in Afghanistan and use it for its strategic purposes. Now that India is left almost friendless in the region, Pakistan needs to be more watchful of the developments in Afghanistan. *Sri Lanka is no more friends with India as it has given the contract for the construction of a new port to China. The contract had earlier been awarded to India. Nepal has tense relations with India over border issues.* Bangladesh's relations with the latter are also strained due to the BJP win in Assam state elections.

Journalist assaulted, *Dawn*, 26 May¹⁷

A journalist and YouTuber, Asad Ali Toor, was severely beaten up by unidentified assailants outside his residence in Sector F-10 late on Tuesday night. A police official told *Dawn* that some people came outside Mr Toor's residence located in an apartment building. A scuffle took place between him and these people who fled from the scene after thrashing him. The injured journalist was moved to a private hospital, where his condition was stated to be stable. Narrating some of the details of the incident, Mr Toor said through video that the attackers had asked him about the source of his funds. *The journalist was accused of defaming the military last year and also faced a court case in this regard. According to the FIR, Mr Toor had allegedly indulged in propaganda against Pakistan and its institutions on social media for long.* However, the Lahore High Court absolved him of the charges after the FIA police told the court that no evidence was found to support the charges.

¹⁶ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2301213/chaman-blast-1>

¹⁷ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1625655/journalist-assaulted>

The Rise of The New Pakistani Taliban, Frud Behan & Daud Khattak, Gandhara, 18 May¹⁸

TTP, also known as the Pakistani Taliban, has re-emerged over the past year, unifying squabbling factions and unleashing a spate of deadly attacks across the country's tribal belt. Underscoring its resurgence, the TTP last month carried out a deadly car bombing outside a heavily guarded luxury hotel in the south-western Pakistani city of Quetta, beyond its stronghold in the northwest. *Under the leadership of Noor Wali Mehsud, more of a religious figure than a fighter, who has been in charge since 2018, the TTP has retained its close links with Al-Qaeda, the U.S.-designated terrorist network.* "The TTP mostly targets Pakistani security institutions and their officials, seldom attacking soft targets," says Abdul Basit, a Pakistani counterterrorism and security expert, in a reference to the targeting of civilians. "Rhetorically, the TTP has moved away from a global to local jihadist narrative." *There are also signs that the TTP has opened a new front against Chinese interests in Pakistan, where Beijing has considerable political clout and is spending billions on infrastructure projects.* Observers say the TTP's attack on the Serena Hotel, where China's ambassador to Pakistan was staying but was not present at the time, suggests that the militant group has joined the local fight against Chinese interests.

URDU MEDIA

Do not allow Afghan peace process be sabotaged, Editorial, Nawa-i-Waqt, 04 May¹⁹

American and NATO forces have started withdrawing from Afghanistan. At the same time the situation is deteriorating in the country. The Afghan security forces are carrying out actions against the Taliban and the latter are responding with full might. According to some reports, attacks and counter attacks have increased in the last 24 hours. Attacks carried out by the Taliban at different places have killed 20 people at the least. The killed include close aide of former vice president Abdur Rasheed Dostum, Peeram Qul. *The situation is unsettling and can raise many apprehensions about the Afghan peace process.* Some American security forces have been warning from the onset that complete withdrawal might end in instability and insecurity in Afghanistan. They also warned that America might face subversive attacks. *The pointed to be noted here is that the attacks from the Taliban are directed at the Afghan security forces, not at the foreign troops that are leaving the country.* One of the reasons for the Taliban not targeting the foreign troops is that in the Doha agreement it was agreed that the Taliban would not attack American and

¹⁸ <https://gandhara.rferl.org/a/the-rise-of-the-new-pakistani-taliban/31261608.html>

¹⁹ <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/islamabad/2021-05-04/page-4/detail-9>

NATO troops when they would be leaving. One important factor for the increase in the attacks is that the Afghan forces have increased their attacks against the Taliban. In reaction to these attacks, counter attacks are carried out by the Taliban. *The situation also implies that some sections in Afghanistan do not want withdrawal of the foreign troops. They are doing such activities to give out a message that without the presence of foreign troops, peace would not return. India's role cannot be ruled in this because after the withdrawal of the foreign troops, India would have no say in Afghanistan.*

Billions dollars of investment, Muhammad Aslam Khan, Roznama Express, 04 May²⁰

UAE has given one year extension to Pakistan to pay back its \$2 billion. But it seems that there are still some hurdles in the \$30 billion in Pakistan from Saudi Arabia and UAE. UAE gave Pakistan a relief by giving one year extension for paying the loan which was supposed to be returned on 19 April 2021. On the other hand, some arm-chair intellectuals are creating an atmosphere of commotion. *Prime Minister Imran Khan is tried to be convinced that clear obstructions in the way of Maryam Nawaz for going to London so that way could be cleared for \$30 billion investment from Saudi Arabia and UAE in Pakistan.* Qatar has offered Pakistan a hard cash loan as well. Meanwhile, the reasons given as obstruction in the way of \$30 billion investment by former chairman of the Investment Board were lack of confidence in bureaucracy, political intervention, inexperienced and ignorant people's appointment in the Board of Investment. The removal of the technocrats from their positions seems to have validated these reasons. *Like in Bangladesh, if Pakistan tried, investment would become easy here as well. The emir of Qatar Sheikh Ahmad Al Thani has a soft corner in his heart for Pakistan. He wants to invest in the country.* Pakistan should benefit from this opportunity.

No compromise on the Last-Prophethood Editorial, Nawa-i-Waqt, 05 May²¹

Responding to resolution passed in the European Parliament about Pakistan's GSP-Plus status Prime Minister Imran Khan has said that there could be no compromise on the issue of Last-Prophethood. *In the meeting chaired by the Prime Minister it was said that the government would ask the European Parliament to keep the matter of blasphemy issue out of the GSP-Plus status. It was said in the meeting that Pakistan was ready to clear the reservations of the European Parliament. But there would be no compromise on the Blasphemy law and calling Qadianis as kafir* (non-Muslims). It was said that if the GSP-Plus status was ended, Pakistan would lose \$3 billion in trade. Meanwhile

²⁰https://www.express.com.pk/epaper/PoPupwindow.aspx?newsID=1108321266&Issue=NP_LHE&Date=20210504

²¹ <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/islamabad/2021-05-05/page-4/detail-10>

Prime Minister Imran Khan had meetings with the ambassadors of three OIC member countries. *Imran Khan emphasised in his remarks during the meetings that OIC should answer Islamophobia and allegations of terrorism against Islam.* Every Muslim country should unite and raise voice against Islamophobia. They should make the western world realize how important the issue of Last-Prophethood is for the Muslims.

Pak-Saudi Arabia to boost defence cooperation, Editorial, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, 07 May²²

The relationship of Islam makes Pakistan and Saudi Arabia as brothers. People of the two countries are also connected through this emotional relationship. Saudi Arabia has special position in the Muslim world for being the custodian of the two holies places of the Islam. For this reason also Pakistan's relationship with Saudi Arabia is emotional as well. *The political, economical and social relationship thus between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are exemplary. Similarly, Pakistan-Saudi defence cooperation has been strong and getting stronger with every day. The recent visit of army chief Gen Qamar Bajwa was part of the same agenda.* According to ISPR, Gen Bajwa met the Saudi army chief and both exchanged ideas on affairs of mutual interests and regional security. *Progress in the Afghan peace process and increase in the defence cooperation between the two countries were also discussed.* The chief of Saudi Arabia army thanked Gen Bajwa and assured full cooperation for regional peace. After Gen Bajwa's visit, Prime Minister Imran Khan would visit the kingdom today. It is hoped that these visits would further strengthen the relationship between the two countries.

Action needs to be taken against Israel, Editorial, *Daily Pakistan*, 17 May²³

Turkey's President Recep Erdogan has said that Israel is a terrorist state. He said that Tel Aviv has crossed every line in committing crimes against humanity. President Erdogan said that Turkey would not sit silent on the crimes committed by Israel. The countries that would stay silent on Israel's atrocities would face a bad future, he added. Over 70 Palestinians have been killed in the one week long bombing b Israel so far. Everywhere in Gaza only destruction can be seen. *Despite that some so-called "pro-justice" people can only see and mourn the killing few children in Israel.* Most of the countries think only this way. They cannot see the suffering of Palestinian kids that are killed. Obstructions are created in the way to condemn the Israeli atrocities. *In the UNSC, one or the other member country vetoes a resolution against Israel. Then the UN General Assembly where the great powers do not have much say*

²² <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/islamabad/2021-05-07/page-4/detail-0>

²³ <https://dailypakistan.com.pk/E-Paper/rawalpindi/2021-05-17/page-9/detail-0>

passes a resolution against Israel. But such resolutions have had no impact. The Israeli expansion in the areas of Palestinians continues uninterrupted. The situation in the ongoing crisis is so grim that in the bombing of the Gaza strip over 160 fighter jets are participating. The countries that had established diplomatic relations with Israel and were doing trade with Tel Aviv have been rendered speechless. The Palestinian President had warned these countries that don't establish the relations with Israel without a solution to the conflict. But under pressure from their external friends, these countries could see one side of the coin only and thought the solution would follow after establishing the ties. Such illusionary people exist in South Asia as well.

Iran-China strategic partnership would benefit Pakistan, S Anjum Asif, Ummat, 18 May²⁴

After the signing of the China-Iran strategic partnership, it is being said that the agreement is against the interests of Pakistan. China has preferred Iran over Pakistan by signing a \$400 billion agreement. CPEC is no more of the same significance is being reiterated. The China-Iran agreement is no way against Pakistan. Nor is it going to reduce the significance of CPEC. *After Iran, Pakistan would benefit the most from strategic agreement. According to the agreement, China would invest \$400 billion in 25 years in transport, energy, and other sectors. The investment would be a lifeline for Iran, a country that has been crippled by the sanctions imposed by the US.* Iran would get Chinese weapons that would reduce the military threat coming from America, Israel and GCC countries. After the agreement, the pressure on Pakistan from the US would also lessen. Iran would stabilize and its relations with Pakistan would improve. The agreement would also increase the significance of CPEC as it would expand towards the West as well. *It is foolish to think that China would sign an agreement that would undermine its \$61 billion investment in CPEC. ... By signing the agreement with Iran, China wants to expand its regional influence. For that it is important to take CPEC in countries like Azerbaijan, Turkey and Russia.*

ELECTRONIC MEDIA

PM Imran Khan's visit to Saudi Arabia, Analysis, Shehré Iqtadar, 05 May²⁵

Prime Minister Imran Khan is PM Imran Khan's Visit to Saudi Arabia scheduled to visit Saudi Arabia early next month from May 7 to 9.

²⁴ <https://www.ummat.net/2021/05/18/news.php?p=idr2.gif>

²⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=95qPCQO6XPo>

According to a news report published in *Arab News*, the premier will be visiting the kingdom on the invitation of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. *The prime minister will be accompanied by several members of the cabinet, which include: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Information Minister Fawad Chaudhary, the PM's special aide on the Middle East, Tahir Ashrafi, and the PM's adviser on climate change, Malik Amin Aslam.* Ahead of Imran Khan's visit Army Chief Gen Qamar Bajwa has already reached Saudi and is expected to meet the civilian and military leadership. *In this episode analyst Adeel Warraich and Essa Naqvi talk about the Pakistan-Saudi relations and how it went from worse to betterment since 2020.* Essa Naqvi pointed out that historically Pakistan and Saudi shared a good relationship and during the start of the Imran Khan government in 2018, the relations were ideal. But the change of status quo in Indian Kashmir by Modi government on 05 August 2019 (abrogation of article 370) and *Pakistan's expectations from Saudi Arabia to stand with it on Kashmir issue against India and Saudi Arabia's non action led to the deterioration of the bilateral relationship.* Imran Khan also expected the Saudi to support them to use the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) platform to raise the issue of Kashmir and *proposed a meeting of OIC foreign ministers meet in Islamabad on the completion of one year of abrogation of article 370 on 05 August 2020 and question India as a group of Islamic countries, but Saudi and other OIC countries denied.* Later Imran Khan met PM of Malaysia during his New York visit, President of Turkey Tayyip Erdogan & President of Iran Hassan Rouhani. After these meeting the news about Kuala Lumpur summit was out and *Saudi felt that a parallel Islamic platform to OIC will be formed that will reduce the importance of Saudi Arabia among Islamic countries. Pakistan has already said that it will form a new Islamic bloc after OIC denied to be used as a platform to raise Kashmir issue. These events led to further isolation between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.* Later the issue of recognition of Israel by Islamic countries and Pakistan's refusal to succumb to the pressure of Saudi and refusal to recognize Israel added to the tensions. **Significance of this visit vis-a-vis Islamophobia:** Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi recent visit to UAE, Tehran and Turkey was significant and one common topic was Islamophobia. *Question is how many OIC countries have taken stand on this issue, and isolated stand of Imran Khan against west will not work. If only the 27 OIC countries raise this issue as one voice then something will change.* This will be a structured bi lateral trip and Pakistan can gain two three things out of it. First there can be a meeting related to the prisoners release from Saudi jails, *investment of Saudi oil refineries in Pakistan and Pakistan can play a role in improvement of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia and provide platform.*

EU passed resolution to remove GSP+ status of Pakistan? Najam Sethi's Analysis, Naya Daur, 05 May²⁶

The European Parliament has adopted *a resolution calling for a review of the GSP+ status granted to Pakistan in view of an "alarming" increase in the use of blasphemy accusations in the country as well as rising number of online and offline attacks on journalists and civil society organisations.* Raza Rumi underlined that if this is enforced it will adversely impact the export (\$6 Arab) of Pakistan to the EU. On the other hand, General Qamar Bajwa in a meeting with select journalists a week earlier underlined the desire to make Pakistan a normal state. **The PTI government has defended its position and has said that they will not compromise on the issue of Prophethood and blasphemy law. Raza Rumi quizzes Najam Sethi on this important development.** Najam Sethi pointed out the normal state Bajwa can only be possible where army is not dictating and let the democracy work. But Pakistan is not a normal state and we have failed at every step. EU is saying that Pakistan should be normal and underlined that if it was a normal state it would not have used the Parliament to debate on the expulsion of the French Ambassador. *Sethi underlined that the EU thinks that Pakistan is wrong to defend the TLP and even the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is not with Pakistan on this issue.* Sethi argued that after brainwashing for 70 years, Pakistan has lost the plot and in no way is a normal state, the economy is in worse state under Imran Khan, international alliances are breaking, there is international isolation of Pakistan and on top of it the right wing politics and control of religious fringes are increasing. Now the PM is saying we will mainstream the TLP, but that will be more dangerous. *They will sit in the Parliament and pressurize to expel the French ambassador. France which is a small country is now saying that it will cancel the GSP+ status of Pakistan and Pakistan will not be able to export to EU that will be another major shock to the economy.* Even the FATF is pressurizing Pakistan to fulfill its conditions; they can close all the banks. Sethi underlined that Pakistan should first try to normalize the internal conditions in the country and then focus on foreign policy, not otherwise. He pointed out that the governments opinion that *TLP should be brought in the mainstream politics is wrong because when they will come in politics there will always be an underlying fact that they reached this position due to their militant/religious character and will never leave this aspect.* The government is trying to neutralize the TLP at this stage because it is weak and not a position to counter it. Despite they are busy sending the leader of opposition in the jails.

Has PMLN reconnected with Pindi? Analysis by Mansoor Ali Khan, 11 May²⁷

²⁶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9O8scR_Sszg

²⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y7WPRtM5-n0>

The Analyst pointed out that since the 2018 elections, PML-N has taken an anti-establishment stance and in the last few months, with the formation of the PDM, these attacks on the establishment became sharp. Nawaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz openly criticized the army that prompted the establishment to issue clarifications in the media that they have nothing to do with politics. But *slowly the PML-N reduced the anti establishment stance, Maryam Nawaz and Hamza Shehbaz got bail and the recent bail of Shehbaz Sharif was a masterstroke and the PML-N seems to have done some kind of deal with the establishment.* Ali Khan in this episode makes an attempt to analysis if the PML-N and army settled on some kind of deal? *The main points are as follows: First,* if all reports and news analysis to be believed, Shehbaz Sharif came out of the jail on some kind of understanding, even the bail to Maryam and Hamza are part of these understanding. *Second,* It is a well known fact *that Shehbaz Sharif has always been pro-establishment and of the view that there is a need to have a minimum understanding with the army as opposed to Nawaz Sharif.* Also there is a murmur that establishment wants to bring in a new setup and bring change in the country and for this reason Shehbaz Sharif has been given space. Even there is an opinion that Shehbaz Sharif wants to visit London and try to bring Nawaz Sharif into confidence and tell him about the important points of his recent hidden meetings with the establishment that made his bail possible. *Third,* The biggest spoiler of this deal between establishment and Shehbaz Sharif is PM Imran Khan, **who is now desperately trying to stop him from flying out of the country.** Even after the courts order, Shehbaz Sharif was stopped by FIA at the Lahore airport from flying out of the country. The analyst underlined that the biggest reason for stopping him from flying out is that there is a realization in PTI that there is something wrong, *and this visit to London can be problematic to the PTI government. Therefore new cases are opened up against Shehbaz Sharif (Hudibiya Mills).* *Fourth,* Also Imran Khan and the establishment no more seems to be on the same page, as they use to argue earlier and something has gone wrong. On one side Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi in a recent interview to Nadeem Malik pointed out that ISI chief Gen. Faiz has been talking to RAW chief since two years in UAE and **UK but on 10 May 2021 when a caller asked Imran Khan about issue of Kashmir and talks with India, he categorically rejected any possibility of talks with India, until it goes back to post 05 August 2019 status in Jammu and Kashmir** (revoke article 370). This shows that there is some problems/clash between army and Imran Khan, as both are giving different stands on India.

OIC need to rethink diplomatic relations with Israel: Pakistan should take the lead, Capital Talk, Geo News, 17 May²⁸

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

Hamid Mir pointed out that the focus of the World today is on Gaza which is bombarded by Israel and in this matter; *Organisation of Islamic Council (OIC) and UN Security Council held online meetings to discuss the latest developments. There are discussions taking place in the Pakistan parliament* also however the government and opposition are still busy in fighting each other. But he underlined till now they have only paid lip service to the issue at hand. *Hamid Mir invited representatives from the government and opposition and asked, will this lip service be of any help to the Palestine cause? Guests: Mushahid Hussain- PML-N & Chairman Senate standing Committee for Foreign Affairs & Shireen Mazari-Federal Minister for Human Rights. Mushahid Hussain* pointed out that at least certain sections of Muslim society are no more silent and are *talking about the Palestine issue openly; these include mainly Pakistan, Turkey, Iran, Saudia Arabia and Indonesia.* There is lots of public opinion on the issue, street opinion is there but Muslim elite is missing. The Muslim elites in Pakistan once were talking about recognizing Israel and today that dream is shattered to pieces. Pakistan is taking the right stand taking stand for Palestine but we have to do more on this and *in this matter the suggestion by Turkey President Erdogan to form an international joint protection force should be discussed* and there should be join letters from the Muslim countries to US President and UN Security council. To bomb non military targets like media comes under war crime. Bernie Sander has written in *New York Times*, *“We must also take a hard look at nearly \$4 billion a year in military aid to Israel. It is illegal for U.S. aid to support human rights violations”*. Talking about the similarities between Palestine and Kashmir conflict he underlined that *the resolution of both issues are connected to UN Resolution, both India and Israel are occupation forces, both want to bring demographic change and both Netanyahu and Modi are fascist and thinks on religious bases.* Shireen Mazari pointed out that the Muslim countries at this point *there should be a rethink of diplomatic relations with Israel or at least suspended and call back the diplomats.* These are signalling of the countries intentions and it will have a deep impact. *For example Qatar has expelled the Israeli Ambassador and this signalling is very important for the World.* Turkey’s suggestion should also be considered and this is being debated in the Pakistani Parliament. Most importantly the illegal blockade to Gaza should be opened so that necessary food, humanitarian aid and other items reach the people of Gaza.

Tareen Group & Ring Road Scam shakes PTI government in Islamabad!
Capital Talk with Hamid Mir, *Geo News*, 19 May²⁹

²⁹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=taT90jcw_tM

After the official formation of Tareen group and their decision to stand as a separate entity in the Punjab assembly, the PTI government in Islamabad seems to gear up to save its government and in damage control mode. Adding to it the *Ring road scam* and involvement of its leaders in the same, is another setback for the government. SAPM on overseas Pakistani Zulfi Bhukhari resigned from his post as his name came out in the scam. A range of senior Ministers of the PTI from speaker national assembly Asad Qaiser to Asad Umar took to twitter on 19 May in support of Imran Khan and the hashtag *#IstandwithImranKhan* was trending. Hamid Mir asked why these Ministers are assuring that they stand with Imran Khan. Is the Tareen group responsible for the certain marathon of assurances? Is there any connection between the ring road scam & Tareen group? *Guests: Zulfi Bukhari-PTI & Raja Riaz Ahmad-Tareen Group. Raja Riaz Ahmad* informed that the Tareen group decided to come officially in the Punjab assembly as the Buzdar government has already started to harass the MNA's who were supporting Jahangir Tareen since three months, the government stopped the development funds. *These MNA's registered strong protest against the Punjab government in the meeting that took place at Tareen residence, therefore we nominated a head to lead these MNA's in Punjab assembly.* As far as Parliament is considered we have put a hold on the same process to nominate a Parliamentary leader as the group is still assessing if PM Imran Khan completes his promises made to the group in the last meeting. The group will express their protest on the coming Friday in the Punjab Assembly. Imran Khan has requested us not to go on media, so far we are restraining from it to criticise the Federal government. *There is still one month for the Budget and we will see if the PM fulfils the promises otherwise we will be forced to nominate a parliamentary leader.* He pointed out that SAPM *Shehzad Akbar* is trying to misinform the PM and he is behind all these propaganda against Jahangir Tareen and the MNA's/MPA's supporting him. *Zulfi Bukhari* informed that he resigned from his post as Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Overseas Pakistanis as his name came out in the ring road scam and he will not take the post until his name is cleared from the scam. *There is a careless sentence in the ring road report that mentions me and there is no hyperlink to the sentence.* Whoever has written this report, he should give prove of it and sit with me and debate in any TV programme. I have nothing to do with the ring road scandal. The Tareen group is formed as a forward block for blackmailing Imran Khan and there is no link with the scam and the Tareen group. *There should be a judicial commission and that level of inquiry should be initiated in the ring road scam.*

BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES

(Select incidents culled out from the Pakistan media)

Place	Date	Description	Killed	Injured
Balochistan				
Quetta ³⁰	05/05/2021	At least four personnel of the Frontier Corps (FC) were martyred while six others were injured in a terrorist attack in Balochistan's Zhob district.	04	06
Bolan ³¹	10/05/2021	Three FC soldiers martyred in attack on Bolan post	03	01
Chaman ³²	21/05/2021	At least six people were killed and 14 others were injured in a blast in Chaman	06	14
Quetta ³³	27/05/2021	TTP commander, 3 other terrorists killed in Quetta: CTD	04	00

³⁰ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2298399/four-fc-troopers-martyred-in-zhob-terrorist-attack>

³¹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1622963/three-fc-soldiers-martyred-in-attack-on-bolan-post>

³² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1624892/at-least-6-killed-in-blast-at-palestine-solidarity-rally-in-chaman>

³³ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1625900/ttp-commander-3-other-terrorists-killed-in-quetta-ctd>