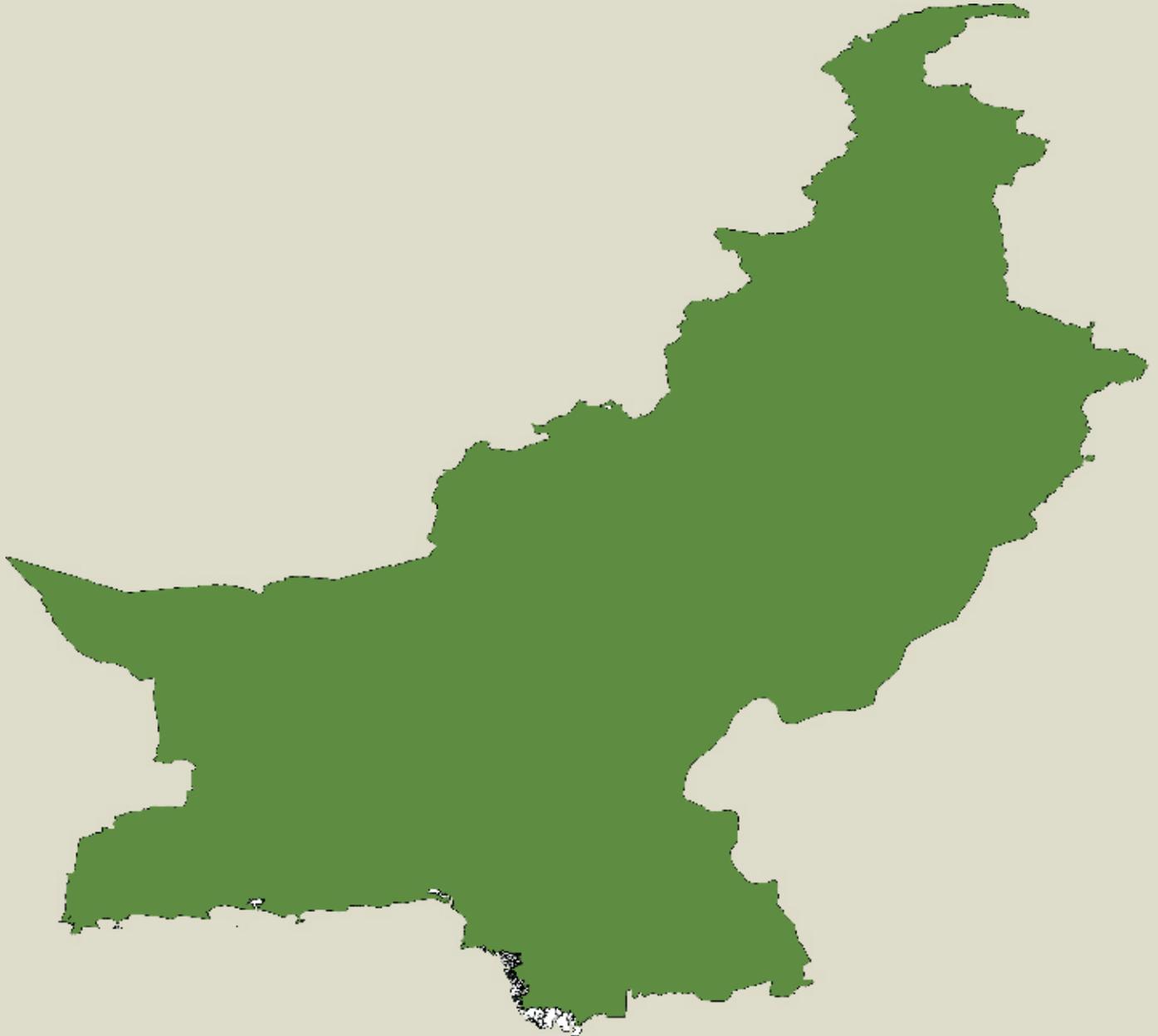


October 2018

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

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INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE
STUDIES & ANALYSES
रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL	03
POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS	11
ECONOMIC ISSUES	12
SECURITY SITUATION	14
URDU & ELECTRONIC MEDIA	18
Urdu	21
Electronic.....	23
STATISTICS	24
BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES.....	25

Editorial

Imran Khan pledged through his election campaigns that he will bring economic reforms using the resources within the country and stabilize the ailing economy. Within the first month into power, the newly formed PTI led government could not save the economy that plunge into an all-time low. Limited options within Pakistan, in the first week of this month Imran Khan

finally decided to go to the IMF officially to request for a 13th bailout. But this time the IMF has urged Pakistan to come clean on the debts in order to secure a bailout. In this regard the managing director of IMF Christine Lagarde said, “She would require “absolute transparency” of Pakistan’s debts, including those owed to China”.

In order to evade the embracement Imran Khan flew to Saudi Arabia and came back with \$6 billion package. In an address to the Nation after his visit the PM announced this as a *zabardast* Package (Great Package) and underlined that this package will provide some relief and help to decrease the economic burden to a great extent. He also emphasized that the strategy is to take minimum loan from the IMF indicating that it comes with lots of conditions. He also announced that talks are on with other friendly countries and similar kind of packages are expected from other friendly countries. Imran Khan could not contain his excitement and in an address to the nation on national television he presented this a good news to his fellow countrymen.

Many in both the print and broad cast media criticizes this act of Imran Khan and underlines that it is for the first time in the history of Pakistan that a PM is announcing the bailout in such a manner and celebrating it as his victory. The critics reminded Imran Khan’s post-election position, how he pledged he ‘will die before going with the begging bowl for help from other countries’. It has to be noted that on his maiden visit to Saudi Arabia he hinted towards a possible bailout request to Saudi but after the visit he said that the conditions that were put by the Saudi government for the grant of economic package was not acceptable to him. But now all of a sudden after accepting the economic package the government has stated that the economic package comes without any conditions, which sounds little contradictory.

The new debate on the need to revise CPEC indicate to the loopholes and skewed planning strategy of the CPEC. Many argue that China is benefitting more from the project and it subordinates Pakistan's interests to those of China. Many experts in Pakistan also point out to the environmental and humanitarian costs of projects in Sindh, and says a ‘lack of direct payoff from Gwadar port could further infuriate insurgency-hit Balochistan’. On the other hand, some also argue that Pakistan cannot afford to annoy the Americans at this crucial point when it urgently needs an IMF bail-out to stabilize the economy.

Zainab Akhter

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS

Another U-turn, Editorial, Daily Times, 04 October¹

The ruling PTI is trying to put a brave face on things. Riyadh will be investing in Pakistan. Just not as part of either the Joint Working Groups (JWGs) or the Joint Coordination Committee (JCC). That is, any financial injections will feature as part of a bilateral framework. *This would be all well and good had the U-turn not come as a Saudi delegation is still in the country. For it suggests miscommunication on a spectacular scale. This is to say nothing of what is fast becoming seen as the new set-up's tradition of announcing policy steps only to retract these a short time later. Thereby giving the impression of a government not sure of its own footing. The fallout being an increasing trust deficit between state and citizenry.* And given that Saudi Arabia is a steadfast American ally in the Middle East, some pundits here are beginning to whisper in not un-hushed tones that Washington may have had a quiet word in Riyadh's ear. This, however, is unlikely. Especially considering how the Kingdom has signed defence and energy deals with Russia; another challenger to Washington's hegemony. *Thus the notion of Riyadh becoming more closely tied to Pakistan was reportedly of great concern to an Iranian regime already suspicious of the Islamic Military Alliance (IMA). Not to mention this country's training of Saudi troops. And while Islamabad has repeatedly reassured both sides that it will not choose between allies, it should welcome having the pressure eased somewhat on this front.* That being said, the more solid approach would have been for the Khan government not to jump the gun in the first place. For while it is appreciated that the federal set-up is endeavoring to be transparent — it must be stressed that this cannot come at the cost of bypassing Parliament. Meaning that the elected representatives of the Pakistani people must be recognized as legitimate stakeholders; regardless of political rivalry. It is thus hoped that this will be the last flip-flop by the Centre. If it is not, this will hardly bode well for PTI's first 100-day record. Or for citizenry confidence. And in the meanwhile, the entire country is awaiting concrete clarifications on all these fronts.

¹ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/306048/another-u-turn/>

Fumbling in the dark? Murtaza Solangi, *The Friday Times*, 05 October²

Despite heavy economic pressures created by an external account deficit and the rising oil prices, the new government was trying to avoid going to IMF. This is the context of the prime minister's trip to Saudi Arabia: Pakistan wanted a multibillion-dollar financial injection by Saudis, including oil import on deferred payments and parking of a few billion dollars in the Pakistani coffers to support the dwindling stock of the hard currency reserves. Sources say the team includes experts from the Saudi strategic camp, suggesting that there might be an element of a quid pro quo attached to future deals. "These are not decision makers. They are the people who can suggest to Saudi decision makers what all they can and should commit to. The commitment will be made at a higher level," said one of official privy to the dialogue with the Saudi visitors. *IMF's decision-making is heavily influenced by Washington. We have not forgotten Mike Pompeo's threatening language on the IMF bailout, linking it to CPEC.*

A one-dimensional approach, Zahid Hussain, *Dawn*, 10 October³

Halfway through the 'magical' 100 days, the Khan government is still struggling to find its moorings. The prime minister seems to be in a state of nirvana with little sense of reality on the ground. Governance through the occult and inanity sums up the past 50 days of Khan's rule. The government has put its entire focus on fighting real or imaginary corruption, notwithstanding *the fact that some of the most tainted people are now part of his administration. Surely, rampant corruption is one of the biggest curses retarding the country's economic progress, but there are also other more serious issues that urgently need to be addressed. Voodoo economics would not remedy our deep-rooted problems.* The ineptitude and lack of capacity of the PTI government were more evident in the latter's handling of the economy. It is obvious that the negotiations with multilateral financial institutions will not be easy this time because of our worsening relations with Washington, and the bailout is likely to come with much tougher conditionalities. The government will have to take some unpopular measures in order to gain space for carrying

² <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/tft/fumbling-in-the-dark/>

³ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1438027/a-one-dimensional-approach>

out much-needed structural reforms. There is a greater need now for national reconciliation to face internal and external challenges. It surely does not mean compromising on corruption, but inflammatory remarks can prevent the law from taking its course. The perils of a one-dimensional approach are contagious.

PM-N improves showing in NA, PA, *The Express Tribune*, 15 October⁴

The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) on Sunday managed not only improved its position in the National Assembly by bagging four NA seats, it also extended gains in the Punjab Assembly by securing five seat, according to results compiled by *The Express Tribune*. According to details, PML-N had vacated only one of the 11 NA seats up for grabs in the by-election, whereas PTI had vacated six and the PML-Q vacated two seats. While elections on two NA seats – NA-103 and NA-60 – were postponed. *PML-N put up a tough fight against the ruling party and not only managed to retain NA-124, the only seat it vacated, but also managed to win three more constituencies. On the other hand, PTI managed to win only four seats, including NA-60, where elections were postponed after Hanif Abbasi's arrest. ...*

Khan's 'desperate' speech, Editorial, *Daily Times*, 24 October⁵

Prime Minister Imran Khan achieved what he set out to do in Saudi Arabia. And now Pakistan's begging bowl runneth over. Or at least is some \$6 billion the richer. For the Kingdom has agreed to cough up \$3 billion in foreign currency support for a one-year period. As well as the same amount in terms of deferred oil payments; also over 12 months. But it was his speech to the conference where the PM should have considered holding back somewhat. In his chat with foreign news outlets he refrained from disclosing his real thoughts about President Trump; on the grounds that it would be unbecoming for a head of government to dish the dirt. It matters not that Khan has said this before. *The bottom line is that repeating such sentiments at an international forum of this type can be avoided.* Meaning that there was no real reason for the PM to deliver a public speech in this way. Not when it was only the Saudis who were

⁴ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1825874/1-pml-n-improves-showing-na-pa/>

⁵ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/313791/khans-desperate-speech/>

being touched up for cash. Unless, of course, Pakistan wanted to drive home the message that it really is so desperate that it will do anything for hard currency injections. Including perfecting the art of public begging.

Lopsided foreign ties, Editorial, *Dawn*, 26 October⁶

As a first-time holder of high office, Mr. Khan has a steep learning curve in international politics and diplomacy, but at least he has not shied away from such matters and remained focused wholly on a domestic agenda. What is far from clear, however, is whether Mr. Khan's government and the Pakistani state can play a more effective role as peacemaker in the region. *Having secured a partial economic lifeline from Saudi Arabia while not having made progress in building economic and trade ties with Iran, particularly the Iran-Pakistan pipeline that is in limbo, the lopsided ties of Pakistan with Saudi Arabia and Iran are unlikely to give Pakistan much leverage as peacemaker. Further complicating Pakistani ties with Iran is US President Donald Trump's determination to severely weaken Iran with crushing sanctions.* Perhaps Pakistan can reach out to other Muslim-majority countries such as Malaysia or Indonesia to coordinate its peace efforts, or a collective effort can be made to revive the moribund OIC, which could become a plausible forum in which the conflict in Yemen is brought to a peaceful end. Prime Minister Khan could also increase confidence in his own role as potential regional peacemaker if he takes the Pakistani parliament into confidence about the true terms of the financial assistance he has secured from Saudi Arabia.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Dealing with the Saudis, Zahid Hussain, *Dawn*, 03 October⁷

It was significant that Prime Minister Imran Khan chose Riyadh for his first foreign visit within four weeks of coming to power, thus breaking his pledge of not travelling abroad in his first three months in office. The warm welcome given to the new Pakistani prime minister signaled a fresh beginning and the resetting of a critical relationship. *However, Pakistan's strategic tilt towards the kingdom is not without its perils, particularly in view of the growing*

⁶ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1441413/lopsided-foreign-ties>

⁷ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1436522/dealing-with-the-saudis>

hostility between Riyadh and Tehran. Indeed, one major purpose of Khan's visit was to seek financial assistance from Saudi Arabia to ease Pakistan's external balance-of-payment problem and avoid going back to the IMF. While wanting Saudi Arabia to park a certain amount at the State Bank to help boost foreign exchange reserves that have been fast depleting, Pakistan is also seeking oil supply from the kingdom on deferred payment. *The Saudi rulers appear keen on investing in some big projects in Pakistan as part of their 2030 development vision that envisages forging closer partnerships with foreign countries. Surely this vision also offers Pakistan an opportunity to push up its manpower export to more skilled and managerial levels, inevitably boosting its foreign remittances.* It is extremely important for us to improve relations with Saudi Arabia. Close economic ties with the kingdom will open a window of opportunity for Pakistan. It is a good idea to include the kingdom in CPEC projects and to invite investment in other fields.

A new trajectory of Pak-Saudi relations? Khurram Abbas Minhas, *Daily Times*, 08 October⁸

This is the first time that the government of Pakistan has constructively engaged Saudi Arabia in a long-term commercial activity. The country has also institutionalized the strategic partnership with Saudi Arabia. In this regard, a high-level consultative committee has been set up between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, which will usher in a new era of bilateral strategic partnership in diverse fields. *India's wide-ranging cooperation with Saudi Arabia in various fields and Modi's proactive diplomacy in the backdrop of Pakistan's rejection to the Saudi offer to join the Yemen War, proved to be detrimental to the bilateral relationship between the two Muslim majority states.* PM Imran Khan's visit has addressed multiple concerns of both the countries related to each other, particularly concerns of the royal family about Pakistan's determination to protect the Saudi Arabia's territorial integrity. According to Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, the visit has given an impression that Pakistan considers Saudi Arabia as its preferred country and ally. It has laid a solid foundation of long term Saudi investments in Pakistan. *Saudi Arabia's acceptance to become a strategic partner on CPEC, on Pakistan's invitation,*

⁸ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/307415/a-new-trajectory-of-pak-saudi-relations/>

has changed the conventional bilateral relationship, which was based on security, aid and limited investments in agriculture sectors.

Afghanistan: the US' longest war, Asif Durrani, Daily Times, 10 October⁹

The aftermath of Taliban's fall led to many developments which had implications in the subsequent years on Afghanistan. It also became the casus belli for the US' prolonged engagement in the country, which American commentators now refer to as, America's longest war in history. *What went wrong in Afghanistan, that despite tremendous human and technological resources, it became an embarrassment for the US and a source of tension for the region? A host of events or factors contributing to the deterioration of Afghan situation are noteworthy: First*, for the United States, the situation in Afghanistan remained favourable till early 2004, as the Taliban were in hibernation. The US ignored Talibani gestures for reconciliation. However, after the US invasion of Iraq in March 2003, which diverted the US attention from Afghanistan, the Taliban grabbed the opportunity and started consolidating their position. **Second**, Karzai and Ashraf Ghani failed to provide good governance; inefficiency, nepotism and corruption have been the hallmark of their governments. Afghan security forces lacked motivation while desertion rate amongst soldiers was alarmingly high according to international standards. The US shirked taking steps to curb warlords who consolidated their position in the government and around the country. **Third**, the narcotics business flourished in the country to the extent that Afghanistan attained the dubious distinction of being the largest opium (90 percent) producer in the world. Narcotic money turned out to be a major source of wealth, power and war economy in Afghanistan. Drug money has created a vested interest that favours war as peace and stability would be detrimental to the narco-business. **Fourth**, despite the overthrow of Taliban, Afghanistan continued to be a testing ground for competing influences. *Now Russia and Iran are in contact with the Taliban, a significant development from the regional perspective. And most importantly, the use of brute force and ignoring tribal sensitivities, especially barging into Afghan homes, created deep aversion against the US which was*

⁹ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/308419/afghanistan-the-us-longest-war/>

capitalized by the Taliban. Consequently, Taliban now hold sway over 40 percent of the country while contest another 30 percent.

Pak-Russia relations, Dr Khalil-ur-Rahman, Daily Times, 22 October¹⁰

The US has always placed its interest on priority in its relations with Pakistan. The Soviet Union maintained its relations with Pakistan adversely. Contrary to it, China, after border agreement in 1963, has helped Pakistan in its difficult times. Changed global geo-politico-economic and strategic order has paved the way for Pakistan, China and Russia to come closer to each other. Firstly, the US presence in Afghanistan is threat to the interests of Russia and Pakistan. Secondly, Central Asian Republics were part of the Soviet Union. Pakistan has special attachment with the region due to Muslim legacy. Thirdly, the region of Central Asia is plenty of natural resources including oil, gas and uranium etc. Uranium is also important for Japan. The exploitation of natural resources of the region needs safe passage for transportation to rest of the world. Pakistan and Russia may not take benefit of the natural resources until the US presence and restoration of peace in Afghanistan. Thus, both have common cause to make efforts for the solution of Afghanistan imbroglio. Fourthly, closeness between Russia and China has also brought Pakistan closer to Russia. Fifthly, CPEC initiative launched by China has convinced Russia that it may not afford to remain alien to it. Pakistan is nucleus of CPEC, thus, cordial relations with Pakistan will be in the interest of Russia. Sixthly, Pakistan is in search of new friends. Russia also needs friends to extend its reach to different areas of the globe. Lastly, the Soviet Union desired to have access to warm waters through the Gwadar seaport. It is main source of transportation of CPEC. Russia has found opportunity to respond the Corridor positively to serve its interests.

The China agenda, Munir Akram, Dawn, 28 October¹¹

¹⁰ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/312928/pak-russia-relations/>

¹¹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1441863/the-china-agenda>

In these turbulent times, Pakistan's relationship with China provides an essential anchor for its security and foreign policy and the foundation for its socioeconomic development. China meets Pakistan's defence requirements; it is building Pakistan's infrastructure. *The two countries need each other's support on the political challenges they face at present. China will expect Pakistan's support on its maritime disputes in the South China Sea, on the One China Policy and Taiwan, and on the separatist threat from Uighur extremists in Xinjiang.* Given the concerted US pressure and threats against Pakistan, there is need for more vocal Chinese support to Pakistan on its core security challenges. China should condemn the threats of force and economic pressure on Pakistan; call for a peaceful resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with international law; and oppose all threats to disrupt the CPEC project. China's contribution is also essential to promote a political settlement in Afghanistan including by support for its development and incorporation into the CPEC and Belt and Road network. It appears essential for the prime minister to set at rest any doubts regarding Pakistan's commitment to the CPEC. This is the 'flagship' of President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). If the US and its friends, are successful in sabotaging CPEC, it will constitute a major foreign policy setback for China and its leader as well as for Pakistan.

ECONOMIC ISSUES

To the IMF, Editorial, Daily Times, 09 October¹²

It has also wasted precious time. *For negotiations will have to start in earnest from scratch. A visiting IMF team left the country last week without reaching consensus with the Centre. But now that the latter has made up its mind, Islamabad will have to put its lobbying hat on.* And fast. If that is, increased quotas (three to five times above its allocated Special Drawing Rights, SDRs) are to be secured. *A request will also have to be made for a front-loaded programme; considering the expanded dollar inflows during the first year of the bailout. The government is, of course, keen to ensure that any stringent conditions have as little impact as possible on low-income groups.* This is right and just. But it serves as even more reason that serious consultations towards

¹² <https://dailytimes.com.pk/307973/to-the-imf/>

this end should have begun well before now. Regardless of the nitty-gritty of this week's by-elections or, indeed, the much-touted 100-day agenda. The Centre feared putting all its gold-plated eggs in the IMF basket. This is understandable. What is not is the touching up of allies, such as China and Saudi Arabia, to provide alternative funding. Not relying on a single bailout source means just that; as opposed to actively trying to side-line a global lending institution. *This was never feasible. In addition, as unfair as IMF returns are — they still offer a more well-trodden path in terms of what borrowing nations are up against than, say, securing handouts from regional players with their own set of geo-strategic interests. This is not to disparage friendly nations. But it is to point out that there is never any such thing as a free lunch.*

Coming clean at the IMF, Editorial, *Daily Times*, 12 October¹³

Among the biggest concerns is that the Imran Khan government may be rather backward in coming forward on the number-crunching front. That is, in a bid to maintain the electoral dream of establishing an Islamic welfare state the Centre may well be tempted to undersell the gravity of the nation's fiscal health. *Preferring to hedge certain bets on touching up some friendly nations for loans of a different kind. Though pundits warn that this will do nothing to inspire investor confidence. For as crippling as IMF repayments are — prevailing market wisdom dictates that the Fund is, at least, a known entity that is open to public scrutiny.* The same cannot be said for private bilateral deals. Indeed, the Fund has insisted that the Prime Minister open up the books on Chinese investment; a pre-election pledge. This is entirely reasonable given that external debt is on schedule to reach \$8bn this year. Add to this the fact that the first tranche of the CPEC return, due next year, totals \$1bn. This is not to point the finger at Beijing. But, rather, to call on the government to adopt a strategy and stick to it. Pakistan cannot afford to waste any more time in the twilight zone. *Apparent disconnect within the cabinet itself is not helping matters. It was left to the Information Minister to rule out tapping China for yet more bilateral cash; or, indeed, the UAE and Saudi Arabia.* Thus the only thing that Pakistan can do is be completely honest with both the IMF and the citizenry. This means no more talk of how this storm will be weathered in no

¹³ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/309251/coming-clean-at-the-imf/>

more than three to six months. Such willful myopia serves no purpose. Pragmatic realism can be the only prescription.

Rethinking foreign investment and policy capture in Pakistan, Dr Ahmed Abdullah Khan, *Daily Times*, 16 October¹⁴

Under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (“CPEC”), Pakistan has been promised several billions under the guise of development in the energy, infrastructure and development sector. Pakistan is not the only country to have received such generous capital (anticipated) inflow from China. Pakistan is an attractive, unexplored region that will generate generous payments for China on favourable terms in the long term. An ideal investment vehicle! Reports indicate that Pakistan will pay over \$USD90bn for an initial stint of \$USD50 billion invested by China. China’s economic imperialism has also triggered aggression from India. A disgruntled American establishment, and more importantly, has transformed large Pakistani cities into mini China towns. However, foreign investment presents its own challenges. Pakistan is not prepared to host such large capital inflows. Our investment instruments are not robust enough. Our regulators are inept and our regulatory regimes inadequate. Our glaring circular debt figures are here to stay unless there is a complete overhaul in our regulatory structures.

China endorses Pakistan’s aid request to IMF, Baqir Sajjad Syed, *Dawn*, 16 October¹⁵

Certain quarters believe that Pakistan, which is undertaking China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) — a massive infrastructure and connectivity project in collaboration with China, is finding itself in difficult situation because of mounting Chinese debt. This view is supported by the US, which has significant influence on the IMF board. *Beijing cautions Islamabad that the facility should not affect economic cooperation between the two countries.* Chinese spokesman Lu strongly rejected the perception that CPEC debt was adding to Pakistan’s financial woes. Recalling Pakistani finance ministry’s figures, he said, “the debt incurred by CPEC makes up a very small proportion

¹⁴<https://dailytimes.com.pk/310696/rethinking-foreign-investment-and-policy-capture-in-pakistan/>

¹⁵ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1439290/china-endorses-pakistans-aid-request-to-imf>

of Pakistan's debt composition and it is not to blame for the current financial difficulty in Pakistan". While *China is supporting Pakistani request, the spokesman underlined that any programme for Pakistan should not affect the normal bilateral cooperation between China and Pakistan.*

Strategic confines of CPEC, Muhammad Amir Rana, Dawn, 21 October¹⁶

The government's confused response and the strategic community's overemphasis on CPEC's strategic dimension are exerting pressure on the project's long-term prospects. CPEC's second and most important phase will start soon. It is expected that Prime Minister Imran Khan's visit to China next month will pave the way for this. Interestingly, Chinese companies have their own reservations. Many companies have complained about red tape here and the poor market capacity to absorb surplus production. They are reluctant to invest in risky projects. As far as domestic investment is concerned, the local business community has largely been kept in the dark about the special economic zones; there is a perception that these would be exclusively for Chinese companies. China is also believed to be pursuing some Asian nations to invest in CPEC-related projects, mainly in the economic zones. *The government needs to focus on the depoliticisation of CPEC and bringing it out of the shadow of its strategic orientation. It can arrange expos to not only showcase CPEC but also to make known Pakistan's potential in other economic, commercial areas. But this will need some serious effort.*

Saudi loan, Editorial, Dawn, 25 October¹⁷

In the latter opinion, Mr. Khan and his allies can make a reasonable case based on the fact that yet again the country is facing a balance-of-payments crisis and running dangerously high fiscal deficits. This was not Mr. Khan nor is his PTI government doing. What is the prime minister's doing and responsibility, however, are the steps he and his government are taking. And when those steps start to mirror the measures taken by the previous governments he relentlessly attacks, a fair question arises: why should Mr. Khan simply be taken at his word? *According to Mr. Khan, the IMF will make onerous demands of Pakistan if more money is sought from it. But the prime minister did not explain what are the terms on which Saudi Arabia has agreed to lend money to Pakistan.* But there will be at a minimum Saudi expectations, and perhaps

¹⁶ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1440341>

¹⁷ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1441186/saudi-loan>

even demands, when it comes to Pakistan's support for issues that are of interest to the Saudi monarchy. When he was an opposition figure, Mr. Khan seemed to understand that and hence decried the secret deal that the previous PML-N rulers had struck with the Saudis in return for a loan. The prime minister's claim that Pakistan will try and facilitate dialogue between the Saudis and its regional rivals and enemies is similarly unconvincing. It has been claimed before, by the last government, and did not amount to much.

SECURITY SITUATION

Cosying up to extremists, Editorial, *Daily Times*, 05 October¹⁸

That being said, there was absolutely no excuse for Mr. Qureshi to refer to Saeed as a "political element". The world stage is no place for such dangerous and mainstreaming vernacular. Not least when Pakistan had, just last week, spoken at the UN of how the country remains committed to strengthening its counter-terrorism frameworks and regimes; as a rebuttal to repeated Indian accusations of double-gaming on this front. *Sadly, the PTI is familiar with charges of cosying up to those whom it should not for political gain. From indirectly throwing its weight behind the Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) as the latter held the federal capital hostage for three weeks; while crying blasphemy against the then PMLN government.* That the ruling party appears to be pursuing the same trajectory in office demonstrates sheer reckless and a blatant disregard for the country's precarious situation. For the Noor-Saeed fiasco (Noor-ul-Haq, the minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, had attended the Difa-e-Pakistan Council event on Kashmir and shared stage with Hafiz Sayed) comes at a time when Pakistan is not only trying to reset ties with the US; which does not believe it is doing enough on the terror fighting front. But when it also has to convince the soon-to-be arriving FATF delegation that it is taking appropriate measures against money laundering and terror financing. If things do not go well, the country could join Iran and North Korea on the blacklist. Yet the PM appears indifferent to all this. *Someone somewhere should tell him that the financing of terrorism is perhaps the worst form of corruption. And that it needs to be tackled most urgently. What is not*

¹⁸ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/306348/cosying-up-to-extremists/>

required, however, is hobnobbing with extremist figures with untold blood on their hands. For this helps no one. Especially not the Kashmiris.

Madressah reform, Editorial, Dawn, 05 October¹⁹

So the state's desire for a uniform education system must be lauded. What is problematic, however, is that militant and sectarian organizations use certain madrassahs as fronts for recruiting fighters and raising funds. *Moreover, some religious schools have a narrow focus that brainwashes students, with the result that madrassah students are taught to hate sects and religions other than their own.* Any seminary promoting militancy and hatred of others must be dealt with under the law. There is also a need to register and deal with thousands of illegal madrassahs operating in the country, as outlined in the National Action Plan. *Indeed, if sectarian and extremist material is excised from the curriculum, and modern subjects are taught to students, children studying in madrassahs can contribute positively to national life, supplementing their religious education with life skills.* Prime Minister Imran Khan discussed issues related to religious schools with heads of the country's five madrassah boards, affiliated with various religious sects. Mr. Khan said that the government wanted to do away with class-based education and introduce uniform syllabi, adding that multiple education systems in the country were counterproductive. He also reiterated the desire that many governments over the past few decades have aimed to achieve: mainstreaming of madrassah students and involving them in all sectors of life. The government must, therefore, take madrassah reforms to their logical conclusion.

Ending terror financing, I.A. Rehman, Dawn, 11 October²⁰

The authorities should heed the FATF declaration that all NPOs are not at risk of being used for money laundering and terrorist financing "and some may represent little or no risk at all". They claim to have separated good charities from bad ones, but this appears to be more in the manner that the 'good' Taliban are separated from the bad ones. Such a process can only smack of arbitrariness and subjective considerations. One hopes that the Pakistan representatives are now better equipped to satisfy the APG mission than they were during the earlier two rounds. Earlier, on the eve of the mission's visit in August, the government was still looking for somebody to prepare a national

¹⁹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1436932/madrassah-reform>

²⁰ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1438272/ending-terror-financing>

risk assessment study, and its claim to be working on a 12-point action plan to counter money laundering and terror financing did not convince many. *Above all, the campaign against INGOs and CSOs is not backed by any law — the model law drafted by Nacta is yet to be examined by parliament, and marks the oddity of a police department drafting a law for human rights activists, and the people out to harass CSOs, too, have no legal sanction for their actions.*

Dealing with Pakistan's far-right, Hannan R Hussain, *Daily Times*, 11 October²¹

Political mainstreaming of hardline outfits has clearly not paid off. Hundreds of candidates tied to outlawed groups like Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) and Ahle Sunnah wal Jamaah (ASWJ) took part in the 2018, general elections, on the false premise that political integration shall render violent elements peaceful. Rather, outfits such as TLP have added to their anti-Ahmadiyya support base, using newfound political legitimacy to impose blasphemy checks on the PTI government. While still a fraction of Pakistan's overall population, TLP's ability to override democratic autonomy, and take religio-political matters into its own hands, is alarmingly effective. *Despite their limited numerical strength and firm sectarian roots, Pakistan's far right — led by Tehreek e Labbaik — continues to stake its claim to key policy matters. From deciding who sits on the nation's Economic Council, to dictating the fate of Pak-Dutch ties in wake of the blasphemous caricatures contest, their ability to demand leadership compliance through violence is a perilous practice.* Amid inclusive economic and health reforms, Imran's chances of demonstrating flexibility against the far-right rest on how accurately his political rhetoric aligns with his actions. For instance, electoral advocacy for Pakistan's blasphemy laws, and presidential support from TLP members, make it increasingly difficult to design policies that are independent of far-right interests. Despite repeated assurances, Pakistan's efforts to scrap JuD's fundraising operations remain inconsistent. On September 13, the Supreme Court allowed JuD and FIF to continue its 'welfare operations', dismissing the interior ministry's plea for a ban. The plea, aimed at giving legal force to Pakistan's crackdown against JuD, was dismissed because a petition by JuD chief was 'still being heard'.

²¹ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/308718/dealing-with-pakistans-far-right/>

Difficult equation, Moeed Yusuf, Dawn, 09 October²²

I have previously explained what the longer game may be premised on: if India can continue growing economically and diverting significant resources to defence while forcing Pakistan to remain wedded to a paradigm that prizes hard security over economic well-being, in a decade or two, the power differential will be so large that the only negotiation possible would be on the stronger party's terms. *This is seen as hubris that must be responded to by staying steadfast.* Pakistan needs to reorient its thinking from geo-security to geo-economics. About the only way to develop a genuine Indian stake in Pakistan's stability while gaining economically is to position Pakistan as a regional trade and transit hub. CPEC is the perfect start. *Begin shifting the global view of Pakistan as the impediment to regional integration in South Asia, and prompt India to question the utility of its policy of seeking to isolate Pakistan globally.*

URDU & ELECTRONIC MEDIA

URDU

Appeal for economic cooperation to Saudi Arabia! Editorial, Ummat, 03 October²³

Deep friendship, social and religious relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are not a new. Despite the change in the governments, there has been no change in the relations. Both the countries are attached to strong roots of the religion. *The holy shrines in Saudi Arabia remain sources of belief and spiritual power for the Muslims across the world and for Pakistanis.* Pakistanis are the largest number going for *Haj* and *Umrah*. ... Saudi-government has always helped Pakistan before anyone else and more than anyone else. Similarly engineers, doctors and teachers among others have helped Saudi in every aspect of life. Indeed in return they were paid well. *Pakistan has always preferred Saudi's protection and security.* ... There is possibility for new economic cooperation between the two. *King Salman of Saudi Arabia, Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman and other officials are aware of the fact that*

²² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1437762/difficult-equation>

²³ <http://ummat.net/2018/10/03/news.php?p=idr1.gif>

Pakistan is the only nuclear Muslim country that has proven itself in academic and scientific experiments. ... The Saudi delegation has expressed its will to invest in Diamer Basha and Mohmand Dams. The delegation was given briefing about steel project which many oppose by arguing that it equals to selling resources to Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia has announced to create 'oil city' in Gwadar which will create jobs for the locals. Though it is surprising that the current government took a U-turn and decided to ask for loan but it is still good to take it from Saudis than the institutions (like IMF) who drain the applicants' resources. However the condition remains that it should help the Pakistanis.

They were trusted, Editorial, Ummat, 10 October²⁴

PTI-led government has already failed to fix the struggling economy of the country. What will it do in next five years! It had not completed few days in the government and it shunned all its previous claims and reached to the IMF with its begging bowl for an economic package. *Finance Minister Asad Umar has left for Indonesia where he along with his delegation will talk to the IMF for the loan. According to the experts, given the previous strong statements of Asad Umar against the IMF and the claim that the government would not go to the IMF, the IMF will set strong conditions for any economic bail out. ...* People of Pakistan will not be even aware of the fact that most of the assets of the country are kept mortgage to the international financial institutions. It is expected that many roads, airports, historical buildings among others are mortgaged to the external institutions. If the money is not paid to them, all these mortgages will go to them. To avoid any such situation the people of Pakistan had elected Imran Khan to power so that he could bring the looted money back and fix the country's economy. But the new government has surrendered to the IMF. ... It has raised fuel, gas, electricity prices to put further burden on common people. ... The people and analysts who had voted the PTI are surprised that the people it had elected to reduce their miseries, are increasing them. Now who is left who can be tested!

²⁴ <http://ummat.net/2018/10/10/news.php?p=idr1.gif>

Chor, daku aur..., Saleem Safi, Jang, 10 October²⁵

One form of corruption is in which a person takes it to build his/her own and family assets; PPP's leadership are accused of this type of corruption. Second form of corruption is in which in which a person uses political or administrative authority to get concessions from the political institutions and increase his/her wealth; PML-N and its leadership is accused of this type of corruption. *Third type of corruption is in which the leader him or herself does not take corruption but gives people around such posts which do same for him/her*, though the leader keeps his/her hands clean but it is the people around who do it for him/her and then they spend it on the leader and the party. *PTI is accused of introducing this form of corruption in Pakistan.* In general all the three main political parties, PML-N, PPP and PTI, are corrupt, only ways differ. ... When Prime Minister Imran Khan or his spokesperson says that if not to call a thief a thief than what, though it seems good but when seen in ethical terms it does not suit. Like Imran Kahn has his followers so has every leader. ... *When Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry says that the previous governments were governments of 'thieves' then indirectly it applies to his government also because those people are part of this government as well: Whether Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Babar Awan, Prevez Khatatk, Fawad Chaudhry, Jahangir Tareen, Zubaida Jalal and others, they have joined PTI.* ... It is better that the Prime Minister asks his cabinet that they should start their days by abusing themselves two-three times in the morning. That will not let them to destroy the political environment.

Will this government complete its term? Editorial, Ummat, 16 October²⁶

Prime Minister Imran Khan and his party PTI had thought that they would win more seats in the by elections than they had in July 2018 general elections. Any vacated seat generally is won by the same party who had it earlier because voters remain same. Party in power always has an edge also. *However, in contrast to these rules or traditions, in the recent by-elections PTI won less number of seats than it had in the July general elections. Both at the federal level and in Punjab, PTI had to face defeat.* The results are indeed disappointing for Imran Khan and for his party. Information Minister Fawad

²⁵ https://e.jang.com.pk/pic.asp?npic=10-10-2018/Karachi/images/06_007.png

²⁶ <http://ummat.net/2018/10/16/news.php?p=idr1.gif>

Chaudhry said that the party should have won 8 seats out of 11 NA seats that went for by-elections but it could get only 4. *It is surprising that the loss of four seats include the NA-124, Lahore and NA-35, Bannu which were won by Imran Khan in July. PTI claims that Imran Khan's popularity continues but the results show something else. Either the claim is baseless or within two months of his government, people have been disappointed by his government.* ... Imran Khan and his party have proven themselves wrong in just two months' time. All allegations are put on previous governments and common people are burdened with more taxes and inflation. Like its predecessors, current government is also holding meeting after meeting about how to befool common people.

Third World War on the brink of CPEC, Mohammad Aslam Khan, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, 23 October²⁷

Though China has rejected any news about making military base in Afghanistan but the pain that the news had caused among the enemies has not gone away. ... China was suffering from domestic issues and international image problem. Now the Chinese have woken up. They adopted austerity for a long time. Now President Xi Jinping started 'One belt, One Road (OBOR)' initiative and it is going well. The project is a hope for poor regions and for the people who were subjected to suffering by capitalism. *The daily increase in Chinese financial power has given restless nights to the Europeans who see it as competitor to their age-old dominance. CPEC is one project, 16 per cent of UBOR. To make it to fail, painstaking efforts are made.* New troubles are created for China and Pakistan. America is behaving like a wounded snake. It threatens Pakistan and if nothing works, then it rumours that *Daesh* is present in Afghanistan. Sometimes it incites traitor Hussain Haqqani to raise the issue of Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang Province of China. These all are linked. The news from Hong Kong is also part of whole agenda. *The South China Morning Post wrote, referring to some military sources that China was making a camp in Wakhan, near a place where border between China and Afghanistan meets. Spokeswoman of Chinese Foreign Office, Hua Chunying rejected any such news and said that it is a lie.* ... Where Pakistan has something to benefit about, some issues crop up. To sell its foot, Pakistan kills whole goat. Such people can

²⁷ <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/Lahore/2018-10-23/page-10/detail-10>

be only prayed for. *In all this story Imran Khan Government's lack of warm welcome to Chinese Foreign Minister is not good. The Chinese ambassador has been visiting Banilgala before the elections. Imran and his cabinet needs think over it so that further steps will be taken.* ... America and its agents are targeting Pakistan. The real thorn for the US is speedy work on the CPEC. There is a possibility of third world war on the brinks of the project.

Arrival of Israeli flight to Pakistan? Editorial, Jasarat, October 29²⁸

Landing of Israeli flight in Islamabad for the first time in history of Pakistan has become an issue. All big shots except Prime Minister have refuted this news. Even the President of republic has clarified. *But only rejection cannot work.* People used to complain that Nawaz Sharif government is extending hands of friendship with India silently but never reached to Israel. *As per the BBC report, the flight landed at Masqat airport carrying Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The same flight flew to Islamabad as Oman's flight after changing its code. Technically civil aviation's denial is true as code was changed to fly in Pakistan.* Who can bring forth the truth between the claim and the denial? Since Pakistan does not acknowledge Israel, so Israeli plane cannot make it to Pakistan. Situation is very grim. After assuming the power, the PTI government is indulging in things which can eradicate the vary character of Pakistan. First, pro-Qadiani stunt. Then roll back. Next Asia's issue. Nothing is clear on it. Sanctity of Prophethood is in danger. Now Israeli plane. Who were on board in this plane and what was their message? Who met whom? Is it only rumor or reality? The whole nation is in dark? Even clarifications are doubtful. Fawad Chaudhry says we will not hold secret meeting. It means will they do this openly. President is saying that we are not going to have relations with Israel. Why the clarifications are issued?

ELECTRONIC MEDIA

²⁸ <http://www.jasarat.com/2018/10/29/181029-03-4/>

Off the record, Zem-TV, 09 October²⁹

Kashif Abbasi raised the matter of PTI-led Government's decision to go to International Monetary Fund (IMF) for financial package. *This was a decision against the PTI's earlier position in which it had said that the previous government was going begging to the IMF which it would never do.* State minister for revenue and PTI leader Hammad Azhar said that the clips played are true but later Asad Umar had said that Pakistan needed to keep options open. *He said that Pakistan has gone to the IMF 18-times since 19060s. On the rise of prices Azhar was of the view that these are adjustments so that losses in different departments can be covered.* PML-N leader Miftah Ismail said that this government by devaluing the currency has incurred debt worth thousand crore in single day. He said this is not the way to run the government and PTI should come out of the mode of opposition and fix the economy. Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar of PPP said that late Benazir Bhutto had said long back that only eighty thousand out of 130 million Pakistanis pay taxes. It is the salary-class and the trend continues till today. *Khokhar said that PTI-led government has gone to the IMF because it could not get money from Saudi Arabia and China which also shows its political and diplomatic failure.*

Jirga with Saleem Safi, Geo-TV, 28 October³⁰

Imran Khan announced on national television that he has been able to secure the Package from Saudi Arabia that will help to stabilize the ailing economy of Pakistan. Saleem Safi criticizes this act of Imran Khan and underlines that it is for the first time in the history of Pakistan that a PM is announcing the bailout in such a manner and celebrating as his victory. *Saleem Safi reminds us that before elections Imran Khan said that he will die before going with the begging bowl for help from other countries.* On his maiden visit to Saudi he hinted towards a possible bailout request to Saudi but after the visit he said that the conditions that were put by Saudi for the economic package was not acceptable to him. *But now all of a sudden after accepting the economic package the government has stated that the economic package comes without any conditions, which is a big contraction, he adds.*

²⁹ <http://www.zemtv.com/2018/10/09/off-the-record-9th-october-2018/>

³⁰ <https://www.geo.tv/shows/jirga/216435-jirga-28-october-2018>

STATISTICS

BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES

(Select incidents culled out from the Pakistan media)

Place	Date	Description	Killed	Injured
Sindh				
Karachi ³¹	24/10/2018	Police-protesters clash leaves one dead, six injured in Karachi	01	06
Balochistan				
Quetta ³²	24/10/2018	4 children injured in Quetta school firing	0	04

³¹<https://dailytimes.com.pk/314027/police-protesters-clash-leaves-one-dead-six-injured-in-karachi/>

³² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1441044/4-children-injured-in-quetta-school-firing>

