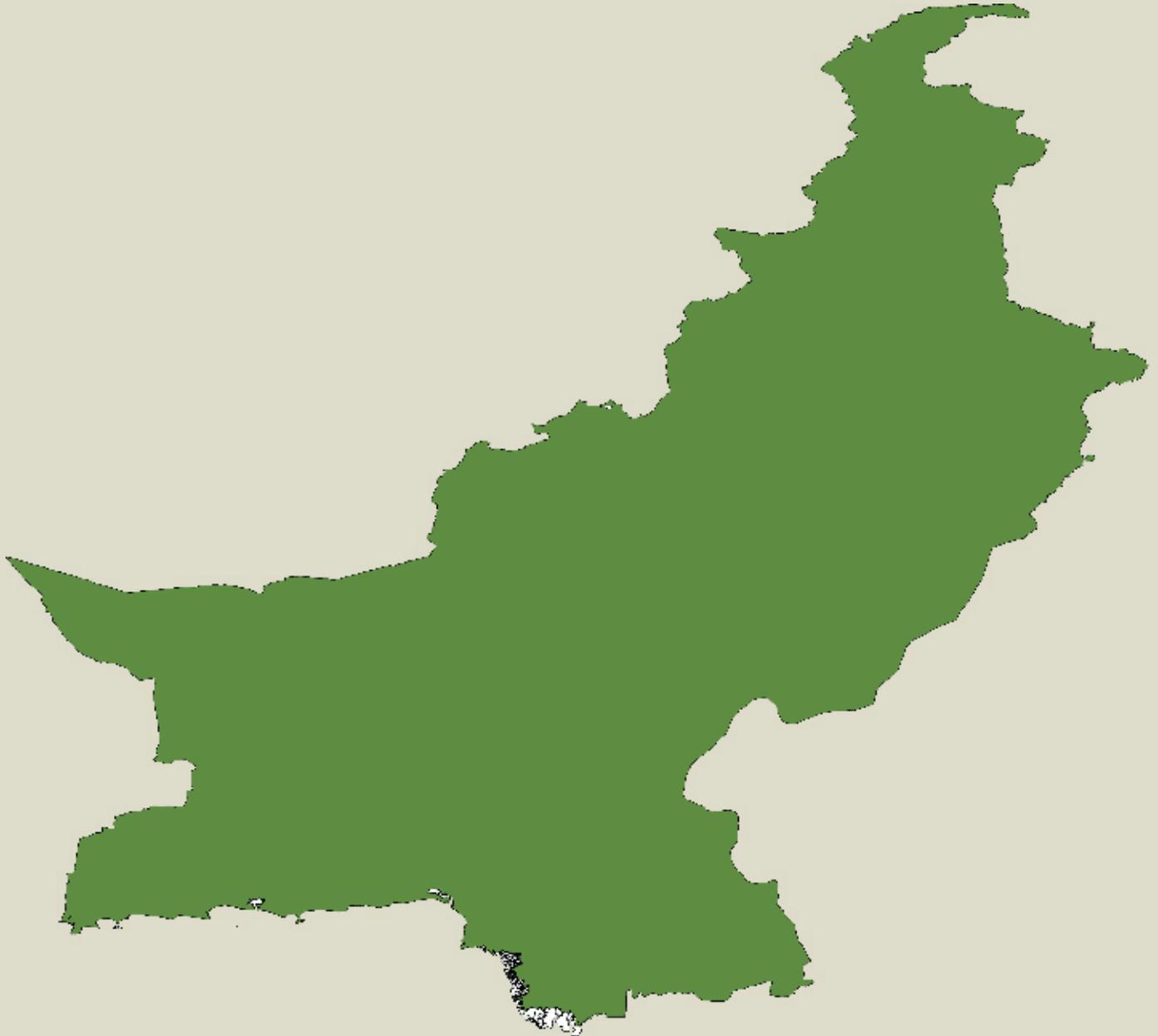


DECEMBER 2017

PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST

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



Prepared by
Dr. Zainab Akhter
Nazir Ahmad Mir
Dr. Mohammad Eisa
Dr. Ashok Behuria

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INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE
STUDIES & ANALYSES
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PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST, December 2017

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Editorial

In yet another blow to the ruling government, the 'resignation' of five PML-N lawmakers spurred speculation about an imminent breakup of the ruling party. Interestingly these ministers handed their resignation to their spiritual leader, or *pir*, who has been leading the campaign against Punjab Law Minister Rana Sanaullah over his comments about a minority community. It shows the role of religious elements in politics and also indicates towards the growing threat to the ruling government.

A gruesome attack on the minorities took place this month; nine people lost their lives and thirty were injured in a suicide attack on the Bethel Memorial Methodist Church, Quetta claimed later by the Islamic State (IS). There were 400 worshipers inside the church during the time of the attack. It has to be noted that the church is located in the city's high-security zone and has been the target of a terrorist attack in the past. Balochistan has remained a hotbed of the terrorist attacks and according to the South Asia Terrorism Portal, in all a total of 242 have been killed in attacks in Balochistan in 2017. Sectarian groups such as the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, a faction of which has worked with ISIL in the past, are among those behind attacks, added the report.

The northern areas of Pakistan saw a massive anti-government protest against the tax adaptation act of 2012 towards the end of the month. The people of GB demanded that the legal status of the region is disputed and therefore there cannot be taxation without proper representation of the region in the Constitution of Pakistan. The weeklong protest was marked with a complete shutter down towards the end and a massive call of *Gilgit Chalo* witnessed thousands of people from various districts marching towards Gilgit to register their protest. The anti-tax movement came as a serious blow to the PML-N supported government in GB which later have to give to the wishes of the people and promised to revise the act.

A major breakthrough on FATA-KP merger came this month when the high powered National Implementation Committee (NIC) on Fata Reforms endorsed the merger plans. The committee also decided to do away with the controversial sections of the Frontier Crimes Regulations and allow the colonial-era regulation to continue as a supplementary dispute and conflict resolution mechanism with a sunset clause to repeal it in its entirety once a proper judicial system was in place in the tribal region. According to reports in media Maulana Fazlur Rehman has conditionally agreed to support the proposal. It has to be noted that he was a strong opponent of the merger and an important ally of the ruling PML-N government.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mention of Pakistan and its alleged role influencing the Gujarat elections was widely debated both in print and broadcast media in Pakistan. It was reported in most of the English dailies that the tough competition by the opposing party, in this case Congress in Gujarat, left no option for Modi and therefore he came down to his favorite Pakistan bashing which they referred to as *Modi's fail-proof mascot*. Most of the media-outlets tried to give it a religious angle by digging Modi's past and his role in the Godhra riots painting him as right wing Hindutva figure promoting anti Muslim sentiments for political gains. The victory of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for a fifth straight term in Gujarat was put across the media in Pakistan as a result of the last-minute targeting of Pakistan.

Dr. Zainab Akhter

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Khawaja Asif hints at foreign policy shift from US towards China, Russia, Naveed Siddiqui, *Dawn*, 05 December¹

¹<https://www.dawn.com/news/1374715/khawaja-asif-hints-at-foreign-policy-shift-from-us-towards-china-russia>

Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif indicated that Pakistan's foreign policy has for long remained US-centric; however, the time had come to review the policy and shift its focus towards Russia and China. The foreign minister highlighted the possibility of a policy shift and said revisiting the Islamabad's policy was the need of the hour. The minister hinted at an inclination towards the left block of the world, saying *"China lives next to us and we have a common wall. Russia can also be our good friend."*

Our largest minority, Editorial, Dawn, 07 December²

Delayed, then rushed, the 2017 census was bound to betray some statistical anomalies, but perhaps the most glaring discrepancy is that of the disabled population at 0.48pc of the total population. According to a recent report, a survey conducted along international standards in Attock district in 2015 found that 15.5pc of the population had a disability. *That the census exercise was an opportunity missed is a huge understatement.* The truth is, people with disabilities are likely our largest and most inclusive social group — all ages, genders, ethnicities, religions and socioeconomic levels are represented; and anyone can join this group at any time; at birth, or through injury, illness or old age. It stands to reason then that any government that claims to be people-centric must factor in disability as a major development priority.

Army chief calls for widening scope of madressah education, Saleem Shahid, Dawn, 08 December³

The army chief said more religious seminaries were established in Balochistan compared to modern and quality schools for local students during the past four decades. "Only religious education is being imparted to the students at all these seminaries and thus the students are left behind in the race for development." Gen Bajwa said he was recently told that 2.5 million students were being taught in madressahs. *"So what will they become: will they become Maulvis (clerics) or they will become terrorists?"* he asked, saying it was impossible to build enough mosques to employ the huge number of madressah students. The army chief said poor education was holding back the nation of 207 million people, and especially in madressahs.

Reinvigorating Pak-Iran ties, Editorial, Dawn, 11 December⁴

² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1374996/our-largest-minority>

³ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1375246/army-chief-calls-for-widening-scope-of-madressah-education>

⁴ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1375784/reinvigorating-pak-iran-ties>

Iran has repeatedly called for increasing cooperation between the two ports of Gwadar and Chabahar, as well as participating in CPEC. The remnants of the sanctions that informally linger with global banks reluctant to engage with those doing business with Iran, needs to be navigated skilfully. While Pakistan's deepening engagement with the Saudi-led military alliance that has shunned Iran complicates the picture, the leadership here can still take an independent stance by not allowing foreign powers to dictate our foreign policy agenda. Indeed, *Pakistan and Iran have much to gain through the expansion of ties, and an earnest effort in that direction is possible, provided the will is there.*

Vienna Convention doesn't apply to spy operations, Pakistan tells ICJ, Nasir Iqbal, *Dawn*, 14 December⁵

.....India had no explanation why a serving naval commander working on secondment to RAW was travelling to and from inside Pakistan in the cover of a Muslim name. In the counter-pleadings, the officer said, Pakistan had argued that Jadhav was on active duty and the only deduction that one could make was that he was a spy sent on a special mission, adding that only a state which adheres to legitimate actions with clean hands could request the world court to intervene in a matter between two countries.

Politicisation of courts, Editorial, *Dawn*, 17 December⁶

The judicialisation of politics here is an emerging reality, however, that all sides and institutions need to consider carefully. Once the judiciary is approached in a matter that is clearly justiciable and within the jurisdiction of a court, the latter cannot simply turn away petitioners because of possible political ramifications. But the superior judiciary may want to consider being more mindful of public perception and issue judgements that are well argued, firmly rooted in the law and establish good precedents.

⁵<https://www.dawn.com/news/1376534/vienna-convention-doesnt-apply-to-spy-operations-pakistan-tells-icj>

⁶ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1377111/politicisation-of-courts>

US to take unilateral steps in 'areas of divergence' with Pakistan: Pentagon, Anwar Iqbal, Dawn, 18 December⁷

In a report to Congress, which was released to the media, the Pentagon underlined the need for a joint US-Afghan platform for combating more than 20 militant groups active in the region. *The report to Congress emphasised the need for a "fundamental change" in the way Pakistan deals with the alleged terrorist safe havens on its territory.* To induce that change, the Pentagon proposed working across the US government, "using a range of tools to expand our cooperation with Pakistan in areas where our interests converge and to take unilateral steps in areas of divergence".

America's warning, Editorial, Dawn, 19 December⁸

.....the repeated attempts to pin blame on Pakistan for failures of the US and Kabul overlooks a fundamental reality: eventually, there will have to be a political settlement in Afghanistan. *Threatening Pakistan with unilateral action against militant networks that Pakistan is also expected to help bring to the negotiating table makes little sense.* While the report has also stressed the need for dialogue and cooperation with Pakistan, the mere suggestion of unilateral military action inside Pakistan by the US against militant targets is likely to be met with hostility.

Bajwa says army not destabilising civilian govt, Baqir Sajjad Syed, Dawn, 20 December⁹

In a major gesture, the army chief reportedly said that the military was ready to back political leadership's initiative for normalization of relations with arch rival India. Gen Bajwa, according to a couple of senators, said that relations with all neighbours had to be normalized and urged political leaders to try to improve relations with India. He assured that their efforts would be fully supported by the army. The general's offer was particularly significant because Indians allege that the army has been blocking peace efforts. Notwithstanding the army chief's proposal, the prospects of progress towards normalization remain dim because of Indian intransigence.

⁷<https://www.dawn.com/news/1377317/us-to-take-unilateral-steps-in-areas-of-divergence-with-pakistan-pentagon>

⁸ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1377425/americas-warning>

⁹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1377681/bajwa-says-army-not-destabilising-civilian-govt>

Pakistan 'obliged' to help US, says Trump, Anwar Iqbal, Dawn, 20 December¹⁰

US President Donald Trump, while unveiling his new national security strategy, reminded Pakistan that it's obliged to help America because it receives "massive payments" from Washington every year. "We have made clear to Pakistan that while we desire continued partnership, we must see decisive action against terrorist groups operating on their territory. The policy paper also says that *"the United States continues to face threats from transnational terrorists and militants operating from within Pakistan"*. The new strategy says that America must continue to enhance its influence overseas to protect the American people and promote their prosperity.

Trump's new foreign policy and challenges for Pakistan, Marvi Sirmed, Daily Times, 20 December¹¹

It asks Pakistan to 'intensify its counterterrorism efforts, since no partnership can survive a country's support for militants and terrorists who target a partner's own service members and officials'. It further goes on to say that the US will also 'encourage Pakistan to continue demonstrating that it is a responsible steward of its nuclear assets'. Meaning thereby, the pressure on Pakistan to deliver Taliban on the negotiating table alongside decisive action against the Haqqani Network would continue. *While reiterating the importance of India's role for economic assistance in the region, the report identifies it as a priority issue for the US to deepen strategic partnership with India and support its leadership role for security in Indian Ocean and throughout the broader region.* This is way beyond just seeking India's contribution in the development of Afghanistan, as was envisaged in the earlier South Asia Policy.

ECONOMIC ISSUES

Iran opens \$1bn project to expand Chabahar port, Dawn, 04 December¹²

¹⁰ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1377685/pakistan-obliged-to-help-us-says-trump>

¹¹ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/163262/trumps-new-foreign-policy-challenges-pakistan/>

¹² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1374416/iran-opens-1bn-project-to-expand-chabahar-port>

Iran inaugurated a long-awaited \$1 billion project to expand its southeastern Chabahar port which Tehran hopes would help the country become a key transit route to Afghanistan and Central Asia, competing with Gwadar port. President Hassan Rouhani inaugurated the expansion, carried out with an investment of \$1 billion, including \$235 million from India. The project has more than tripled the port's capacity to 8.5 million tons a year. India has committed \$500m to the Gulf of Oman port, which is Iran's closest to the Indian Ocean and would allow it to bypass Pakistan. But New Delhi has proceeded cautiously at a time when Washington has taken an aggressive approach towards Tehran.

Fiscal stress, Editorial, *Dawn*, 05 December¹³

Current expenditures are actually budgeted to fall by Rs141bn from last year, an expectation that strains the imagination considering every other year current expenditures have always blown past the budgetary allocation. The inordinately heavy emphasis on development spending, particularly on pet projects, is likely to feel the strain as this revenue picture carries forward. And that strain is likely to land up in growing public debt. So the fiscal framework is already coming under stress, something that is currently being addressed through window dressing. In fact, signs are mounting that the government will live up to the fears expressed prior to the budget — that election-related priorities would eat away all the gains on the fiscal front since 2013.

Three CPEC projects hit snags as China mulls new financing rules, Syed Irfan Raza, *Dawn*, 05 December¹⁴

The decision could affect over Rs1 trillion road projects of the National Highway Authority (NHA). It was not clear how wide the impact of the delay will be, but initial reports confirm that at least three road projects are going to experience a delay. The projects to be affected include the 210-km Dera Ismail Khan-Zhob Road, at an estimated cost of Rs81 billion. Of this, Rs66bn will be spent on construction of road and Rs15bn on land acquisition. Also the Rs19.76bn 110-km Khuzdar-Basima Road has also been affected. The Rs8.5bn 136-km remaining portion of Karakoram Highway (KKH) from Raikot to Thakot is also impacted. All three projects were originally part of the government's own development programme, but in December 2016, the spokesman of the NHA announced that they are to be included under the CPEC umbrella to become eligible for concessionary finance from China.

¹³ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1374578/fiscal-stress>

¹⁴ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1374532/three-cpec-projects-hit-snags-as-china-mulls-new-financing-rules>

Three CPEC projects hit snags as China mulls new financing rules, Syed Irfan Raza, Dawn, 05 December¹⁵

China has temporarily stopped funding of some projects particularly those related to the road network under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) till further decision regarding 'new guidelines' to be issued from Beijing, a senior government official told. The decision could affect over Rs1 trillion road projects of the National Highway Authority (NHA). It was not clear how wide the impact of the delay will be, but initial reports confirm that at least three road projects are going to experience a delay. The projects to be affected include the 210-km Dera Ismail Khan-Zhob Road, at an estimated cost of Rs81 billion. Of this, Rs66bn will be spent on construction of road and Rs15bn on land acquisition. Also the Rs19.76bn 110-km Khuzdar-Basima Road has also been affected. The Rs8.5bn 136-km remaining portion of Karakoram Highway (KKH) from Raikot to Thakot is also impacted.

CPEC's difficulties, Editorial, Dawn, 06 December¹⁶

According to the report, the Chinese have developed new rules for approving financing for CPEC projects, and each of the latter will have to be resubmitted through the new procedures before financing can be arranged. All of these might prove to be temporary difficulties, and the projects mentioned (except for the Diamer-Bhasha dam which appears to have been scrapped), could be back on track within months. Or this could be the moment when CPEC is changing gears, entering a new phase of its construction beyond the 'early harvest' power projects, and the enterprise is growing beyond the ability of the government to effectively manage. As CPEC grows, its implementation becomes more complex and unwieldy given the small number of people involved in drafting the Pakistani position in the talks.

Chabahar and the region's future, Editorial, Daily Times, 12 December¹⁷

Some analysts had feared Pak-Iran ties would be affected in the wake of Pakistan's participation in the Saudi-led military alliance 'against terror', but Pakistani officials have reportedly assured Iran that the country would not become a part of any venture that singles out the western neighbour. Perhaps

¹⁵<https://www.dawn.com/news/1374532/three-cpec-projects-hit-snags-as-china-mulls-new-financing-rules>

¹⁶ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1374725/cpecs-difficulties>

¹⁷ [HTTPS://DAILYTIMES.COM.PK/157277/CHABAHAR-REGIONS-FUTURE/](https://dailytimes.com.pk/157277/chabahar-regions-future/)

that is why Iranian government also felt the need to make it clear that the country is not up to something that would affect Pak-Iran ties. This move was important because hype was created by hawkish elements in Indian media about Iran singling out Pakistan. *But Pakistan's participation in the ceremony indicates that both countries hold no grudges against each other.* Iran's positive gesture in this regard should be duly welcomed by Pakistan and we should refrain from becoming a part of any regional plan to isolate Iran.

In CPEC talks, Chinese drive a hard bargain with Pakistan, Khaleeq Kiani, Dawn, 13 December¹⁸

Pakistan appeared to have been pushed hard by the Chinese side to give in more than it secured in return during the recently held 7th joint cooperation committee (JCC) meeting of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). This is evident from the minutes of the 7th meeting on a series of issues including revision in the completion deadlines of the energy projects, the Main Line-1 project and early activation of revolving fund in 30 days for payments to Chinese sponsors. The JCC agreed that Pakistan's agencies in power sector and Chinese project sponsors should sign the supplemental agreements at the earliest and decided that "Pakistani side will address timely payment of electricity charge in power projects under CPEC as soon as possible".

Trump signs bill that includes \$700m reimbursement for Pakistan, Anwar Iqbal, Dawn, 14 December¹⁹

US President Donald Trump has signed into law a \$700 billion defence bill that includes up to \$700 million to reimburse Pakistan for supporting US military operations in Afghanistan. President Trump put his signature on this sweeping defence policy bill, which also authorizes additional spending on missile defence programmes to counter North Korea's growing nuclear weapons threat. But half of this amount has been withheld and can only be released if the US secretary of defence certifies that Pakistan is taking demonstrable steps for curbing the Haqqani network. This was the first indication that the United States could show leniency in Pakistan's disputes with India if Islamabad agrees to help it out in Afghanistan.

¹⁸<https://www.dawn.com/news/1376231/in-cpec-talks-chinese-drive-a-hard-bargain-with-pakistan>

¹⁹<https://www.dawn.com/news/1376517/trump-signs-bill-that-includes-700m-reimbursement-for-pakistan>

Taxing Gilgit-Baltistan: Part – II, Amir Hussain, Pamir Times, 15 December²⁰

There are political and economic matters that go beyond the capacity of the local government. It would be naïve to expect too much from the GB government without ensuring inter-institutional accountability. These institutions must also be held accountable in the political, financial and legal matters of GB. *It seems as though the geostrategic importance of GB is the most determining factor of the plight of its people. The people of Gilgit-Baltistan have been victims of a stringent and myopic national security policy that tends to exclude people from the national arena.* There is an 'accumulated anger' of being excluded for seven decades from political and economic development because of an indifferent national security policy. What we have witnessed in Balochistan due to misplaced policy priorities is a lesson that our policymakers must learn before it's too late to manage the impending conflicts in GB

Rising external debt, Editorial, Dawn, 18 December²¹

External debt of the country increased by \$10bn in the first quarter of this fiscal year compared to the first quarter last year. And this does not include the \$2.5bn in the bonds floated recently. The bulk of this increase has come since March this year, and given the recent flotation of bonds in the global markets, the figure is set to accelerate in the coming months. As part of this story of increasing external debts, there is an accompanying growth of external debt-service payments. The rising external debt is the other side of the growth story that the government constantly reminds us of. *Pakistan's GDP growth rates have indeed begun to tick upward since 2013, but the pace of accumulation of external debt implies that in substantial measure, these upticks have been earned through borrowed money.*

What it means to use yuan in trade with China, Mohiuddin Aazim, Dawn, 25 December²²

It has finally been officially confirmed that Pakistan is considering using the Chinese currency for bilateral trade. This means Pakistani and Chinese banks will, in the course of time, be able to open import letters of credit in rupees and yuan (also known as renminbi, or RMB). Moreover, Pakistan will be able

²⁰ <https://pamirtimes.net/2017/12/15/taxing-gilgit-baltistan-part-ii/>

²¹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1377232/rising-external-debt>

²² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1378744/what-it-means-to-use-yuan-in-trade-with-china>

to pay for imports from China in yuan rather than in dollars, and Chinese companies investing in CPEC projects will bring in yuan-denominated funds here and remit back their profits and dividends also in yuan instead of dollars or other foreign currencies. *There is a growing trend towards promoting the use of local currencies to settle transactions between two or more countries, as countries seem eager to reduce their overdependence on the US dollar.*

SECURITY SITUATION

Dangerous liaisons, Shahzeb Jillani, *The Friday Times*, 01 December²³

The security operation, carried out half-heartedly, without a clear chain of command and a contingency plan was hence doomed for failure before it had begun. *Khadim Rizvi calls himself an Allama and Shaikh al-Hadith (scholar and expert), he is obviously anything but. The man plays on the hate-filled religious sentiment.* He idealizes Mumtaz Qadri, the police bodyguard, who shot dead Punjab Governor Salmaan Taseer and openly incites violence against anyone who begs to differ with him. He is on record spewing venom against Hindus, Christians, Jews, Ahmadis, Deobandis, Shias and pretty much everyone who does not subscribe to his version of violent and extremist theology.

Are we really serious about tackling terrorism? Editorial, *Daily Times*, 03 December²⁴

The Peshawar attack took place exactly a week after a senior police leader Ashraf Noor was assassinated in the same city. We need to stop relying on military operations alone to deal with this problem and take up a more comprehensive approach to tackle the menace of extremism and terrorism. It is high time that those at the helm remember the existence of the seemingly defunct National Action Plan (NAP). If it wasn't in bad shape already, it was completely torn apart in the conclusion of the Faizabad fiasco when the government capitulated to extremists who staged an illegal dharna, openly utilised rhetoric containing hate-speech and glorified the murderer Mumtaz

²³ <http://www.thefridaytimes.com/tft/dangerous-liaisons/>

²⁴ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/151338/really-serious-tackling-terrorism/>

Qadri. That it happened under the watch of an elected cabinet and was brokered by the military says it all.

Rise of Barelvi activism, Muhammad Amir Rana, *Dawn*, 03 December²⁵

Although seen as a majority sect in the country, the sermons of Barelvi clerics and scholars often impart a sense of victimhood at the hands of rival sects, mainly Deobandis. This perceived sense of victimhood was in particular sharpened after the hanging of Mumtaz Qadri, the killer of Punjab governor Salmaan Taseer. Many Barelvi organisations used Qadri's death and other blasphemy-related issues to try and gain glory as well as political relevance. But the TLYRA achieved what others could only dream of, and some political analysts are already projecting it as potential threat for mainstream right-wing political parties, mainly the PML-N, in the upcoming elections.

Who is Khadim Hussain Rizvi? Kalbe Ali, *Dawn*, 03 December²⁶

Before November, only a few people had paid attention to the wheelchair-bound cleric with a flowing white beard. His newly registered political party, Tehreek-i-Labbaik Ya Rasool Allah (TLYRA), had certainly drawn the interest of political analysts and journalists after its unexpectedly strong showing in recent by-elections, but by and large, Maulana Khadim Hussain Rizvi remained a marginal figure in the public consciousness. Indeed, the rise of Barelvi politics could be a double-edged sword for society if mishandled by the power brokers. Any induction of extremist doctrines and violent groups among them could lead to an additional layer of sectarian-based discord in society.

Terrorists must be denied space, Editorial, *Daily Times*, 11 December²⁷

The security warning issued by the Chinese embassy in Islamabad of to its nationals residing in Pakistan should serve to remind us that this country's fight against militant outfits is far from over. This will require that we immediately give up on the questionable mainstreaming policy, and ensure that no extremist group is given a chance to take their violent agenda to the domain of electoral politics. For militant groups that operate at a regional and a global level, we will necessarily need to work with different states in the region and at the international level. For instance, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) are

²⁵ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1374276/rise-of-barelvi-activism>

²⁶ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1374182/who-is-khadim-hussain-rizvi>

²⁷ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/156627/terrorists-must-denied-space/>

militant Islamist groups based in Central Asia, though their networks extend to the north-western Chinese province of Xinjiang.

China's security alert, Editorial, *Dawn*, 11 December²⁸

Ultimately, while Pakistan has made important strides towards securing investment zones and sites with significant foreign nationals present, there has to be recognition of underlying perils. While China is evasive about militant threats to its territory and people, Pakistan need not be so. Pakistan's long fight against militancy will ebb and flow, and the closer the strategic relationship with China become, the more likely there will be threats to both China and Pakistan. But the Pakistani response cannot and should not be country specific. For many years, the state has been unnecessarily and undesirably suspicious of foreign nationals in this country. Until CPEC materialized, there were many other countries that either had or were interested in significant investments in Pakistan. There appears to be the possibility of fresh investments by a range of countries in Pakistan today

Terror wave in KP, Editorial, *Daily Times*, 12 December²⁹

There have been several terror attacks in Peshawar and Quetta in the past few months. The loopholes in the performance of the relevant departments have been pointed out several times with little impact. The recent terror attacks show that there is lack of proper coordination between investigative and intelligence agencies. Yet it appears that no steps are being taken to improve the process of intelligence sharing which is a crucial element in stopping the possibility of terror attacks. It should be investigated as to what is causing consistent intelligence failures and security lapses. Heads need to roll. Also problematic is the government's utter failure to implement National Action Plan (NAP). If the sympathizers of terror continue to operate with impunity, the militants will eventually get a chance to reorganize themselves and it would end up compromising the gains made in anti-terror operations.

Pakistan could lose territory to terrorists: US, Anwar Iqbal, *Dawn*, 15 December³⁰

²⁸ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1375783/chinas-security-alert>

²⁹ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/157287/terror-wave-kp/>

³⁰ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1376718/pakistan-could-lose-territory-to-terrorists-us>

Shifting between soft persuasions and tough advice, the United States is now saying that Pakistan could lose control of its territory if it does not sever ties with the Haqqanis and other terrorists. The warning followed a Pentagon statement, which said the new US strategy for Afghanistan had “fundamentally changed the battlefield in favour of Afghan national security forces” and the Taliban militants were now on the retreat. And this change happened because the new strategy made it clear that US forces would stay in Afghanistan for as long as it took to stabilize the country and also because it gave American troops more power to confront the enemy, the Pentagon added. The top US diplomat assured Pakistan that Washington wanted to work with Islamabad to “stamp out terrorism within their boundaries”, but Pakistan had to “begin the process” by changing its relationship with the Haqqani network and with others.

Right-wing divided, Aasim Sajjad Akhtar, Dawn, 15 December³¹

Previously, left-wing revolutionaries were alive to internal contradictions in the structure of power, and would pounce at the moment when these contradictions were at their sharpest. Today’s progressives must remember that even though the right is very powerful in today’s Pakistan, it is also hopelessly divided as are state functionaries that have always used religion as a weapon to defang the left at home, and undermine its ‘enemies’ outside the country. In part the notion that the state and religious right are omnipotent is one that progressives themselves tend to reinforce via unending narratives circulating in society. Certainly the fear factor of the establishment and religious right is indisputable, especially given that there is almost no recourse to the killings, disappearances and other forms of violence that are visited upon progressive activists. *Exposing the myth of right-wing unity is the first step towards building a progressive alternative and such an alternative might even garner the support of many within the complex animal that is the Pakistani state.*

Mainstreaming jihad: why now?, Pervez Hoodbhoy, Dawn, 16 December³²

For three decades Pakistan’s military establishment has stoutly denied supporting violent religious groups irrespective of whether a group’s target lay across national borders or, instead, its goal was to achieve specific political objectives within Pakistan. But today the military’s attitude is more ambivalent. Both serving and retired senior army officers are now openly expressing support for some groups. These include the newly emerged religious parties opposed to the PML-N government, notably Hafiz Saeed’s

³¹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1376620/right-wing-divided>

³² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1376805/mainstreaming-jihad-why-now>

Milli Muslim League (MML) and Khadim Hussain Rizvi's Tehreek Labbaik Ya Rasool Allah (TLYRA). Religious groups have already made their debut on the national scene and their initial successes — as in the NA-120 by-elections — are considerable. Militant groups operating against Indian rule in Kashmir have always been looked favorably upon by the security establishment — this fact has never been in question.

The menace of half-baked mullahs, M Ziauddin, *Daily Times*, 16 December³³

A group of misguided obscurantists in Pakistan seem to have assigned themselves, without any official sanction, the 'sacred' duty of going out looking for the needle in haystack and naming even the most unlikely of them all as the culprit and issuing the requisite fatwa against him or her seemingly only for their own personal glory, not for the glory of Islam. Most of the bad Taliban were the product of a misguided policy that our establishment had followed as it used them as our foreign and defence policy instruments. The bad Taliban became worse when they were forcibly stopped from enforcing their distorted version of Islam on the people of Pakistan. The occasional incursions of the TTP terrorists into Pakistan and their cowardly ambushes against our check-posts and border installations indicate that they are getting the required help from Afghanistan. *In order to fix this problem we first need to neutralize those forces in Afghanistan who are patronizing the TTP.*

Church tragedy in Quetta, Editorial, *Dawn*, 18 December³⁴

While the roots of terrorism in Balochistan are undeniably complex, there has been a tendency to try and separate it from militant violence elsewhere in the country. Certainly, a low-level nationalist insurgency and an unstable border with two neighbouring countries put Balochistan's security challenges in a different perspective, but terrorist attacks such as against a church in Quetta cannot be separated from the national militant threat. From Fata to Karachi, Peshawar to Quetta and Rawalpindi to Lahore, there may be different militant networks active, but they are often part of the same spectrum. The interconnected fight against militancy and extremism also plays its part, with militant networks acquiring the knowledge to attack in new parts of the country by tapping into local extremist networks. Arguably, an ad hoc,

³³ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/160504/menace-half-baked-mullahs/>

³⁴ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1377233/church-tragedy-in-quetta>

piecemeal approach by the state allows militant groups to regenerate or evolve.

No room for extremists in electoral politics, Editorial, *Daily Times*, 24 December³⁵

The United States is reportedly planning to add Jamaatud Dawa (JuD) chief Hafiz Saeed's newly-formed political party and some other Pakistan-based groups to a list of organisations that 'use terrorism to promote their agenda'. It was reported by Indian media this week that the Trump administration has accepted India's request to label more Pakistani militant groups as globally designated terrorists. Pakistan has been raising concerns about the influence of Indian lobby in Washington, but it is about time we realised that by giving political space to extremist elements, we are only vindicating India's stance which would help get the latter diplomatically closer to the US. It is a known fact that Milli Muslim League is another name for the banned JuD, yet it continues to operate with impunity. The country's civil and military leadership needs to act against all extremist groups regardless of their sectarian identities. They don't have to do this to satisfy any external actor, but for the country's own stability and security.

Civilian control of the military, Raashid Wali Janjua, *Daily Times*, 25 December³⁶

.....Conversely, it can be argued that if the military refuses to cede space to the elected representatives in matters of national defense, foreign policy, and national security the civilians can hardly provide any direction. Our national security decision making process is heavily militarized due to the reasons mentioned above. An example is the National Command Authority where the civilian presence and expertise is far less visible than the military component. Resultantly, the military's viewpoint is the only view point that prevails on such fora. Same is the case with the threat perception and the determination of the response in conventional sphere. The threats determine the response and the economic capacity determines the value of the response.

2017: Instability, manufactured crises and surrender, Raza Rumi, *Daily Times*, 31 December³⁷

³⁵ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/165825/no-room-extremists-electoral-politics/>

³⁶ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/166426/civilian-control-military/>

³⁷ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/170840/2017-instability-manufactured-crises-surrender/>

The most worrying developments of 2017 were related to a reversal on the state's commitment to fight extremism. An ugly display of extremism on the streets of Islamabad for three weeks made a mockery of the so-called National Action Plan (NAP) against terrorism. The year 2017 will be remembered for the de facto burial of NAP. As if establishment's patronage to Barelvi groups was not enough, the 'good' jihadists were successfully inducted into electoral politics. Without disarming violent groups, their mainstreaming is suicidal; and yet this seems to be the future course.

PROVINCES & REGIONS

FATA

Another setback to FATA merger, Editorial, *Daily Times*, 14 December³⁸

The united opposition had boycotted the National Assembly session and announced that it would not attend the proceedings until the bill was tabled in the Parliament. Then, the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) threatened to stage a sit-in at the Faizabad interchange if the process for FATA merger is not kicked off by December 31. Alongside the mainstream opposition parties, a newly-formed FATA youth jirga has also been raising its voice on the issue, demanding expedited efforts for the merger of the region with the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province. Unlike mainstream parties, however, the jirga members have rightly protested the failure of the authorities concerned to take into account the views of women and other marginalized communities of the region. These are legitimate concerns and must be addressed as the merger process gets underway. Addressing these concerns will entail ensuring wide-ranging consultations with FATA's civil society and political actors.

Delaying Fata reforms, Editorial, *Dawn*, 13 December³⁹

It now appears that the resistance to Fata reforms has outlasted Mr Sharif's period in office and continued into Mr. Abbasi's tenure, further undermining the current prime minister's standing. The opposition in the National Assembly was rightly aggrieved, creating the rather strange spectacle of

³⁸<https://dailytimes.com.pk/158861/another-setback-fata-merger/>

³⁹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1376185/delaying-fata-reforms>

opposition parties vociferously supporting a government bill that the government itself is reluctant to support. The danger is that with a general election looming, the PML-N may sacrifice Fata reforms altogether to appease political allies in what is expected to be a fiercely competitive poll climate. There is no credible alternative that those opposing Fata reforms have presented. Indeed, the opposition is mostly behind closed doors with few politicians willing to speak publicly and frankly about their reservations. The Fata reforms package has already been somewhat diluted by the decision to promote a so-called mainstreaming of the region before considering the issue of a merger with KP. Narrow political interests and myopia should not be allowed to derail Fata reforms.

Historic decision on Fata-KP merger taken, Ismail Khan, *Dawn*, 26 December⁴⁰

The high-powered National Implementation Committee (NIC) on Fata Reforms has endorsed the merger of tribal regions with north-western Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and agreed that Islamabad would make a policy statement in this regard, two senior figures involved in the deliberations. The meeting which took the landmark decisions on Dec 18, but did not make them public, also decided to do away with the controversial sections of the Frontier Crimes Regulations and allow the colonial-era regulation to continue as a supplementary dispute and conflict resolution mechanism with a sunset clause to repeal it in its entirety once a proper judicial system was in place in the tribal region. Those familiar with the deliberations say that any development on the merger plan and giving Fata representation in the KP Assembly in 2018 is directly linked with getting the JUI-F chief to agree to the Fata Reforms Bill. The bill seeks to extend the jurisdiction of the Peshawar High Court (PHC) and the Supreme Court of Pakistan to the tribal regions. "This is directly linked with the other two issues", one senior figure said.

GB

Challenges for CPEC in G-B, Masud Ahmed Khan, *Pamir Times*, 12 December⁴¹

There are several threats and challenges to CPEC in G-B which cannot be ignored. Firstly, India will not miss an opportunity to damage CPEC as the

⁴⁰ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1378852/historic-decision-on-fata-kp-merger-taken>

⁴¹ <https://pamirtimes.net/2017/12/12/challenges-for-cpec-in-g-b/>

country has a so-called claim on G-B and opposes the project terming it to be passing through a disputed territory. Recently, a member of Indian Lok Sabha moved a bill for allotting reserved seats for G-B in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. The IOK assembly already has 24 reserved seats for G-B. *India is trying its level best to exploit the vulnerabilities of G-B to damage CPEC, as it also wants to keep hegemony in South Asia and hence, does not want to see a stable and developed Pakistan.* Secondly, G-B's geographical proximity with Afghanistan through Wakhan signifies the importance of CPEC. But this strip can be used as a launching pad for terrorist activities by hostile elements by using the passes of Hindukush and Pamir. The possibility of terrorist activities in G-B cannot be ruled out.

Thousands march towards Gilgit against taxes, Pamir Times, 27 December⁴²

Thousands of people from the four districts of Baltistan region left for Gilgit on Tuesday to participate in the protest against the imposition of taxes under Gilgit-Baltistan Adaptation Act 2012. The shutter down strikes and protests by traders, political and civil society activists entered seventh day despite below minus 5 temperature in most parts of Gilgit-Baltistan. In Baltistan, the protesters from Shigar, Karmang, Ghanche and Skardu districts gathered at Yadgar-e-Shuhada Skardu before starting the long march towards Gilgit. Addressing a huge gathering, the president of Anjuman-e-Tajran Ghulam Hussain Athar said that the protest will continue till the government quashes all taxes illegally imposed in Gilgit-Baltistan

Gilgit-Baltistan protests, Editorial, Dawn, 29 December⁴³

The local administration agreed to withdraw the GB Adaptation Act of 2012, under which the taxes in question had been imposed, and the federal government must ensure this agreement is not violated. Before considering the imposition of any taxes in the region, including those that have an incidental effect on the residents of GB such as the withholding tax on bank transactions by non-filers (GB residents are not in the jurisdiction of the FBR and cannot file returns with the federal tax authority), the federal government must first resolve the constitutional status of the region. Until that is done, no attempts should be made to make the residents of the area share any part of the burden of federal expenditure in the region.

An extortionist state, Faisal Bari, Dawn, 29 December⁴⁴

⁴² <https://pamirtimes.net/2017/12/27/thousands-march-towards-gilgit-against-taxes/>

⁴³ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1379381/gilgit-baltistan-protests>

The taxation system in the country is extremely unfair, biased, extortionist, inefficient and corrupt. Those who are in the tax net are fleeced while many who should be in the net are not there (bias and unfairness). The state has failed miserably in both extending the tax net and in being able to reduce underreporting of those who do file returns. And it is not simply due to lack of data that the tax authorities have been unable to extend the net or catch underreporting. The main reasons seem to be embedded in the political economy of the structures we have created.

Kashmir

No magic wand for Mr Sharma, Shujaat Bukhari, *The Friday Times*, 29 December⁴⁵

Even though militancy is a reality, its political causes cannot be ignored. Continuous denial of this reality has made it all the more interesting for the educated young Kashmiri. But Sharma's appointment, irrespective of whatever the result, is an admission of the fact on the part of Delhi that hard power alone cannot work. Many believe that Islamabad holds key to any decision the Hurriyat leaders take. Though not verified, on the face of it, there is hardly any doubt about Pakistan playing a role in Kashmir. It is a fact that Delhi has maturely approached Jammu and Kashmir's political problem but the challenge for the Hurriyat is to also decide how they fit themselves in. Why does Sharma not get a warm response even from those who strongly believe in the process of dialogue? There is a history to this. Right from 1947, New Delhi has appointed pointmen and made promises but only to break them in the end. This long path of broken promises and betrayals have disillusioned the people.

RELATIONSHIP WITH INDIA

The playing fields, F.S. Aijazuddin, *Dawn*, 14 December⁴⁶

To Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Pakistan is the equivalent of President Donald Trump's numerous demons North Korea, Iran, Syria, Afghanistan, Cuba, Mexico, and the Democrat party all rolled into one. Trump may be

⁴⁴ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1379380/an-extortionist-state>

⁴⁵ <http://www.thefridaytimes.com/tft/no-magic-wand-for-mr-sharma/>

⁴⁶ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1376418/the-playing-fields>

afflicted by many headaches; Modi has only one migraine called Pakistan. He has tried numerous remedies, from bombastic rhetoric to boastful retaliation. He's now veering towards a more potent prescription. Once again, this time in the Gujarat state elections, the dog-eared Pakistani card is being played to reincarnate Indian nationalism. It was not so long ago, during the Assam state elections, that Assamese were warned of a threat from Pakistan, a distant enemy located over 2,000 kilometres away. Now it's western Gujarat's turn to be similarly intimidated.

The Pakistan phobia in India, Javaid Iqbal Bhat, *Daily Times*, 15 December⁴⁷

The response from the former PM is what the critic's term as 'hard', but it reveals the level of prejudice towards Pakistan in India. When the current and the former PM invoke Pakistan to settle scores, what comes out is the normalization of hate and prejudice against Pakistan in India. Both mark their purity by their distance from the neighbouring country. Both use harsh language to show the depth of their disgust with that country to come out clean on each other's allegations. All this is the result of desperation produced by the urge to win an election. To win an election, the extent to which one can go is unlimited. The opposition in mimicking the behaviour of the ruling regime, and it not confined only to the invocation of Pakistan. A principled stand on secularism is off the page and the opposition is trying to act 'more' than what the ruling regime does. With his passion to be a 'Hindu' growing it shouldn't be a surprise if Modi reduces the number of visits to temples and invokes another pet animal of Pakistan. The former PM in his response has not disappointed by charging with an extra bit of effort at the neighbouring country.

Pakistan ploy works for Modi as BJP wins Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh, Jawed Naqvi, *Dawn*, 19 December⁴⁸

Bharatiya Janata Party won a fifth straight term in Gujarat, a victory that was at least partly spurred by the last-minute targeting of Pakistan, Mr. Modi's fail-proof mascot. Amid reports that Rahul Gandhi's charm offensive was wooing large crowds, Mr. Modi responded by accusing former prime minister Manmohan Singh and former army chief Deepak Kapoor together with a clutch of former high commissioners to Pakistan of plotting with Pakistan to defeat the BJP in Gujarat. The opportunity came when foreign minister

⁴⁷ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/159704/pakistan-phobia-india/>

⁴⁸ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1377444/pakistan-ploy-works-for-modi-as-bjp-wins-gujarat-and-himachal-pradesh>

Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri arrived in Delhi to attend the wedding of a scion of the royal family of Rampur and Loharu, with whom he has family ties.

Kulbhushan Jadhav's espionage expedition, M Ali Baloch, Daily Times, 19 December⁴⁹

Individuals of highest calibre with ability to maintain both overt and covert composure are considered fit for this adventurous craftsmanship. And the spy has to ensure adherence to clandestine discipline. Kulbhushan Sudhir Jadhav's selection to undertake this mission must have undergone rigorous procedural discipline before subsequent approval of the relevant bosses in Research and Analysis Wing (RAW). Despite his capabilities, deftness and dexterity, Kulbhushan landed in a minefield as the security apparatus of Pakistan caught him red-handed, a robust deed reflective of Pakistan's counter espionage vigilance mechanism far superior to that what Jadhav and his masters thought of. Detention proved his delusive plans to escape hunt as poor. He is a 'commander' rank serving officer in Indian navy as per his own statement. Indian passport bearing his assumed name Hussein Mubarak Patel – a fictitious activity to conceal his original identity, has been recovered from his possession. It is not unusual practice in espionage discipline to carry different identities suiting to spy's overt and covert engagements. In his confessional statements released to media, he disclosed his clandestine mission of espionage leading to sabotage activity in restive province of Balochistan, Karachi and elsewhere in Pakistan.

STATISTICS

BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES

(Select incidents culled out from the Pakistan media)

Place	Date	Description	Killed	Injured
Karachi				
Azizabad ⁵⁰	11/08/2017	DSP traffic, police constable shot dead in Karachi's Azizabad	02	0
Karachi ⁵¹	22/08/2017	Militant group kills three to 'avenge besmirching' of	03	0

⁴⁹ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/162576/kulbhushan-jadhavs-espionage-expedition/>

⁵⁰ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1350943/dsp-traffic-police-constable-shot-dead-in-karachi-azizabad>

⁵¹ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1487651/militant-group-kills-three-avenge-besmirching-name/>

		its name		
FATA				
Landi Kotal ⁵²	16/08/2017	Two injured by shell fired from across Afghan border	0	02
Waziristan ⁵³	28/08/2017	Two soldiers martyred in SWA blast	02	03
Punjab				
Lahore ⁵⁴	08/08/2017	Blast on Lahore's Outfall Road leaves 46 injured	0	46
Lahore ⁵⁵	18/08/2017	Clash of PML-N and PTI workers leaves teenager Amir dead	01	02
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa				
North Waziristan ⁵⁶	12/12/2017	Second Lt, sepoy martyred as militants open fire on army vehicle in North Waziristan	02	0
Sindh				
Peshawar ⁵⁷		US drone kills three in Kurram	03	0
Quetta ⁵⁸	17/12/2017	9 killed in suicide attack on Quetta's Bethel Memorial	09	30

⁵² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1351860>

⁵³ <http://dailytimes.com.pk/pakistan/28-Aug-17/two-soldiers-martyred-in-swa-blast>

⁵⁴ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1350328>

⁵⁵ <http://dailytimes.com.pk/features/18-Aug-17/clash-between-pml-n-pti-workers-leaves-teenager-dead>

⁵⁶ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1376147/second-lt-sepoy-martyred-as-terrorists-open-fire-on-army-vehicle-in-north-waziristan>

⁵⁷ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1373973/us-drone-kills-three-in-kurram>

		Methodist Church		
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⁵⁸ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1377184>