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FORTNIGHTLY REPORT ON PAKISTAN

August 16-31, 2016

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

India-Pakistan Relations

Amid attempts by Pakistan to take advantage of the ongoing unrest in Kashmir valley, Prime Minister Modi, while delivering his Independence Day speech, underlined the fault lines in Balochistan. From the ramparts of the historic Red Fort, he not only referred to PoK but also stated that he had been receiving good wishes from the people of Balochistan. All the Baloch activists living in and out of Pakistan including the top separatists like Hyrbyair Marri, Brahmdagh Bugti, Karima Baloch welcomed Modi's statement and hailed him for mentioning Balochistan issue during his speech. These developments resulted in the deterioration of an already tensed India-Pakistan relations. Pakistan termed all those Baloch hailing Modi as "traitors" and registered FIRs against them under sections 120, 121, 123, and 353 of Pakistan Penal Code. It organized anti-India protest in PoK and Balochistan on the one hand and accused India of meddling in Pakistan's internal affairs on the other.

Reacting to it, Tareq Fatemi said that by referring to Balochistan, India crossed the "redline." Sartaj Aziz, on the other hand, repeatedly argued in each of his media interactions that Indian Prime Minister's remarks vindicated Pakistan's stance that New Delhi was involved in fomenting terrorism in the volatile Balochistan province. He also stated that it was a well thought out move of India to divert attention from the Kashmir issue. Meanwhile, OIC came up with the statement that Kashmir was not an internal issue of India and greater efforts should be made to expose India over the Human Rights violations in Kashmir. Pakistan welcomed the statement by the OIC General Secretary. The opposition parties criticised Nawaz government for not including enough members from

the opposition into the list of special envoys on Kashmir. After the criticism, the government decided to nominate more envoys, giving representation to other parties as well.

Panama Papers

The deadlock between the government and opposition over the Panama Papers probe is continuing. Neither the government, nor the opposition is ready to back down. PPP Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari emphasized that the issue must be investigated thoroughly and argued that ToRs proposed by the opposition were effective and constitutional. Imran Khan and Tahir-ul-Qadri first announced their plans to bring people into the streets to pressurize the ruling PML-N. Qadri even warned that this time the “Qisas March” in Rawalpindi would be decisive and “neck or nothing” phase against the government. Imran Khan too announced to hold the rallies on the same day. It would be interesting to see how the government responds to these rallies this time.

The Fallout of Altaf Hussain’s Speech

Altaf Hussain is known for his hard hitting speeches and the support he gets from mohajir community based in urban Sindh, especially Karachi. Recently, in a speech Altaf asked his supporters to attack ARY news office to which the supporters responded. In this clash, five people got injured and one lost his life. Other political parties and important leaders including Nawaz Sharif criticised Altaf Hussain for inciting his supporters for a violent attack. MQM’s leaders in Pakistan were taken aback with this development in which they found themselves cornered. The deputy convener Farooq Sattar and other leaders not only denounced the “anti-Pakistan” slogans and attack on media houses but also decided to distance themselves from the party chief and London leadership. This

was followed by an announcement that all the decisions from now onward would be taken in Pakistan, not London.

National Action Plan (NAP) and Khyber-III

In order to implement NAP effectively, Pakistan has decided to form a special committee and raise at least 29 wings of civil armed forces. National Security Advisor Nasir Khan Janjua would head this committee and see through the raising of the civil force. The government has been under severe criticism for quite some time over the non-implementation of many points of the NAP. Right wing elements, right since the beginning, have had problems with some of the points of the NAP. Recently, JUI-F leader Maulana Fazlur Rehman warned the Sindh provincial government to refrain from making any law that discriminates madressahs and other religious bodies. He threatened to take direct action, if the government proceeded with such laws and argued that those trying to target the Madressahs were actually serving the agenda of foreign masters.

Meanwhile, Pakistan army has launched another operation (Khyber-III) in the Khyber Agency to neutralize the militants in the mountainous terrain. The operation began with army targeting the tough terrain of Rajgal with the aim of limiting the movement of militants in the mountainous passes.
