

INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

# Pakistan

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## FORTNIGHTLY REPORT ON PAKISTAN

October 16-31, 2016

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

### **India-Pakistan**

Although the LoC and international border between India and Pakistan has never been peaceful, ceasefire violations and skirmishes have become very common these days. Hardly any day passes when we do not get the news of two militaries confronting each other. In most of the cases, it is difficult to find out which side provoked and which responded to that provocation. However, the Pakistani newspapers were full of reports of “repeated and unprovoked ceasefire violations” by India. It has become a tendency of blaming Indian armed forces for every minor and major confrontation at the LoC and international border.

Recently, the Pakistan’s foreign office spokesperson Nafees Zakaria alleged that India had so far committed close to 100 ceasefire violations. He went on to claim that Pakistan never ever violated ceasefire and it was Indian media that always propagated misinformation in this regard. The claim by the foreign office is not only highly objectionable and questionable, it is totally unfounded. How could one, knowing fully well the nature of civil-military relations in Pakistan and security establishment’s role in Pakistan’s India policy, make such claims, especially at a time when the two countries were having a tough time in their relationship.

It appears that the political dispensation in Pakistan is not ready to address India’s genuine concerns for peace and stability of the region. Instead of accommodating Indian concerns, the Pakistani leaders solely blame India for everything going wrong in this complex relationship. Sartaj Aziz recently stated that India had no moral ground to talk about counter-terrorism efforts and accused it of state sponsored terrorism and terror financing on Pakistani soil.

Senate Chairman Raza Rabbani too accused India of using the regional body (SAARC) to further its political agenda against Pakistan. Such baseless accusations would most probably work against the normalization of relationship. Amid the growing tensions between the two nuclear armed neighbours, the United States has urged the two countries to pursue dialogue to reduce tensions in the region. The deputy spokesperson of the Department of State, Mark Toner also stated that the US had been pressurizing Pakistan to take on the terrorist safe havens on their soil. Unlike earlier occasions, the US efforts, advises, and requests have so far not been able to bring the two countries at the dialogue table this time. It seems India has hardened its position on Pakistan's sponsorship of terrorism in the region and wants to see some visible changes in Pakistani approach before engaging it in a dialogue.

### **Panamagate**

The confrontation between the opposition and the government over Panama paper leaks and corruption is continuing with no end in sight. PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto has threatened the ruling PML-N with his announcement of a long march if the government fails to meet his demands by December 27. JI chief Siraj-ul-Haq accused the Pakistani rulers of looting the nation. He even argued that Nawaz Sharif had undermined the nation's ideology and deceived the people of Pakistan. PTI chief Imran Khan went a step further claiming that Nawaz Sharif will be personally responsible if "third power" (understood to be a reference to Pakistan Army) steps in as a result of his upcoming lockdown of Islamabad on November 2, 2016. Imran expects close to a million people joining his call to lockdown Islamabad. He also found an unlikely support from PPP. The known PPP leader Aitzaz Ahsan stated that although the PPP was not part of PTI's Islamabad lockdown, but it would review its decision if the government resorted to torture of political workers. Amid this political deadlock, responding to various petitions the apex court of Pakistan issued notices to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and others over the Panama Leaks case. This brings judiciary into the picture in a major way. It would be quite interesting to see the unfolding events in the coming weeks.

### **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)**

Pakistani leadership is heavily relying on the success of CPEC to transform Pakistan's economy. It is believed to be another milestone in the Pakistan-China friendship often described as higher than the highest mountains, deeper than the deepest sea, and sweeter than the sweetest honey of the world. The Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif argued that Chinese President's vision of One Belt One Road (OBOR) was the vision of peace, development and prosperity of Asia. The ruling dispensation in Islamabad is so obsessed with the project that it refuses to acknowledge the fact that the smaller provinces have some genuine issues at least the way project was being implemented. It seems that China too has decided to ignore the internal political issues in regard to CPEC projects. Chinese Ambassador Sun Weidong echoed what the federal government had been arguing—Western route was part of the multiple passages and would bring benefits to all Pakistani people. The envoy also said that China was looking forward to enhance its cooperation with Iran through CPEC.

Pakistan has been a country heavily dependent on international aid and loans to move forward. International organizations often presented a bleak picture of Pakistan's deepening economic crisis. However, recently International Monetary Fund (IMF) stated that more or less the Pakistani economy was out of crisis and was fiscally better positioned. With the same token, it also expressed concerns on some serious troubles that needed urgent attention. The international body cautioned Pakistan regarding investments under CPEC. It categorically stated that the international investments had the potential to lift the economy's potential output, but the repayment obligations might prove to be serious.

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