

Issue no. 5

October

VIF Expert Groups Reports



Edited by Aayush Mohanty



Vivekananda
International
Foundation

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Published in 2020 by

Vivekananda International Foundation

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Editor's Note

The Vivekananda International Foundation in October hosted different Expert Groups through video conferencing. Members of these groups contributed immensely by sharing knowledge gained through vast experience in their respective fields. This issue contains reports of the U.S, Pakistan, West Asia, and China Expert Groups.

The discussions ranged from U.S elections, internal strife in Pakistan, Turkey's push to become a major player in world politics, and finally, China's growth and its effects on India. The U.S. Expert Group invited Dr. Rachel Kleinfeld, Senior Fellow at the Carnegie Endowment of International Peace, who gave a talk on the U.S. elections and shared comprehensive details of the complex nature of the U.S. Presidential election process. The China Expert Group, meanwhile, invited Ananth Krishnan to share his thoughts and a glimpse of his new book "India's China Challenge: A journey through China's Rise and what it means for India." VIF would like to thank Dr. Rachel Kleinfeld and Ananth Krishnan for their valuable time and insights.

The West Asia Expert group deliberated on Turkey's evolving foreign policy, while the Pakistan Expert group exchanged views on Pakistan's relations with Turkey and the intense rivalry brewing between the Imran Khan government and the opposition parties

and finally, Pakistan's role in the Afghan Peace Process.

The researchers associated with these Expert Groups have put unfaltering efforts to coordinate the meetings and collate the notes for the reports in this issue.

We wish our readers a Joyous, Safe, Healthy and Happy Diwali!

Aayush Mohanty

New Delhi

November 2020

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China's Growth Story and its Implications for India

Compiled by Dr. Teshu Singh

The Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF) hosted the Experts Group of China on October 20, 2020. Amb Ashok Kantha moderated the book discussion. Attendees of the Experts Group meeting were Lt. Gen. Ravi Sawhney, Amb Anil Wadhwa, Amb G. Parthasarthy, Amb R. Rajagopalan, Prof Srikanth Kondapalli, Prof. Madhu Bhalla, Prof. Sujit Dutta, and Mr. Ananth Krishnan. The agenda for discussion set by the Experts group on China was the recently published book on "India's China Challenge: A journey through China's Rise and what it means for India."

The book by Ananth Krishnan titled "India's China Challenge: A journey through China's Rise and what it means for India" captures Chinese everyday life seen through an Indian's lens close up, with a pace which enhances the richness and depth of the narrative. To understand what "India's China Challenge" is, it is imperative to understand how the Chinese see themselves as their journey, priorities, outlook, economy, and polity. Another approach which the author also brings out is the way the Chinese look at India. Amid the ongoing tensions between India and China, the book is well-timed on bilateral relations and adds another layer of understanding of China.

The book captures the place of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and its stalwart Mao and then proceeds to a more contemporary era of Xi. In the book discussion, the period between the Beijing Olympics held in 2008 and the leadership change in 2012 is placed as a defining period in understanding of contemporary China. During this time, it was believed

that China was moving towards the direction of “openness” after hosting a major sporting event; this interpretation came from the wave of new policies leading up to the Party Congress in 2012; however, this was not the case.

China, according to the author, is facing a four-fold challenge. The first part provides a view of the political challenge and the functioning of the Chinese state and further looks at the values that govern and motivate the communist party. The second part looks at the economic challenge in which the development of India-China trade relations and the buy-sell relationships have evolved. Third part visits the diplomatic and military challenge. The fourth, the author evaluates the challenge of history for China. Lastly, he deals with the issue of China’s frontiers.

Xi’s Era

In the book discussion, the events in 2012 were characterized as extraordinary and tumultuous in Chinese Politics. The year saw the unfolding of the scandal involving Bo Xilai, which subsequently exposed the split in the communist leadership. There was also a belief amongst certain sections of the leadership that the party was losing control and hence needed to reassert itself as well as install a sense of discipline on the people of the country. The second-generation leaders in China also felt that their elders/forefathers had built the party, and the country was increasingly run by the bureaucrats. This was the milieu during which Xi Jinping took over and, therefore, his focus on campaigns concentrating on corruption, instilling political thought, and instilling discipline through enforcement.

In the first five years of his rule, Xi Jinping has focused on ideology. In 2013, he gave a speech in Guangzhou, wherein he reflected on why the Soviet Union collapsed. According to him, the reason for the downfall of the USSR was that Soviets had compromised on their ideals. The two critical lessons propagated by him were to prevent a neutral army’s emergence and resist political reform based on the western model. Therefore, the increasing push back initiated under his leadership against the growing clamour for political reforms in China, which was visible from 2010 onwards.

Xi Jinping has skillfully accumulated power and established himself as the third great leader of the party. He has removed the term limit on the Presidency of PRC and ended the model of collective leadership. Xi restructured the party-state structure and apparatus, resulting in the CPC providing a greater say in policy formulation and the country's executive functions. This centralization of power within the party to a great extent by instituting several leading small groups that now decide policy on a wide variety of issues, whilst in the past, the matters that were decided by the State Council now come under his purview. It is suspected that he even heads one of these groups on the South China Sea. One could also assume that the LAC escalations could be an outcome of a policy group led by Xi.

Tibet, since 2010 has seen radical policy changes. At the time, policies were implemented to focus on marginalising minority identities by undermining traditional religious practices and language. The model used in Tibet has been replicated in Xinjiang. The starting point of such repressive policies was the 2014 attack on the Kunming railways station. The aftermath of the attack saw President Xi visiting the place a month later and directing the officials to emulate America's war on terror to deal with extremism. Since then, security is at the heart of any policy on Xinjiang.

Meanwhile, Hong Kong protests caught the Chinese government's eyes, who were worried about the scale and the intensity. The passing of the new Security Law, as well as the decision in October of 2019, altered the traditional approach. Questions are being raised on China's approach regarding the so-called "One Country Two Systems." The recent enforcement of the law in Hong Kong is now seeing less support for the China model. The model is being scrutinized domestically, mostly dealing with issues about identity and values.

In the post-COVID 19, some intellectuals like Prof Xu Zhangrun have said that Xi Jinping's biggest legacy is that he has appended the fundamental political principle of post-reform China by providing the people a sense of stability. However, Xi Jinping is concerned about the criticism from the nationalist, which impacts internal changes in China, thus affecting its external behaviour.

India-China Relations

The Indian approach has to change as far as the commercial relationship with China is concerned as tensions remain high on the LAC. The way of doing business with China cannot be compartmentalized any further considering the circumstances. Like Alibaba and Tencent, big-tech companies from China invested in India, even when security threats from China remained unresolved. The Indian government's new policies and actions to curb Chinese investments show a growing feeling that a cordial commercial relationship and an antagonistic Chinese attitude on the LAC cannot co-exist. If there is an India-China economic de-coupling, a long-term strategy would be required, as many Indian industries are dependent on imports from China. The strategy required would have to be formulated, which would be in synchronisation with India's capabilities.

Conclusion

The book provides a fresh perspective away from the entrenched political, diplomatic, and military literature having preponderance in the Indian discourse yet weaves all of them and more in an attempt to understand the Chinese people.

Understanding the U.S Presidential Elections 2020

Compiled by Dr. Himani Pant

As the U.S. presidential election nears, concerns regarding the build of a constitutional crisis post-election have amplified. Amid the global churn brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, this election's outcome is bound to have huge implications for the world, including India. To deliberate on the possible election outcome and its consequences in general, the Vivekananda organised interaction of the VIF expert group with Dr. Rachel Kleinfeld, Senior Fellow at the Carnegie Endowment of International Peace. The opening remarks were presented by the VIF Director, Dr. Arvind Gupta. The discussion was moderated by Amb. Arun K Singh and saw in attendance distinguished participants, including Lt Gen Ravi Sawhney, Dr. Rudra Chaudhuri Lt Gen Anil Abuja, Vice Admiral Satish Soni, Prof. KP Vijayalakshmi, and Mr. Pranav Kumar.

Background

Major opinion polls suggest that Joe Biden is leading in most states, including in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Pennsylvania. However, the 2016 experience has shown these statistics cannot be entirely relied on- last-minute developments/revelations would have a role to play this time around too. Another factor that adds to these polls' unreliability is that the voters tend not to declare their support for Donald Trump openly. These trends are predominant, particularly in the suburban and in the areas where the swing is most likely. The role of the Electoral College also assumes crucial significance in this context. A possibility for a long-drawn court process needs to be weighed in given President Trump's refusal to accept the

results if the outcome is not in his favour. The participants' observations, key determinants, challenges, possible scenarios post-election, and their implications have been summarised in subsequent sections.

Key Determinants in the Present Election

i. There is anger in the voting public, which may add to the 'swing.' The anger stems from the public's disenchantment with the 'unsatisfactory' role of the U.S. Congress, widespread polarisation among the parties, judiciary, etc. The real swing voters are non-voters with a tendency to incline towards strong, one-person leadership. This group accounts for about 40 per cent of the voting population and would substantially influence the election outcome.

ii. The role of independents is a related factor with respect to analysing the 'swing' votes. It is often seen that independent candidates are not independent and are rather vague about their priorities.

iii. The U.S. election has turned very competitive in the last two decades. The political strategy of tackling the right and left in the primary and moving towards centre for the general election does not work anymore. Possibilities of a last-minute swing are higher, a trend that also played out in the 2016 election.

iv. There are means to affect elections in rather nefarious ways. It has been observed that parties tend to win by suppressing the vote on the other side. Voter intimidation, arms security of ballot centres, social media campaigns, etc. are meant to dissuade people from voting.

v. The election result is personality-driven to a great extent, making it more about identity and less about policy. This identity politics may swerve the elections based on the voters' preferences and grievances.

Post-election Scenario

The present election is mired in several problems from the very beginning. There are issues with conducting the election amid COVID-19; the immediate aftermath is likely to be chaotic; there are also concerns about the transition phase following the election result in November till January 2021.

The first scenario is where Biden is elected with a healthy margin. Florida would have a crucial role to play here as it is an early recording state with large electoral votes. In this case, the constitutional crisis would be averted. The second scenario is where Biden is elected with a thin margin or no clear winner. This phase would inevitably be more chaotic as Trump would most likely challenge it. In the event of an undecided election and no clear mandate regarding the president, the possibility of turmoil looms large. Moreover, irrespective of whether Trump comes in for a second term or not, his legacy would continue to impact domestic politics for some time. This implies that a sudden reversal of all his policies would be difficult.

The second scenario poses several security challenges. An undecided election and the ensuing turmoil would be a difficult situation to deal with amid coronavirus. When expansionist China has become a cause of global concern, this churn in U.S. domestic politics will make it vulnerable to security threats. The focus of the military would almost entirely be domestic due to these circumstances. This, coupled with partisan hankering and polarisation, would restrict the country's capacity to meet international challenges, furthering its inward orientation. By extension, this means Washington might not help its allies in countering Beijing's expansionism or other such security threats.

Challenges

The U.S. is an old democracy built on 18th and early 19th-century election protocols that rely on norms rather than laws. This means that there is no clarity about how the situation would unfold in the event of unprecedented developments that haven't been tested earlier. For instance, as mandated by the Constitution, states determine how their elections are run as a result of which each state has his own rules for election—nearly each state has to send in electors who are elected by a popular vote. However, there is an exception to this procedure. If the election is deemed unfair, the state legislature gets to pick the electors by the first week of December. The pronouncement of an election as unfair also depends on the courts of the respective states. A court may decide along with the state legislature that the election was unfair that all the ballots hadn't been counted.

In this context, it is essential to know that in the three swing states—Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania, ballots cannot be counted by law

until the night of the election (Michigan has amended the rule to begin ten hours early). This leads to a precarious situation, especially when the likelihood of absentee ballots is higher than usual. Over 60 million votes have been cast already but cannot be counted which how long it may take to count as it is a long and tedious process. While there is a procedure to recount votes rejected due to improper signatures, etc., the reservation of counting till election night raises practical time-related constraints unexecuting them.

Thus, most U.S. election problems stem from the lack of a coherent election infrastructure split into several precincts. As discussed earlier, states are responsible for conducting elections in their state- this degree of decentralisation of elections is a major problem and makes the process complicated. The absence of a central election body furthers this complexity.

Conclusion

Notwithstanding the several challenges, including the possibility of a constitutional crisis, U.S. democracy is expected to demonstrate resilience in the long term. However, a chaotic transition period has inevitable security implications, as discussed above. Thus, a peaceful transition of power works in favour of the U.S. and maintaining the global balance of power. Furthermore, the uncertainty may also prolong economic recovery- a point of concern given China is recovering faster than most major economies amid COVID-19.

Erdogan's Neo-Ottomanism

Compiled by Dr. Yatharth Kachiar
and Hirak Jyoti Das

2020 to discuss Turkey's assertive foreign policy. The discussion touched upon the factors motivating Turkey's assertive approach in foreign policy, implications of Turkey's ambitious foreign policy strategy, and Turkey's core interests in the region. Adding on, what role could the EU play in bringing Turkey back to the western fold, the future trajectory of Turkey's relation vis-à-vis the West, and specifically NATO; is it possible to neutralize the "Pakistan factor" in Turkey-India relations? The Meeting was attended by the following: Amb. D P Srivastava, Amb. Sanjay Singh, Dr. Meena Singh Roy, Lt. Gen. (R) Syed Ata Hasnain, Admiral Satish Soni, Ambassador Anil Trigunayat (Coordinator), Ambassador Satish Chandra, Lt Gen (R) Ravi Sawhney.

Introduction

In recent years, Turkey's foreign policy has evoked widespread interest among academicians and policymakers alike. Under the Justice and Development Party (AKP), especially after 2011 onwards, Turkish foreign policy has laid stronger emphasis on national security, adopted a revisionist approach while implementing policies, and preferred transaction-based relations, pursuing strategic autonomy and regional hegemony. Neo-Ottomanism, the quest for Islamic leadership, and militarization of diplomacy has become the hallmark of President Erdogan's approach. All these significant changes are apparent in Turkey's closer ties with Russia and China, deteriorating relations with the U.S. and the West, aggressive approach in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, direct military

involvement in Libya and Syria, and more recently in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. To a great extent, it explains the Turkish approach towards India.

Factors Responsible for Assertive Turkish Foreign Policy

1. The merger of Blue Homeland Doctrine and AKP's Islamist strategic vision-

It is crucial to pay attention to Ankara's core interest and strategic ambitions to understand the changes in Turkey's foreign policy. Born out of the ashes of the Ottoman Empire, Turks still have magnified recollection of their past. Such a romantic view of the Ottoman era constitutes a lens through which the foreign policy-making elites perceive their external environment. The burden of history- factual or imaginary- tends to shape decision-makers' actions and their attitude towards other nations. Former Prime Minister, Ahmet Davutoglu's Strategic Depth Doctrine, revealed Turkey's ambitions and worldview. It suggested that Turkey's geostrategic location and its historical legacy are the two most fundamental assets, which will empower Turkey to carve out its sphere of influence in the region and become a regional power. President Erdogan recently described Ankara's support for Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as part of Turkey's quest for its "deserved place in the world order."

Besides its quest for neo-Ottomanism, Turkey seeks to project itself as the leader of the Islamic world, facilitating the formation of an alternate Islamic organisation and reclaiming Arab patrimony over religious sites. It has emerged as a significant regional backer of the Palestinian issue, and Turkish leaders have made the repeated claim about Palestine and Jerusalem's religious and strategic significance for the Ottoman state.

The strategic ambition of Turkey, however, does not solely belong to the AKP government. Since the end of the cold war, in Turkey, different schools of thought- Islamists, Eurasianists- have argued in favour of a more ambitious role for the country at the global level. At present, AKP's Islamic oriented strategic vision, Eurasianists, and other anti-western and nationalists- seems to have a common understanding concerning the goals and tactics of Turkish foreign policy. To establish

Turkey as a regional hegemon, these various schools of thought have agreed to support policies such as establishing military bases and aggressive power projection in the neighbourhood.

Turkey's maritime policies in Libya and the eastern Mediterranean are causally linked to the newly famous doctrine 'Blue Homeland.' Crafted by secular nationalist officers, the doctrine is presented as an antidote to Turkey's existential threat. According to the 'Blue Homeland' doctrine, it was the Ottoman state's failure to control the seas that resulted in the empire's collapse. Therefore, it considers naval supremacy paramount for survival and expands Turkish influence in the region's economic and political sphere. Turkey's maximalist claims in the eastern Mediterranean are in agreement with the Blue Homeland doctrine.

Moreover, what makes this doctrine rather interesting and potentially disruptive is its claims not only in the eastern Mediterranean region but its assertion in "the Persian Gulf, Sea of Oman, Arabian Sea, Red Sea, the Eastern waters of the Atlantic Ocean." For President Erdoğan, this concept can be a means to expand Islamist influence across the region. For example, by dominating the eastern Mediterranean, Turkey will strengthen the Muslim Brotherhood's presence in countries where it has already established some footprints, such as Libya, Iraq, and Syria. There is no serious opposition to the Blue Homeland doctrine within Turkey since it taps into the broader nationalist sentiments. President Erdoğan has used the nationalist rhetoric in the case of Syria, Iraq, and now the eastern Mediterranean to distract the masses from Turkey's crumbling national economy.

2. The concentration of Executive power

With the transition from a parliamentary to a "strong" presidential system in Turkey, decision-making power has been transferred from the cabinet and other government institutions to the Presidential Palace. The role of the bureaucracy has thus been reduced to the implementation of the policy. A critical aspect of this development is the disappearance of the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) as a factor in foreign policymaking after the 15 July 2016 coup attempt. However, it cannot be discounted for good and could spring a surprise in times to come as youth's discontent acquires salience. The concentration of

executive power in the presidency has also allowed Erdogan to directly imprint on foreign policy decisions, circumventing professional bodies in the state. Therefore, it can be argued that Turkish foreign policy has been instrumentalized for domestic purposes and serves as a vehicle for the president's political ambitions.

3. *Regional and Domestic security/ Disenchantment with western allies*

There is an increased disenchantment within Turkey vis-à-vis its Western allies. The perception that the West never considered Turkey's security interests significantly strengthened over time. For example, the US disengagement from the Middle East after the Iraq operation, the Obama administration's reluctance to get involved in Syria, and the U.S. support for the Kurdish YPG militia against the Islamic state are some of the decisions that were considered unsympathetic to Turkish interests in Ankara. Also, the growing western criticism of the Erdogan government for its growing authoritarianism and the rejection to extradite Fethullah Gulen by the U.S. widened the rift between Ankara and the West. Nevertheless, at present, Turkey hosts 24 NATO bases. Despite divergences of interests with other NATO members in the Eastern Mediterranean region, Syria and Libya, these states realise the country's strategic importance and not likely to cut off ties with Ankara.

The Future Trajectory of Relations with the West

Before projecting itself as a regional and a pan-Islamist power, Turkey was keen to enter the comity of the European Union (EU) states. However, the EU's unrealistic conditions to discourage its entry pushed the country to adopt a more hard-line approach. To resolve the eastern Mediterranean crisis, the European Council called on Turkey to accept Cyprus's invitation to engage in dialogue with Turkey. The EU has avoided taking stringent actions against Turkey's aggressive rhetoric and actions in the eastern Mediterranean. There have been alleged pressure on the EU from the U.S. and Germany not to sanction Turkey. Erdogan's policy of appeasement strengthens his strategy of repeatedly escalating and de-escalating tensions to extract concessions from his European counterparts. It is crucial to engage and contain Turkey to deal with its belligerent behaviour. Turkey's ongoing economic crisis provides a possible window of opportunity for

the EU to seal a quid pro quo with Ankara. In return for a bailout package, the EU can push Turkey to adopt democratic reforms, transparency, and accountability.

Is it Possible to Neutralize the “Pakistan factor” in Turkey-India Relations?

The issue of Pakistan casts a gigantic shadow over the Turkey-India relationship. Pakistan looks at Turkey as a security provider along with China. There are political divergences between Ankara and New Delhi on the Kashmir issue and the presence of Gulen schools in India. Also, India is concerned about Turkey's intention to use the Indian Muslim network for Pakistan's benefit. China's growing influence and treatment of Uyghur Muslims are a common concern for both India and Turkey. Turkey could be a crucial ally for India to raise the Uyghur Muslims' concerns on the international platforms, although Turkey has already raised it at the UN 3rd Committee. Moreover, Central Asia could be an arena for cooperation for India and Turkey. Finding the right formula for neutralizing the “Pakistan factor” in Turkey-India relations will likely prove more, not less difficult under the present circumstances. Nevertheless, India needs to keep communication channels open, including Track 2 diplomacy, academic and cultural exchanges, etc. to explore the possible opportunities and counter common concerns, primarily stemming from China. Besides, greater Turkish economic engagement with India (though calibrated) could sanitize its thinking.

A New Wave of Democratic Movement has Begun in Pakistan

Compiled by Dr. Yatharth Kachiar

A meeting of the Pakistan Study Group was held via video conferencing on 15 October 2020. The main items on the agenda were: Pakistan's internal developments and the Afghanistan peace process. The Meeting was attended by the following: Shri Arvind Gupta, Ms. Shalini Chawla, Shri Sushant Sareen, Shri Rana Banerjee, Amb G. Parthasarthy, Amb Satish Chandra, Amb Gautam Mukhopadhyay, Amb Amar Sinha, Amb DP Srivastava, Shri CD Sahay, Lt Gen (R) Ravi Sawhney, Lt Gen (R) Ata Hasnain, Gen. (R) NC Vij, Shri Tilak Devasher, Brig. (R) Rahul Bhonsle.

Pakistan's Internal Developments

Pakistan Democratic Movement

The opposition parties in Pakistan have finally united to challenge both the Imran Khan government and its military backers. The powerful coalition of opposition parties against the government makes the current movement different from other previous political protests and marches in Pakistan. Under the Pakistan Democratic Movement banner, the stage for the new multi-party alliance was set by three-time former Prime Minister and PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif's powerful address on 20 September at the opposition's All Parties Conference.

On 20 September, the All Party's Conference adopted a 26-point resolution with the key goals to oust the "selected prime minister" and end the army's role in politics through a mass movement. What makes

the current movement distinctive in Pakistan is its direct challenge to the army's prominent position in the country's politics. As Nawaz Sharif stated "it is the state above the state that needs to be taken on." The PDM's rally in Gujranwala on 16 October has set the stage for Pakistan's anti-government movement. The presence of a sizeable number of supporters during the recent protest rallies also silenced the initial doubts over the opposition's ability to pull the crowds. Simultaneously, the aggressive speeches delivered during the rally, especially by former PM Nawaz Sharif, have increased Islamabad's political temperature. By directly attacking the army in his speech in Gujranwala, Nawaz Sharif seems to have burnt his bridges and removed the possibility of negotiating with the army to find a working solution to the ongoing problem.

Nawaz Sharif's direct targeting of the army chief and the ISI head for interfering in the political process and undemocratically removing his government has brought a new turning point in Pakistani politics. Other opposition leaders also targeted the role of the military establishment in bringing the PTI government to power. However, they did not amplify the accusations vis-à-vis the military the way Nawaz Sharif did. Therefore, it remains to be seen whether the tone and demeanour adopted by former PM Nawaz Sharif in attacking the hybrid regime will also be adopted at large by the PDM or not.

The Imran Khan government has played up the 'anti-state' and 'Indian hand' card to malign Nawaz Sharif. At present, the PTI government does not have many options to counter the opposition movement. At best, it can strike hard by arresting opposition leaders and creating administrative obstacles for the future rallies in Peshawar, Multan, and Lahore. None of these will resolve the political issues confronting the Pakistani state. There is seething anger within the masses against Imran Khan's government mishandling of the economy. There are already a series of protests happening in Islamabad, Balochistan, and Sindh. Nevertheless, despite his poor governance, Imran Khan will continue as the Prime Minister as long as the military establishment does not find his replacement.

At this stage, it is difficult to gauge the military establishment's reaction towards Nawaz Sharif's speech and the PDM. There is a possibility that the army generals will crush the whole movement at its very onset, especially if there is any violence involved in any of the rallies. It is also not easy to understand the army's prevailing sentiment regarding the

country's ongoing economic, political, and foreign policy crises. If the majority view within the Pakistan military's rank and file shifts against the present government, it will be difficult for the top echelons within the establishment to overlook the Imran Khan government's incompetency. There is also a possibility that the military establishment could use the country's ongoing chaos to establish its direct rule yet again.

Within the opposition, there could be a tussle for power between Maulana Fazlur Rehman and Maryam Sharif. However, in all likelihood, for various reasons, including domestic and international, Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman may not be able to build the consensus needed to be a Prime Ministerial candidate. He could be an excellent power broker in Pakistan in the coming years. Another critical question that remains to be answered is that even if the protest rallies under the PDM banner are highly successful, what is the endgame of the whole movement? The movement has put forward the maximalist demands that include removing the Imran Khan government, but there is a lack of clarity on how this objective would be achieved.

Moreover, historical precedents within Pakistan suggest that to remove a ruling party or leader from power, street protests alone are insufficient. The institutional support, especially from the Judiciary and army, is required to achieve PDM's desired objectives. At present, street protests are gathering momentum. However, it remains to be seen whether it will get support from other institutions or not.

On the economic front, there are no real investments taking place in Pakistan. Even on the CPEC, some reports suggest that the projects are going relatively slow, and the Chinese may have lost some interest. Also, there are severe concerns within Pakistan on energy economics, which are becoming unmanageable now. To come to grips with energy economics, the government needs to raise electricity tariffs, which could also become a political disaster. In case the IMF pulls the plug on the economic program, then Pakistan will be in serious trouble as its external position remains rather precarious. On FATF, Pakistan will most likely remain on the grey list in the foreseeable future.

Pakistan was recently elected to the UNHRC, which means its narrative on Kashmir vis-à-vis India will intensify in the coming months.

Afghanistan Peace Process

As the peace talks in Doha have progressed, the violence in the country remains unabated. This substantiates India's longstanding position that giving legitimacy to the Taliban prematurely is counter-productive for Afghanistan. Recently, Mr. Abdullah visited Pakistan for the first time in 10 years as the head of the High Council for Peace. During his visit to Pakistan, Mr. Abdullah said: "I believe it is now a chance to pass the old and repeated slogans and conspiracy theories that have kept us behind and create a new chapter." In India, he met Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, and delivered a keynote speech at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA). He stated: "India is a strategic partner of Afghanistan and has continuously supported Afghanistan's government and people. Our historical relations with India are very important to us, and India's role in establishing a lasting peace in Afghanistan and the region is vital."

Within Afghanistan, there is a pushback against the model of government based strictly on Sharia. According to a recent survey conducted by the Heart of Asia society in Afghanistan, approximately 74 percent of the respondents favoured an Islamic Republic vis-à-vis an Islamic Emirate. Only 7 percent preferred an Emirate, 6 percent said a mixture of the two, and 11 percent said they had no preference. The survey also showed that men were more likely to opt for the Emirate than women, and literate people indicated a preference for a republic more than those without any school or university level education.

At present, the peace process is mainly stuck on two issues: the use of Hanafi jurisprudence and the U.S.-Taliban agreement as to the framework for the talks. Taliban negotiator Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi reassured that using Hanafi jurisprudence is not an act of "prejudice" and will not cause differences between Shias and Sunnis in Afghanistan. The Afghan negotiating team has said they are willing to accept Hanafi jurisprudence but recommended respecting the Shia Personal Status Law and the religious jurisprudence of other minority groups.

The Taliban are also insisting that the U.S.-Taliban agreement should be the basis of any future negotiations. If this is accepted, then the demand for a ceasefire by the Afghan delegation and the international community becomes irrelevant because the U.S.-Taliban agreement makes it an

outcome of the protracted negotiations rather than a condition for negotiations. More importantly, some analysts have observed that if the Taliban does not reduce the country's ongoing violence, then the U.S. government might be forced to change its policy of complete withdrawal. There are voices within the U.S. army that support making any reduction beyond 5,800 troops condition-based. The recent attack launched by the Taliban in Helmand has also shifted the public and international opinion against the Taliban. There is a growing realization within the international community that the U.S. has been hasty in granting the Taliban an unconditional legitimacy.

About the VIVEKANANDA INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION

The Vivekananda International Foundation is an independent non-partisan institution that conducts research and analysis on domestic and international issues, and offers a platform for dialogue and conflict resolution. Some of India's leading practitioners from the fields of security, military, diplomacy, government, academia and media have come together to generate ideas and stimulate action on national security issues.

The defining feature of VIF lies in its provision of core institutional support which enables the organisation to be flexible in its approach and proactive in changing circumstances, with a long-term focus on India's strategic, developmental and civilisational interests. The VIF aims to channelise fresh insights and decades of experience harnessed from its faculty into fostering actionable ideas for the nation's stakeholders.

Since its inception, VIF has pursued quality research and scholarship and made efforts to highlight issues in governance, and strengthen national security. This is being actualised through numerous activities like seminars, round tables, interactive dialogues, Vimarsh (public discourse), conferences and briefings. The publications of VIF form lasting deliverables of VIF's aspiration to impact on the prevailing discourse on issues concerning India's national interest.



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