

Institute for Policy Reforms

Press Release

Difficult time for Turkey

The coup attempt in Turkey has no immediate implication for Pakistan. ‘While a threat to constitutional rule seems unlikely in Pakistan, there is a more serious danger to state stability,’ says an analysis by the Institute for Policy Reforms about the recent putsch in Turkey. Titled ‘Difficult time for Turkey’, IPR lists several possible causes for the coup. A large number of people in Turkey ‘worry about the country’s shift to the right’. The Army is unhappy about Turkey’s involvement in the Syrian crisis and deterioration in relations with neighbours. Self-interest was also at play, as senior Army officers feared another purge by Mr. Erdogan. There are deep social and political divisions in Turkey. However, AKP has steadfast support reinforced by years of economic prosperity whose benefits have been shared widely.

Turkey will face for long the consequences of the coup. ‘Regardless of who wins, in a turmoil the whole country loses’, says the report. In a positive development, all political parties opposed the coup. Risking their lives, a large number of people came out to defy the coup, not all were AKP members. Mr. Erdogan too has been conciliatory. However, just when Turkey needed to reduce its social and political divisions, Mr. Erdogan’s aggressive actions since the coup may have pulled the country in the opposite direction. Turkey is under emergency rule. A very large number of army men and other intellectuals, including 42 journalists, have been arrested or removed from their jobs. Total number exceeds 50,000.

The report adds that the Turkish government cannot accept any risk to constitutional rule. However, it shares the fear that the coup attempt may be used to overcome all opposition to AKP rule. That may not be a good omen for Turkish democracy. Of course, Mr. Erdogan does not have an easy task.

On the one hand, he has supporters in his party who prefer the country’s shift to the right. On the other hand, for the sake of the country’s stability, he must take along those who believe in Ataturk’s vision for Turkey. And, at a time of deep crisis in the region, he has an Army that does not share his ideology and security policies.

It is possible that the Turkish government has decided to no longer pursue an active role in Syria. Perhaps it now realizes the great harm this has caused to the country. In that case, Mr. Erdogan must appease the West that would like Turkey to remain the weapons conduit for Syrian rebels. The coming period is a ‘test’ for the Turkish President.

The report says that the coup attempt in Turkey does not directly affect Pakistan. ‘There are many differences between the two countries in the evolution of their political institutions’. Unlike Turkey, where Islamist and secular ideas compete for political space, in Pakistan, the power structure is not a product of ideology or beliefs. Power sharing in Pakistan is a negotiated arrangement to

accommodate interests of competing institutions. Competition among institutions is no longer a zero sum game. Negotiations take place continually with broad agreement over the areas of influence of respective players.

Mr. Erdogan's AKP is a product of political Islam. A mix of pride, anti-West sentiments, and religion are the bases of his support. It is reinforced by years of inclusive development and prosperity under Mr. Erdogan.

Our political parties do not evoke the same loyalty. The leaders do not show high ideals or good performance. The people of Pakistan move their expectations for better conditions in the country between elected governments and extra constitutional rule. Both have brought few benefits for them. However, the report carries a warning for Pakistan.

Continuous failure by elected officials to provide development, improve living standards or justice has forced people to look for alternatives. The inability of law enforcers to ensure stability in the country creates insecurity and uncertainty. This situation affords non state actors to offer themselves as an option.

The report also states that both Pakistan and Turkey are weakened because of their involvement in affairs of their neighbours, Afghanistan and Syria, respectively. This has made them less secure. Pakistan must minimize competition among various parts of the state. It must focus on challenges within the country and amity with neighbours to secure borders. Weapons must remain in the hands of state institutions and not find their way to armed militia.