



Abe's Re-Election as LDP's President: Analysing the Result and his Future Agenda

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Shinzo Abe is re-elected as President of Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in September 2018. He has extended his term by three years and will remain in office till September 2021. As public opinion suggests many were not in favour of Abe's extension to power; but the people and party insiders loyal to Abe still wanted him to continue in the office. Abe secured a third term as President of the party as the loyalists to him have revoked the party's amendment of giving previously two consecutive terms to the incumbent president; which instead changed to three consecutive terms. But the recent change in the party's Constitution has eventually blocked many LDP leaders' desires to lead the party.

In the recently concluded election Abe has defeated his lone challenger Shigeru Ishiba, a former Party General Secretary and a stalwart. Interestingly, the presidential election was contested between two so called hawks in a party which is amalgamation of hawkish and dovish factions. Both the candidates had the agenda to revise the Constitution and give more power to country's defense forces. However, their approaches were different. While Ishiba was in favour of delaying the constitutional revision and favour economic reforms, Abe stated that both issue should be taken up simultaneously.

The LDP's presidential election also reflected that the women are still not given importance in matters of leading the organisation. In 2015, Seiko Noda, a woman leader and even a Cabinet Minister in Abe's ministry wanted to contest for the presidential polls. She eventually failed to contest as she could not garner the votes required from the Japanese Diet; which is 20 endorsements.

Shinzo Abe has a challenging period ahead as the coming year, the Upper House of the Diet elections is due and fate of Abe lies on the performance of the polls. A setback to the party in the upcoming party election will pose a moral responsibility for party's performance. In

Japanese politics there are past precedence when the party chief had to resign owing the responsibility of party's dismal performance. Given the divided opposition, Abe is likely to sail through this crisis. But at present, it is difficult to predict the performance of the LDP in upper House elections.

There are many domestic and external agendas which Abe has to tackle carefully. The constitutional revision of Article 9 and to gain two-third majority in the parliament and a public referendum on these are some of the main agenda on Abe's table. At the domestic front, Abe is also grappling with many other pressing issues. Among them is economic revitalisation of Japan. Abe will face many challenges in the present term and it will require his ability and governance to tackle the economic agendas and policies. The main backlash faced by Abe is that the previous developmental initiatives are still yet to reach the grassroots level in the rural areas. With an aim to achieve two percent inflation growth; the plan to increase Consumer Tax from eight to ten percent may bring a boost to revenue with control of fiscal deficit. With unprecedented monetary easing operation, which has resulted in share prices tripled and unemployment rate down to historically low in mid-two percentage.

Appropriate measures on macroeconomics policies and easing of visa requirements on foreign visitors, are the main driving force behind. The number of tourist has quadrupled in past five years. But, Abe has to be careful about the after effects of consumption tax. It is being speculated that because of an increase in consumption tax up to 10 percent, people will tend not to buy luxury items, which may further put the country into deflation.

Shinzo Abe in his last term in office must focus on shaping the country with different economic agendas and development. One of the main worry is Japan's wide age gap among its population. The number of aged is almost half of its total population and has created a deficit in workforce. To overcome the shortage of labour, Abe has taken steps to allow immigration of skilled worker. In this scenario, Prime Minister Abe should focus mainly on development agenda and keep away the unwanted and not so important issues; as such the revision of constitutional amendments.

Another issue, Abe has to tackle is the Imperial Succession issue. The Emperor of Japan, Akihito has taken the decision to abdicate due to his ailing health conditions. Abe cabinet has to oversee the preparation of the Imperial Succession which in itself is a mega event. Another mega event Abe has to oversee is the preparation towards hosting 2020 Olympic in Tokyo. Abe has invested his political capital to outbid Madrid and Istanbul- the other two rivals for Olympic venue. Now Abe has taken up responsibility to make the Tokyo Olympic a success.

These events will seek lots of energy and efforts from Abe and his administration. Therefore, he must tread cautiously to take up only those issues which are doable in his next three years. More importantly, he should focus on improving ties with China, resolving territorial issues with Russia and the pending issue of abduction with North Korea.

About the Speaker

Shamshad Ahmad Khan is Visiting Associate Fellow at the ICs. He is also a Guest Faculty at the Department of East Asian Studies, University of Delhi. After completing his PhD in 2009 from the Centre for East Asian Studies, School of International Relations, JNU, he has spent time as faculty as well as researcher in Indian and Japanese academia. In India, he had been associated with think tanks such as Institute of Defense Studies and Analyses (June 2009 - September 2013) and Indian Council of World Affairs (October 2013 to September 2015). In Japan, he had been associated with Keio university (October 2015 – August 2016), Japan Institute of International Relations (November 2014 to January 2015), Institute for Developing Economics (November 2012-February 2013), Slavic Research Centre, Hokaido University (December- March 2011) and Waseda University (April 2007- March 2008) in different capacities. Until recently, he was Assistant Professor (visiting) at the Department of International Relations at Sharjah University, UAE. He is also a recipient of Nakasone Yasuhiro Award.

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