



KEY TRENDS IN PAKISTAN IN NOVEMBER 2019

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QUESTION 1:

What is the key political event/factor to happen/watch for during November and why?

“A standoff between the federal government and protesters is likely to raise political temperatures in the country. A bargain over graft cases of Nawaz Sharif and Asif Ali Zardari apparently on medical grounds but secretly on political grounds is likely to trigger debate in the national media. Sharif could be given bail on medical grounds and he might be shifted abroad for treatment.”

Syed Fazl-e-Haider

“The key political event is the JUI-F's Azadi March. This Azadi march will determine the democratic trajectory of Pakistan in the month of November. Let's assume, and most likely it is going to happen, that protesters will enter into the D-Chowk and the PTI government would find it difficult to control the street power of JUI-F and supporters of the PML-N and PPP. Imran Khan would have to rely on the army in order to evacuate the area. In that scenario, the army would be pitched against the opposition parties and, more importantly, against the street power of the religious parties which the army used to rely on in the past. This November will see many crucial political developments in Pakistan flareup. The most crucial one would be how the army behaves as an institution and how other senior military officers see the relationship between army chief Bajwa and prime minister Imran Khan.”

Dr. Yaqoob ul Hassan

“The ‘Azadi March’ challenges the leadership and legitimacy of PM Khan. There is the potential that planned sit-ins into November could lead to a clash between protesters and security forces that would lead the military to intervene in the country's politics. Separately, Nawaz Sharif's death, whether while in prison under hospitalization, could create a martyr for the PML-N even while it brings about a leadership vacuum for the party.”

Dr. Marvin Weinbaum

“There is a lot happening right now. JUI's march will reach the capital tomorrow. Their primary demand is the resignation of Prime Minister Imran Khan. JUI only got symbolic support from the other opposition parties. Most importantly, the military establishment is still backing the Khan government. No change is possible without their blessing. Nawaz Sharif has got an eight-week bail on medical grounds. He is being pressured from several corners to go abroad for treatment. If he does, it will give a much-needed breathing space to the current government.”

Nadeem Zafar

“Basically two. Firstly, the anti-Imran rally/march that is building considerable steam and, secondly, the opening of the Gurdaspur corridor.”

Dr. Probal Kumar Ghosh

“The opposition parties’ protest led by Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman's Jamat-e-Ulema-e-Islam (Fazal-ur-Rehman) is the key event in November that should be closely watched. This is the most organized and the biggest show put together by opposition parties led by JUI-F, in which political workers from all over Pakistan have gathered in Islamabad to demand the resignation of the prime minister and fresh elections. Although the protesters may not succeed in getting what they demand, the protest can weaken and destabilize the government. One example of such weakening is the government caving in to the demands of traders, who had been separately protesting tax measures announced by the government, in order to prevent the entire country coming to a halt.”

Ishrat Saleem



QUESTION 2:

What is the key economic event/factor to happen/watch for during November and why?

“New schemes or development projects related to Gwadar Port and CPEC are likely to be announced to attract foreign investors.”

Syed Fazl-e-Haider

“The key economic development would be to see how the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and traders are going to resolve their differences over the Computerized National Identity Cards (CNIC) condition and regressive taxes. The FBR and the traders association failed to settle their differences through talks. The trade association has already called for a two-day strike in Pakistan. This trade strike and Azadi march could be a coincidence but it would put more pressure on the Imran Khan government. There is a growing resentment against the economic policies of the government.”

Dr. Yaqoob ul Hassan

“The IMF is reviewing Pakistan’s debt portfolio to determine how to approach the next tranche of loans. At the same time, there has been a 7.5 percentage point increase in the number of business loans that are not being paid, with most of the new payment failures coming from the energy and agriculture sectors. More promising, Pakistan has improved 28 places on the World Bank’s Ease of Doing Business List, to 108.”

Dr. Marvin Weinbaum

“The Federal Bureau of Revenue (FBR) today negotiated a settlement with traders who were on strike. The FBR has agreed to their demands like fixed taxes and the non-requirement of National Identity Card for daily business transactions. The agreement by the government goes against its understandings with the IMF. Anyway, the agreement will give some relief to the day-to-day business which has been suffering for a long time now. We will need to see how the agreement impacts the bigger KPIs of the national economy.”

Nadeem Zafar

“I think, with the completion of the plenary session/meeting of the FATF and an extension of time for four months before they are placed in the Deep Grey category (from Grey), it is time for Pakistan to get its act together. It is unlikely that extensions of such sort will flow again with the help of China, Malaysia, and Turkey. Yet again, it’s unlikely that the current Pakistani establishment will be able to comply with the requirements laid down for eliminating terror financing and money laundering.”

Dr. Probal Kumar Ghosh

“The protests by opposition parties will have an economic fallout as major roads and commercial centers may be shut down by the government or the protesters.”

Ishrat Saleem



QUESTION 3:

What is the key social event/factor to happen/watch for during November and why?

“More and more people might be pushed below the poverty line, adding to the frustration of the general masses with the government's economic policies. A sort of social chaos could increase the crime rate and propensities toward suicide in the country.”

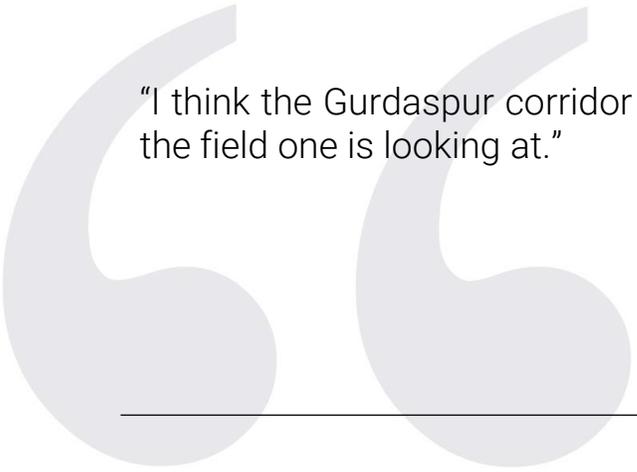
Syed Fazl-e-Haider

“In the social aspect, the key development to follow is how the PTI government manages its relationship with media. There is a growing criticism against Imran Khan's government against media censorship.”

Dr. Yaqoob ul Hassan

“Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)'s birthday falls on November 10. We will see large processions throughout the country. The event has always been a safe event for the country (unlike the Muharram processions).”

Dr. Marvin Weinbaum



“I think the Gurdaspur corridor can be placed under social and religious, as well as security, happenings depending on which side of the field one is looking at.”

Nadeem Zafar

“There are several protests going on in the country, significantly by doctors in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, by doctors and paramedical staff in Punjab, and by Basic Education Community School teachers of Punjab. These are events to be watched closely during November. The professional communities have been protesting for quite a while, without the government showing any inclination to listen to them and resolve their issues. Doctors and paramedics may escalate the protests by shutting down indoor services, which will have a serious fallout for people and create a headache for the government, which is already facing a major political crisis in the capital.”

Ishrat Saleem



QUESTION 4:

What is the key security event/factor to happen/watch for during November and why?

“The Protest march of thousands of people set out on October 27 toward Islamabad and the sit-in of thousands of people in the capital could create a serious security issue.”

Syed Fazl-e-Haider

“Two key security developments would be to how the Pakistan military manages LoC and push the Afghan Taliban for the talks. LoC will flareup again in the month of November as more militants would like to infiltrate before it starts snowing on the mountains. On Afghan Taliban, Pakistan military has to push Afghan Taliban to resume talks with the US.”

Dr. Yaqoob ul Hassan

“In view of the increase in clashes along the LoC and the overall deterioration of relations with India, there is a growing possibility of a larger military confrontation. A jihadi group may feel freer to embark on a terrorist operation in Kashmir or deeper within India.”

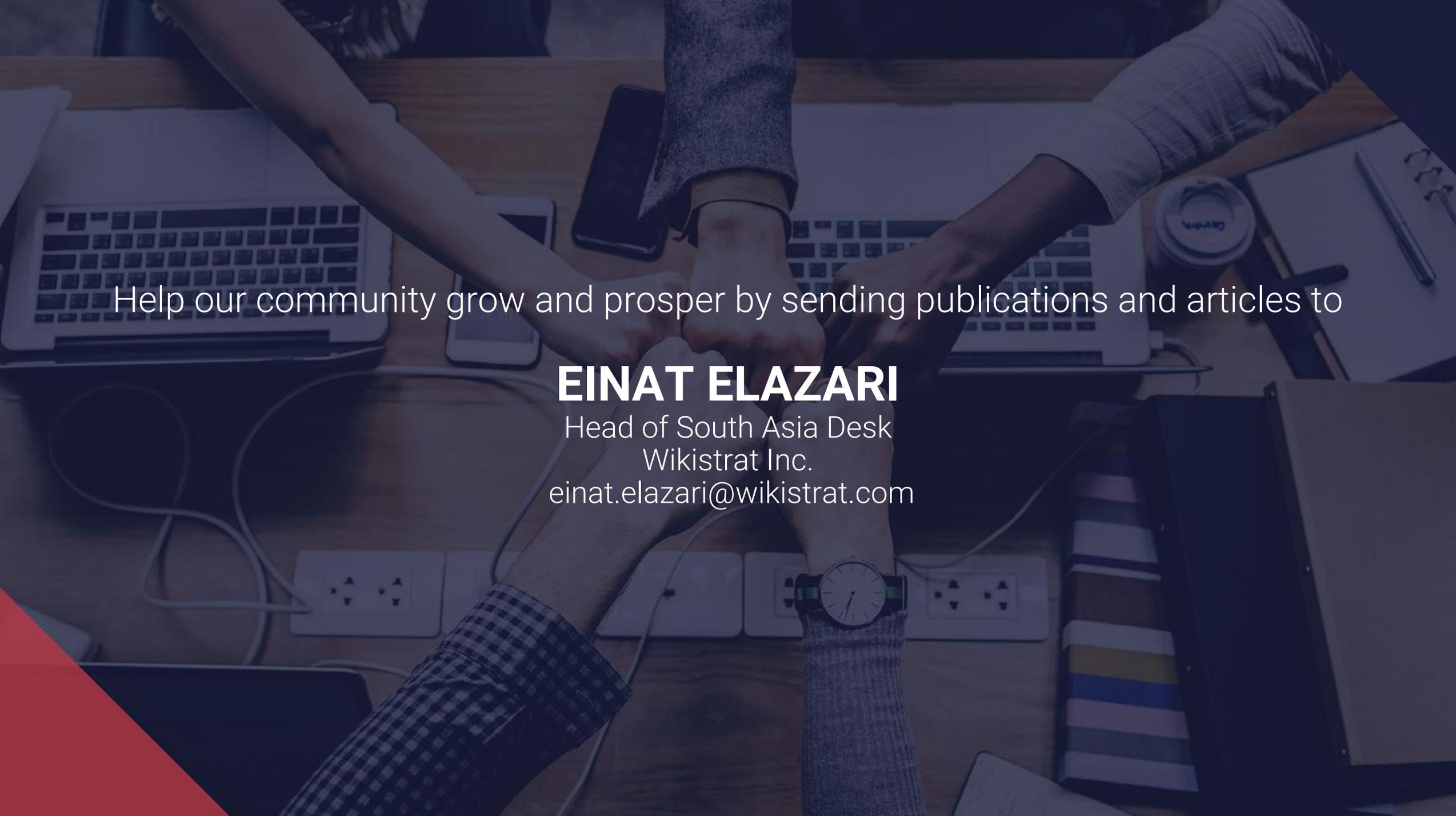
Dr. Marvin Weinbaum

“LoC in Kashmir remains hot. India recently claimed to have destroyed terrorist camps across LoC which was denied immediately by Pakistan. I do not think there will be a major escalation or a larger conflict in the Kashmir region, but LoC skirmishes will continue to happen.”

Nadeem Zafar

“The protests by the opposition parties have a security aspect as well. If the protesters resort to violence, it will create a grim security situation in the capital. Already residents are facing problems in reaching their destination in various parts of the city due road closures and barriers.”

Ishrat Saleem



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