



Pakistan Striving to Defeat Geopolitics and Status Quo

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Struck like many other nations by COVID-19 and beset by the US-led geopolitics, Pakistan today is trying hard to extricate itself from the consequences of the 15-year-long fake news/disinformation campaign by the Indian Srivastava group through a vast network of some 750 news outlets and web domains. This campaign across 119 countries greatly and negatively influenced Pakistan's image abroad. This has precipitated internal discontent.

The revelations of this large fake news network operating against Pakistan came indeed as a vindication of Islamabad's long standing claim that India supports elements of destabilization and subversion inside Pakistan.

Secondly, together with China, Pakistan is trying to shift its focus from geo-politics to geo-economics through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. It has tried its best to contribute to the intra-Afghan negotiations to nudge Afghan Taliban into talks with the Kabul government, conscious of the fact that without peace in Afghanistan, peace in Pakistan will be difficult and that will also impede economic revival and turn around.

However, the British colonial model of governance remains a big obstacle towards Pakistan's progress, for the model is slow and insufficiently equipped to keep in

step with demands of the current era. The decision-making process is still slow and complex, which, in turn, obstructs quicker implementation of projects.

Thirdly, unfortunately, like a few other states, Pakistan has also suffered from the lack of global Internet regulations, on the one hand, discrimination, on the other, which have been exploited by different states to pursue their strategic agendas.

For instance, when Pakistan or other Muslim countries lodge complaints on sensitive religious issues, the Western governments as well as the authorities of the social media platforms, such as Twitter and Face book, often snub them. But most people in the US and Europe kept silent, indeed endorsed when Twitter and others took President Trump out. They all defended the move in the name of national security. But our experience shows that "freedom of expression" is much dearer to these countries and companies when it comes to issues of Pakistan's national interests.

Lastly, Pakistan is trying to harness its greatest asset, its young labor force that is, its growing IT sector and prized geo-economic location. Pakistan has been declared top tourist destination by several renowned outlets. Its strategic location gives Pakistan the leverage to play a role of bridge builder and peacemaking among competitors. Pakistan is also moving on a positive trajectory on Human rights issues and is trying to bridge the gaps where necessary. Weakness lies in improving governance and ensuring policy continuity in the right direction.

Reforms in that context is difficult, with a lot of push-back by the forces of status quo, such as traditional political forces, bureaucracy and business cartels, which refuse to make way for democratic reforms. The elite capture has made the process difficult for Prime Minister Imran Khan, who is focused on the welfare of the common people – something that was never the focus of previous governments.

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