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Dedicated to Democratic Ideals, a progressive and politically stable Pakistan, and strong US-Pakistan relations.

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Embracing American Ideals; Promoting and Protecting the American Dream

The meaningful contribution of groups and organizations to integrate immigrant and minority communities needs to be emphasized. Groups and organizations face a special challenge and a specific responsibility different from that of the State: to embrace American ideals and to promote and protect the American Dream.

Communities' Integration – Homeland, USA

Arlington Public Library

1015 N. Quincy Street, Arlington, VA

2:00-4:00pm | Sunday, November 26, 2017

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Afghanistan War: Some glaring misconceptions

Touqir Hussain

Does history really repeat itself? Yes, but rarely and certainly not in the way we think it does. More often than not it does not, even though some similarities between any two historical events make us believe otherwise. The reality is in historical analogies not only similarities but dissimilarities also are important, and often more important. History is a useful guide to understand the present but we have to be careful how to use it. There is always something new or different in the present and our analysis ignores it at our peril.

By the conventional view of history we feel the Afghanistan war is failing because the country has always defeated empires and it is doing the same now. This, I am afraid, is a mischaracterisation of the war responsible for many a faulty analysis. We have to ask ourselves if the old Afghanistan bears much resemblance to the contemporary Afghanistan (the post-monarchy state) which continues to be called a graveyard of empires like the old one. Did that Afghanistan have al Qaeda, the Taliban and their support base in Pakistan, drug mafia, and an ethnically-divided Afghanistan where the traditional Pashtun-dominated balance of power has been fractured. Not to mention the competing strategic interests of Pakistan, Iran and India; rising China; scramble for energy and resource-rich Central Asia; and the complex geopolitics of today?

To be specific, let us go back to the '80s Jihad, the first war of the contemporary Afghanistan, and see who defeated whom? Did Afghans really defeat the Soviets proving the dictum of their country being a graveyard of empires? No, Afghans did not defeat the Soviets, certainly not by themselves. It was a coalition of victors comprising a superpower, the CIA, the ISI, and of course the Afghans (majority of them but not all). The Afghans were divided then as they are now. So what graveyard of empires are we talking about? It was essentially the final battle of the Cold War fought in Afghanistan in which America won

but the poor Afghans ended up as losers as much as winners. They got rid of the Communists but got stuck with the Taliban. The superpowers went home but regional powers walked in. And soon sneaked in the international Jihad.

It was only a matter of time before another Afghanistan war started. At the end of all this Afghans may yet lose again but they will not be alone. Pakistan too has lost as has Washington. But this is not a defeat of America the empire by Afghanistan. Neither America went there as an empire, nor is every Afghan fighting Americans. Just a radical minority called the Taliban supported at various times to varying degrees by Pakistan, Iran and Russia. If America has failed so has Afghanistan. What graveyard of empires?

Yet another misperception about this poorly understood war, has to do with statements from official sources that Pakistan is not trying to impose any solution of its own on Afghanistan. It desires an "Afghan led and Afghan owned" peace process. This is frankly no more than a politically correct statement making Pakistan look good. Pakistan knows full well the Afghan government is weak and has a legitimacy problem with the Taliban insurgents who do not want to talk to them. By themselves Kabul cannot bring about peace. It needs the help of Islamabad and Washington.

Even this talk of a regional solution to facilitate a political solution is a myth. How can you have a political solution without an internal reconciliation in Afghanistan? And Afghans need reconciliation not just with the Taliban and the alienated population sympathetic to them but also among the divided Unity Government that masks serious internal cleavages and discord, including ethnic tensions. And how can regional countries help if their own relationships among themselves remain conflicted in which Afghanistan is more of an effect than a cause?

Finally there is the key misperceptions as to what the Trump strategy means. It is widely believed that Trump is looking for a military solution which frankly he is not. It just appears that way. Similarly contrary to appearances India is not being invited to play a security role in Afghanistan (Does India need a US invitation to get involved in Afghanistan!). India is essentially being asked to share Washington's economic burden in Afghanistan. Trump's speeches are heavily political aimed at his base trumpeting America First theme and burden sharing by allies. The call to India was more for domestic audience.

Unlike the failed strategies of the Obama administration, "we will fight and we will talk" and later "we will talk and not fight", the Trump team wants to fight first and talk later. And fight with a strategy that has not been tried before — address the sanctuaries issue more forcefully, get re-involved in counter-insurgency with a different military approach and tactics and try to take the fight to the Taliban and possibly to Pakistan. The thinking is that it will force the Taliban to talk.

Does Trump have a right strategy? I have my doubts. Americans rarely have had a right strategy in fighting insurgencies, civil wars and wars of national liberation as the Vietnam

war proved so tragically. Ken Burns's 10-part documentary on the Vietnam war currently being shown on PBS Television here in the US gives an enormous insight into this failing.

Basically the Americans want to get out, of course leaving behind enough military presence for counter-terrorism operations and for an advisory role. But only after they have achieved some degree of pacification if not a peace deal. Whatever the original aim, Americans are there now not so much for geopolitics but for reasons of national security to which terrorism remains a big threat. It has been a poorly fought war, and they want to salvage their image, aiming not so much for peace with honour — whose time is long past — but peace without dishonour.

Much would depend on Pakistan's role. It is the most consequential external player after the US but is seen, rightly or wrongly, by both Kabul and Washington as having been part of the problem. The central role will of course belong to the Afghan government whose own failure more than that of anyone else has brought this war to such a sorry pass and suffering to their great country.

Touqir Hussain, a former ambassador, is adjunct faculty Georgetown University and Maxwell School of Public Affairs at Syracuse University. He is a member of the INDUS Academic Panel. The article was originally published in [The Express Tribune](#) on October 5.

SAIS Event

October 11, 2017

Athar Javaid, President of INDUS, met Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for Interior, Pakistan, during an event at SAIS - Johns Hopkins University moderated by Dean Vali Nasr, "Pakistan's Efforts in Internal and Regional Security."



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Youth Leadership Development

Creating campus-based, strictly nonpolitical Student Government Associations that offer Executive, Legislative & Judiciary functions experience within the campus environment. Elected student representatives, as Members of Parliament, Senators and judges manage all aspects of student affairs, in conjunction with campus administration.

Pakistan Civil Liberties Union

Civil liberties are personal guarantees and freedoms that the government cannot abridge, either by law or by judicial interpretation. However in today's Pakistan, rising violence, intolerance, weak rule of law, endemic corruption, lack of social and economic justice, and religious freedom, social exclusion of the vulnerable and the marginalized are a common phenomenon that the people of Pakistan face on a daily basis. Pakistan Civil Liberties Union – PCLU is a watchdog organization intended to combat all the above issues at every cross section of our society.

Community Integration & Civic Promotion

When successful, the processes of community integration and civic promotion begin with the individual and, alongside support from Federal, State, and municipal programs,

advance collectively, often through socialization with informal groups and professional and cultural associations. However, due to regional, organizational, and programmatic differences, the catalytic potential of civil society organizations is underutilized. Partnerships with local, regional, and national civil society organizations will advance community integration, promote the concept of citizenship, and highlight pathways to achieve the “American Dream.”

Policy Research – As It Happens

Campus-based political and social sciences research. Graduate Student and Faculty focusing on policy issues for possible social, cultural, and political reform, followed by advocacy action and awareness creation by the same researchers for the purposes of legislative reform as appropriate.

Cultivating Early Awareness

Aimed at increasing youngsters’ awareness of rights and responsibilities of citizenship, and building a national bond at a very impressionable age, leading to real benefits to the nation in evolving future leadership.

MEDIA REVIEW

Mind the gap

Huma Yusuf

“The [Pakistani] women we celebrate are exceptions.” Pakistan ranked second worst in the world for gender parity. Indicators include health and survival and political empowerment. To begin addressing the problem, Pakistan needs more sex disaggregated data to “understand the true nature of the gender gap” and to “give ordinary women a greater voice” by checking violence against them and by giving them tools to connect and be heard. [[Dawn](#)]

Khwaja Asif Defends Pakistan Policy at USIP in Washington D.C.

Riaz Haq

Pakistani Foreign Minister Asif argued 10 key points against stated U.S. policy toward Pakistan and the region at Washington, DC, think tank event. [[Haq’s Musings](#)]

Legal eye: A game of chess?

Babar Sattar

The author expects little policy-making from the Pakistani government as it wrestles with the appointment of a new NAB head, selection of an interim PM, and other issues in the run up to the 2018 election. [[The News](#)]

Despite Tillerson, US won’t abandon Pakistan for India

Jonah Blank

While “the relationship between [the US and India] has grown progressively closer over the past two decades,” the author believes it is likely overstated. Also, the US-Pakistan relationship has not fundamentally changed: “There is no new US policy towards Pakistan and there won’t be one soon. As long as the US has troops in neighboring Afghanistan, it will be reliant on Pakistan for logistical support, transit, and—perhaps most importantly—Islamabad’s influence with both the Taliban and its affiliated Haqqani Network.” [[Indian Express](#)]

Pakistan should become a secular state, but how realistic is that?

Raza Habib Raja

In Pakistan, “no material or influential institution is secular,” and urbanization will increase the role of religion in political and other matters. Secularism would allow various religious faiths to practice freely and allow laws that reflect contemporary realities. But there is no obvious political champion of a secular Pakistan right now. And “given the desperate state of affairs in Pakistan... that is the ultimate irony.” [[Express Tribune](#)]

Solo Female Travel in Pakistan

A tourist’s travels in Pakistan explain how to approach and plan a trip and the many things to see and do while visiting. “After 20 days traveling in Pakistan, I can say it is my favorite country in the world.” [[We Are Travel Girls](#)]

‘EIA public hearings have become a meaningless formality’

Fatima Munir

Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) are being relegated to the background in Karachi as there appears “no limit to the environmental degradation that is acceptable in the name of development.” An architect explains how the EIA are being circumvented and present false hope to the common man that environmental considerations are a factor in development decisions.

[[Express Tribune](#)]



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