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A Note from INDUS Community Integration & Civic Promotion Program



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On February 14, an American horror story played out in southeastern Florida when 19-year-old Nikolas Cruz opened fire at Stoneman Douglas High School, killing 17 people, including 14 students.

An exhaustive list of such events may start in 1999 with the mass killing of 13 students and teachers at Columbine High School in Colorado. However, over the course of twenty years since Columbine, it is tragic to note that violent eruptions and mass killings have become so commonplace within the society of the world's most advanced and powerful nation. Mass shootings involving more than four casualties take place every sixteen days in the US. Compare this to an average time of 200 days between such incidents between 1999 and 2010.

The INDUS Community Integration and Civic Promotion Program takes this opportunity to respectfully remind our readers that homegrown mass shootings and terrorist attacks can be prevented, and if we are learning anything, it's that the best opportunity – and the responsibility – to do so begins at home – first with immediate family members and then

friends, co-workers, community members and religious leaders. It ends with law enforcement authorities.

Why Trump's Troubling Pakistan Policy Dooms Afghanistan Peace

The administration's approach to Islamabad undermines potential solutions in Afghanistan.



Touqir Hussain

For a 16-year-long war in Afghanistan, whose failure lies in an endless list of complex causes – including flawed strategy, incoherent war aims, return of the warlords, rise of fiefdoms and ungoverned spaces, corruption, power struggles and a competitive and conflict-prone regional environment – U.S. President Donald Trump has one simple solution: get rid of the Haqqani Network and Taliban sanctuaries in Pakistan. And if Pakistan does not oblige, cut off aid.

Like the Afghanistan war, the equally complicated U.S.-Pakistan relationship is also being narrowly defined, thereby obscuring the many different ways it can serve or hurt the very American interests that the Trump administration is trying to serve.

It is certainly true that Pakistan has a lot to answer for, especially for its illicit relationship with the Taliban. But sanctuaries did not play a defining role in the war's failure, nor will their eradication, if they still exist, play a salient part in its success.

Sixteen years into the war, which has been described as "16 one year wars," Washington has shown no better understanding of the complexities of Afghanistan and the region than when it invaded the country in 2001. Some understanding of what has gone wrong might help us find the way forward.

The War in Afghanistan: What Went Wrong

It was a war that may not have been unnecessary but was nonetheless possibly avoidable. It has been an unwinnable war in the way it has been conducted, especially given the realities of a strife-torn country wracked by multiple conflicts since the overthrow of the monarchy in 1973. The 1980s war against the Soviets and the subsequent civil war had raised the profile of the mullah and jihad, and changed not only Afghanistan but also the adjoining tribal territories in Pakistan. Home to millions of Afghan refugees and base to mujahedeen, these territories almost became like one country along with the areas across the Afghan border.

Pakistan's heartland too was affected by the religious infrastructure spawned by the 1980s war and by Islamabad's own follies, to which Washington made no small contribution, first through the ISI- and CIA-sponsored jihad in Afghanistan, and then by sanctioning Pakistan in 1990 and leaving it to its own devices. The Taliban were an extension of this slow unraveling of Afghanistan, and strategic overreach of the Pakistan army and societal changes in the country.

Former President George W. Bush made grievous mistakes upon America's return to Afghanistan. He showed no understanding of what had been going on in and around Afghanistan since Washington's last exit. It was a strategic mistake to try to defeat al-Qaeda by defeating Taliban who were not going to fight but instead run away to Pakistan. The focus should have been on al-Qaeda. The context of dealing with the Taliban was fixing the fractured Afghanistan through reconstruction and stabilization of the country with a new ethno-regional balance acceptable to all the Afghans. That is what you call nation building. But Washington, of course, would have none of that.

Instead, Bush outsourced much of the war to warlords and rushed to institute democracy, guided by the need to get domestic support for the war and by a flawed view that democracy is nation building. Actually, democracy and nation building are two separate challenges, with one sometimes reinforcing the other but not always.

In Afghanistan, democracy did not help. It made Karzai dependent on the political support of warlords and regional power brokers, the very people who had brought Afghanistan to grief in 1990s. This led to payoffs, corruption, a drug mafia, power struggles, and bad governance, facilitating the return of the Taliban which led a resistance that was part insurgency, part jihad, and part civil-war. And by creating a dual authority – their own and that of the Afghan government – Americans set up a perfect scenario for clash of personalities, policies and interests, making for a poor war strategy.

While Bush went on to fight another war, for his successor, it was a story of dealing with his deeply conflicted approach to the war where policy and legacy collided. Indeed the policymaking itself was not without its own conflicts, strife-torn as it was by turf wars, interagency rivalries and bureaucratic tensions.

The Trump Strategy

Now Trump is seeking a military solution for the conflict. There is a talk of a political solution, but that seems to be just a Plan B in case the military option fails. The suspension of aid to Pakistan is aimed at pressuring Islamabad to help Washington defeat the Taliban. But Pakistan is finding it hard to oblige without relinquishing its national interests in favor of U.S. aid, and that too in the face of public humiliation by Trump. It certainly will not do so in this election year, and not in an atmosphere where Pakistan sees the Indian threat having doubled with India's increased presence in Afghanistan from where it is allegedly helping orchestrate terrorist attacks on Pakistan. If anything, this should enhance Pakistan's relationship with the Taliban, which may be demonstrating their value as an ally with the recent horrific terrorist attacks in Kabul.

The Taliban are the biggest card Pakistan has to secure its interests in Afghanistan, and it would not give it up easily unless it knows what comes next. Pakistan also feels the U.S. strategy would not succeed and may in fact backfire. A disinherited Taliban on a retreat from Afghanistan would be a much greater threat to Pakistan and to the United States, especially if the Taliban joins forces with other jihadist and Islamist groups.

The Washington-Islamabad standoff thus continues. Pakistan feels it can take the heat, and that if Washington dials up the pressure, it would fall back on China. Washington thus has to consider the geostrategic implications carefully in this respect.

The China Factor

A Pakistan closely aligned with China could conceivably take a harder line against India. If the United States continues to see China as a threat and India as a balancer, what would serve American interests better: an India whose resources are divided by a two-front deployment, or one that has friendly relations with Pakistan? For that, Washington should not burn its bridges with Islamabad.

A relationship with Pakistan would also give the United States leverage against India. Furthermore, it will be useful to have Pakistan on its side in a region that is increasingly coming under the strategic shadow of Russia and the creeping influence of Iran. Most importantly, Pakistan's role remains critical in stabilizing Afghanistan, and in helping Washington's

counterterrorism efforts.

A Political Solution?

After considering all other options, the discussion always reverts to the talk of a political solution. But the irony is such a solution remains as elusive as the military one. How do you have power-sharing or coexistence when the Kabul government and the Taliban subscribe to two different political systems? And if instead of sharing it, you divide power by relinquishing the governance of some areas to the Taliban rule, are you not consigning the populations to the Middle Ages?

Pakistan has limited influence to bring Taliban to the negotiating table, and has little incentive to do so when there is lack of clarity about American policy and Pakistan's own relations with Washington are strained. The upshot is that Taliban themselves are divided. Some are irreconcilable, but those who want peace worry that if they do lay down the arms and accept a deal while the American forces are still there, they might be shortchanged.

The Taliban trust China and its guarantees that they would not be betrayed. But the Chinese need support from Washington and Kabul. The Quadrilateral Consultative Group process offered the prospect of such a support. But the Trump administration prefers military option and going it alone, and that also suits Kabul: this way, at least the Americans will likely stay for the long haul.

What is needed is a new relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Only Kabul and Islamabad together can deal with the Taliban, politically if possible, and militarily if necessary. Counterinsurgencies are essentially a governance issue. Afghanistan needs to conciliate the areas under the Taliban control, and Pakistan should help by making its lands inhospitable to them. And both must work on joint border management and resolution of the refugee problem. This is a long-term plan, but it is doable. U.S. engagement with them would be essential to their success, as would be China's involvement.

But the Trump administration is not thinking in these terms. Instead, Trump has defined the Afghanistan war very narrowly and in immediate terms as a terrorism problem. American soldiers under attack from sanctuaries in Pakistan, rather than the war itself, preoccupies the Trump base. As for the military, it is only thinking of the military solution, and that also highlights the sanctuaries issue. So, right now, U.S. Pakistan relations are stuck, which makes the prospects of any political solution in Afghanistan quite dim.

Touqir Hussain, a former ambassador of Pakistan and diplomatic adviser to the Prime Minister, is adjunct faculty at Georgetown University and Syracuse University. He is a member of the INDUS Academia and Scholars Panel. His article was originally published in [The Diplomat](#).

Break the silence



Huma Yusuf

IT is not possible to eradicate dissent in a nation of 220 million people. On any issue, at any time, there will be someone who takes an opposing view, someone who offers a different perspective, someone who levels a criticism, someone whose values diverge. Denying this is tantamount to insanity.

And yet, the state's efforts to eradicate dissent continue apace. The recent closure of Radio Mashaal on the grounds that its programming undermined Pakistan's interests and facilitated a "hostile intelligence agency's agenda" was only the latest in a series of crackdowns against dissenting voices. Journalists and bloggers are abducted (or nearly so) with alarming frequency.

Foreign correspondents have been expelled from the country. And it is not just dissenting voices in the media that are facing pressure; attempts to curtail the activities of domestic and international NGOs are under way, with many of the latter facing expulsion.

These tactics seem excessive given that decades of martial law have instilled a strong culture of self-censorship and caution among those who seek to challenge the state. Starting out as a reporter in Karachi 15 years ago, I remember being told to stay clear of religion, the military and Altaf Hussain — in order to stay out of trouble. Times have changed, but not by much. You can criticise Altaf Hussain with little fear these days. The rest of the advice is intact. Indeed, one can imagine today's reporters being told to stay clear of Balochistan and CPEC as well.

A heavy-handed approach also seems unnecessary in an era when co-option works as effectively. The state has learned how to bring dissenters on side by funding projects, facilitating careers, arranging lucrative contracts, providing access in the form of scoops and high-profile interviews, and inflating salaries. Few will bite the hand that feeds them. This is an unnerving shift towards first-world narrative manipulation, much like lobbying, and difficult to pin down as a form of censorship. And Pakistan will lack the tools to counter it — such as transparency, right to information, and media literacy — for decades to come.

Legal instruments are also cynically deployed to ensure dissenters mind their language. Courts are ever ready to cite violations of media regulations and hold troublesome characters in contempt in order to ensure silence. The Anti-Terrorism Act — which ambiguously states that “creat[ing] a sense of fear or insecurity in society” is an act of terrorism — is routinely used to pursue journalists, students or other members of civil society that dare speak out against the state — to the extent that the Supreme Court in August had to urge lower courts to wield the ATA with a tad more finesse.

Growing attempts by the state to quash dissent are echoed by the growing audacity of far-right groups to scare into silence those they perceive to be dissenters. These are groups that, for now, consider themselves to be protected by the state, aligned with its views, in agreement on what constitutes dissent. But their tactics are different, even more dangerous.

As a result, those who take any issue, of any magnitude, with state narratives are either in danger of being accused of treason, terrorism or conspiracy by the state, or blasphemy by the mob. Both are terrifying prospects. Both are sufficient to fuel further silence, stronger self-censorship, extreme caution.

But 220m people will never agree on everything. So while dissent may be stifled, it cannot be eradicated. And it will eventually have to be reckoned with. At some point, individuals and communities decide the silence is no longer worth it — that what is gained in exchange for silence is too unjust, too negligent. That silence gives you nothing in return.

That's when people take to the streets. One recent example of silence running its course is the 'Pakhtun Long March', which reflects a community's exasperation with stereotyping and persecution. The protests and public outpouring following Zainab's brutal abuse and murder was another tipping point, which indicated that the horrors had reached unacceptable levels. And once the silence is broken, it is difficult to restore again. That's because further silence is quickly equated with complicity, and for all our flaws, we are ultimately a nation with some conscience.

The problem with stifling dissent is that you don't know what will be a breaking point. With no one to point out where you might be failing, with no one to suggest what might be perceived as an injustice, with no one to hold you to account, you start to forget that silence does not mean complacency or even resignation. Dissent helps a society become stronger, by recognising problems and urging improvement — it allows for dialogue and incremental change, democracy rather than revolution. Push for silence long enough and the only response you'll get is a scream.

Huma Yusuf is a freelance journalist. She is a member of the INDUS Academia & Scholars Panel. Her article was originally published in [Dawn](#).

The fast-changing dynamics of Pakistani politics



Dr. Hasan Askari Rizvi

In March, Pakistan's domestic politics is expected to experience a number of important developments that will have far-reaching implications. Next month may prove to be decisive in determining the political role of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN), and how much clout state institutions will exercise in governance.

Half of the members of the upper house of Pakistan's Parliament, the Senate (52 out of 104), will be elected in the first week of March. All provinces have equal representation in the Senate, and each provincial assembly elects the allocated quota of members.

In addition, four members are elected by 12 National Assembly members from the tribal areas, and federal capital members are elected by the National Assembly as a whole. There are unconfirmed reports of the use of money to obtain votes. The PMLN is expected to emerge as the single largest party in the Senate, but the elections will not put an end to the PMLN's political difficulties.

Two important court judgments are expected to be announced before mid-March, and they will have a direct impact on the party's political dynamics, and its chief Nawaz Sharif and his family. The PMLN managed to get a law passed by Parliament to let Sharif serve as party chief, despite his disqualification as prime minister and National Assembly member. The Supreme Court bench is expected to announce its judgment soon on the validity of this new law.

The other case that is expected to be decided before mid-March is before the Accountability Court, addressing corruption and money-laundering charges against Sharif, his two sons, his daughter and her husband.

If one or both judgments go against the Sharif family, it will create a leadership crisis in the PMLN, and will block the political career of Sharif and his ambitious daughter Maryam, at least for the time being. This will likely cause a conflict within the party over succession. In case the judgments go Sharif's way, his leadership will be reaffirmed, but the confrontation between the PMLN and opposition parties will intensify.

Currently, the PMLN — and especially Sharif and his daughter — has launched a massive propaganda campaign against the superior judiciary and the military, alleging a conspiracy by these state institutions to oust him from politics. This has soured relations between the party and the institutions, especially the superior judiciary.

The Supreme Court imprisoned a Sharif loyalist for contempt of court, and issued such a notice to two other loyalists. But the court has shown a lot of patience toward the negative statements of Sharif and his daughter. It seems the court wants to await the Accountability Court judgment in the family's money-laundering case.

The campaign against the two state institutions has strengthened Sharif's position in the PMLN and galvanized party activists, who would be willing to engage in protests if the leadership asked them to. Another dilemma pertains to the question of implementation of a judgment that convicts Sharif and his family by the PMLN government at the federal level and in Punjab.

The party may decide to challenge an adverse court judgment by resorting to street protests. If the government does not control them, opposition parties are expected to challenge it. The Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaf (PTI) of Imran Khan has already shown its intention to counter such

agitation.

The growing confrontation between the PMLN and the PTI, and the campaign against the superior judiciary and the military, have increased polarization in Pakistani politics. Though the PTI is less strident and suffers from organizational weaknesses, it is maintaining political pressure on the PMLN.

The political polarization and confrontation have diverted the government's attention from good governance to pursuing the PMLN's partisan agenda against the superior judiciary and opposition parties, especially the PTI.

March will be an eventful month for Pakistani politics and society. The outcome of these political and judicial developments — especially how the PMLN, the superior judiciary and the military deal with one another — will determine the direction of domestic politics, and whether general elections, due in summer, will be held on time.

Dr. Hasan Askari Rizvi is a Pakistan-based political analyst. His article was originally published in [Arab News](#).



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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

'Bajwa Doctrine' working well against American blackmail

Under the "Bajwa Doctrine" the Pakistan army is responding strongly to actions by the U.S., according to an analysis from the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), a British security think tank, by Kamal Alam, RUSI's expert on Pakistan and Middle East. Said the report: "The Pakistani military is fully prepared to face any cuts in US military aid and potential threats of cross border incursions by American forces and feels its global recognition and reputation of its counter terror efforts and the military's role is very different to what it was in 2001." [[The News](#)]

American Bid to Put Pakistan on FATF Watch-List Fails in Paris

Riaz Haq

Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the financial watchdog group for terror financing, has delayed any decision to put Pakistan on its watch list. But Pakistan may be placed on the FATF "grey list" at the June meeting; the author examines the potential effect on Pakistan's economy, on the United States, and how China would benefit, saying that, if it were to happen, it would be a pyrrhic victory for the United States as "Washington will lose whatever little political capital and influence it still has left in Pakistan." [[Haq's Musings](#)]

Corruption is still rife around the world

A chart shows that more than two-thirds of countries score below 50 in Transparency International's latest index. [[The Economist](#)]

U.S. Pursues Saudi Nuclear Deal, Despite Proliferation Risk

The Trump administration is pursuing a deal to sell nuclear reactors to Saudi Arabia. The kingdom's refusal to accept enrichment and reprocessing curbs is likely to anger U.S. lawmakers, who must review any accord to transfer U.S. nuclear technology. It is a lucrative but complicated opportunity for U.S. businesses, entwining regional strategy and international competition. [[Wall Street Journal](#)]

The world's largest-ever tech deal now depends on Qualcomm

Broadcom placed a \$146 billion dollar bid on Qualcomm, its rival chip maker. Qualcomm's board will soon meet to discuss next steps. A merger would create the world's third largest chipmaker and, to the delight of many including antitrust regulators, change the pricing policy used by Qualcomm. [[The Economist](#)]

This Amazing 3D Sand Art In Balochistan Will Leave You Optically Confused

Zubair Mukhtar, Hussain Zeb, and Bahar Ali Gauhar, three friends from the coastal city of Pasni, have created jaw-dropping 3D sand art on display by the sea. [[MangoBaaz](#)]

Air pollution is damaging our mental health

Kim Eckart

The higher the level of particulates in the air, the greater the indications of psychological distress. A new study looked for a direct connection between toxic air and mental health, relying on some 6,000 respondents from a larger, national, longitudinal study. The researchers found that the risk of psychological distress increased alongside the amount of fine particulate matter in the air. Every increase in pollution of 5 micrograms per cubic meter had the same effect as a 1.5-year loss in education. [[World Economic Forum](#)]



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