**Hubris and egos or humility and wisdom**

**What should prevail?**

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May 17, 2023

[Opinions](https://www.nation.com.pk/opinions), [Columns](https://www.nation.com.pk/columns)

I have been thinking about whether my interest in politics is because of nature (my genes) or nurture (experiences). In undivided India, my father was the President of the Nainital Muslim League. He was arrested immediately after partition and spent six months in jail on fabricated charges of ‘anti-state’ activities and was only released when my mother wrote to Jawaharlal Nehru, who was my father’s patient.

The earliest memory of my life is that of a three-year-old. We used to live in the clinic of my father facing Victoria Road in Karachi directly across Paradise Cinema. The students were protesting on the road on January 9, 1953. Suddenly, there was commotion and shots were fired. My father (and I observing from between his legs) watched from the balcony. Tear gas shells and, immediately thereafter, real bullets were fired. I remember seeing a body slumped on the road. An inspector warned my father to go inside. That’s all I remember. Reflecting on it today, it was a story of hubris that has been repeated throughout our history.

[New Chinese ambassador arrives in US, says relations face 'serious' challenges](https://www.nation.com.pk/24-May-2023/new-chinese-ambassador-arrives-in-us-says-relations-face-serious-challenges)

Protesting students were pushed aside by a flag-carrying automobile whose occupant was the Minister of Interior, Mr Mushtaq Gurmani. That is when the firing started. Gurmani lost consciousness because of the tear gas and was lifted away. Sadly and criminally, 26 students were killed. The first to lose his life was a young boy scout, Nainsuk Lal, who was tendering to a bullet-injured student protester. The entire city joined the protest and life was paralysed. Public property was damaged including Gurmani’s car. During the negotiations that followed, peace was restored on the appeal of a student leader, Kazim, not at the request of the government. Did we learn anything?

The next year in 1954 in memory of those killed, a convention was held in Katrak Hall. Mr A K Brohi, a Minister at the time, was supposed to speak. Gurmani felt insulted the year before, he was also against negotiations that had brought peace, and his hubris and ego were yearning for revenge. Brohi arrived, but a planned pandemonium was started with plain clothes people along with arranged gangsters mixing among the students unknown to them. The peace squad among students was led by Dr Adeeb Rizvi (of SIUT today).

[Why Climate Change Adaptation needs to be energy-driven and gender-responsive](https://www.nation.com.pk/24-May-2023/why-climate-change-adaptation-needs-to-be-energy-driven-and-gender-responsive)

Our long history of labelling parties and leaders as traitors and anti-state dates back to 1951 when the Rawalpindi Conspiracy case was initiated. Those arrested included Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Maj. Gen. Akbar Khan, Sajjad Zaheer and Capt. Zafarullah Poshni (who recently died and has written an excellent book ‘Prison Interlude’ a memoir of those days). A special law was passed to try them. All were sentenced but then released after four years of imprisonment when an Appeals Court declared the allegations to be totally false. I simply cannot imagine Faiz Sahib and the army personnel of that time to be traitors.

I move forward to Fatima Jinnah’s burial in 1965. She was maligned as a candidate and was labelled as anti-state when she contested against President Ayub Khan. When she died, my father and I, as a young matriculate, were at her funeral. A huge crowd was there. Because of a few isolated slogans, tear gas was fired right into the centre of the huge but peaceful crowd, which turned violent. We never learned.

[Azerbaijan warns Armenia against meddling in Karabakh](https://www.nation.com.pk/24-May-2023/azerbaijan-warns-armenia-against-meddling-in-karabakh)

Mujeeb was called a traitor following the Agartala Conspiracy Case. Ayub Khan refused to invite him to the Round Table Conference (RTC) in 1969 but relented when the opposition insisted. The RTC collapsed in a couple of days because of the clear inability of the politicians to reach a deal. However, many politicians in East Pakistan were dubbed traitors and the rest is history. Imagine our desperation, when hubris had spectacularly failed, that before Mujeeb was released, Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto went to meet him in prison and urged him to consider a loose confederation.

The Hyderabad conspiracy case was instituted in 1975 by PM Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Shaheed in which the National Awami Party (NAP) was banned. Its entire leadership including Wali Khan, Bizenjo, Ataullah Mengal, Khair Bakhsh Marri, Najam Sethi and Habib Jalib were arrested and tried for treason. The 3rd Amendment was passed hurriedly to give a very broad definition to anti-state activities. I remember reading an excellent 40-page patriotic rejoinder of Mr Wali Khan on the allegations of treason. Were the above traitors? We should also not forget that in July 1977, when politicians delayed the conclusion of negotiations, it provided an excuse for an 11-year-long take-over that was painful in all respects.

[Bilawal’s services as FM lauded](https://www.nation.com.pk/24-May-2023/bilawal-s-services-as-fm-lauded)

Many experiments have been conducted and many somersaults taken in our political processes, for example, the ‘creation’ of political parties, the creation of their antidotes, then destroying them, then creating ‘Pro-Pakistan’ alternatives, then destroying them too. Suppression, then appeasement, then accommodation—policies emerging from the thinking of whoever was in power, rather than through a serious, broad-based, inclusive strategic process.

Where do we go from here? I urge everybody to take a deep breath. I will stick my neck out as I have learned from experience and history both, and state that no political party today has ever been anti-Pakistan or that it comprises traitors. Excesses have been committed by all during our history, out of frustrations including during the MRD. When all avenues are closed, anger in all its dimensions is the only route left which then colours the national landscape into a lethal red.

I have urged all stakeholders to ‘think again’ and have even gifted a book of the same title by Adam Grant to many of them. An outstanding example of today is the remarkable peace achieved between Iran and Saudi Arabia. A great achievement of their leaders, kudos to HH Mohammad bin Salman and the Iranian leadership along with the positive role played by our friend China. This signifies a major reversal of thinking by these great leaders, who will go down in history for ending decades of animosity.

[Court extends interim bail of Usman Buzdar till 25th](https://www.nation.com.pk/24-May-2023/court-extends-interim-bail-of-usman-buzdar-till-25th)

Can we find similar greatness in our leadership? I personally know there are many on all sides of the spectrum, including in the establishment, but everyday events and hot exchanges between them fogs their perception into dangerous arguments, even unrealistic questions are floated like, ‘Are you with Pakistan or against Pakistan?’.

The first and last thing elders would say would be to cool down, learn from the past, and save the family. Our friends who have a clear view from outside are urging us too. Only nations that learn from history achieve greatness. Those who don’t, are forgettable dots in the sands of time. I have been urging all that we desperately need to find a solution. I am confident that Inshallah, better sense will prevail and with the spirit of forgiveness            we will succeed in sorting out our disputes. A lot of work is to be done, and many golden chapters are to be written. Long Live Pakistan!