



## Onslaught by Pakistan's new censors

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collective ire of our establishment and its lackeys? For a long time, it was considered an editorially conservative paper: Its detractors used to call it Daily Yawn. It's the kind of paper that was once read by bureaucrats, diplomats and aspiring young people wanting to improve their English. But over the past decade, Dawn has become a bit more vigorous in its reporting and its commentary.

Two years ago, for example, Almeida reported that Sharif, then the prime minister, had told the army's top brass that if the military didn't act against militants, Pakistan would stand isolated in the world. The generals apparently were so shocked and hurt at the suggestion that they weren't seen abroad as a gaggle of peace-loving Gandhis that they went into a huddle and emerged shouting breach of national security. They demanded an inquiry, and a high-powered commission including senior intelligence officers was set up.

The besieged government fired its information minister for his "lapse" in failing to stop the story from being published. When the commission announced its findings, the army's spokesman tweeted that the military "rejected" them. The spokesman was made to retract the tweet, but the onslaught against Almeida and Dawn continued by other means.

Media competitors have called Almeida an enemy agent and a Sharif lackey. The newspaper stood by him, and he continued to write his column with occasional references to "the muzzle and the leash." Then, during the last election campaign this spring, Sharif — who was removed from office for corruption last year — gave Almeida that interview confirming his differences with the generals. And now Almeida faces criminal and possibly treason charges simply for writing that a three-time prime minister said that Pakistan shouldn't be a staging ground for terrorist attacks on another country.

But he isn't the one who is a threat to the nation.  
The persecution of Cyril Almeida is

now the center of a clampdown on Pakistani media unprecedented in scale and sophistication.

Four years ago, after Hamid Mir, arguably the country's most well-known television journalist, was shot six times in Karachi, his brother accused the chief of the military spy agency, known as the ISI, of ordering the hit. The military establishment turned on the Geo TV network, where

Mir worked, and the Jang media group for maligning the ISI.  
Seven years ago, Syed Saleem Shahzad, a reporter who had exposed suspected connections between the Pakistani Navy and terrorists, was found

dead in a canal. A judicial commission that probed the incident didn't reach any conclusion, but it recommended reforming the intelligence agencies.

Those reforms haven't taken place, but the intelligence agencies have found ways to control the media without having to resort to physical violence. Newspaper distributors are told not to deliver the paper. TV shows keep disappearing as cable operators



Columnist Cyril Almeida entering court in Lahore, Pakistan, on Oct. 8.

are instructed over the phone to take them off the air.

Pakistani journalists have always been boisterous taking on military dictators and civilian rulers who have tried to curb their freedoms. They were out on the streets again last week. But about the same time that they were protesting, a delegation of media owners was being briefed by the army's spokesman on how to report on national security.

At the heart of the Pakistani establishment's idea of national security is a self-aggrandizing notion of respect. Almeida refers to the army as "the boys," sometimes cheekily. The establishment thinks he's not respectful enough. It asks: Why did he call the army chief, not General Raheel Sharif, but just Sharif? A prime minister tells Almeida, on the record, that he has different ideas from theirs about national security? How dare he go write that up in a newspaper just under the picture of our founding father?

For now, it seems the new censorship is working. Urdu journalists are writing about national politics in paragraphs. Current affairs programs criticizing the army are routinely dropped at the last moment. Reporters seen as critical of the army are losing their jobs. Ghazi Salahuddin, one of Pakistan's most senior journalists, recently said that he has never seen such restrictions on the media here. He has been a working journalist for a half-century and through three military dictatorships.

Dawn's first editor in chief, Altaf Hussain, once wrote that Jinnah, the paper's founder, never gave him any editorial directive — that he "never said 'Do this' or 'Don't do that.' In fact, he told me to study a given situation and form my honest and independent opinion on it, and then to write fearlessly what I thought." If Jinnah were alive today, he probably wouldn't be able to write what he thought in the paper he founded.

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## Kushner's moral laryngitis



Frank Bruni

From where I sit, Jared Kushner hasn't been much of a blessing to America.

But he has been a boon to clichés. Like the one about having your cake and eating it, too. Only in his case, there's extra frosting: He doesn't pay any tax on the cake, either.

Or the one about having everything served to you on a silver platter. Except Jared bobbles the platter, sends the delicacies atop it to the floor and squashes them under his tasseled loafers. Then his enablers whisper to the media that the delicacies were pulverized all along and would have looked worse without his princely footwork. We're not to fault Jared. We're to fete him.

I'll pass, and I'll note that while he and Ivanka Trump seemed at one point to be taking a wise break from center stage, he's back in the spotlight, identified as one of the most gullible fan boys of Prince Mohammed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia and exposed as an epic tax evader. He really is the perfect son-in-law.

Where Jared goes, embarrassment follows. He's Midas minus the touch and the humility. Oblivious to the truth of the kingdom that he was romancing, he bought into and promoted the idea of the Saudis as forward-thinking fixers who would make his self-aggrandizing delusion of peace in the Middle East happen. Now he watches and winces as they clumsily try to settle on the right lie about what happened to the journalist Jamal Khashoggi, who is believed to have been tortured, murdered and dismembered in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.

Last year Jared persuaded President Trump to choose Saudi Arabia as his first big stop on his first big foreign trip. He was on the phone with the kingdom so often that it frightened some American security experts. America's spies, meanwhile, caught wind of communiqués between foreign

officials talking about how easily manipulated Jared might be.

What does he have to say about the Saudis and Khashoggi? Nothing. He has his usual moral laryngitis. He's integral when there's the hope of credit, invisible when there's the certainty of blame.

Jared, 37, fancied himself a visionary. So did the 33-year-old Saudi prince, known as M.B.S. When they met at the White House two months after President Trump's inauguration, they reportedly forged an immediate friendship, each affirming the other's precocity and royal glow. Two princes are even smarter and shinier than one. But this was another Jared misjudgment: M.B.S. imprisoned business executives, kidnapped the prime minister of Lebanon and surely had knowledge of, if not a hand in, the silencing of Khashoggi.

And so the list of Jared's screw-ups grows.

He was among the Trump intimates who wanted all those fat-cat bankers in the administration; the resulting optics have dazzled. He pushed for the firing of the former F.B.I. director James Comey; that worked out brilliantly. He advocated the hiring of Anthony Scaramo; that was the stuff of farce.

Meantime he and Ivanka told the world — and themselves — that they were the better angels of the administration. Never mind that to campaign for her father, they shelved many of the principles that they had prattled about at Hamptons cocktail parties across the years. They weren't really shelving them, you see. No, they were sneaking them to be traitors within the new regime. They would bring it to power, then undermine it. They would create the problem in order to solve it.

This made no sense unless you factored in their desire for the heady adventure and personal advantage that a Trump presidency would afford them, no matter how wretched it turned out to be. They wanted the ride. So they rationalized it. Then they crashed. To measure their softening effect on Trump, just watch



Jared Kushner during a cabinet meeting in the White House in August.

his recent "60 Minutes" interview. He dismissed climate change. He blithely shrugged off the brutality of Vladimir Putin and Kim Jong-un. He all but begged Jim Mattis to resign.

Stephen Miller lives large. Steve Bannon lives on. Jared, are you alive? From where did he get this outsized confidence of his? His father bought him his admission to Harvard. His management of his family's company — in particular, his \$1.8 billion purchase of 666 Fifth Avenue — was questionable enough that a headline in Vanity Fair last year asked, "Is Jared Kushner the World's Worst Real-Estate Investor?"

"He hasn't really done anything," a prominent Republican who knows and is sympathetic to him recently said to me, referring to how little on Jared's résumé can be divorced from his inheritance. I'll give Jared this: He has at least kept Uncle Sam at bay. As The Times's Jesse Drucker and Emily Flitter reported last weekend, he "appears to have paid almost no federal taxes" for years while quintupling his net worth over the past decade to almost \$324 million.

He's the embodiment of the Trump administration's ethos that you're entitled to take a whack at something by dint of affluence and arrogance, not because of any manifest expertise. He'll reinvent government! He'll end the violence between the Israelis and Palestinians! He'll do justice to yet another cliché. It's the one about fools rushing in.

## Black athletes, raised fists

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country.

But in fact, Smith and Carlos were more moderate than their gesture suggested. They were trying to raise awareness of suffering; they were not Black Panthers or separatists. They had no weapons stockpiled or manifestoes. Their hugely watched act was, in fact, mostly improvised. In his autobiography, Smith explained that he sought to make a "human rights salute," not a black power salute. "We were concerned about the lack of black assistant coaches," he said. "About how Muhammad Ali got stripped of his title. About the lack of access to good housing and our kids not being able to attend the top colleges." They didn't want to race in meets hosted by all-white track clubs.

That was not exactly the stuff of revolution. But they were important causes in a country that seemed to have forgotten how to take care of the poor, particularly the black urban poor as the War on Poverty unraveled. Smith was completing his fourth year of ROTC at San Jose State and expected to graduate as a lieutenant in the Army. As he later explained, the protest was about mainly about "black dignity." A direct line might be traced from that medal stand to Frederick Douglass and his essay "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" now acknowledged as one of the great protest documents of American history. At the end of the essay, Douglass, after venting his spleen, expressed pride in the United States and wrote, "I do not despair of this country." Similarly, Tommie Smith demanded that his protest be done well, "because the national anthem is sacred to me, and this can't be sloppy." Great nations can survive this kind of respectful protest.

It should also be remembered that the protest came from three athletes, not two. Peter Norman stood on that medal stand, too, wearing his button,

adding his perspective to a problem that was hardly unique to America. Australia had a long and vexed history of its own, as Norman knew well — he had grown up in a family strongly affected by the Salvation Army and its mission to the poor. The decision of this apprentice butcher to stand tall, in his own way, greatly broadened the meaning of the moment. In fact, it was his idea that Smith and Carlos each wear a single glove (Carlos had forgotten his pair). It would be difficult to find a more poignant example of the Olympic ideal that Brundage had spent decades promoting. These athletes were standing together for something larger than simply winning. Smith later described the scene on the medal stand as an "arch of unity."

All three suffered in different ways for their role in forming that arch, but with the passage of time, they were welcomed back into the Olympic fold, and into the larger embrace of history. When Norman died in 2006, still unfairly neglected, Smith and Carlos stood up one more time, as his pallbearers.

Fifty years later, some of the details have shifted, but the gestures of athletes continue to reverberate in a nation that remains divided in most of the ways it was then. Future disputes over protests will surely get many of the details wrong in the heat of the moment, as so many extremists did in 1968. But taking the long view helps to restore a measure of calm inside an argument that shows no signs of ending soon.

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## The Saudi dilemma

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Saudi Arabia for months, not in. Now it will get worse.

And here's one more complication. Even if M.B.S. were pushed aside, if you think there are a 100 Saudi royals with the steel, cunning and ruthlessness he had to push through women driving, removing the Islamic police from the streets and reopening cinemas, you are wrong. There are not. All of these reforms had intense conservative opponents. This is not Denmark, and yet, without sweeping social, economic and religious reforms, Saudi Arabia could well become a huge failed state. Remember, one of ISIS' biggest sources of young recruits was Saudi Arabia.

And by the way, if you think M.B.S. had a dark side, you ought to look under some rocks in the kingdom. You will find some people there with long beards who don't speak English who believe the most crazy stuff about Shiites, Jews, Christians, Hindus, America and the West. And right now, trust me, they are applauding Jamal's assumed murder.

So, once again, what do we do? I don't have a simple answer. It's a mess. All I know is that we have to find some way to censure M.B.S. for this — without seeming to attack the whole Saudi people and destabilize the country. And we have to make sure that the social/religious reform process in Saudi Arabia proceeds — whoever is in charge there. Because that is a vital U.S. interest.

But you can't fix stupid. And when your ally does something as sick and as stupid as the Saudis apparently did in Istanbul, there is just no easy fix. But Trump might start by appointing an ambassador to Saudi Arabia. He has never had one — and it shows.

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