The impact of jihad as foreign policy

What is the issue?

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- US President Trump’s new South Asia policy is to end the Pakistan army’s four decades of resort to jihadi terrorism.
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- However, foreign policy experts reiterate the complications and challenges in doing so.
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How did the policy evolve?

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- Jihad as foreign policy was initially encouraged by the US in the 1980s to counter Soviet army’s occupation of Afghanistan.
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- This was backed by many leading Islamic countries, Western Europe and China as well.
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- Pakistan’s support to violent extremism played a key role in restricting Russian dominance in Afghanistan and its withdrawal from Afghanistan at the end of the 1980s .
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- It also carried on with cross-border terrorism across its eastern frontiers in India.
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- However, in the 1990s, US turned its focus on constructing the post-Cold War political arrangements in Europe.
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- Meantime Pakistan, exploiting the geographical advantage of Rawalpindi, persisted with the jihadi strategy across its eastern borders with Afghanistan.
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- However, the 9/11 attacks drew US's focus back to Afghanistan; it felt the

urgency to drain the terror swamps.
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- US Presidents Bush and Obama failed with all the options - money (military and economic assistance), love (declaring Rawalpindi as a “major non-Nato ally”) and coercion (raining drones across Pakistan’s western borderlands).
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- But, over the last two decades, America has discovered how hard it is to change Pakistan’s course.
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Why do the efforts fail?

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- The **geography** of Afghanistan and Pakistan, give huge advantage to the latter to exhibit its dominance.
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- The **landlocked nature of Afghanistan** necessitates Pakistan’s logistical support for US troops.
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- Also, **Pakistan’s intelligence** cooperation in the global war on terror becomes essential.
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- American sceptics' opinion that “Pakistan is too **nuclear** to fail” is true to a large extent.
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- Pakistan's alarm bells about the dangers of a nuclear confrontation between Pakistan and India, and its export of nuclear and missile technology to states in the region and beyond hampers US's outright options.
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How does the future look?

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- Pakistan has publicly rejected Trump’s demands to shut down terror sanctuaries and has outlined its own counter demands.
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- This include getting Kabul to end its support to the groups fighting against Pakistan and getting Delhi to make concessions on Kashmir.
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- It is demonstrating its defiance with increased relationships with China,

Russia and Turkey and reiterating that it can't be isolated.
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- Given all these, US should not lose sight of the view that Pak has always valued the special relationship with America and is aware of the dangers of inviting Washington’s wrath.
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- Supporting terror has become more like Pak's behaviour and habit; a more deeper understanding of this and appropriate response would work in US's favour.
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Source: Indian Express

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