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## South Asia

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# British Take Aim To Break Up Pakistan

by Jeffrey Steinberg

With the Dec. 27, 2007 assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, Pakistan, and, by extension, the entire South and Central Asian region, have been plunged into turmoil—just as British strategists intended. While the Bush Administration demonstrated the same degree of bungling incompetence and shallow thinking towards the unfolding Pakistan crisis, as it showed towards the invasion and occupation of Iraq, Britain has proceeded, step-by-step, towards a strategic goal: the breakup of Pakistan, and the creation of a no-man’s-land separatist entity, bordering on Afghanistan and Central Asia, to serve as a long-term source of instability, asymmetric warfare, and black market operations, particularly opium trafficking out of the “Golden Crescent.”

Already, the frontier areas of the North West Frontier Province, Waziristan, and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), are outside any direct control of the government in Islamabad, or the Pakistani military. Both the Taliban and al-Qaeda have re-established command, control, and communications in this region, and the Pakistan Army is not prepared to launch military operations against its own people in that area (a sizeable number of rank and file soldiers in the Army come from those regions). The Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) has longstanding ties to the Taliban, dating back to the U.S.- and British-sponsored mujahideen operations of the 1980s, against the Soviet occupation, prior to the Taliban’s formal emergence.

One senior U.S. intelligence source estimates that it would take 100,000 NATO combat troops, and a total of 200-300,000 troops altogether, in Afghanistan, to clear the border area of insurgents, and stabilize the country. And there is zero prospect of any such deployment at this time, or any time in the future. NATO’s mission statement for Afghanistan, according to NATO sources, explicitly forbids any anti-narcotics operations, ostensibly due to troop limitations; and an

estimated \$100 million in revenue from the black market opium trade, approximately 10% of the total annual cash flow, goes to the Taliban every year—thus insuring that the organization will continue to build in strength. The Taliban and its warlord allies control an estimated one-third of Afghan territory. British MI6 has been engaged in ongoing negotiations with Taliban commanders, much to the chagrin of the U.S. CIA, which recently pressed the Afghan government to expel two British “diplomats” who were funneling cash to the Taliban, and otherwise facilitating their takeover of key towns and regions.

## The Bhutto Assassination

In much the same way that neoconservatives in the Bush Administration convinced themselves that the invasion of Iraq would be a “cakewalk,” and that American soldiers would be greeted as “liberators,” Bush Administration strategists concocted a fantasy that “democracy” and stability could be brought to Pakistan, by forging a governing coalition between Benazir Bhutto, President Musharraf, and a new Pakistan Army chief, chosen for his close ties to the Pentagon. Shortly after her return to Pakistan, Mrs. Bhutto reneged on the agreement, and launched an effort to unseat Musharraf altogether, through street demonstrations and her own international media spotlight. According to one senior U.S. intelligence source, Bhutto’s British “friends” may have been instrumental in convincing her that she could abandon her deal with “that dictator” and go for direct power—with London’s backing.

The wishful delusion on the part of the Bush Administra-



PIB/Government of India

*Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh signs the condolence book for Benazir Bhutto at the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi on Dec. 28.*

tion contributed to the circumstances leading to the Bhutto assassination and the chaos that has followed, but was not the cause of her murder. Lyndon LaRouche observed, within hours of the Bhutto assassination, that whoever convinced President Musharraf to take off his military uniform and step down as head of the Armed Forces, was in the middle of the assassination/destabilization scheme. Stripped of the power of the uniform, President Musharraf has been turned into a hostage of circumstances.

### Londonistan

U.S. and Indian intelligence specialists have emphasized that the investigation into the Bhutto assassination is made more difficult by the fact that the Pakistani People's Party (PPP) leader had many enemies, who wished to see her dead, creating a number of opportunities, and a proliferation of false trails to secure a coverup. They point, however, to a network of Islamist groups, including the Hisbut Tahrir, with international headquarters in London, who have heavily penetrated the ranks of the Pakistani Army in recent years, and who, therefore, had access to the secure, garrison city of Rawalpindi. Such British-intelligence-protected and -sponsored groups offered the perfect cover for a made-in-London assassination.

If there was any remaining doubt about London's drive to spread chaos in South and Central Asia, through the Bhutto assassination and its aftermath, the Jan. 5-11, 2008 edition of *The Economist* set the record straight, with a lead editorial, "The World's Most Dangerous Place—Nothing else has worked; it is time for Pakistan to try democracy." The City of London mouthpiece demanded that the assassination probe be taken out of the hands of Musharraf, that the Pakistani military and intelligence services be purged, and that "democratic" elections take place right away. The alternative: a "slide into anarchy." "For too long," *The Economist* concluded, "Mr Musharraf has been allowed to pay lip-service to democratic forms, while the United States has winked at his blatant disdain for the substance. The justification has been the pre-eminent importance of 'stability' in the world's most dangerous place. It is time to impress upon him and the generals still propping him up that democracy is not the alternative to stability. It is Pakistan's only hope."

The International Crisis Group (ICG), normally a respected NGO, in a Jan. 2 report, echoed *The Economist* and went one step further—demanding Musharraf's immediate ouster. The report virtually claimed that Musharraf's remaining in office would lead to the breakup of the country: "Bhutto's death," the ICG claimed, "has drawn the battle lines even more clearly between Musharraf's military-backed regime and Pakistan's moderate majority, which is now unlikely to settle for anything less than genuine parliamentary democracy. Many in Pakistan fear that the federation's very survival could depend on the outcome of this struggle."

The Pakistani government denounced the ICG call as "seditionous."

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## Southwest Asia

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# Iraq: Calming Down or Priming for Blowup?

by Carl Osgood

The Bush Administration and its supporters have been making much out of the substantial reduction in the level of violence in Iraq that has occurred since the Summer of 2007. They declare that the surge strategy, which was hatched at the American Enterprise Institute in response to the Iraq Study Group's critical December 2006 report, has been an unqualified success; that Gen. David Petraeus is a hero for his "brilliant" implementation of a new counterinsurgency strategy; and that anyone on the political scene who still supports an unconditional withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq, as quickly as possible, is trying to pull defeat from the jaws of victory.

Competent analyses are more circumspect, however, and go well beyond Petraeus's own warning, in a year-end letter to the troops, that the supposed progress there is still "reversible." Indeed, while the current strategy may have resulted in short-term gains, long-term centrifugal forces that, in certain cases, have been planted by 100 years of British imperial strategy, and exacerbated by the bungled U.S. occupation, may yet pull the country apart.

The reduction in violence has generally been attributed to three factors: the surge, last Spring, of 30,000 additional U.S. troops into Iraq to implement the new strategy; the Anbar "Awakening," in which Sunni tribal chiefs in Anbar, Diyala, and other provinces, in some cases greased with U.S. and Saudi cash, have turned on their al-Qaeda allies; and a ceasefire declared by Shi'ite firebrand cleric Moqtada al-Sadr and his Jaish al-Mahdi militia.

With U.S. military encouragement, Sunni men have flocked to join "concerned local citizens" groups (or CLCs) which are then contracted to provide security in local areas. Sadr's ceasefire, with the exception of some rogue elements said to be outside of his control, has generally been described as holding. The result, according to Petraeus, has been a decline in the level of violence by about 60% over the past year.

Many critics of the Administration have attributed at least part of the reduction in violence to the completion of the ethnic cleansing that has taken place in Baghdad since the February 2006 Samara mosque bombing. The formerly mixed neighborhoods in Baghdad, these critics say, are now either all Sunni or all Shi'ite, lessening the motivation for ethnic violence. Anthony Cordesman, the chief Middle East expert