

# The British Plan To Recolonize The Subcontinent Is Gaining Ground

by Ramtanu Maitra

The massive suicide bomb attack on July 7, which killed 41 people at the Indian Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan, including the Indian military attaché and counsellor, indicates the ruthlessness of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)-British MI6-aided Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), or Pakistani Taliban, to break up Pakistan, and create a new, and unstable, nation bordering the resource-rich Central Asia and Iran. Although the Western media is keen to blame the "Taliban," it is clear that the Afghan Taliban was not involved, and that it was the handiwork of the TTP.

A day earlier, on the first anniversary of the Pakistani Army's raid of Lal Masjid at the heart of Pakistan's capital, Islamabad, a suicide bomber blew himself up, killing at least 19 people, mostly police officers. On the same day the Indian Embassy was attacked, terror struck Pakistan's largest city, Karachi, six times within an hour, as unknown terrorists triggered a series of blasts that wounded over 50 people, including children and policemen. Karachi, the largest Pakistani port, is the main disembarkation station of nearly 70% of the supplies that go to Afghanistan by road to the battling U.S./NATO troops. The supplies pass through the famed Khyber Pass—a 30-mile stretch between the Khyber Hills. At the time of this writing, the Khyber Pass, and a part of Peshawar city, 22 miles east of the Pass, remain infested with militant local tribes working hand-in-glove with the TTP.

The only way to comprehend what is happening is to first step back, and look at the key geostrategic puppet-master in the region: the British Empire.

## British Geostrategy for the Subcontinent

The British policy toward South Asia, and the Middle East as well, is uniformly colonial, and vastly different from that of the United States. Even today, when Washington is powered by people with tunnel vision, at best, the U.S. policy is not to break up nations, but to control the regime, or, as has become more prevalent in recent years, under the influence of the arrogant neocons, to force regime change. While this often creates a messy situation—for example, in Iraq—the U.S. would prefer to avoid such outcomes.

Britain, on the other hand, built its geostrategic vision in the post-colonial days through the creation of a mess, and furthering the mess, to break up a country. This policy results in a long-drawn process of violent disintegration. That is the

process now in display in Pakistan, as well as in many other nations, including Zimbabwe and Kenya—where the British colonial forces had hunted before, and still pull significant strings.

When the British left the Indian subcontinent in 1947, it was divided into India and Pakistan. The British colonial geostrategists, coming out of World War II, realized the importance of controlling the oil and gas fields. If possession could not be maintained, the strategists argued, Britain and its allies must remain at a striking distance, to ensure their control of these raw material reserves, and deny them to others.

At the end of British rule, Pakistan consisted of East Pakistan (which since has been liberated to form Bangladesh) and West Pakistan. West Pakistan's western wing (west of River Indus) bordering Afghanistan and Iran, consisted of Baluchistan, the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and the Tribal areas. North of all these, was the state of Jammu and Kashmir, which was a princely state under the Maharaja of Kashmir. Of the three areas, Baluchistan and the Tribal areas had not been brought under the British occupation and were kept instead as British protectorates. This was because the Tribals were ferocious, and made it clear they would not accept British troops within their territories. Moreover, the British crown figured that these areas would act as a buffer with Afghanistan, where the British were worried the Russians would show up.

Pakistan's North West Frontier Province (NWFP), however, is a different story. The NWFP, inhabited by Pushtun Muslims, was under the Indian National Congress, and led by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, a close associate of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Ghaffar Khan had no intention of joining Pakistan, but when the British called for a referendum to decide which way the NWFP would go, Ghaffar Khan decided not to let his party participate, ostensibly because he feared violence. Because of this, the referendum won by only 50.49% in favor of joining with Pakistan.

It is evident that Britain did not want India to have any direct land link either to Afghanistan, or Russia, or Iran. In the North, when the dispute over the status of the state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) arose, India's access to the North was blocked as well. The Kashmir dispute, the handiwork of London, showed what the British were looking for. Using a large number of Mirpuris (Mirpur is a part of J&K) who had

migrated to Britain soon after the partition of the subcontinent, the MI6 built up a very strong anti-India lobby in J&K and encouraged the demand for an independent Kashmir. At the same time, MI6 lent a hand to the Pakistani ISI, to implement terrorist acts within the India-held part of J&K which would undermine India's efforts to stabilize the area. The policy has not worked so far, but a royal mess has been made, thanks partly to India's misguided, and often ruthless, policies.

The MI6 mouthpiece, and a link to the British colonial establishment, was Eric Lubbock (Lord Avebury). He was the first British Member of Parliament to publicly support the Kashmiri secessionist movement, which he did in an address to a secessionist group, JKLF (Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front), at a conference in London, in 1991. There, he also announced his support for an armed struggle, according to *The Dawn* of Karachi. In a March 1995 issue of the JKLF's *Kashmir Report*, Lubbock condemned Indian policy in Kashmir as equivalent to what would have occurred if "Britain had been invaded in 1940," and suffered Nazi occupation. He demanded that Indian troops be withdrawn. "New Delhi fails to understand that if peaceful initiatives are thwarted, the inevitable result will be further violence," he threatened. Lubbock is still around pushing the colonial policies.

## Who Are the Afghan Taliban?

For the uninitiated, it is important to realize that there exists a distinction between the Afghan Taliban and the Pakistani

Taliban. The Afghan Taliban, along with many other Afghans, are engaged in a war against the occupying U.S. and NATO troops, with the objective of driving them away so they can gain control of their land. In other words, these Afghans are ready to fight any foreign troops, be they are American, British, Canadian, or German. But they have no intention of doing harm to others who have not lent troops to the occupying forces. At the same time, the Afghan Taliban would accept help from anyone, including the Pakistani Taliban, or any jihadi group functioning along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, including the much-vaunted al-Qaeda. It must be noted that no Afghan Taliban has ever been spotted, either in Iraq, or Palestine, where the Western, or pro-Western troops are engaged in battling the local Islamic groups.

On the other hand, while it is true that the Afghan Taliban have no love for the Indians, nonetheless they would not risk setting up a large operation of the kind that must have preceded the attack on the Indian Embassy. Moreover, the Afghan Taliban control large swathes of land in southern and eastern Afghanistan, but ground information suggests that they still are not in a position to carry out major attacks inside Kabul. Last April, an elaborate operation was put in place to assassinate Afghan President Hamid Karzai in Kabul. Initially, the operation was attributed to the Afghan Taliban, but later the Afghan authorities charged that it was the Pakistani ISI behind the failed attempt.

The Pakistani Taliban, however, are an altogether different kettle of fish, and are presently involved in breaking up Pakistan on behalf the geostrategic interests of the British colonials. This outfit, besides having a large number of tribes representing Pakistan's virtually ungoverned Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Northern Areas bordering Afghanistan and the disputed state of Jammu and Kashmir, is guided by the Pakistani ISI and British MI6. The Pakistani tribal groups, who have never formally accepted Islamabad's authority, see, in the present situation, an opportunity to carve out a separate nation bordering Afghanistan in the West and River Indus in the East. This objective, however far-fetched it may have seemed just months ago, is now a distinct possibility, not only because the ISI and MI6 have chalked out a design for achieving it, but also because of Washington's reckless approach to taming the Taliban and al-Qaeda at any cost, including undermining of Pakistan's sovereignty.

The increasing disintegration of Pakistan's political establishment has added to the threat. The ISI has been deeply infiltrated by MI6, and the Pakistani Army does not have the will to engage in a bloody civil war to prevent yet another break-up, nor does Pakistan's weak political elite have a clue as to how to integrate the increasingly militant tribal areas with Pakistan.

## ISI-MI6 Link-Up

On the other hand, there exists a policy agreement between the ISI and MI6. Following the withdrawal of the

## Who's Who

**ISI:** Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence; composed of all three branches of the military services, it is deeply infiltrated by Britain's MI6 foreign intelligence service.

**Ji:** Jamaati Islam, a conservative Islamic party that has existed since Pakistan's formation in 1947. Britain's MI6 and Pakistan's ISI jointly created it.

**JKLF:** Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front, a Kashmiri secessionist group, formerly headed by the late Amanullah Khan.

**Al-Muhajiroun:** A London-based group ("The Emigrants") used by MI6 and the CIA to recruit mujahideen to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan during the early 1980s. It became the recruiting arm for al-Qaeda in London.

**TTP:** Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, or the Pakistani Taliban; based in the essentially ungoverned Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).

defeated Soviet Army in 1989, the ISI moved in to arm and train the Taliban. The intelligence agency also brought in al-Qaeda, and was in the process of developing what is called “strategic depth,” which, it argued, was necessary to protect the country from its “mortal enemy,” India. The civilian governments in Islamabad, under the late Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, had little choice but to allow the Pakistani Army and the ISI to pursue this objective.

After 9/11, the scene changed rapidly. The Bush Administration identified Afghanistan, which was under Taliban rule, as the staging ground of al-Qaeda, and invaded the country with the intent of eliminating both the Taliban and al-Qaeda, in one fell swoop. Neither the ISI, and by extension, a section of the Pakistani Army, nor the British colonial operatives, wanted these assets, set up over years with the intent of controlling Central Asia, and undermining Russia, China, and India, to be sacrificed. Pakistan’s ungoverned FATA immediately became the shelter of many who were facing Washington’s wrath. In December 2001, *Asia Times* reported that the former ISI chief and a close collaborator of the MI6, “Hamid Gul, nicknamed the ‘Godfather of the Taliban,’ is believed to be behind moves to help the Taliban establish a base in Pakistan’s autonomous Pushtun tribal belt.”

The added irony, is that Washington’s foolhardy approach involves two of its “best allies”—Britain and Pakistan—who had built up these assets, and were keen to protect them from Washington’s missiles and rockets. The outcome of Washington’s policy is now plain for everyone to see: Having routed the Taliban, and driven them from power within weeks following the invasion, almost six and a half years later, Washington is now facing an enemy which is surely much stronger than it ever was before. The credit for this, of course, goes to the ISI and MI6. Both have now come to realize that not only can the assets be protected, they can be “officially” lodged in a country carved out of Pakistan.

### What Drives the ISI?

The question is, why would the Pakistani ISI want the separation? Putting aside the British control over the ISI for the moment, what must be recognized, is that the ISI was the brainchild of an Australian-born British intelligence officer, Maj. Gen. R. Cawthorn, Deputy Chief of Staff in the Pakistan Army in 1948, who later served in Australia as head of their Secret Intelligence Service. The ISI was structured to be



manned by officers from the three main military services, and to specialize in the collection, analysis, and assessment of external intelligence, either military or non-military. At the time, as it exists even today, the ISI considered India its “mortal enemy,” and the key to hurting India was to wrest control of the disputed state of Jammu and Kashmir, where Muslims are in majority.

There is yet another “meeting of minds” between MI6 and the ISI in recent days: their mutual hatred of Afghan President Karzai. The ISI rejected Karzai out of hand because the Afghan President is close to India, and even Russia—but cool toward Pakistan. So, the ISI feels it necessary to replace Karzai with someone who will be pro-Pakistan and anti-India.

Nor does MI6 like Karzai, and has joined with the ISI to remove him, because he is controlled from Washington, and has become openly anti-British: Last December, when Karzai learned that two British MI6 agents were working under cover of the United Nations and the European Union, and behind his back, to finance and negotiate with the Taliban, he expelled them from Afghanistan. One of them, a Briton, Michael Semple, was working as the acting head of the EU mission in

Afghanistan, and is widely known as a close confidant of Britain's ambassador, Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles. The second, an Irishman, Mervin Patterson, is the third-ranking UN official in Afghanistan.

These MI6 agents were entrusted by London with the task of using Britain's 7,700 troops in the opium-infested, Push-tun-dominated southern Afghanistan province of Helmand to train 2,000 Afghan militants, ostensibly to "infiltrate" the enemy and "seek intelligence" about the lethal arms of the real Taliban. Karzai rightly saw it as Britain's efforts to develop a lethal group within Afghanistan.

In addition, around the same time, Karzai was under pressure from Britain, the U.S., and the UN, to appoint Lord Paddy Ashdown, a British Liberal Democrat, as the UN Special Envoy to Afghanistan. Ashdown had left his "viceregal" mark while serving as the High Representative of the United Nations for Bosnia a few years ago.

Anticipating that Ashdown, true to his reputation in the Balkans, would function like a colonial viceroy under orders from London, Karzai summarily called off the appointment. This decision raised quite a few hackles in London, and elsewhere.

### **MI6-ISI's Anti-Russia Ties**

During the Cold War, the Pakistani ISI was not only training and infiltrating armed militants inside the India-held part of Jammu and Kashmir, but was utilized by the British to create security problems on Russia's southern flank. When the Soviets bumbled into Afghanistan with thousands of troops and tanks, ISI and MI6, along with the CIA, joined forces in the early 1980s to recruit mujahideen to fight the Red Army. MI6 turned over to the ISI some of their assets in the London-based organization known as al-Muhajiroun, or The Emigrants. This became the recruiting arm of al-Qaeda in London, and was used for terrorist work. The first groups were Pakistanis; they were followed by Somalis and Eritreans, among others. Al-Muhajiroun operated at the time under the armless Omar Bakri Muhammad, known as "Captain Hook," who was the Imam of Finsbury Mosque in London.

Coincidentally, in 1983, the British-based World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), headed by Prince Philip, which often provides the staging grounds for operations of MI6 and other British intelligence outfits, suggested that two national parks be created in Pakistan's Northwest, and although rather thin in natural wildlife, the preserves have proved to be excellent for growing poppy, and for training and staging mujahideen incursions into Afghanistan.

But, in the post-Cold War days, and particularly after 9/11, Washington moved closer to India, which went from being a "Soviet puppet," as it was labeled by some American analysts, into becoming a U.S. ally. Following 9/11, Washington made it a point to seek India's help in fighting the war on terror. Although India never supplied Washing-

ton with troops, New Delhi strongly supported Washington's war on terror policy. At the same time, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf embraced this Washington-led policy, putting the ISI in limbo. With the anti-India angle suddenly removed, the ISI became vulnerable to the British plan to create a separate Islamic state, carved out of Pakistan, located on the threshold of Central Asia. MI6 succeeded in reigniting the the ISI's aspiration to liberate the state of Jammu and Kashmir as its prime mission. The attack on the Indian Embassy on July 7 was a statement of that objective.

### **Musharraf on the MI6 Role**

The interweaving of British MI6 and the Pakistani ISI is too elaborate to fully describe here. But, to get an idea of it, consider this example: Pakistani President Musharraf, in his book, *In the Line of Fire*, stated that Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh, a Britain-born Pakistani who has been accused of kidnapping and killing *Wall Street Journal* correspondent Daniel Pearl, in Karachi, in 2002, was originally recruited by MI6, while studying at the London School of Economics. He alleged that Omar Sheikh was sent to the Balkans by MI6 to engage in jihadi operations. Musharraf added that, "at some point, he [Omar Sheikh] probably became a rogue or double agent."

On Oct. 6, 2001, a senior U.S. government official told CNN that U.S. investigators had discovered that Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh, using the alias "Mustafa Muhammad Ahmad," had sent about \$100,000 from the United Arab Emirates to Mohammed Atta, one of the 9/11 hijackers. "Investigators said Atta then distributed the funds to conspirators in Florida in the weeks before the deadliest acts of terrorism on U.S. soil that destroyed the World Trade Center, heavily damaged the Pentagon and left thousands dead."

Beyond that, the Saeed Sheikh affair shines a bright light on the MI6-ISI links. More than a month after the money transfer was discovered, the head of the ISI, Gen. Mahmud Ahmed, resigned from his position. It was reported that the FBI was investigating the possibility that it had been General Ahmed who ordered Saeed Sheikh to send the \$100,000 to Atta. There were reports that Indian intelligence had already produced proof for the Pakistani administration that this was so.

Even more important are the joint operations between the MI6 and the ISI. The export of jihad to the Central Asian republics to pressure the countries of the former U.S.S.R. was a joint venture of the ISI, Pakistan's Jamaati Islam (JI), and Hezbe Islami Afghanistan. It is also documented that the MI6 directly deposited money into an account in the name of Amir Qazi Hussain Ahmed of Pakistan's JI, which Qazi used to pump Islamic literature and money into the Central Asian republics to incite the local Naqshbandi circles (a Sufi group) to rebel against the governments.

## Khalistan and the Assassination Of Indira Gandhi

Britain's other gross interference to undermine Indian sovereignty with the help of the ISI became evident during the Khalistani movement in India's Punjab in the 1980s. A number of militant Sikh-led organizations, such as the Dal Khalsa, Babbar Khalsa, Council of Khalistan, the Khalistan Government-in-Exile, and the Sikh Federation were headquartered in Britain. The Sikh Federation was formed after the 2001 proscription by the British government of the International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF), while the Babbar Khalsa cadres started working under the aegis of the Akhand Kirtani Jatha (AKJ), another militant group, after the ban imposed by the British government. Moreover, the top leaders of the Khalistani movement, Jagjit Singh Chauhan and Gurmej Singh of the Khalistan Government-in-Exile, used Britain to call for an independent Punjab (Khalistan), yanked out of India.

Although the Khalistani movement, which helped in fomenting the plots to assassinate two Indian prime ministers—Indira Gandhi and her son, Rajiv Gandhi—in addition to the deaths of scores of innocent Indians, is no longer visible, London still carries the Khalistani flag. In a highly significant development for the internationalization of the Sikh freedom struggle, representatives from a range of leading Sikh organizations met with high-ranking officials of the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) on Aug. 15, 2007, in London, in order to seek British support for the Sikh nation's right to self-determination.

Goaded and helped by MI6 and Britain's colonial geo-strategists, the ISI did its best to create chaos within Punjab during that period. At the time that the Khalistani movement had grown dangerous following the Indian Army's raid of the Golden Temple, the holiest of holy Sikh shrine in Amritsar, and of the assassination of Indira Gandhi, the Pakistani ISI chief was Lt. Gen. Hamid Gul, who is now leading the charge on behalf of the Pakistani Taliban to undermine Pakistan's sovereignty.

According to an Indian intelligence analyst, in 1988, when Benazir Bhutto became prime minister, Gul justified backing the Khalistani terrorists as the only way to preempt a fresh Indian threat to Pakistan's territorial integrity. When Mrs. Bhutto asked Gul to stop playing that card, he reportedly told her: "Madam, keeping Punjab destabilized is equivalent to the Pakistan Army having an extra division at no cost to the taxpayers." Gul strongly advocated supporting indigenous Kashmiri groups, but was against infiltrating Pakistani and Afghan mercenaries into Jammu and Kashmir. He believed Pakistan would play into India's hands by doing so, the analyst pointed out.

### The Kingpin

This brings us to the leading collaborator of the British MI6 within Pakistan, Lt. Gen. Hamid Gul. Driven by his anti-India zeal, and now, with an equally zealous Islamic fervor,

Gul is perhaps the most dangerous individual in Pakistan today. As his support for the Pakistani Taliban is expected to unleash more violence in the coming days, Gul will become even more powerful.

It is widely acknowledged, even by the CIA, that Gul played a key role in helping to train and arm the Afghan Taliban in the 1990s. He had extensive liaison with Osama bin Laden, now hated, but liked immensely earlier by the CIA-MI6-ISI trio, while that Yemeni-Saudi was in Afghanistan.

Since the Lal Masjid raid by the Pakistani Army at the behest of President Musharraf last July, to free the mosque of jihadis and Pakistani Taliban, Gul has become violently anti-Musharraf. The July 15, 2007 London *Times* reported comments by Gul following the Lal Masjid conflict: "The government is trying to hide the number of young girls killed. As the truth comes out that young girls were gassed and burnt, riddled with bullets and killed, it'll be bad for Musharraf."

BBC reported Gul's views on jihad, criticizing Musharraf for seeking to stop jihadis, and challenging: "Who is Pervez Musharraf to say we should stop Jihad, when the Koran says it and when the United Nations Charter backs it up? Musharraf says: 'Stop the jihad, do this, that and the other.' No, no, no. He cannot. There is a clear-cut Koranic injunction."

UPI and the *Washington Times* have quoted Gul's interview in Pakistan's Urdu newspaper *Nawa-e-Waqt* where he stated: "The leadership vacuum created by the sad demise of [Palestinian] President [Yasser] Arafat can only be filled by Osama bin Laden and [Taliban leader] Mullah [Mohammad] Omar, the real leaders that are the only dedicated individuals with the mass support of the Muslim world."

It is likely that Gul was directly involved in the assassination of Benazir Bhutto. Bhutto had contended that the rise of extremism in Pakistan could not have happened without support from government agencies, including the military and the powerful ISI. She added that, though Baitullah Mahsud, the frontman of the MI6 and the ISI in the TTP, had reportedly threatened to send suicide bombers against her if she returned to Pakistan, the real danger came from extremist elements within the government that were opposed to her return.

"I'm not worried about Mahsud, I'm worried about the threat within the government," she told the London *Guardian*. "People like Mahsud are just pawns. It is the forces behind them that have presided over the rise of extremism and militancy in my country."

Despite his inciting speeches and his role on behalf of the terrorists masquerading as jihadis, Gul remains virtually untouchable. Following the imposition of a state of emergency by President Musharraf on Nov. 3, 2007, Gul had demonstrated against the Presidential order. He was arrested, but Musharraf had to release him within two weeks. It is evident that Hamid Gul has become too powerful and that he enjoys high-level protection. *Cui bono?*