
Shi'a-Sunni Conflict

New British-Saudi Prescription for Permanent War in the Islamic World

by Ramtanu Maitra

The much-vaunted success in Iraq, by the George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations, has now become a violent failure, engulfing the Shi'as and Sunnis into lethal conflict. In Pakistan, the "Taliban movement," funded from Saudi Arabia and aided by Britain, is fast turning into the slaughter-house of minority Shi'as by the "Islamic Sunni jihadis." Unless Baghdad and Islamabad recognize, and deal with, the enemy that unleashed this endless war to destroy Islam, and bring untold misery to hundreds of millions of Muslims in the region, a state of permanent war will prevail, subsuming much of Middle East, Central Asia, and a large part of the Indian Subcontinent. In other words, the Islamic world must identify the creators of this monster, and end the killing of Muslims by their fellow Muslims.

What is designed to occur in the coming days was evident in Tony Blair's Jan. 29 testimony, at John Chilcot's Iraq War Inquiry. Blair's six-hour testimony was a staged drama aimed at whitewashing Britain's role in instigating the 2003 joint U.S.-U.K. Iraq invasion, by falsifying intelligence claiming Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and Saddam Hussein's involvement with al-Qaeda. The former British prime minister and imperial puppeteer, who chained in the hapless President George W. Bush, and the pro-war American neocon cabal led by the Cheney-Rumsfeld duo, told the Chilcot Commission, in no uncertain terms, that it would be right to invade the Shi'a-majority Iran.

Blair speaks for the alliance among the British Empire, Saudi Arabia, and Israel, which has created an Israeli-Wahhabi Sunni nexus run from the top by the old manipulator of Islamic countries—Great Britain. Blair told the Commission, on that occasion, that Iran, in 2010, was more dangerous, in terms of its nuclear program, than Iraq was in 2003. Addressing the

Islamic Republic of Iran's ties with "terror groups," Blair said, "a large part of the destabilization in the Middle East at the present time comes from Iran."

All day, Blair used his platform to bring up Iran, even when it was only tangentially related to the topic at hand. "I think, the most telling aspect of this, is that the Iranians, whatever they said, from the beginning, were a major destabilizing factor in this situation and quite deliberately," he stated. Then, pushing further, he called for a new war in the Persian Gulf, this time against Iran. "Today we are going to be faced with exactly the same decisions" [as we were in Iraq], he said. "My judgment is, we do not take any risks."

Shi'a-Sunni Divide

Although Sunnis and Shi'as are the two major denominations within Islam, according to Islamic scholars, there are 73 sects in the world that call themselves Muslims. Among these 73 sects, those Muslims who accept Omar, Abu Bakr, and Osman as their first, second, and third Caliphs, as the important representatives of the Prophet Mohammad, and Ali as the fourth Caliph, are considered to be Sunnis. The Shi'a sect, instead of giving recognition to the three Caliphs, accepts Ali, the nephew and son-in-law of the Prophet Mohammad, as his successor. Since the death of the Prophet Mohammad in 632 A.D., the Shi'a-Sunni divide has deepened. The definite separation of the two sects was the result of two famous battles: the Battle of the Camel (656) and the Battle of Seffin (657).

Approximately 85% of the world's Muslims are Sunni, with the remaining 15%, Shi'a. Shi'as make up the majority of the population in Iran, Iraq, Azerbaijan, and Lebanon. Sunnis are a majority in the Muslim communities of Southeast Asia, China, Africa, and the rest of the Arab world.

While the divisions within these two sects were sharp, as is a commonplace in other religions—for instance, Christianity—the exploitation of the Sunni-Shi’a divide was the *modus operandi* of the Britain Empire, which carved up the Arabian peninsula at the end of World War I, to perpetuate the endless conflict among various tribes, and between Shi’as and Sunnis within Islam. The “divide and rule” policy, pitching one sect against the other, and arming one against the other, was the bread and butter of the Empire’s expansionist policy. While such was the method to create, and prolong the despicable and murderous colonial system, the purpose was to loot and exploit Arabia’s wealth to fill London’s coffers.

Today, as was predicted before the invasion, Iraq, a Shi’a-majority land of rich cultural heritage, has been turned into a deadly area, in which Sunnis—aided by Britain’s closest post-Cold War ally, Saudi Arabia—and Shi’as, are locked in a deadly struggle. The reason that the British empire servers, with Blair as their front man, pushed this war on President Bush, was to destroy the fabric that Saddam Hussein, and other Iraqi leaders earlier, had woven to maintain a non-violent relationship between these two major sects, and, thus, strengthen Iraq as a sovereign nation-state.

British-Saudi-Israeli Nexus

The British intervention in Iraq in 2003 was, in reality, the continuation of the British effort to unleash Shi’a-Sunni violence, that began in the post-World War I Arabia. In the 1920s, Britain set about carving up Southwest Asia to serve its own needs. Gertrude Bell, a spy and operative for the British Empire, was at the forefront of creating “nations” and king-making. In 1921, Bell drew the borders of Iraq, and so created disastrous problems for generations to come. The policies she set down were to resonate down the decades and, ultimately, lead to war. Newcastle University historian Jim Crow said: “Without that imperial carve-up, Iraq would not be in the state it is in today. Gertrude Bell was one of two or three Britons who were instrumental in the creation of the Arab states in the Middle East that were favorable to Britain.”

In 1919, at the Paris Conference ending World War I, Bell argued for the establishment of independent Arab



Tony Blair’s saber-rattling testimony to the Chilcot Inquiry attempted a whitewash of Britain’s role in fomenting the Iraq War, and virtually called for an invasion of Iran.

emirates for the area previously covered by the Ottoman Empire. The Arab delegation, which was actually under Bell’s control, was led by Faisal Saeed al-Ismaïly, a Bedouin Sunni steeped in the orthodox version of the religion, born in Taif (now, Saudi Arabia), the third son of the Grand Sharif of Mecca.

Planting a Sunni Bedouin in historical Mesopotamia was a long-term British design which served a number of purposes for the Empire. To begin with, a desert Bedouin and feudal potentate was surely not acceptable as a ruler to the Shi’a-majority Iraqis, who had a strong sense of their heritage. In addition, Faisal played a role back then in forming the British-Sunni-Israeli nexus to perpetuate the British Empire’s role in what is known today as the Middle East. This is the nexus that is now unleashing violent Shi’a-Sunni conflicts to weaken the Islamic world, and preparing to invade Iran. This is the nexus that Blair represented at the Chilcot inquiry.

For instance, on Jan. 3, 1919, Faisal and Chaim Weizmann, president of the World Zionist Organization, signed the Faisal-Weizmann Agreement for Arab-Jewish cooperation, in which Faisal conditionally accepted the Balfour Declaration, based on the fulfillment of British wartime promises of development of a Jewish

homeland in Palestine, on which subject he made the following statement:

“We Arabs . . . look with the deepest sympathy on the Zionist movement. Our deputation here in Paris is fully acquainted with the proposals submitted yesterday by the Zionist Organization to the Peace Conference, and we regard them as moderate and proper. We will do our best, in so far as we are concerned, to help them through; we will wish the Jews a most hearty welcome home. . . . I look forward, and my people with me look forward, to a future in which we will help you and you will help us, so that the countries in which we are mutually interested may once again take their places in the community of the civilized people of the world.”

If the Palestinians are keen to identify who did them in, and when, this statement of Faisal, who was made the king of Iraq by the British empire-servers, will lead them right to the target.

Pakistan: Thrown to the Wolves

The parting shot on the Indian Subcontinent by the British Empire in 1947 was to break it up into two countries—India and Pakistan. The division, which followed rivers of blood unleashed by the ruling British to prevent the birth of a single nation, was carried out on the basis of religious divisions. Thus, Pakistan was formed with areas that had a Muslim majority, and yet again, Britain drew the lines and countries were formed. A very large majority of Pakistan’s Muslims are Sunnis, but they are not of the more orthodox Deobandi variety. A small Shi’a community existed, spread around the country. In the early days after the formation of Pakistan, there were very few incidents of Shi’a-Sunni conflict reported.

But things changed rapidly in the post-Cold War days. Beginning in the late 1980s, Saudi Arabia, now



The British spy Gertrude Bell served as the Crown’s imperial agent in Southwest Asia in the early 20th Century, drawing the borders of Iraq in such a way as to insure disastrous problems for generations to come.

rich with oil dollars, and fully in league with London after the rise of Khomeini’s Shi’a-majority Iran, started expanding the medieval Wahhabi variety of Sunni Islam, perpetuated and nurtured in Saudi Arabia and its adjunct, Kuwait. Saudis were moving into Central Asia with Wahhabi Qurans to indoctrinate the moderate Muslim faithful of Central Asian nations with hardcore Wahhabism. Exploiting these countries’ poverty, the Saudis moved in with Quran and Kitchen. London, where millions of Muslims from former colonies had immigrated, was busy inculcating the new generation of British Muslims to become their foot soldiers. MI5 and MI6 recruited them from “respectable” British universities and indoctrinated them to become “Islamic crusaders.” While

they were working for the British Empire, these Muslims were led to believe that they were in a war to liberate their Muslim brethren from the yoke of Christian domination!

While the Saudis provided the money and the Wahhabi-promotional gangs, Britain had a larger interest. The empire sought control over Central Asian nations, with their oil and gas, and that meant weakening the Russian Federation. As a result, British MI6, with the help of the Pakistani ISI-trained armed men, launched the Islamic Movement for Uzbekistan (IMU), to oust the Central Asian governments, and simultaneously, unleashed the scourge of opium.

In Pakistan, the British-Saudi operation has two prongs. The first is used to get control of the areas bordering Afghanistan through a Wahhabi-centered movement, called the Pakistani Taliban movement. The situation in these tribal areas of Pakistan has become so bad, that Islamabad was forced to deploy thousands of Pakistani troops, again and again, to bring them under some control.

The second prong centers around supporting and helping Sunni terrorist groups supplied with Saudi money and Saudi-directed Wahhabi indoctrination. One of the priorities of the terrorists is to kill the Shi'as of Pakistan. Evidence indicates that the anti-Shi'a movement started in Jhang, Pakistan, in the 1980s. There is evidence that then-Pakistani President General Zia was warned of Jhangvi's anti-Shi'a and anti-Iran movement, but he ignored the warnings and allowed it to blossom into a full-fledged religious party called Anjuman-e-Sipah-e-Sahaba of Pakistan (ASSP). In small towns, the old Shi'a-Sunni debate restarted with the fury that had been dampened in the past.

In 1989, the Afghan mujahideen government-in-exile came into being in Peshawar, after the Soviet retreat from Afghanistan. At the behest of Saudi Arabia, the exiled Shi'a mujahideen of Iran were not included in this government. The Saudis paid over \$23 million a week during the 519-member session of the mujahideen "shura," as a bribe, according to one American Afghanistan expert.

In recent years, the Shi'a-Sunni conflict has been intensified in Pakistan. The British objective, using the Saudi and MI6-trained Sunni killers, is to draw Iran out in support of Pakistan's Shi'as. Recent slaughtering of Shi'as in Karachi, using another Wahhabi-indoctrinated group, Jundullah, to kill the Iranian Revolutionary Guards inside Iran's Sistan-Balochistan province, are distinct efforts by London to provoke Iran to commit violent acts outside of its borders. That has not happened, but, intensifying the Shi'a-Sunni conflict will not only keep Pakistan in a state of permanent instability, weakening Islamabad's writ, but may force Iran's hands.

Yemen and Afghanistan

Recent violence in Yemen is also Shi'a-Sunni warfare triggered over the decades by the British and Saudi roles. It was under Harold Wilson's Labour government that British troops were driven out of South Yemen in November 1967. The British Empire had established control over what it called South Arabia during the 19th Century. Arab nationalism, spearheaded by Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser, threatened imperialist power throughout the region; thus, the British military base in Aden in South Yemen was seen as indispensable. As one governor of the colony put it, South Arabia would be held for "as long as

Britain remains great."

Following a coup by military leaders in 1962, the Yemen Arab Republic came into existence. The new revolutionary government in the capital, Sanaa, called for the unification of the country and the expulsion of the British. From the outset, the British tried to bring down the government. They encouraged royalist rebellion, supplying the rebels with arms, money, and advisors. Former British SAS (Special Air Service) officers, with close connections to right-wing elements within the Conservative Party, were enlisted in a MI6-run mercenary operation that was financed jointly with the Saudis. Such was Saudi hostility to revolutionary nationalism that they turned a convenient blind eye to the arms that the Israelis provided for the royalists.

Now, once again, the British-Saudi nexus has identified Yemen as the venue for a new Shi'a-Sunni bloodbath. Some analysts point out that the ongoing, but little-noticed battle in Yemen may be the first new battleground of a proxy war between Shi'a-majority Iran and Wahhabi Saudi Arabia. It is also feared that the dispute could erupt across the peninsula and spread throughout the Middle East.

In Afghanistan, the Shi'as are mostly Hazaras, weak, and living in the western part of the country. Here, the Saudi/Pakistani-trained Wahhabi Sunnis, under the label of "Taliban," had taken control of Kabul in 1999. Subsequent to 9/11, both Washington and London identified the Taliban and al-Qaeda as Siamese twins. However, after fighting the Taliban and al-Qaeda for more than eight years, last January, at a conference in London, organized by the British, a new formulation has emerged, that there exist "good" Taliban, who are much larger in number than the "bad" Taliban. There are also indications that there is a sudden exigency to bring the so-called good Taliban back to power in Kabul. Why so?

Is it battle fatigue, or something else? What is evident is that bringing the Taliban back, through an arrangement brokered by the Saudis and the British, will threaten the Shi'a-majority Iran. Iran could hit back, or create complications by putting in place such an arrangement, providing London, Riyadh, and Tel Aviv a "sound" reason to strike at Tehran. In other words, bringing the Afghan Taliban back in Kabul may not only trigger a long-term civil war within Afghanistan, but could provoke Iran to intervene against the agents of London, Riyadh, and Tel Aviv.