

Punishing Pakistan and Challenging China

Pakistan in Pieces, Part 2

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This is Part 2 of “Pakistan in Pieces.”

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The AfPak War Theatre: Establishing the New Strategy

As Senator Obama became the President-elect Obama, his foreign policy strategy on Afghanistan was already being formed. In 2007, Obama took on veteran geostrategist and Jimmy Carter’s former National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski as one of his top foreign policy advisers,[1] and he remained his foreign policy adviser throughout 2008.[2] On Obama’s campaign, he announced that as President, he would scale down the war in Iraq, and focus the “War on Terror” on Afghanistan, promising “to send in about 10,000 more troops and to strike next-door Pakistan, if top terrorists are spotted there.”[3]

In October of 2008, before the Presidential elections, “senior Bush administration officials gathered in secret with Afghanistan experts from NATO and the United Nations,” to deliver a message to advisers of McCain and Obama to tell them that, “the situation in Afghanistan is getting worse,” and “that the next president needed to have a plan for Afghanistan before he took office,” or else, “it could be too late.”[4] Both McCain and Obama had agreed to a troop increase for Afghanistan, essentially ensuring the “continuity of empire” from one administration to the next.

A week after winning the election, Obama invited one of Hillary Clinton’s top supporters and advisers to meet with him. Richard Holbrooke, who had worked in every Democratic administration since John F. Kennedy, “which extended from the Vietnam War, in the sixties, to the Balkan conflicts of the nineties,” was Clinton’s Ambassador to the United Nations for the last year and a half of the Clinton administration. Obama had decided “that Holbrooke should take on the hardest foreign-policy problem that the Administration faced: Afghanistan and Pakistan.” Holbrooke wrote in March of 2008, before Obama won the Presidency, that, “The conflict in Afghanistan will be far more costly and much, much longer than Americans realize,” and it “will eventually become the longest in American history.”[5]

The position Holbrooke was to receive in the Obama administration was one created specifically for him. He was to become a “special representative” to the region of Afghanistan and Pakistan:

[1] In addition to being an emissary to the region, Holbrooke would run operations on the civilian side of American policy. He would create a rump regional bureau within the State Department, carved out of the Bureau of South and Central Asia, whose Afghanistan and

Pakistan desks would report directly to him. He would assemble outside experts and officials from various government agencies to work for him, and he would report to the President through Hillary Clinton. Clinton told Holbrooke that he would be the civilian counterpart to General David Petraeus, the military head of Central Command.[6]

Holbrooke was thus placed in charge of “Af-Pak”, a term of his own creation, “to make the point that the two countries could not be dealt with separately,” which was then adopted into official parlance.[7]

In November of 2008, the Washington Post reported that while Obama was considering giving the position of Secretary of State (which he then did), he was also discussing giving General James L. Jones the position of National Security Adviser, which he subsequently did. The article stated that, “Obama is considering expanding the scope of the job to give the adviser the kind of authority once wielded by powerful figures such as Henry A. Kissinger.” James Jones was a former NATO commander and Marine Corps commandant.[8]

Jones as NATO commander was pivotal in assembling troops for the war in Afghanistan, and at the time of his nomination as NSA (National Security Adviser), he headed “the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s Institute for 21st Century Energy.”[9] The official statement of purpose for the Institute for 21st Century Energy is:

to unify energy policymakers, regulators, business leaders, and the American public behind a common sense strategy that ensures affordable, reliable, and diverse energy supplies, improves environmental stewardship, promotes economic growth, and strengthens national security.[10]

Jones earned \$900,000 in salary from the Chamber of Commerce, and got \$330,000 from serving on the board of Boeing and \$290,000 for serving on the board of Chevron upon his resignations of those positions to become National Security Adviser.[11] In October of 2010, Jones was replaced as National Security Advisor by Tom Donilon.

On February 8, 2009, within weeks of being installed as NSA, Jones gave a speech at the 45th Munich Conference on Security Policy, in which he stated:

As the most recent National Security Advisor of the United States, I take my daily orders from Dr. [Henry] Kissinger, filtered down through General Brent Scowcroft and Sandy Berger, who is also here. We have a chain of command in the National Security Council that exists today.[12]

He then elaborated on the purpose and restructuring of the National Security Council under the Obama administration. He stated that the NSC “must be strategic” in that, “we won’t effectively advance the priorities if we spend our time reacting to events, instead of shaping them. And that requires strategic thinking.” He further stated that:

the NSC today works very closely with President Obama’s National Economic Council, which is led by Mr. Larry Summers, so that our response to the economic crisis is coordinated with our global partners and our national security needs.[13]

Shortly after taking office, Obama set up a two-month White House strategic review of Afghanistan and Pakistan, to be headed by Bruce Riedel, a former CIA official and scholar at the Brookings Institution, and “Riedel will report to Obama and to retired Marine Gen. James L. Jones Jr., the national security advisor,” and was to work very closely with Richard

Holbrooke in drafting the policy review.[14]

In February of 2009, Henry Kissinger wrote an article for the Washington Post describing the strategy America should undertake in Afghanistan and Pakistan, emphasizing the role of “security” over the aim of “reform” of the Afghan government, stating that, “Reform will require decades; it should occur as a result of, and even side by side with, the attainment of security — but it cannot be the precondition for it.” Militarily, Kissinger recommended the “control of Kabul and the Pashtun area,” which stretches from Afghanistan to the North-West Frontier Province and Balochistan province in Pakistan. When it came to the issue of Pakistan, Kissinger wrote:

The conduct of Pakistan will be crucial. Pakistan’s leaders must face the fact that continued toleration of the sanctuaries — or continued impotence with respect to them — will draw their country ever deeper into an international maelstrom.[15]

Following the policy review, on March 27, Obama announced the administration’s new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, decidedly to make it a dual strategy: the AfPak strategy. Obama promised “to send lawyers and agricultural experts to Afghanistan to reform its government and economy, and to offer seven and a half billion dollars in new aid for schools, roads, and democracy in Pakistan.”[16]

Holbrooke had a staff of 30 in the State Department, and “nine government agencies, including the C.I.A., the F.B.I., the Defense and Treasury Departments, and two foreign countries, Britain and Canada, [were] represented in the office.” General David Patraeus, then Commander of U.S. CENTCOM (the Pentagon’s Central Command with authority over the Middle East, Egypt and Central Asia), along with then-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Admiral Mike Mullen, and Richard Holbrooke worked together and “pressured General Ashfaq Kayani, the head of the Pakistani Army, to push back against the Taliban in Swat,” which had the effect of precipitating the internal displacement of more than 2 million people.[17]

Changing Strategy, Changing Command

In January of 2009, shortly after Obama took office, he announced that his administration “picked Lt. Gen. Karl W. Eikenberry, a former top military commander in Afghanistan, to be the next United States ambassador to Kabul,” of which the New York Times said:

Tapping a career Army officer who will soon retire from the service to fill one of the country’s most sensitive diplomatic jobs is a highly unusual choice.[18]

Further, the General had “repeatedly warned that the United States could not prevail in Afghanistan and defeat global terrorism without addressing the havens that fighters with Al Qaeda had established in neighboring Pakistan,” which is parallel to the new strategy in Afghanistan. His appointment “has the backing of Richard C. Holbrooke, President Obama’s special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan.”[19]

On May 11, Defense Secretary Robert Gates fired General David D. McKiernan, Commander of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which commands all NATO forces in Afghanistan. Gates stated that, “It’s time for new leadership and fresh eyes,” and that it was the Pentagon command which recommended the White House fire McKiernan, including Gates, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Mullen and McKiernan’s military boss, General

Patraeus, Commander of CENTCOM.[20]

There has been much speculation as to the reasons for his firing, and it is a significant question to ask, as the firing of a General in the field is a rarity in the American experience. The general view pushed by the Pentagon was that it was due to a matter of “consistency,” as in changing strategies and changing ambassadors, it was also necessary to change Generals. While McKiernan was focused on military means and tactics, the strategy required counter-insurgency tactics. It was reported that, “McKiernan was overly cautious in creating U.S.-backed local militias, a tactic that Petraeus had employed when he was the top commander of U.S. forces in Iraq.”[21]

One Washington Post article made the claim that the push to fire McKiernan came initially and most forcefully from the Chairman of the JCS Mullen, and that Gates agreed and lobbied Obama to fire him. The reasoning was that McKiernan was “too deferential to NATO” in that he wasn’t able to properly manage the NATO forces in Afghanistan, and lacked the political fortitude to manage both military and political affairs.[22]

The official reason for the firing was mostly to facilitate alignment with the new strategy requiring a new military commander, which is likely true. However, it requires an understanding of the new strategy as well as a look at who was sent in to replace McKiernan where you realize the true nature of his being fired. [Note: McChrystal himself was later fired in 2010 after publicly speaking out against top administration officials].

McKiernan was replaced with Lt. Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, former Commander of the Pentagon’s Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), the highly secretive command of U.S. Special Forces operations. As the Washington Post pointed out, his appointment “marks the continued ascendancy of officers who have pressed for the use of counterinsurgency tactics, in Iraq and Afghanistan, that are markedly different from the Army’s traditional doctrine.”[23]

The new AfPak strategy, which McChrystal would oversee, “relies on the kind of special forces and counterinsurgency tactics McChrystal knows well, as well as nonmilitary approaches to confronting the Taliban. It would hinge success in the seven-year-old war to political and other conditions across the border in Pakistan.”[24]

In March of 2009, investigative journalist Seymour Hersh revealed that the U.S. military was running an “executive assassination ring” during the Bush years, and that the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) was running it, and that, “It is a special wing of our special operations community that is set up independently,” and that, “They do not report to anybody, except in the Bush-Cheney days, they reported directly to the Cheney office... Congress has no oversight of it.” He elaborated:

Under President Bush’s authority, they’ve been going into countries, not talking to the ambassador or the CIA station chief, and finding people on a list and executing them and leaving. That’s been going on, in the name of all of us.[25]

Hersh appeared on Amy Goodman’s program, Democracy Now, to further discuss the program, of which he stated:

There’s more—at least a dozen countries and perhaps more. The President has authorized these kinds of actions in the Middle East and also in Latin America, I will tell you, Central

America, some countries. They've been—our boys have been told they can go and take the kind of executive action they need, and that's simply—there's no legal basis for it.[26]

At the time this news story broke, it was reported that the JSOC commander at the time, “ordered a halt to most commando missions in Afghanistan, reflecting a growing concern that civilian deaths caused by American firepower are jeopardizing broader goals there.” The halt lasted a total of two weeks, and “came after a series of nighttime raids by Special Operations troops in recent months killed women and children.”[27]

All of this is very concerning, considering that the new Commander of NATO operations in Afghanistan, was the former head of the “executive assassination ring.” Having run JSOC between 2003 and 2008, McChrystal “built a sophisticated network of soldiers and intelligence operatives,” which conducted operations and assassinations in Iraq, Afghanistan, as well as Pakistan.”[28]

In June it was reported that McChrystal was “given carte blanche to handpick a dream team of subordinates, including many Special Operations veterans, as he moves to carry out an ambitious new strategy.” He was reported to be assembling a corps of 400 officers and soldiers “who will rotate between the United States and Afghanistan for a minimum of three years.” The New York Times referred to this strategy as “unknown in the military today outside Special Operations.” The Times further reported that McChrystal:

picked the senior intelligence adviser to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Maj. Gen. Michael T. Flynn, to join him in Kabul as director of intelligence there. In Washington, Brig. Gen. Scott Miller, a longtime Special Operations officer now assigned to the Joint Chiefs of Staff but who had served previously under General McChrystal, is now organizing a new Pakistan-Afghanistan Coordination Cell.[29]

In June of 2006, Newsweek referred to McChrystal's JSOC as being a “part of what Vice President Dick Cheney was referring to when he said America would have to ‘work the dark side’ after 9/11.” McChrystal also happened to be a Fellow at Harvard and the Council on Foreign Relations.[30]

As it was later revealed, the CIA had been running – from 2002 onwards – a force of roughly 3,000 elite paramilitary Afghans, purportedly to hunt al-Qaeda and the Taliban for the CIA. Used for reconnaissance, surveillance, and actual operations, many in the force have been trained by the CIA in the United States, and their operations and numbers have expanded since the new strategy involving Pakistan was put in place. The paramilitary force – or terrorists, depending upon one's perspective – are undertaking covert operations inside Pakistan, often working directly with U.S. Special Forces.[31] It must be remembered that during the Afghan-Soviet war in the 1980s when the CIA was funding, arming and training the Afghan Mujahideen to fight the Soviets – late to become known as ‘al-Qaeda’ – they were, at the time, referred to as “freedom fighters,” just as the terrorist death squads were referred to in Nicaragua. Thus, the nomenclature of “paramilitary force” must be viewed with suspicion as to what the group is actually doing: covert operations, surveillance, assassinations, etc., which by many definitions would make them a terrorist outfit.

In May of 2009, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was reported as saying that a US military offensive in southern Afghanistan could have the effect of pushing militants and Taliban into Pakistan, “whose troops are already struggling to combat militants.” Chairman Mike Mullen stated that this means that Pakistan “could face even greater turmoil in the

months ahead.” This was based off of a US surge of troops in Afghanistan. Senator Russ Feingold said that, “We may end up further destabilizing Pakistan without providing substantial lasting improvements in Afghanistan,” and that, “Weak civilian governments, an increased number of militants and an expanded U.S. troop presence could be a recipe for disaster for those nations in the region as well as our own nation’s security.” Mullen responded to the Senator’s concerns by stating, “Can I... (be) 100 percent certain that won’t destabilize Pakistan? I don’t know the answer to that.”[32]

But of course, the answer is in fact, certain; and it’s an unequivocal “yes”. These remarks were made following the surge of an additional 21,000 US troops to Afghanistan in March. In the beginning of May, Pakistan launched a military offensive against the Taliban in Swat and other areas of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), after a peace deal broke down between them, “forcing more than two million people from their homes.”[33] It was further reported that:

Pakistani military chief Gen. Ashfaq Kayani has told U.S. officials he’s worried not only about Taliban moving across the border, but also the possibility that U.S. forces could prompt an exodus of refugees from southern Afghanistan.[34]

In May, Holbrooke and the American military establishment had pressured the Pakistani government to undertake the offensive against the Taliban in the Swat Valley, which led to the displacement of more than 2 million people. As the New Yorker put it, Holbrooke “was mapping out a new vision for American interests in a volatile region, as his old friend Henry Kissinger had done in Southeast Asia. And he was positioning himself to be a mediator in an international conflict, as he had done in the Balkans.”[35]

In September of 2009 a classified report written by General McChrystal was leaked, in which he had concluded, “that a successful counterinsurgency strategy will require 500,000 troops over five years.”[36] It was further reported in September that, “the CIA is deploying teams of spies, analysts and paramilitary operatives to Afghanistan, part of a broad intelligence ‘surge’ that will make its station there among the largest in the agency’s history,” rivaling its stations in Iraq and Vietnam at the height of those wars. The initiative began “under pressure from Army Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal,” and the extra personnel are being employed in a number of ways, including teaming up with Special Forces troops in “pursuing high-value targets.” Further:

The intelligence expansion goes beyond the CIA to involve every major spy service, officials said, including the National Security Agency, which intercepts calls and e-mails, as well as the Defense Intelligence Agency, which tracks military threats.[37]

In October of 2009, it was reported by the Washington Post that although Obama announced a troop surge in Afghanistan of 21,000 additional troops, “in an unannounced move, the White House has also authorized — and the Pentagon is deploying — at least 13,000 troops beyond that number.” It was reported that these additional forces were primarily made up of “support forces, including engineers, medical personnel, intelligence experts and military police.” Thus, it brings the total 2009 surge in Afghanistan to 34,000 US troops. Thus as of October 2009, there were 68,000 US troops in Afghanistan (more than double the amount of when Bush left office), and 124,000 US troops in Iraq.[38]

In early October, Henry Kissinger wrote an article for Newsweek in which he proposed a strategy for the US in Afghanistan, in which he initially made it clear that he supported

General McChrystal's proposal of sending an additional 40,000 troops to Afghanistan. Kissinger proclaimed that calls for an "exit strategy" were a "metaphor for withdrawal," which is tantamount to "abandonment." Clearly, Kissinger favours a long-term presence. He stated that even a victory "may not permit troop withdrawals," citing the case of South Korea. Kissinger further wrote on the options for Afghan strategy, stating:

A negotiation with the [Taliban] might isolate Al Qaeda and lead to its defeat, in return for not challenging the Taliban in the governance of Afghanistan. After all, it was the Taliban which provided bases for Al Qaeda in the first place.

This theory seems to me to be too clever by half. Al Qaeda and the Taliban are unlikely to be able to be separated so neatly geographically. It would also imply the partition of Afghanistan along functional lines, for it is highly improbable that the civic actions on which our policies are based could be carried out in areas controlled by the Taliban. Even so-called realists—like me—would gag at a tacit U.S. cooperation with the Taliban in the governance of Afghanistan.[39]

Kissinger further claimed that a reduction of forces in Afghanistan would "fundamentally affect domestic stability in Pakistan by freeing the Qaeda forces along the Afghan border for even deeper incursions into Pakistan, threatening domestic chaos," and that, "the prospects of world order will be greatly affected by whether our strategy comes to be perceived as a retreat from the region, or a more effective way to sustain it." [40]

He further explained that any attempts to "endow the central government with overriding authority" could produce resistance, which would "be ironic if, by following the received counterinsurgency playbook too literally, we produced another motive for civil war." Kissinger thus proposed a strategy not aimed at "control from Kabul," but rather, "emphasis needs to be given to regional efforts and regional militia." Kissinger explained the regional importance of Afghanistan, and thus, the "challenge" of American strategy:

The special aspect of Afghanistan is that it has powerful neighbors or near neighbors—Pakistan, India, China, Russia, Iran. Each is threatened in one way or another and, in many respects, more than we are by the emergence of a base for international terrorism: Pakistan by Al Qaeda; India by general jihadism and specific terror groups; China by fundamentalist Shiite jihadists in Xinjiang; Russia by unrest in the Muslim south; even Iran by the fundamentalist Sunni Taliban. Each has substantial capacities for defending its interests. Each has chosen, so far, to stand more or less aloof.[41]

In November of 2009, Malalai Joya, a former Afghan MP and one of the few female political leaders in Afghanistan, said that:

Eight years ago, the U.S. and NATO—under the banner of women's rights, human rights, and democracy—occupied my country and pushed us from the frying pan into the fire . . . Eight years is enough to know better about the corrupt, mafia system of [President] Hamid Karzai . . . My people are crushed between two powerful enemies . . . From the sky, occupation forces bomb and kill civilians...and on the ground, the Taliban and warlords continue their crimes . . . It is better that they leave my country; my people are that fed up . . . Occupation will never bring liberation, and it is impossible to bring democracy by war.[42]

In late November, Pakistani Premier Yousuf Raza Gilani warned "that the US's decision to send thousands of extra troops to Afghanistan may destabilize his country," as it would

likely lead to “a spill over of militants inside Pakistan.” In particular, it could force militants and Taliban to migrate into Pakistan’s southern province of Balochistan.[43]

On December 1, President Obama announced that the U.S. would send an additional 30,000 US troops to Afghanistan by summer 2010, and with a “plan” to purportedly withdraw by July 2011. As the Washington Post reported, “adding 30,000 U.S. troops to the roughly 70,000 that are in Afghanistan now amounts to most of what Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, the commander of U.S. and NATO forces there, requested at the end of August.” Obama stated that the chief objective was to “destroy al-Qaeda,” and a senior administration official said that, “the goal for the Afghan army, for example, is to increase its ranks from 90,000 to 134,000 by the end of 2010.”[44]

President Karzai said in early December that, “Afghanistan’s security forces will need U.S. support for another 15 to 20 years,” and that, “it would take five years for his forces to assume responsibility for security throughout the country.”[45] This statement supports the conclusions set out in McChrystal’s classified report, which stated that the US would need to remain for at least 5 years.

Seth Jones, a civilian adviser to the U.S. military and senior political scientist at RAND Corporation, one of America’s top defense think tanks, wrote an op-ed for the New York Times in December titled, “Take the War to Pakistan.” He stated that the U.S. is repeating the same mistakes of the Soviets when they occupied Afghanistan in the 1980s by not attacking the Taliban “sanctuary” in Pakistan’s Baluchistan province. He stated that, “This sanctuary is critical because the Afghan war is organized and run out of Baluchistan.” He then proclaimed that, “the United States and Pakistan must target Taliban leaders in Baluchistan,” which could include conducting raids into Pakistani territory or hit Taliban leaders with drone strikes.[46]

As Jeremy Scahill reported in June 2009, “more than 240,000 contractor employees, about 80 percent of them foreign nationals, are working in Iraq and Afghanistan to support operations and projects of the U.S. military, the Department of State, and the U.S. Agency for International Development.” Scahill reported on the findings of a Defense Department report on contracting work in the war zones, stating that, “there has been a 23% increase in the number of ‘Private Security Contractors’ working for the Department of Defense in Iraq in the second quarter of 2009 and a 29% increase in Afghanistan, which ‘correlates to the build up of forces’ in the country.” While contractors outnumbered forces in Afghanistan, in Iraq they were roughly equal to the US forces occupying the country, at 130,000.[47]

It was reported that as Obama ordered more troops to Afghanistan in December of 2009, a new surge of contractors would follow suit. As of June 2009, the number of contractors in Afghanistan outweighed the US military presence itself, with 73,968 contractors and 55,107 troops. According to different estimates, “Between 7% and 16% of the total are Blackwater-style private security contractors.” As of December 2009, the number of contractors in Afghanistan was reported to be 104,100.[48]

In January of 2010, as Obama’s announced 30,000 extra troops began to be deployed to Afghanistan, Pakistani officials became increasingly fearful that “a stepped-up war just over the border could worsen the increasingly bloody struggle with militancy” within Pakistan itself, ultimately further destabilizing Pakistan’s southwestern border and the “already volatile tribal areas in the northwest.” On top of sending militants into Pakistan, there were

fears that it would exacerbate the flow of Afghan refugees into Pakistani territory.[49]

Blackwater and the “Secret War” in Pakistan

In November of 2009, investigative journalist and best-selling author Jeremy Scahill wrote an exclusive report on the secret war of the United States in Pakistan. The story sheds light on the American strategy in the region aimed at the destabilization and ultimately the implosion of Pakistan. The chief architects and administrators of this policy in Pakistan are none other than the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), previously run as an “executive assassination ring” by General McChrystal, and the infamous mercenary organization, Blackwater, now known as Xe Services. JSOC and Blackwater work together covertly in undertaking a covert war in yet another nation in the region, adding to the list of Afghanistan and Iraq.

Scahill described the covert operations as “targeted assassinations of suspected Taliban and Al Qaeda operatives,” as well as “other sensitive action inside and outside Pakistan.” Further, “the Blackwater operatives also assist in gathering intelligence and help direct a secret US military drone bombing campaign that runs parallel to the well-documented CIA predator strikes.” The sources for the report are drawn heavily from individuals within the US military intelligence apparatus. One source revealed that the program is so “compartmentalized” that “senior figures within the Obama administration and the US military chain of command may not be aware of its existence.” This program is also separate from the CIA’s own programs, including both drone attacks and assassinations, of which the CIA assassination program was said to be cancelled in June of 2009.

It was in 2006 that JSOC reached an agreement with the Pakistani government to run operations within the country, back when Stanley McChrystal was running it in close cooperation with Vice President Dick Cheney as an “executive assassination ring.” A former Blackwater executive confirmed that Blackwater was operating in Pakistan in cooperation with both the CIA and JSOC, as well as being on a subcontract for the Pakistani government itself, as well as “working for the Pakistani government on a subcontract with an Islamabad-based security firm that puts US Blackwater operatives on the ground with Pakistani forces in counter-terrorism operations, including house raids and border interdictions, in the North-West Frontier Province and elsewhere in Pakistan.”

JSOC’s covert program in liaison with Blackwater in Pakistan dates back to 2007, and the operations are coordinated out of the US Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan, and that Blackwater operates at “an ultra-exclusive level above top secret.” The contracts are all kept secret, and therefore “shielded from public oversight.” On top of carrying out operations for JSOC and the CIA inside Pakistan, Blackwater further conducts operations in Uzbekistan.

In regards to the drone strikes within Pakistan, while largely reported as being a part of the CIA drone program, many are, in fact, undertaken under a covert parallel JSOC program. One intelligence source told Jeremy Scahill that, “when you see some of these hits, especially the ones with high civilian casualties, those are almost always JSOC strikes.” Further, Blackwater is involved in the drone strike program with JSOC, “Contractors and especially JSOC personnel working under a classified mandate are not [overseen by Congress], so they just don’t care. If there’s one person they’re going after and there’s thirty-four people in the building, thirty-five people are going to die. That’s the mentality.” Blackwater further provides security for many secret US drone bases, as well as JSOC camps

and Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) camps within Pakistan.

With General McChrystal's rise from JSOC Commander to Commander of the Afghan war theatre (which in military-strategic terms now includes Pakistan under the umbrella of "AfPak"), "there is a concomitant rise in JSOC's power and influence within the military structure." McChrystal had overseen JSOC during the majority of the Bush years, where he worked very closely and directly with Vice President Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. As Seymour Hersh had exposed, JSOC operated as an "executive assassination ring" and had caused many problematic diplomatic situations for the United States, as even the State Department wasn't informed about their operations. One high-level State Department official was quoted as saying:

The only way we found out about it is our ambassadors started to call us and say, 'Who the hell are these six-foot-four white males with eighteen-inch biceps walking around our capital cities?' So we discovered this, we discovered one in South America, for example, because he actually murdered a taxi driver, and we had to get him out of there real quick. We rendered him—we rendered him home.[50]

Blackwater is also involved in providing "security for a US-backed aid project" in a region of Pakistan, which implies that even some aid projects are connected with military and intelligence operations, often using them as a cover for covert operations. Blackwater still operates in Afghanistan working for the US military, the State Department and the CIA. As one military-intelligence official stated:

Having learned its lessons after the private security contracting fiasco in Iraq, Blackwater has shifted its operational focus to two venues: protecting things that are in danger and anticipating other places we're going to go as a nation that are dangerous.[51]

Much of Scahill's information has been supported by other mainstream news sources. In August of 2009, the New York Times reported that in 2004, the CIA "hired outside contractors from the private security contractor Blackwater USA as part of a secret program to locate and assassinate top operatives of Al Qaeda." The CIA had held high-level meetings with Blackwater founder and former Navy SEAL Erik Prince. The article also revealed that in 2002, Blackwater had been awarded the contract to handle security for the CIA station in Afghanistan, "and the company maintains other classified contracts with the C.I.A." Blackwater has hired several former CIA officials, "including Cofer Black, who ran the C.I.A. counterterrorism center immediately after the Sept. 11 attacks." [52]

On December 10, 2009, the New York Times reported that in both Afghanistan and Iraq, Blackwater "participated in some of the C.I.A.'s most sensitive activities — clandestine raids with agency officers against people suspected of being insurgents." These raids, referred to as "snatch and grab" operations, occurred almost nightly between 2004 and 2006, and that, "involvement in the operations became so routine that the lines supposedly dividing the Central Intelligence Agency, the military and Blackwater became blurred." One former CIA official was quoted as saying, "There was a feeling that Blackwater eventually became an extension of the agency." Further, Blackwater was reported to have provided security not only for the CIA station in Afghanistan, but also in Iraq; and in both countries, Blackwater "personnel accompanied the [CIA] officers even on offensive operations sometimes begun in conjunction with Delta Force or Navy Seals teams." [53]

In late August it was reported that Blackwater had a CIA contract to operate the remotely

piloted drones, carried out at “hidden bases” in Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as provide security at the bases.[54] In December, the New York Times ran a story reporting that the CIA had terminated its contract with Blackwater “that allowed the company to load bombs on C.I.A. drones in Pakistan and Afghanistan.” However, while the CIA claimed that all Blackwater contracts were under review, a CIA spokesperson said that, “At this time, Blackwater is not involved in any C.I.A. operations other than in a security or support role,”[55] which is still a very wide role, considering how the roles have been blurred between providing “security” and actively taking part in missions.

As the Guardian reported in December of 2009, Blackwater had a contract in Pakistan “to manage the construction of a training facility for the paramilitary Frontier Corps, just outside Peshawar,” which is the Pakistani Army’s paramilitary force.[56] Despite a continual official denial of Blackwater involvement in Pakistan, in December, the CIA admitted Blackwater operates in Pakistan under CIA contracts,[57] and in January of 2010, US Defense Secretary Robert Gates confirmed that both Blackwater (now known as Xe Services) and DynCorp have been operating in Pakistan.[58]

However, some reports indicate that Blackwater may be involved in even more nefarious activities inside Pakistan. A former head of Pakistani’s intelligence services, the ISI, stated in an interview that apart from simply taking part in drone attacks, Blackwater “may be involved in actions that destabilize the country.” Elaborating, he said, “My assessment is that they [Blackwater agents] — either themselves or most probably through others, through the locals — do carry out some of the explosions,” and that, “the idea is to carry out such actions, like carrying attacks in the civilian areas to make the others look bad in the eyes of the public.” In other words, according to the former head of the ISI, Blackwater may be involved in committing false flag terrorist attacks inside Pakistan.[59]

In November of 2009, Al-Jazeera reported that while many attacks occurring across Pakistan are blamed on the Tehreek e-Taliban, Pakistan’s Taliban, “the group has issued its first video statement denying involvement in targeting civilians and has blamed external forces for at least two recent blasts.” The denial stated that the attacks are being used as an excuse to prepare for military operations in various tribal regions of Pakistan, including South Waziristan. The denial also stated that the Pakistani Taliban “had no role in the bomb blast in a Peshawar market that killed at least 100 people as well as an attack in Charsada, a town located in Pakistan’s North West Frontier Province.” The spokesperson claimed that the Pakistani Taliban does not target civilians, and that the bombings were “linked to Blackwater activities in the country.” Even when the bombings initially occurred the Taliban denied involvement, and the local media was blaming “Blackwater and other American agencies.”[60]

The head of the Pakistani Taliban had previously stated that, “if Taliban can carry out attacks in Islamabad and target Pakistan army’s headquarters, then why should they target general public,” and proceeded to blame the bomb blast in Peshawar that killed 108 people on “Blackwater and Pakistani agencies [that] are involved in attacks in public places to blame the militants.” He was further quoted as saying, “Our war is against the government and the security forces and not against the people. We are not involved in blasts.”[61]

In January of 2010, it was reported that Blackwater “is in the running for a Pentagon contract potentially worth \$1 billion to train Afghanistan’s troubled national police force,” as Blackwater already “trains the Afghan border police — an arm of the national police — and drug interdiction units in volatile southern Afghanistan.”[62]

As Jeremy Scahill reported in August of 2009 on a legal case against Blackwater, where a former Blackwater mercenary and an ex-US Marine “have made a series of explosive allegations in sworn statements filed on August 3 in federal court in Virginia.” Among the claims:

The two men claim that the company’s owner, Erik Prince, may have murdered or facilitated the murder of individuals who were cooperating with federal authorities investigating the company. The former employee also alleges that Prince “views himself as a Christian crusader tasked with eliminating Muslims and the Islamic faith from the globe,” and that Prince’s companies “encouraged and rewarded the destruction of Iraqi life.”[63]

Further, both men stated that Blackwater was smuggling weapons into Iraq, often on Erik Prince’s private planes. These allegations surfaced in a trial against Blackwater for committing human rights violations and war crimes in Iraq against civilians. One of those who testified further stated that, “On several occasions after my departure from Mr. Prince’s employ, Mr. Prince’s management has personally threatened me with death and violence.” The testimony continued in explaining that:

Mr. Prince intentionally deployed to Iraq certain men who shared his vision of Christian supremacy, knowing and wanting these men to take every available opportunity to murder Iraqis. Many of these men used call signs based on the Knights of the Templar, the warriors who fought the Crusades.

Mr. Prince operated his companies in a manner that encouraged and rewarded the destruction of Iraqi life. For example, Mr. Prince’s executives would openly speak about going over to Iraq to “lay Hajiis out on cardboard.” Going to Iraq to shoot and kill Iraqis was viewed as a sport or game. Mr. Prince’s employees openly and consistently used racist and derogatory terms for Iraqis and other Arabs, such as “ragheads” or “hajiis.”[64]

In January of 2010, Erik Prince, the controversial founder and CEO of Blackwater gave an interview with Vanity Fair magazine which was intended to not simply discuss the company, but also the man behind the company. It begins by quoting Prince as saying, “I put myself and my company at the C.I.A.’s disposal for some very risky missions,” and continued, “But when it became politically expedient to do so, someone threw me under the bus.” It is worth quoting the article at some length:

Publicly, [Erik Prince] has served as Blackwater’s C.E.O. and chairman. Privately, and secretly, he has been doing the C.I.A.’s bidding, helping to craft, fund, and execute operations ranging from inserting personnel into “denied areas”—places U.S. intelligence has trouble penetrating—to assembling hit teams targeting al-Qaeda members and their allies. Prince, according to sources with knowledge of his activities, has been working as a C.I.A. asset: in a word, as a spy. While his company was busy gleaning more than \$1.5 billion in government contracts between 2001 and 2009—by acting, among other things, as an overseas Praetorian guard for C.I.A. and State Department officials—Prince became a Mr. Fix-It in the war on terror. His access to paramilitary forces, weapons, and aircraft, and his indefatigable ambition—the very attributes that have galvanized his critics—also made him extremely valuable, some say, to U.S. intelligence.[65]

Prince’s Afghan security team is the “special-projects” team of Blackwater, and “except for their language its men appear indistinguishable from Afghans. They have full beards, headscarves, and traditional knee-length shirts over baggy trousers.” In regards to Prince’s

worth with the CIA, he:

wasn't merely a contractor; he was, insiders say, a full-blown asset. Three sources with direct knowledge of the relationship say that the C.I.A.'s National Resources Division recruited Prince in 2004 to join a secret network of American citizens with special skills or unusual access to targets of interest.[66]

In Afghanistan, Blackwater "provides security for the US Ambassador Karl Eikenberry and his staff, and trains narcotics and Afghan special police units." There was also a revolving door of sorts between Blackwater and the CIA. Not only was Prince a CIA asset, but many higher-ups in the CIA would also move into Blackwater. A Blackwater-CIA team even hunted down an alleged Al-Qaeda financier in Hamburg, Germany, without even the German government's awareness of it. Publicly, the Blackwater program with the CIA was canned. Although there was no mention of its covert program with JSOC in Pakistan, so one must assume its relationship is maintained in some capacity. Prince ultimately left his position at Blackwater in the face of bad press, but still controls the majority of the stock.[67]

In September of 2009, General Mirza Aslam Beg, Pakistan's former Army Chief, said that, "Blackwater was directly involved in the assassinations of former Pakistani prime minister Benazir Bhutto and former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri." He told a Saudi Arabian daily that, "former Pakistani president Pervez Musharraf had given Blackwater the green light to carry out terrorist operations in the cities of Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Peshawar, and Quetta." It was in an interview with a Pakistani TV network when he stated that Blackwater and "the United States killed Benazir Bhutto." Beg was chief of Army staff during Benazir Bhutto's first administration. He claimed that she was killed "in an international conspiracy because she had decided to back out of the deal through which she had returned to the country after nine years in exile." [68]

Is the West Punishing Pakistan to Challenge China?

China and Pakistan established diplomatic ties in 1951, and have enjoyed a close relationship since then, with Pakistan being one of the first countries to recognize the People's Republic of China in 1950. One of the primary reasons behind the close and ever-closer relationship between China and Pakistan is the role of India, as both an adversary and competitor to Pakistan and China. A Pakistani ambassador to the United States said that for Pakistan, "China is a high-value guarantor of security against India." Further, within India, increased Chinese military support to Pakistan is perceived as "a key aspect of Beijing's perceived policy of 'encirclement' or constraint of India as a means of preventing or delaying New Delhi's ability to challenge Beijing's region-wide influence." These ties have increased since the 1990s, and especially as the United States became increasingly close to India. As a Council on Foreign Relations background report on China-Pakistan relations explained:

The two countries have cooperated on a variety of large-scale infrastructure projects in Pakistan, including highways, gold and copper mines, major electricity complexes and power plants, and numerous nuclear power projects. With roughly ten thousand Chinese workers engaged in 120 projects in Pakistan, total Chinese investment—which includes heavy engineering, power generation, mining, and telecommunications—was valued at \$4 billion in 2007 and is expected to rise to \$15 billion by 2010.[69]

As the Pakistani ambassador to the U.S. further explained, "Pakistan thinks that both China

and the United States are crucial for it," however, he went on, "If push comes to shove, it would probably choose China—but for this moment, it doesn't look like there has to be a choice." The recent U.S.-India civilian nuclear agreement has further entrenched a distrust of America within Pakistan and pushed the country closer to China. In 2010, China announced it would be building two nuclear power reactors in Pakistan.[70]

In 2007, China and Pakistan inaugurated Gwadar Port in Pakistan's Balochistan Province along the Arabian Sea, creating the first major point in an "energy corridor" which would eventually bring oil from the Gulf overland through Pakistan into China. China financed the building of the port city for \$200 million, with plans to fund billions more worth of railroads, roads, and pipelines which would link Gwadar Port to China. Pakistan is strategically placed in the centre of the new 'Great Game', a nomenclature for the great imperial battles over Central Asia in the 19th century. Pakistan is neighbour to Iran, India, China, and Afghanistan, with a coastline on the Arabian Sea. Thus, Pakistan is situated between the oil-rich Middle East and the natural gas-rich Central Asian countries, with two of the fastest growing economies in the world - India and China - as energy-hungry neighbours; with the imperial presence of America in neighbouring Afghanistan, with its eye focused intensely on neighbouring Iran. A 'Great Game' ensues, drawing in Russia, China, India and America, and the main focus of the game is pipelines.[71]

China has a major pipeline project in the works to bring in natural gas from Central Asia, transporting the gas from Turkmenistan through Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan and into China, which is set to be completed by 2013.[72] Iran, OPEC's second largest oil exporter (after Saudi Arabia), is among the top ten oil exporters to China, and in 2010 it was reported that the Chinese have invested roughly \$40 billion in Iran's oil and gas sectors, including financing for the construction of seven new oil refineries, as well as various oil and gas pipeline projects.[73] In June of 2011, it was reported that China's oil imports from Iran have increased by 32%, signaling a growing importance in the relationship between the two countries. The largest three oil exporters to China are Saudi Arabia, Angola, and Iran, respectively.[74]

The Gwadar Port city built by Chinese investments is destined to be a central hub in the pipeline politics of the 'Great Game,' in particular between the competing pipeline projects of the Trans-Afghan Pipeline (TAP or TAPI), involving a pipeline bringing natural gas from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan, Pakistan, and into India; and the Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline (IPI). The major issue here is that the TAPI pipeline cannot be built so long as Afghanistan is plunged into war, thus the project has been incessantly stalled. On the other hand, India has been wavering and moving out of the picture in the IPI pipeline, in no small measure due to its increasingly close relations with the United States, which has sought to dissuade Pakistan from building a pipeline with Iran. However, in 2010, Pakistan and Iran signed the agreement, and are willing to either allow India or China to be the beneficiary of the pipeline. Whether going to India or China, Gwadar Port will be a central hub in this project.[75] Pakistan has now been seeking direct help from China on the Iran-Pakistan pipeline project.[76] The U.S., for its part, warned Pakistan against signing onto a pipeline project with Iran, yet Pakistan proceeded with the project regardless.[77]

The southern Pakistani province of Balochistan is home to oil, gas, copper, gold, and coal reserves, not to mention, it is the strategic corridor through which the pipeline projects would run, and is home to the strategically significant port city of Gwadar. For the past fifty years, however, Balochistan has been a major hub of Chinese investment and opportunity, with Chinese companies having poured \$15 billion into projects in the province, including

the construction of an oil refinery, copper and zinc mines, and of course, Gwadar Port.[78] India is increasingly concerned about China's presence in the Gulf and Indian Ocean. China is building ports not only in Pakistan, but in Bangladesh and Burma, as well as railroad lines in Nepal.[79]

Following the supposed assassination of Osama bin Laden by the U.S. in Pakistani territory, tensions between Pakistan and America increased, and ties between China and Pakistan deepened. The Chinese were subsequently approached by the Pakistanis to take control of the port of Gwadar, and perhaps to even build a Pakistani naval base there, though the Chinese have denied Pakistani claims that any such deal had been reached. China, further, in response to the apparent U.S. assassination of Bin Laden, said that the 'international community' (referring to the United States) "must respect" Pakistani sovereignty. Indian news quoted diplomatic sources as saying that China "warned in unequivocal terms that any attack on Pakistan would be construed as an attack on China." [80]

Pakistani Prime Minister Gilani visited China on a state visit shortly after the American raid into Pakistan. Following the meetings, China agreed to immediately provide 50 fighter jets to Pakistan, a clear signal that Pakistan is looking for alternatives to its American dependence, and China is all too happy to provide such an alternative.[81] As the Financial Times reported, "Pakistan has asked China to build a naval base at its south-western port of Gwadar and expects the Chinese navy to maintain a regular presence there." [82] China has also signaled that it would be interested in setting up foreign military bases, just as the United States has, and specifically is interested in such a base inside Pakistan. The aim "would be to exert pressure on India as well as counter US influence in Pakistan and Afghanistan." [83]

Conclusion

It would seem, then, that the true cause of chaos, destabilization, and war in Pakistan is not the Orientalist perspective of Pakistanis being the 'Other': barbaric, backwards, violent and self-destructive, in need to 'intervention' to right their own wrongs. Following along the same lines as the dismantling of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, the destabilization of Pakistan is aimed at wider strategic objectives for the Western imperial powers: namely, the isolation of China. While Pakistan has long been a staunch U.S. puppet regime, in the wider geopolitical context of a global rivalry between the United States and China for control of the world's resources and strategic positions, Pakistan may be sacrificed upon the altar of empire. The potential result of this strategy, in a country exceeding 180 million people, armed with nuclear weapons, and in the centre of one of the most tumultuous regions in the world, may be cataclysmic, perhaps even resulting in a war between the 'great powers.' The only way to help prevent such a potential scenario would be to analyze the strategy further, and expose it to a much wider audience, thus initiating a wider public discussion on the issue. As long as the public discourse on Pakistan is framed as an issue of "terrorism" and the "War on Terror" alone, this strategic nightmare will continue forward.

As the saying goes, "In war, truth is the first casualty."

But so too then, can war be the casualty of Truth.

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