

Islamic militancy: a foreign policy tool of the US and Pakistani establishments

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Admiral Mike Mullen (first from left), the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, Pakistani Army Chief Gen. Pervez Kayani (third from left) and next to him, the ISI Chief Ahmed Shuja Pasha (then Major Gen. and Director General Military Operations) aboard the US naval carrier Abraham Lincoln in Indian Ocean; in a secret meeting on August 26, 2008. Pasha was promoted to the rank of Lt. Gen. and appointed as the head of the Inter-Services Intelligence on Sept. 29, 2008. [Source: New Yorker]

The Pakistani media was quick to dismiss Indian allegations about the complicity of elements from Pakistan in Mumbai attacks. Some channels even carried stories that there was no Aslam Amir in Faridkot, only to contradict themselves later. We need to reflect upon the whole paradigm of 'terrorism'. For this purpose, it is essential to take a holistic view including examination of some important and critical events since 9/11, US's strategic interests in the Middle East and Central Asia, the relationship between the US and Pakistan authorities, and the murky nature of CIA's involvement with the so-called Islamic militants.

In Pakistan, there are two extreme viewpoints. One view sees things through a conspiracy paradigm where India-US-Israel nexus is out to destroy Pakistan and Pakistani establishment is an innocent bystander. The other view sees fundamentalism as purely a home grown issue that has gone out of control. There are elements of truth in both the views. But the reality, as always, is far more complex.

It has been made more complex due to the fact there is big money involved on both the sides. The Americans have poured money into so-called Pakistani think-tanks and media groups. Some of these think-tanks have clear and identifiable linkages to those run by neocons or are directly or indirectly funded by the US government or organisations. Their views are given platforms by large and respected groups such as DAWN and GEO TV without bothering to make disclosures about conflict of interest; a standard practice.

Some of the so-called fundamentalists enjoy cosy relationship with the Arab kingdoms and the Pakistani intelligence agencies. These agencies are very close to the CIA and the Pentagon.

Hence, the exponential increase in militancy and terrorist attacks in Pakistan since 2004 cannot be analysed in isolation from the role of the establishment, the US policies, and the biggest ever [ongoing] covert operations of the CIA since the end of the Afghan war in 1989.

Now let us ask why does it take the UN declarations to prompt actions from Pakistan? Why does Pakistan wait for external pressure to mount to act against militant groups? This lends credence to the view that militancy in Pakistan is, in part at least, a policy tool of the security establishment. But it is hard to argue or believe that the "elements within Pakistan" have or could have operated independently of its benefactors in Washington. This aspect may be away from the glare of TV screens and the front pages of the leading newspapers in the US, India, and Pakistan but there are strong reasons and reports to believe that the so-called Islamic militants continue to be tools of also the western intelligence agencies such as the America CIA and the British MI-6. And at points, they are alleged to be joined at the hip.

That is not to say that Pakistan does not have an inner cancer. But contrary to the view held by many in Pakistan, the cure lies in putting a distance with the Americans and not working with and for them. The only way to get out of this predicament would be a well thought out and carefully planned policy of gradual disengagement from playing the great game and support of militancy,

in Kashmir or elsewhere, and at whatever level - state or non-state, over the course of next several years.

In the absence of a clear policy and unwillingness to reduce dependence on the United States in exchange for fighting its proxy wars in Central Asia, the risk of Pakistan sinking deeper into the quagmire will only increase at a great cost to the national security interests. Let's see why?

US Intelligence had advance knowledge of Mumbai attacks

A [CNN report](#) Dec. 1, 2008 claimed that the US intelligence had warned the Indian government about a potential maritime attack against Mumbai at least a month before Mumbai attacks. "US intelligence indicated that a group might enter the country by water and launch an attack on Mumbai", CNN reported. One has to wonder if the top Pakistani authorities were informed and if not, why not? Pakistan would have been a likely point of origination of such a maritime attack by terrorists entering by water.

The CNN story raised another question. Given the extremely close relationship between the US and Pakistani authorities and between the US and some of the militant groups, the United States has the greatest motive and capability to expand the terror war that is not going anywhere in Afghanistan or which it is losing. Given the distant and recent history of CIA covert operations, it is not beyond the realm of possibility that the US would use the widely known presence of CIA assets inside Pakistan to instigate a terrorist attack inside India.

CIA has a history of using terrorist groups

One example of the CIA using terrorist attacks to further US policy objectives was a car bombing in Beirut in 1985. The car was placed outside a mosque. The bomb was timed to go off when people were leaving to make sure it killed the maximum number of people. It killed, according to the Washington Post, 80 people. It wounded over 250, mostly women and girls leaving the mosque. There was a huge explosion so it blew up the whole street, killing babies in beds and so on and so forth. The bomb was set off by the CIA in collaboration with British

intelligence and Saudi intelligence and specifically authorized by William Casey, according to Bob Woodward's history of Casey and the CIA.

It may be recalled that after the Bali bombing in 2002, senior Indonesian intelligence officials [New York Times, Nov. 25, 2002] had suspected that the CIA was behind the bombing and then Indonesia President Megawati had condemned "a superpower that forced the rest of the world to go along with it." Mrs. Megawati went on to say, "We see how ambition to conquer other nations has led to a situation where there is no more peace unless the whole world is complying with the will of the one with the power and strength."

More recently, the US and Pakistani media sources have carried reports of active support by the CIA of militant groups in Pakistan as described later in this article.

US has made the greatest strategic and tactical gains

The United States stands to make the greatest strategic and tactical gains by dragging India into the so-called 'War on Terror.' While the US officials were quick to point fingers towards Pakistan and rush to Islamabad to put pressure on Pakistani leadership, Iran and Russia advised caution. Chinese were careful to avoid any reference to Pakistan while they condemned the attacks. Iran's parliament Speaker Ali Larijani urged both India and Pakistan not to fall into trap set by certain countries. Russia Ambassador to New Delhi Vyacheslav Trubnikov said: "India should not yield to provocation. It should not listen to hotheads." He refused to get drawn to the finger-pointing towards Pakistan, as he maintained that he will not like to jump to conclusions when the investigations are on.

The US administration and its claims

The timing of Mumbai attacks coincided with the announcement of Robert Gates as Obama's Secretary of Defence, signalling the continuity of the current strategy in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The attack came at a time when the new Pakistani government had been conducting the most intense and vigorous campaign ever undertaken by Pakistan against the militants in the tribal areas.

On Nov 12, 2008 the Washington Post reported that CIA Director Michael V. Hayden was likely to lose his job in President Obama's administration. The following day, Hayden raised

the bogey of Osama bin Laden again saying he was “hiding in the lawless tribal areas of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border but was spending most of his time on his own security, making him ineffective.” Hayden described Osama bin Laden's network as a "determined and adaptive enemy" in a "war that is far from over" and warned: "If there is a major strike on [the US], it will bear the fingerprints of al-Qaida."

Hayden is closely linked to the Bush administration's controversial warrantless wiretapping program, the so-called Terrorist Surveillance Program. Hayden was the head of the National Security Agency, which was responsible for intercepting phone conversations and e-mails, when the program was initiated. Hayden has also publicly supported the enhanced interrogation techniques authorized by President Bush and used by the CIA against high-value terrorists caught overseas and held in secret prisons around the world. Now Hayden claims Al Qaeda leaders have extended their tentacles to North Africa and Somalia and were using partnerships to establish new bases. Elsewhere, Mr. Hayden said, Al Qaeda was “strengthening” in Yemen, and he added that veterans of the fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan had moved there, possibly to stage attacks against the government of Saudi Arabia.

Can we take Mr. Hayden’s unsubstantiated claims on their face value or even seriously? Mr. Hayden’s statement implies he knows about the whereabouts and activities of Osama. This is ridiculous. How can he even imply this after more than seven years of 9/11 and with no success in getting even anyway nearer to Osama or his deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri let alone capturing them?

Credibility of US claims about Al Qaeda

No US official or journalist or think-tank has ever raised or answered the question that Alan Greenspan posed in his book, *The Age of Turbulence*:

“There was no bigger question in Washington than, Why no second attack? If Al Qaeda’s intent was to disrupt the US economy, as bin Laden declared, the attacks had to continue. Our society was open, our borders porous, and ability to detect weapons and bombs was weak. I asked this question of a lot of people at the highest levels of government, and no one seemed to have a convincing response.”

Mr. Greenspan is no ordinary person. He is not just a former Chairman of the Federal Reserve. He has known George Bush, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and other top leaders for years and has had access to everyone who is any body in Washington. The reason he did not get a convincing response is that the people at the highest level of [US] government do not have one. Why?

On December 21, 2007, US Defence Secretary Robert M. Gates said a resurgent al-Qaeda terrorist network has shifted the focus of its attacks to Pakistan. "Al-Qaeda right now seems to have turned its face toward Pakistan and attacks on the Pakistani government and Pakistan people," Gates told press reporters.

The Washington Post noted that the Pentagon chief did not specify the nature or location of the group's operations in Pakistan, and quoted Pentagon specialist on counterterrorism efforts on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, who dismissed the defence secretary's assessment. "Gates is drinking the . . . Kool-Aid like this administration has for the last six years". He also said that the fighters there are not affiliated with al-Qaeda. He spoke on the condition of anonymity because he wants to keep his job.

Nor is it clear that al-Qaeda is the real threat in the rest of Pakistan, commented Teresita C. Schaffer, a former deputy assistant secretary of state for South Asia. "Clearly, extremist violence has emerged as the biggest danger to the Pakistan state," she said. "I don't know if it is al-Qaeda or not."

US destabilising Pakistan

On Sept. 17, 2008, Time magazine published a story "Risking War with Pakistan" written by an ex-CIA officer (for the Middle East) Robert Baer. He wrote:

"As Wall Street collapsed with a bang, almost no one noticed that we're on the brink of war with Pakistan. And, unfortunately, that's not too much of an exaggeration. On Tuesday, the Pakistan's military ordered its forces along the Afghan border to repulse all future American military incursions into Pakistan. The story has been subsequently downplayed, and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Mike Mullen, flew to Islamabad, Pakistan's capital, to try to ease tensions. But the fact remains that American forces have and are violating Pakistani sovereignty. You have to wonder whether the

Bush administration understands what it is getting into. In case anyone has forgotten, Pakistan has a hundred plus nuclear weapons. It's a country on the edge of civil war. Its political leadership is bitterly divided. In other words, it's the perfect recipe for a catastrophe. All of which begs the question, is it worth the ghost hunt we've been on since September 11? There has not been a credible sighting of Osama bin Laden since he escaped from Tora Bora in October 2001. As for al-Qaeda, there are few signs it's even still alive, other than a dispersed leadership taking refuge with the Taliban. Al-Qaeda couldn't even manage to post a statement on the Internet marking September 11, let alone set off a bomb."

Professor Anthony DiMaggio of Illinois State University, who teaches American Government and Politics of the Developing World, commented on Robert Baer's report in the Counterpunch:

"The comments above, cited from Time magazine, are the only commentary I've managed to find in all of the American press that warn about the dangerous game the US is playing in destabilizing Pakistan. American media coverage, conversely, is driven by a warmongering that's remarkably indifferent to the dangers involved in escalating the conflict. US attacks on

Pakistan inevitably carry the risk of further inciting Pakistani anger against the US. In the New York Times, editors depict the conflict in an Orwellian fashion, framing Pakistan, rather than the US, as the true threat. Illegal U.S. attacks are framed innocently as a response to terrorism, with the Pakistani government's promises of reprisals against invading troops seen as "threatening" the safety of US troops. American reporters have long been known for their stenographic role, faithfully reflecting the official debate in Washington, rather than independently promoting their own reasoned, critical dialogue."

Prof. DiMaggio could have added; they have also buried critical and troubling facts about 9/11, Al Qaeda, and the role of the US and Pakistani establishments. Here are some concrete and well documented reasons why the US claims about Al Qaeda are not credible and cannot be taken at face value.

The unresolved questions of 9/11 investigation

John S. Pistole, Deputy Assistant Director of Federal Bureau of Investigation's Counterterrorism Division, testified before the US Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs on July 31, 2003. The following part of his testimony is extremely intriguing:

“The FBI conducted a detailed financial investigation/analysis of the 19 hijackers and their support network, following the September 11th attacks. This investigation initially identified the Al Qaida funding sources of the 19 hijackers in the UAE and Germany. The financial investigation also provided the first links between Ramzi Binalshibh and the 9/11 operation. A continuing investigation, in coordination with the PENTTBOMB Team, has traced the origin of the funding of 9/11 back to financial accounts in Pakistan, where high-ranking and well-known Al Qaida operatives played a major role in moving the money forward, eventually into the hands of the hijackers located in the U.S.”

There was no investigation into the grave and startling revelations made by the FBI. The FBI testimony was consistent with what the Wall Street Journal had published on Oct. 10, 2001. The WSJ never followed up or contradicted this story but other sources such as AFP confirmed it.

Quote from the Wall Street Journal:

Our Friends the Pakistanis

Yesterday we noted a report from a Pakistani newspaper that Lt. Gen. Mahmud Ahmad had been fired as head of Islamabad's Inter-Services Security agency after U.S. linked him to a militant allied with terrorists who hijacked an Indian Airlines plane in 1999. Now the Times of India says Ahmad is connected to the Sept. 11 attacks: Top sources confirmed here on Tuesday, that the general lost his job because of the “evidence” India produced to show his links to one of the suicide bombers that wrecked the World Trade Centre. The US authorities sought his removal after confirming the fact that \$100,000 was wired to WTC hijacker Mohammed Atta from Pakistan by Ahmed Omar Sheikh at the instance of Gen Mahmud. Senior government sources have confirmed that India contributed significantly to establishing the link between the money transfer and the role played by the dismissed ISI chief. While they did not provide details, they said that Indian inputs, including Sheikh's mobile phone number, helped the FBI in tracing and establishing the link.

Unquote.

Cover up of 9/11 Investigation

The 9/11 commission itself charged the US government of a cover up. On January 2, 2008, **Thomas H. Kean and Lee H. Hamilton who served as chairman and vice chairman**, respectively, of the 9/11 commission wrote an op-ed piece in The New York Times, accusing the US government of a cover up as no one in the administration ever told the commission of the existence of videotapes of detainee interrogations. “As a legal matter, it is not up to us to examine the CIA’s failure to disclose the existence of these tapes. That is for others. What we do know is that government officials decided not to inform a lawfully constituted body, created by Congress and the president, to investigate one the greatest tragedies to confront this country. **We call that obstruction**”, they concluded.

The commission itself was not keen to pursue the full facts. On page 172 of its report, it stated that ultimately the question of who financed the attacks “is of little practical significance”, noting that **“to date the US government has not been able to determine the origin of the money used for 9/11 attacks.”** That’s right. The 9/11 Commission concluded in its report that it wasn’t important to follow the money trail leading to those ultimately responsible for the crime.

Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh, who was alleged to have wired money to the 9/11 hijackers, was sentenced to ‘death’ in 2002 but his “appeal” has been pending since then. He kidnapped Daniel Pearl of the Wall Street Journal but the US never pressed for his extradition. Musharraf wrote in his book that Omar was an MI6 agent. Omar was also a "Kashmiri jihadi" and associated with Jaish-e-Mohammad. Pakistan’s former chief of Intelligence Bureau; Brig. (retired) Ijaz Shah was the handler of Omar Saeed Sheikh. Sheikh surrendered to him in Lahore although Daniel Pearl was kidnapped from Karachi. Brig. Ijaz Shah was also accused by Benazir Bhutto [Interview to David Frost, Nov. 2, 2008 -Al-Jazeera TV] of plotting to assassinate her.

It is a matter of record that even after more than five years of his arrest, the US government has refused to try the alleged master mind of 9/11, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, in a normal civil federal court. He was arrested in March 2003 and handed over to the US but never faced open trial. According to the 9/11 Commission Report he was “the principal architect of the 9/11

attacks.” On October 12, 2006, Time magazine reported that “KSM confessed under CIA interrogation that he personally committed the murder” of WSJ journalist Daniel Pearl.

Four critical questions

- 1) Why would the US government not pursue the Al Qaeda money trail leading to 9/11 attacks?
- 2) Why would the CIA destroy video tapes containing hundreds of hours of interrogations of Al Qaeda detainees in Guantanamo Bay?
- 3) Why would it obstruct independent investigation by members of the 9/11 Commission?
- 4) Why would the Pentagon and the CIA not try Khalid and other Al Qaeda members in a normal court?

These are crucial and extremely important questions. Unless the US government can answer these critical questions, its critics can rightfully and legitimately question its theory that the Al Qaeda has safe havens in Pakistan from which it can launch terrorist attacks on the America. **The US government and its intelligence agencies have a major credibility issue. Their record, unfortunately, includes lies, deliberate disinformation and doctored intelligence - all designed to promote and implement hidden agendas.**

Deliberately false US intelligence claims

In the past, the US intelligence had concluded that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. It was a lie that has been so well documented that it needs no further comment. The real motive was to conquer Iraq and control its oil fields.

In October 2007, President Bush had suggested that a nuclear-armed Iran could lead to “World War III” and Vice President Dick Cheney promised “serious consequences” if the government

in Tehran did not abandon its nuclear program. But the US establishment and its intelligence agencies had decided to shift their focus away from Iran. In December 2007, a National Intelligence Estimate that represented the consensus view of all 16 American spy agencies, concluded that Iran halted its nuclear weapons program in 2003 and that the program remained frozen, contradicting its own judgment in 2005 that Tehran was working relentlessly toward building a nuclear bomb.

Given that the US has thus far failed to establish the responsibility for 9/11 attacks, the fact that there has been no attack by Al Qaeda on the US soil since 9/11, the real motive behind Iraq War, and the systematic disinformation campaign about Iran's nuclear program, it is perfectly logical to question the real motives of the US policy in Pakistan.

The nuclear dimension

Pakistan's nuclear programme issue assumed greater and urgent significance by the mischievous remarks of Joe Biden, the democrat vice presidential candidate, made in the debate with Sarah Palin. "Pakistan's (nuclear) missiles can already hit Israel," Biden thundered. But what was he talking about?

Pakistan does not have the capability to hit Israel. It has never threatened Israel. Jackson Diehl of Washington Post (Oct.3) commented: "a good deal of what Biden said was exaggerated, distorted or simply false — especially in his nominal area of expertise, foreign policy."

Robert Fisk, writing in the UK's The Independent (Oct. 4) ridiculed Biden's statement that there have been 7,000 madrassas built ... and that's where bin Laden lives and we will go at him if we have actually (sic) intelligence. Fisk chided: "Seven thousand? Where on earth does this figure come from? Yes, there are thousands of religious schools in Pakistan – but they're not all on the border". **Fisk warned about the real US agenda, "We must gird ourselves for the next struggle against 'world evil' in Pakistan".**

Islamic militants are America's intelligence assets

Despite all the propaganda in the US media and think tanks about the alleged threat of Al Qaeda, the ground realities tell a different story. There are several reports, too many for all of them to be mentioned here, that the CIA's involvement with and use of militants did not stop

either after the end of Afghan war or 9/11. It is a matter of record that Abdullah Mehsud, Baitullah Mehsud's cousin and former leader of the so-called Taliban-e-Pakistan, was captured by the US troops in Afghanistan in December 2001 and kept in custody till March 2004 when he was released from Guantanamo Bay and allowed to return to Waziristan. Abdullah played a key role in organizing the 'militants' before he was killed by Pakistan's security forces when Musharraf came under heavy pressure from the Chinese after Abdullah Mehsud kidnapped two Chinese engineers.

On August 5, 2008, The News International reported, "Impeccable official sources have said that strong evidence and circumstantial evidence of American acquiescence to terrorism inside Pakistan was outlined by President Musharraf, General Kayani and DG (ISI) Nadeem Taj in their separate meetings with US Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mullen and CIA Deputy Director Stephen R Kappes on July 12 in Rawalpindi." The top US military commander and the CIA official were also asked why the CIA-run predator and the US military did not swing into action when they were provided the exact location of Baitullah Mehsud on May 24, 2008.

Al Qaeda and Taliban rescued by Bush

The story of how thousands of 'militants and Al Qaeda' ended up in Waziristan reads like a chapter from a spy fiction. How did Al Qaeda manage to establish its base in north-western Pakistan? The Al Qaeda stronghold was established in the months following the US-NATO invasion of Afghanistan. The military campaign commenced in early October and was completed in late November 2001.

In late November 2001, the Northern Alliance supported by US bombing raids took the hill town of Kunduz in Northern Afghanistan. Eight thousand or more men "had been trapped inside the city in the last days of the siege, roughly half of whom were Pakistanis. Afghans, Uzbeks, Chechens, and various Arab mercenaries accounted for the rest." [See article by Seymour M. Hersh, The Getaway, The New Yorker, January 21, 2002]

A large number of these "foreign fighters" that included the Taliban and Al Qaeda leaders were never brought to justice, nor were they detained or interrogated. In fact quite the opposite, they were rescued. As confirmed by Seymour Hersh in New Yorker and documented in detail by Ahmed Rashid [Descent into Chaos, pp. 91-92, published 2008], they were flown to safety on the orders of Vice President Dick Cheney and Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, following

a special request made by Musharraf to Bush. The Bush Administration ordered US Central Command to set up a special air corridor to help insure the safety of the Pakistani rescue sorties from the air bases in Chitral and Gilgit to Kunduz.

London bombing, MI-6 and Al-Muhajiroun

Another example of protecting the terrorists is the London attacks in July 2005. Haroon Rachid Aswat was said to have played a central role in the attacks. “Cell phone records show around 20 calls between him and the 7/7 gang, leading right up to those attacks, which were exactly three weeks ago.” (Fox News, 28 July 2005). The same source (Fox News) which presents Aswat as the “mastermind”, also points to Aswat’s relationship to British and US intelligence, through a British based Islamic organization Al-Muhajiroun. In an interview with Fox News (29 July 2005), intelligence expert John Loftus revealed that Haroon Rashid Aswat had connections to the British Secret Service MI-6 (emphasis added): **“the entire British police are out chasing him, and one wing of the British government, MI-6 or the British Secret Service, has been hiding him.”**

Jundullah and the CIA

The use of Pakistan-based terrorist groups by the US government has been reported by even main stream American media. A major US network, ABC News broke an exclusive story [April 3, 2007] that said, “A Pakistani tribal militant group responsible for a series of deadly guerrilla raids inside Iran has been secretly encouraged and advised by American officials since 2005, US and Pakistani intelligence sources tell ABC News. The group, called Jundullah, is made up of members of the Baluchi tribe and operates out of the Baluchistan province in Pakistan, just across the border from Iran.” ABC News report added: “U.S. officials say the U.S. relationship with Jundullah is [arranged] so that the US provides no funding to the group, which would require an official presidential order or "finding" as well as congressional oversight.” But according to the British daily Telegraph [February 25, 2007], “Funding for their separatist causes comes directly from the CIA’s classified budget but is now “no great secret”, according to one former high-ranking CIA official in Washington who spoke anonymously.”

CIA and Islamic militants in the former Soviet Union

The covert use of Islamic militants is likely to be expanded in the coming years. Strategic Forecasting, Inc., more commonly known as Stratfor, a private intelligence agency once referred to as "The Shadow CIA" by the highly respected Barron's, reported on August 14, 2008 that "The (former Soviet) republic of Tatarstan also is a prime candidate for a covert strategy that aims to inflame Russia's Muslim minorities. This Muslim belt is key because it separates the ethnically Russian portions of Russia from sparsely populated Siberia and runs through all of Russia's transport networks (road, rail and pipeline). The Islamist militant card is a tempting option for Washington and Riyadh. Ramping up Muslim fighters in Chechnya and Tatarstan is a logical step for the United States to take in coordination with its Saudi allies."

The end game

Why would the United States use the Islamic militants even as intelligence assets at apparently great risk to world security and spread of terrorism? A passage from "Devil's Game" by Robert Dreyfuss

(pp. 336-337, published 2005) deserves serious thought. Citing the infamous policy memo written by leading neocons in 1995, entitled, "A Clean Break" to then Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel to 'contain, destabilise, and roll back' various states in the region, Dreyfuss concludes:

"Neoconservatives want to control the Middle East, not reform it; even it means tearing countries apart and replacing them with rump mini-states along ethnic and sectarian lines. The Islamic right, in this context, is just one more tool for dismantling existing regimes, if that is what it takes."

Zbigniew Brzezinski, who served as National Security Adviser in the Carter Administration, warned about the so-called "war on Terror" in his [testimony to the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee](#) on February 1, 2007. He called the war a historical myth created and perpetuated by the US government. He said:

“If the United States continues to be bogged down in a protracted bloody involvement in Iraq, the final destination on this downhill track is likely to be a head-on conflict with Iran and with much of the world of Islam at large. A plausible scenario for a military collision with Iran involves Iraqi failure to meet the benchmarks; followed by accusations of Iranian responsibility for the failure; then by some provocation in Iraq or a terrorist act in the U.S. blamed on Iran; culminating in a “defensive” U.S. military action against Iran that plunges a lonely America into a spreading and deepening quagmire eventually ranging across Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

A mythical historical narrative to justify the case for such a protracted and potentially expanding war is already being articulated. Initially justified by false claims about WMD’s in Iraq, the war is now being redefined as the “decisive ideological struggle” of our time, reminiscent of the earlier collisions with Nazism and Stalinism. In that context, Islamist extremism and al Qaeda are presented as the equivalents of the threat posed by Nazi Germany and then Soviet Russia, and 9/11 as the equivalent of the Pearl Harbor attack which precipitated America’s involvement in World War II.”

What does it all add up to for Pakistan? Where all this is leading to? What is the current strategic objective of the United States in Pakistan? The New York Times provided a clear indication in a report titled, [“US Considers New Covert Push within Pakistan”](#) dated January 6, 2008:

“The options under discussion are unclear and classified. Officials said no decision had been made, but the options likely would involve the CIA working with the military's Special Operations forces. The Bush administration has not formally presented any new options to Musharraf, who gave up his military role last month, or to his successor as the army chief, Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani. The White House thinks Kayani will be more sympathetic to the American position than Musharraf. Kayani was an aide to Bhutto early in his career and later led the Pakistani intelligence service. **“From the White House to the Pentagon, officials see an opportunity in the changing power structure for Americans to advocate for expanded authority in the nuclear-armed country.”** After years of focusing on Afghanistan, we think the extremists [within the administration] now see a chance for the big prize — creating chaos in Pakistan itself,” one senior official said. Some in the State Department argue that American-led military operations on the Pakistani side of the border with Afghanistan

could result in a tremendous backlash. That would be particularly true, they said, if Americans were captured or killed in the territory.”

This was probably as far as a newspaper, such as the New York Times, could go in revealing what was clearly a discussion of covert plans to create chaos in Pakistan. Year 2008 proved to be the worst year in history for Pakistan’s northern areas in terms of violence and deaths and it has created more than chaos in Pakistan. It has brought Pakistan to the brink of collapse.

The reports of the covert operations in Pakistan cannot be denied. Some of them have been documented under the US covert operations category of my website [State of Pakistan](#). The US Assistant Secretary of Defence Michael Vickers is the man responsible for covert operations worldwide including Pakistan. According to Washington Post, Vickers, a former Green Beret and CIA operative, was the principal strategist for the biggest covert program in CIA history: the paramilitary operation that drove the Soviet army out of Afghanistan in the 1980s. The movie “Charlie Wilson’s War” portrays Vickers in that role, in which he directed an insurgent force of 150,000 Afghan fighters and controlled an annual budget of more than \$2 billion in current dollars. He controlled them (ex- Mujahids and today's TALIBAN etc.) at one time.

His address to the Council of Foreign Relations on October 26, 2006 offers a glimpse of his thinking. To get an insight into Michael Vickers - read this transcript from [Military Strategies for Unconventional Warfare](#). Here Vickers states: *"Again, Pakistan is a critical ally in the war on terror, but life's not perfect. But again, what's the alternative—invade the Northwest Frontier Provinces? Good luck. You know—and so there's a—you know, there's a time and place."* The time and place arrived in July 2007 when he was appointed as an Assistant Secretary Defence.

According to a report of the [Army Times](#) (US) December 23, 2008, the US and CIA units for Pakistan are supported by even naval units. The report says, “There are two major special operations task forces in Afghanistan: CJSOTF-A, which is the “white,” or unclassified, task force and is organized around a Special Forces group headquarters with two SF battalions and Marine special operations and Navy SEAL elements; and a “black” special operations task force with a headquarters element drawn from the secretive Joint Special Operations Command overseeing elements of Navy Special Warfare Development Group, also known as SEAL Team 6, the 75th Ranger Regiment, and the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment.” One wonders why does the US covert operatives in Afghanistan and the tribal areas need naval commandos?

Michel Chossudovsky, a professor at Ottawa University and the director of the Centre for Research on Globalization, Canada sums up America's Pakistan strategy with a rather chilling explanation of the US covert policy objectives and actions:

“The political impasse is deliberate. It is part of an evolving US foreign policy agenda, which favours disruption and disarray in the structures of the Pakistani State. Indirect rule by the Pakistani military and intelligence apparatus is to be replaced by more direct forms of US interference, including an expanded US military presence inside Pakistan. This expanded military presence is also dictated by the Middle East-Central Asia geopolitical situation and Washington's ongoing plans to extend the Middle East war to a much broader area.”

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