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Balkanizing Pakistan: A Collective National Security Strategy

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Breaking Pakistan to Fix It

The argument for Balkanizing Pakistan or, more specifically, fragmenting the Islamic Republic so it's easier to police and economically develop, has been on the table since Pakistan's birth in 1947 when the country was spit out of a British laboratory. And lately, the concept is looking more appealing by the day, because as a result of flawed boundaries combined with the nexus between military rule and Islamic extremism, Pakistan now finds itself on a rapid descent toward certain collapse and the country's leaders stubbornly refuse to do the things required to change course. But before allowing Pakistan to commit state suicide, self-disintegrate and further destabilize the region, the international community can beat them to the punch and deconstruct the country less violently.

To quell any doubts about Pakistan's seemingly uncontrollable spiral into darkness, just recently, [Foreign Policy Magazine ranked Pakistan as the tenth most failed state on earth](#) and it would seem its leaders are hell bent on securing the number one slot - an honor it can add to their already dubious distinction as the world's largest incubator of jihadist extremism. Afghanistan will never see peace or prosperity with a neighbor like Pakistan and the U.S. will always be threatened by terrorist plots spawned in Pakistan's lawless regions - like the most recent Times Square bombing.

The most popular approach to fragmentation is to break off and allow Afghanistan to absorb Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), which would unite the Pashtun tribes. In addition, the provinces of Balochistan and Sindh would become independent sovereign states, leaving Punjab as a standalone entity.

Balkanization is based on the premise that the weak central government in Islamabad is incapable of governing Pakistan's frontiers, which have become the number one source of regional instability. The governing Punjabi elite have neglected the other three major ethnic groups - the Sindhis, Pashtuns, and Baluchis, primarily because a majority of Pakistan's budget is spent on the military rather than economic development, schooling or infrastructure. Only 2% of Pakistan's GDP, for example, is spent on education despite the fact Pakistan's literacy rate stands at 57%.

Minority groups have also been underrepresented in institutions such as Pakistan's military - which is the country's most powerful entity. Punjabis who represent 40% of the population constitute 90% of the armed forces. Pakistan's own history provides a

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prime case study of what happens when an ethnic group can no longer tolerate political and economic disregard. After a quarter century of strife the Bengalis rebelled, seceded and founded Bangladesh in 1971.

If the Balkanization solution is ever put in motion, accusations will surely fly that it's yet another example of U.S. imperialism and neoconservatism run amok. However, this would be a diplomatic and multilateral effort, plus, it is more about reversing the iniquities of British colonialism than it is building some new world order.

Inherent Instability

Pakistan's problems began when the British drew its boundaries haphazardly, which was primarily a product of incompetence and haste than maniacal design. According to an article in the New York Times last year, [British colonial officer, Sir Cyril Radcliffe](#) was given six weeks to carve a Muslim-majority state from British India although he had never even been there before. Radcliffe's private secretary was quoted as saying that Sir Cyril "was a bit flummoxed by the whole thing. It was a rather impossible assignment, really. To partition that subcontinent in six weeks was absurd." It would be a comical anecdote except for the fact that hundreds of thousands of people died in the ethnic cleansing that followed as a direct result of British carelessness.

Pakistan's border with Afghanistan - the poorly-marked Durand Line - had been drawn in 1893, also by the British, but it was never meant to be a long-term legally-binding boundary. The faux demarcation split the Pashtuns in half. By reinstating the original natural boundaries, Pakistan's western provinces would be returned to Afghanistan and the Pashtun tribes would be reunited. Such a move would also remove a strategic advantage for the Afghan Taliban, who can easily blend in amongst fellow Pashtuns on the Pakistani side of the border today.

The British did not only gift Pakistan with lethal boundaries, according to [renowned Pakistani journalist Ahmed Rashid](#), Pakistan inherited a "security state" from British rule, described by scholars as "the viceregal tradition" or "a permanent state of martial law". Intellectual Christopher Hitchens asserted Pakistan has been a fiefdom of the military for most of its short existence. As was once said of Prussia: Pakistan is not a country that has an army, but an army that has a country. Hitchens also said the country was doomed to be a dysfunctional military theocracy from day one - beginning with the very name of the country itself:

But then, there is a certain hypocrisy inscribed in the very origins and nature of "Pakistan". The name is no more than an acronym, concocted in the 1930s at Cambridge University by a NW Muslim propagandist named Chaudhri Rahmat Ali. It stands for Punjab, Afghania, Kashmir, and Indus-Sind, plus the suffix "-stan," meaning "land." In the Urdu tongue, the resulting word means "Land of the Pure." The country is a cobbling together of regional, religious, and ethnic nationalisms, and its founding, in 1947, resulted in Pakistan's becoming, along with Israel, one of the two "faith-based" states to emerge from the partitionist policy of a dying British colonialism. Far from being a "Land of the Pure," Pakistan is one of the clearest demonstrations of the futility of defining a nation by religion, and one of the textbook failures of a state and a society.

Pakistan deteriorated throughout the decades because of its focus on building the military and developing Islamic extremist groups to use as weapons in their eternal obsessive struggle against India. It's true the U.S. helped Pakistan build these groups since the beginning of the Cold War, but America learned on 9/11 they had created a Frankenstein monster that now needed to be slain.

Many analysts have suggested India is less of a national security threat to Pakistan than its homegrown terrorist groups, many of which have openly declared their mission to topple the state, which would allow jihadists to secure nuclear materials. Yet, based on its strategic decision to foster extremism and its recent public support for Taliban rule in Afghanistan, it appears the biggest existential threat to Pakistan is its own political and military leaders.

The Last Straw

With that being said, Balkanization does seem like an extreme step at first blush, and perhaps Pakistan should be given another chance. Yet, after considering Pakistan's historic and current relationship with Al Qaeda - it becomes much easier to justify.

Since the war began in 2001 the U.S. has asked Pakistan to root out extremists from

sanctuaries in a Rhode Island-sized area called North Waziristan, chief among them being the lethal Haqqani Network. However, Pakistan's army chief General Ashfaq Kayani asserted his forces were too bogged down fighting the Pakistani Taliban elsewhere in places like South Waziristan, Orakzai Agency and various districts across the NWFP.

I contacted an Afghan intelligence analyst about this and he assessed General Kayani's claim with one single word: rubbish. The Pakistan army consists of 500,000 active duty troops and another 500,000 on reserve. If Pakistan truly wanted to capture the Haqqani Network they would be able to drag them out of their caves by their beards within a few days.

In a movement that should have floored U.S. policymakers, Kayani was brazen enough to try and inveigle Afghanistan to strike a power-sharing arrangement with the Haqqanis. And Kayani, apparently the spokesperson for the Haqqani group, said they'd be willing to split from and denounce Al Qaeda, which is President Obama's primary rationale for the war. However, there is a higher probability of General Kayani converting to Hinduism than there is of the Haqqani Network ever being decoupled from Al Qaeda.

According to the [Long War Journal](#), Siraj Haqqani, their leader, sits on Al Qaeda's decision-making body. Haqqani's friendship with Osama bin Laden dates back to the war against the Soviets in the 1980s and it was Haqqani that ensured safe passage into Pakistan for many Al Qaeda figures after the collapse of the Taliban in 2001. An [Institute for the Study of War](#) analysis concluded that Haqqani was "irreconcilable" and negotiations with him would actually strengthen Al Qaeda and would undermine the *raison d'etre* for U.S. involvement in Afghanistan over the past decade.

In other words, the Haqqani Network is Al Qaeda.

Pakistan has had a close relationship with the Haqqanis for over 30 years, who are still seen as a crucial anti-Indian asset. So, for nine years the Pakistanis protected the Haqqanis and claimed ignorance as to the whereabouts of Mullah Omar, Osama bin Laden and the Quetta Shura. Nine years, nearly \$300 billion dollars and 1900 dead coalition soldiers later, the U.S. has officially verified that the entire war effort has been focused on the wrong side of the mountains.

A stable Afghanistan is in Pakistan's best interests, but this message has been preached time and again with little to no results, and the U.S. has waited long enough for Pakistan's leaders to uproot the extremists that orchestrated 9/11. But now, it appears as if the international community will have to do it for them.

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Michael Hughes writes similar articles as the [Geopolitics Examiner](#) and the [Afghanistan Headlines Examiner](#) for Examiner.com.

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