

Why aren't we acting now?

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THIS article poses two questions: on the day after US/Nato forces invade and occupy some of Balochistan and Waziristan, what will we say we should have done, and why aren't we doing it now? Is this far-fetched?

The facts suggest otherwise. Like the US invasion of Iraq, plans for covert operations and military strikes against Pakistan have not only circulated for long among influential US groups, they are visibly under implementation. Again, like Bush, the Obama presidency has provided the opportunity to implement these plans.

Obama has been elected on a Democratic Party platform that holds that "The greatest threat to the security of the Afghan people — and the American people — lies in the tribal regions of Pakistan, where terrorists train, plot attacks and strike into Afghanistan and move back across the border. We cannot tolerate a sanctuary for Al Qaeda." It defines Pakistan as "a nuclear-armed nation at the nexus of terror, extremism and ... instability" and goes on to promise that "we will lead a global effort ... to secure all nuclear weapons material at vulnerable sites within four years".

There cannot be a clearer statement of US intentions. Nor are the outlines of likely US actions entirely unknown. The logic of the US action will be provided by Kampuchea; the tactics by Kosovo on our western borders and Palestine on our eastern borders. Naturally, historical analogies are far from exact, but they do merit study.

Even though the contextual background of the US bombing of Kampuchea departs from the situation in Pakistan on many points, what is common to the two is that US troops are bogged down in adjacent Afghanistan, the Americans believe that their 'enemy' is able to find 'sanctuaries' and 'safe havens' in Pakistan, and they have been conducting covert bombing operations in Pakistan for some time, which have progressively intensified.

We should not be misled by diplomatic plesantries. In April 1969, Richard Nixon assured Prince Sihanouk that the US respected "the sovereignty, neutrality and territo-

rated the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) a rail-truck transit corridor passing through Russia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, with a capacity of 100 containers of non-lethal supplies per day.

To consolidate the NDN, officials from US, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey met in Baku on March 9-10, 2009 to establish a supply spur in the Caucasus. Even so, the closure of the Manas airbase outside Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan in February has been a severe blow to US supply capabilities from the north.

A solution to these problems can be found by creating an independent corridor to the Arabian Sea in Balochistan. This corridor, together with the occupation of Afghanistan, would also ensure US access to Central Asian crude oil, the *raison d'être* of the so-called war on terror.

The groundwork for this scenario has already been laid by influential US groups in the military and intelligence community: comparing Pakistan to Yugoslavia, predicting civil war and advocating break-up supported by a map in the 2006 US *Armed Forces Journal*. These proposals would be endorsed by US Vice President Joe Biden, who supports the division of Iraq along ethnic lines. The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), trained and financed by US and British intelligence services (among others), is said to be Washington's chosen model to be replicated in Balochistan.

On the eastern front the Indians have been pressing the Americans to accept their right to unilateral military strikes inside Pakistan in self-defence, as they accept Israel's rights in Palestinian territories; and as the Americans have claimed for themselves throughout the world. For well over a decade now, Israel has been teaching the Indians what they have learned in their repression of the Palestinians. In the wake of the Mumbai incident, Indian planes crossed over into Pakistani air space.

According to press reports, US Admiral Mullen sought formal approval for Indians to execute

A US-Israel-India axis has plans to balkanise Pakistan and Iran.

eignty, neutrality and territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Cambodia ..." Over the next 14 months the US dropped 2,750,000 tons of bombs on Kampuchea, more than the total dropped by the Allies in the Second World War. In 1970, Prince Sihanouk was deposed by his pro-American prime minister, Lon Nol. The country's borders were closed, and the US and the Republic of Vietnam Army (ARVN) launched incursions into Kampuchea to attack the People's Army of Vietnam and the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (VPA/NLF) bases.

The coup against Sihanouk and the US bombing destabilised Kampuchea and increased support for the Khmer Rouge. The parallels to recent developments in Pakistan are obvious.

Unlike Vietnam and Kampuchea around 1960, however, the Americans do not intend to withdraw from Afghanistan. Instead, in pursuit of a 'surge' strategy, some 17,000 US troops are expected to arrive in Afghanistan in the coming months; and the US appears to be digging in for a long stay. This creates enormous supply problems to which solutions, significantly, are being put together without dependence on Pakistan.

On March 17, 2009, Gen Duncan McNab testified before the armed services committee that the US military is reconsidering the long-term viability of the Khyber Pass supply route, through which 140 containers pass every day. Earlier this month therefore the US inaugu-

"surgical strikes" inside Pakistan, like the US does, but Pakistan refused. Clearly, this is not the last we have heard of this and India will continue to pursue its policy of keeping Pakistan under the maximal sustainable military, diplomatic and economic pressure.

To conclude, then, there are good reasons to believe that a US-Israel-India axis is in pursuit of a coordinated plan to balkanise militarily consequential Muslim states (next Pakistan, then Iran — the order reversed by Musharraf's weak military policies); 'secure' Pakistan's nuclear weapons; support Baloch irredentism not only to open a corridor both for logistic support of its troops in Afghanistan and for export of Central Asian crude oil, but also to weaken Iran and Pakistan in the long-term; coerce the Pakistan Army into a civil war (advocating suppression of the Taliban by force in Pakistan, while admitting the failure of exactly this policy in Afghanistan); and further consolidate its hold over civilian leadership by creating the kind of financial dependency that would allow it to control 'democratic' elections, and to annul their results if they were unfavourable (as Israel did with Hamas).

Reportedly, Obama is expected to consider and approve options soon, and increased US military activity should take place once the snow melts. One hopes that a small group of patriotic officers in Pakistan are also asking themselves what can be done, and why aren't we doing it now. ■