

Britain and Its Followers Cast A Crooked Shadow over Central Asia

by Ramtanu Maitra

March 31—Great Britain and its followers have begun to exert a full-court press to extend control over Central Asia, north of Afghanistan and south of Russia. Joining the fray are the United States, Israel, London-steered jihadis, Salafi (ultra-radical Sunni) financiers from Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf countries, and various NGOs. As the war in Afghanistan winds down, and preparations for a military attack on Iran are building, the geographical location where Russia, China, and the Indian Subcontinent meet, and where vast resources have remained under the mostly barren earth, has

become the focus of the old British Empire-servers. They are now stirring up trouble in what the British geopoliticians call the “pivot region” of world politics—the five Central Asian nations of Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The objective of London & Co. is to deny the major powers of the Eurasian landmass access to Central Asia and its resources.

Equally important is the British plan to keep the Muslim nations in a state of permanent war. The British objective in the so-called Arab Spring was not to usher



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in democracy in Libya, Bahrain, Syria, Oman, etc., but to exploit the Sunni-Shi'a fissure within the Islamic community. This British plan was unleashed with the help of the Cheney-led neo-cons who ran the George W. Bush Administration. The British intervention in Iraq in 2003 was the continuation of the empire's effort to unleash Shi'a-Sunni violence, which began in post-World War I Arabia.

That process has already taken hundreds of thousands of lives in Iraq. A few thousands in Syria are now dead, and the bloodletting continues. An attack on Iran will unleash a catastrophic bloodbath throughout the Islamic world, drawing in outside countries, including Israel. The conflict will no doubt further deepen existing divisions within the Islamic communities, and further the differences among Muslims, Christians, and Jews in the oil-and-gas-rich Middle East, Maghreb Africa, and Central Asia.

While the divisions within these two sects were sharp, the exploitation of the Sunni-Shi'a divide was the modus operandi of the Britain Empire, which carved up the Arabian peninsula at the end of World War I, to perpetuate the endless conflict among various tribes, and between Shi'as and Sunnis within Islam. The "divide and rule" policy, pitching one sect against the other, and arming each, was the bread and butter of the Empire's expansionist policy.

While such was the *method* to create and prolong the despicable and murderous colonial system, the *purpose* was to loot Arabia's wealth to fill London's coffers. In other words, the British objective is to rule the Islamic world, with Saudi Arabia and other Sunni Gulf states, such as Qatar and Kuwait, as its foot soldiers.

Wherever in the Muslim countries the Shi'a-Sunni divide does not exist because of huge pre-dominance of the Sunnis, as in the case of Afghanistan, Balochistan within Pakistan, and even Pakistan as a whole, the British Empire-servers, following the old methodology of Britain's Empire-builders, exploit the ethnic and tribal divisions. By promoting one ethnic group, and promising the group an independent country (e.g., Balochistan), Britain and its satraps keep the pot of dissension boiling, keeping these groups in a state of permanent war.

In Central Asia, neither the Sunni-Shi'a divide, nor tribal or ethnic differences, are of any significance. What the British intend, is to dismantle the secular Islamic governments, using the Western bankers-controlled drug mafia, jihadi terrorists, and Salafi preachers funded by

Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries aspiring to lead the Muslim world on the shoulders of Britain and its followers. The process through which this can be achieved, the London-Riyadh-Washington nexus believes, is through bloodletting—Muslims killing Muslims.

The 'Pivot Region'

Although the Britain-instigated undermining of the Central Asian nations had begun in earnest right after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early-1990s, the last few years' developments in the region have inspired Britain and its followers to exert greater control over the area. A March 27 article, "NATO's Central Asia strategy: What next?"¹ by London's Transnational Crisis Project security analyst, Nima Khorrami Assl, made that abundantly clear. Assl pointed out that NATO is trying to establish a larger presence in Central Asia's energy sector to reduce Russian dominance.

"Dubbed as the 'pivot region' of world politics, the five Central Asian nations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have collectively gained an immense strategic importance over the last two decades, thanks to their geography and vast deposits of natural resources including gold, gas, oil and uranium," Assl wrote.

The Transnational Crisis Project is run by British intelligence. One of its senior advisors is Richard Barrett, who is a former diplomat and intelligence officer. He held positions in the British Security Service (MI5) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, a dumping ground of senior British intelligence officers. Barrett also served as Director of Global Counter Terrorism Operations for the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS).

Explaining why the area has become the "pivot region" for the empire-servers, Assl wrote: "Today, China has its eyes on Central Asia as a source of energy and raw materials for its expanding economy, as well as a 'critical frontier' for its trade expansion and ethnic stability. Chinese state-owned enterprises have penetrated deep into the infrastructure and energy sectors across the region, especially in Turkmenistan, while the government has sought to increase its soft power by sponsoring a large network of Confucius Institutes in the region's capitals.... Currently, Moscow exerts a great deal of influence over the politics of Central Asian states. It is also a crucial market for Central Asia's 'sur-

1. www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english

plus labor' and therefore, a key source of remittances, which in turn make some regional governments extremely vulnerable to Moscow's demands. . . . Preoccupied with Eastern Europe in the 1990s, NATO's Central Asian strategy was limited to the expansion of ties with energy-rich Kazakhstan and prevention of a Russian monopoly over pipelines carrying oil from the Caspian Sea region. In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks, however, Central Asia's proximity to Afghanistan elevated its strategic importance by offering a 'natural' force projection platform as well as a relatively safe exit gate from the Afghan theatre."

It's Not the Great Game, Stupid

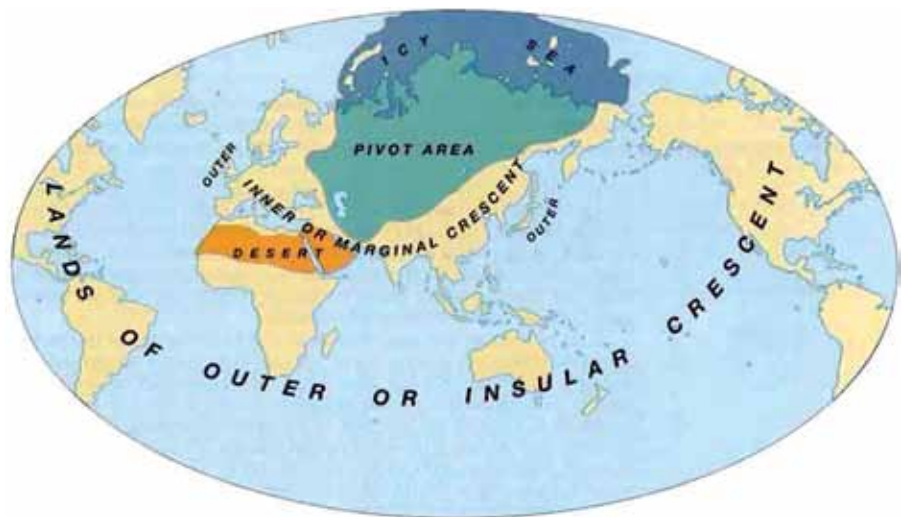
Some analysts point out that what Assl described is part of the old "Great Game" that was the center of geopolitics between Tsarist Russia and the British Empire in the 19th and 20th centuries. Halford Mackinder, the 20th-Century British geopolitician, coined the phrase "pivot region" in pointing out that the People's Republic of China, situated at the gates of this region, or "Heartland," and with access to the sea, possessed sufficient human and natural resources to make a bid for Eurasian mastery sometime in the 20th Century.

However, Mackinder's 20th-Century definition of the "pivot region" does not hold much water in the present context. To begin with, Britain does not have a physical Empire, although its basic structure has remained intact. Great Britain is a financially dilapidated nation that depends chiefly on the usurious and fraudulent instruments created by the City of London-Wall Street financiers and by laundering drug and other dirty money through the offshore banks. More than 90% of those banks are located in Britain's former colonies.

Also, Russia is no longer under a Tsar or Bolshevik rule, and is part of a vast Eurasian landmass where the populous nations of China and India, among others, have begun to cooperate closely with Moscow. Moreover, China has emerged as the second-most-powerful nation in the world, economically and, perhaps, militarily. India is no longer under the British Raj, and is rebuilding its economy and infrastructure to become a



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world power in the not-so-distant future.

But this time around, the empire-servers are operating differently than the geopoliticians of yesteryear, such as Mackinder and Alfred Thayer Mahan, had proposed. The present policy of Britain and its handmaidens is to undermine Russia by creating instabilities all over Central Asia, depriving Russia, China, and India of the ability to secure the region, and build physical infrastructure to link Central Asia with the three Eurasian great powers. In other words, this is not simply a policy of containment of Russia, or China, but is aimed at sabotaging their efforts to develop the Eurasian landmass and secure the area from the rapacious colonial forces whose crooked shadow has cast an ominous threat over the region as a whole.

In addition to the “threats” posed by Russia-China and India, Iran is considered by the British imperial forces as not only a threat, but a “perfectly acceptable” reason why they must take control over Central Asia. This policy mindset has infiltrated deep inside U.S. policymaking circles. For instance, Sen. Richard Lugar (R-Ind.) spoke his mind about the interests of the United States and NATO in Central Asia during visits he made to Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Azerbaijan in 2008. He confirmed that it is in the U.S. interest to establish a multilateral and effective system in the Caspian and Central Asian regions for supplying oil and gas to Europe and other markets, to reduce the dependence of European and Central Asian countries on the Russian energy monopoly.

Preacher-Terrorists in White Robes...

Soon after the Soviet Union broke up, Central Asia became a target of the British imperial crowd, with Saudi Arabia providing the moneybags. Saudis funded the preacher-terrorists in white robes, the London-based terrorist group, Hizb ut-Tahrir (HuT). U.S. and British presence in Afghanistan, beginning at the end of 2001, saw a massive rise in opium production in that country. By 2005, opium was everywhere in Afghanistan, and opium and heroin became a major source of funding for the terrorists operating in Central Asia, undermining the neighboring nations—Iran and Russia, in particular.

According to the U.S. State Department’s 2008 Country Reports on Terrorism, the membership of the HuT, a group that the State Department says advocates “the establishment of a borderless, theocratic Islamic state [i.e., Caliphate—ed.] throughout the entire Muslim world,” grew three-fold from Kyrgyzstan between 2006 and 2008. The Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences pointed out as far back as Dec. 31, 2001, that the HuT has, in effect, become the strongest political force in south Kyrgyzstan, where the drug traffickers were trying to trigger an ethnic riot. That riot indeed took place in 2010, and one of the principal drug-controllers of Kyrgyzstan, Maxim Bakiyev, one of the sons of deposed former President Kurmanbek Bakiyev, is now in Britain, under British Intelligence protection, advising the colonial geopoliticians on how to get control over Kyrgyzstan.

Meanwhile, the HuT has spread its tentacles all over Central Asia. The State Department report on terrorism in 2009 pointed out that the group was gathering

strength in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which is home of an unknown number of HuT members, primarily in the northern part of the country in the Ferghana Valley. Other Islamist groups, including al-Qaeda, are also active there, the report stated.

A Nixon Center research study, cited by Maj. Daniel J. Ruder, U.S. Army School of Advanced Military Studies, U.S. Army Command, and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kan., in his monograph *The Long War in Central Asia: Hizb-ut-Tahrir’s Caliphate*, disclosed in 2006, that the HuT’s secret headquarters is thought to be in Jordan, while its key deputies operate a London-based headquarters, and oversee HuT operations in Muslim countries. In addition to providing funds and educational material from its London base office, the HuT manages one of its main websites in London, as well as a publishing house. Also, the HuT receives financial support from wealthy patrons in Saudi Arabia who subscribe to the group’s radical Wahhabi message.

The party has had substantial success in recruiting members in Central Asia, predominantly in the Ferghana Valley. According to some estimates, there were 15,000 to 20,000 HuT followers in Central Asia in 2006, and this number has grown significantly in the years since. Interestingly, despite its non-violent strategy, HuT has been portrayed as one of the most destabilizing forces in the region.

...And Their Gunmen

HuT’s strategy for Central Asia is to politicize the region’s extreme poverty, repressive political systems, and perceived social injustices, in order to radicalize the population. In doing so, the HuT convinces society that their problems are the fault of their governments, and that the current political structure must be destroyed, to be followed by a just and fair caliphate based on Islamic Sharia (laws). The HuT strategy is focused on radicalizing a dispossessed population and mobilizing them to overthrow the secular Central Asian governments.

The gunmen promoting the HuT’s goal are the terrorist-members of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). Founded in the 1990s in Kabul by two Ferghana Valley terrorists, Namangani and Yuldeshev, the IMU works hand-in-glove with the Saudi and British-controlled HuT and al-Qaeda. Yuldashev met with Osama bin Laden before deciding to move IMU operations from the Valley to Afghanistan in 1997, when it



U.S. Defense Department/R.D. Ward



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London has unleashed its jihadi terrorists in Kazakstan to uproot President Nazarbayev (left), while its snake-in-the-grass agent Tony Blair (right) “advises” the Kazak President on economic issues.

was facing a crackdown in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The organization is believed to have received funding from Saudi sources, including some close to Prince Turki al-Faisal, the then-head of Saudi intelligence.

The Ferghana Valley, where the Uzbek, Kyrgyz, and Tajik borders converge, is the main recruiting area of the HuT, and has long been the main area of IMU operations. According to security personnel in Uzbekistan, the IMU recruits directly from the HuT. According to Evgenii Novikov, who pointed out in his article in the Jamestown Foundation’s *Terrorism Monitor*, May 9, 2005, quoting Dr. Rafik Saifulin, that in the case of Tajikistan, “HuT military structures can develop quickly since the HuT branch in that country has had some contact with the violent Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). It is in Kyrgyzstan that HuT has the greatest potential to develop armed capabilities not least because the party is developing a sophisticated infrastructure in that country.”

Kazakhstan was free of the HuT during this period. President Nursultan Nazarbayev, who is close to Moscow, had banned the HuT, and has now become a target. *Asia Times*’ analyst Jacob Zenn pointed out in a recent article, “Rising terror group exploits Kazakh unrest,”² that a terrorist organization, Jund al-Khilafah

(JaK) is presenting Nazarbayev with one of the most critical tests of his 22-year Presidency. Jund al-Khilafah, meaning “Army of the Caliphate,” entered the international jihadi scene half a year after Nazarbayev won the Presidential elections in April 2011, with 95.5% of the vote. It is likely that, like the IMU, most of the terrorist warriors of the JaK are “former” HuT preachers.

A More Direct Approach

It is abundantly evident that Britain has set its eyes on Kyrgyzstan. While the JaK has been unleashed to uproot Nazarbayev through terrorist operations from within, a leading spokesman and operator of the empire-servers, Tony Blair, has been offered \$12.7 million a year by Nazarbayev to provide his opinions on

economic issues of concern to Kazakhstan. Some Kazakhstan political analysts said Nazarbayev hired Blair to act as a high-profile international representative for the regime. The London *Daily Telegraph*, among other British media, in late September 2011, reported that Blair used contacts while acting as Special Envoy to lobby for millions of dollars of Middle Eastern business for his consulting company.

Of course, this is the same Blair, who embraced Muammar Qaddafi in 2010, became an advisor to Qaddafi’s son, Saif al-Islam, became in his own words a “personal family friend” of the Libyan leader, picked Qaddafi’s wallet clean and then directed the Libyan leader’s “revolutionary gunmen” to shoot him down like a dog on the streets of Tripoli.

Blair’s “economic advice” has borne fruit already. Britain has clinched a new defense cooperation agreement with Kazakhstan, based on which it can transfer almost £4 billion worth of equipment from northern Afghanistan. The agreement, signed by Philip Hammond, the Defence Secretary, would enable the U.K. to ship its equipment out of northern Afghanistan, including tanks and armored personnel carriers. Hammond now hopes to open a new supply route through Central Asia following the signing of the pact with Kazakhstan’s defense ministry, which guarantees Britain air transit rights over the massive Central Asian republic, a country,

2. www.atimes.com/atimes/Central_Asia/ML21Ag01.html

which is equal in size to the whole of Western Europe.

On March 28, the *Daily Telegraph* reported that the British security services averted attacks on Nazarbayev's life "at the preparatory stage." These attacks were allegedly masterminded by a Kazakhstan citizen named Alexander Pavlov. It said that Pavlov has, since 2005, headed the "personal security" of the exiled banker Mukhtar Ablyazov, an opponent of Nazarbayev, who is wanted by Kazakhstan on charges of fraud, and has fled to Britain. Ablyazov, who once headed a Kazak opposition party, until 2009, was chairman of the BTA Bank, which ran into problems when the economic crisis struck. The state intervened and Ablyazov fled to London. The prosecutors said that the ringleaders of the plot planned on March 24, 2012, to set off a series of explosions in parks and administrative buildings in Almaty.

In other words, London, as its fallback option, is maintaining the potential assassins of President Nazarbayev, and would open up doors for them if, and when, Nazarbayev bucks London's terms and conditions.

Britain has also become visibly active in Central Asia, particularly in Kyrgyzstan, the hotbed of IMU terrorism. The Russian news agency RIA Novosti reported in early March that the British defense officials, led by Armed Forces Minister Nick Harvey, met with leaders in Central Asia to obtain transit agreements for the withdrawal of British troops from Afghanistan. Harvey said they discussed using land in Tajikistan as a staging area to allow the shipment of military supplies in and out of Afghanistan. He also discussed transit agreements with Kyrgyzstan officials, Kyrgyzstan's Defense Ministry reported.

In December 2011, Britain opened an embassy in Bishkek, capital of Kyrgyzstan. In May, Foreign Secretary William Hague announced that the U.K. would close a handful of consulates in Europe to help meet a £100 million budget cut. He also said he wanted to open new embassies and missions in areas of growing importance. One of those was Kyrgyzstan. The *Telegraph's* James Kilner wrote on Dec. 8, 2011 that opening a U.K. embassy in the Central Asian state underlines just how strategically important Kyrgyzstan has become to Britain.

The Followers in the Fray

While London is developing its own networks within Central Asia to undermine Russia, and keep the

region in a state of tumult to deny all long-term developmental efforts, the followers of the British legacy of colonial geopolitics have become active. The Obama Administration, which has embraced the British geopolitical outlook with open arms as its own, is engaged in a brutal war in Afghanistan. What lies ahead for Washington in Afghanistan could be as complex as the last ten years' war in that country has been.

Instead of resolving the Afghan problem by engaging all regional powers—Pakistan, Iran, Russia, China, India, and the Central Asian five—the hapless Obama Administration is running from pillar to post trying to satisfy the British, the Saudis, and the jihadis, who are run top-down from London and Riyadh. The task in front of Washington is mammoth—it will have to first disentangle itself from Afghanistan in order to entangle itself later. The latter entanglement is to develop bases, to deny Russia its legitimate influence over Central Asia. That is an order that came right down the pike from London.

The U.S. air base in Manas, Kyrgyzstan, will remain important for NATO even after the U.S./NATO troops withdraw from Afghanistan in 2014. A neo-con State Department official, Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs Robert Blake, is working on the Kyrgyz officials for the extension of base rights after 2014. Blake, whose role in undermining the sovereign rights of the Sri Lankan government has been noted with a great deal of anger in Colombo, is busy in Kyrgyzstan to extend those rights.

According to Ajit Randeniya, a Sri Lankan analyst, during the last two weeks, Blake has been busy coordinating the usual apparatus of intervention—the World Bank-IMF axis, the NGO networks, and in this particular case, a false front, the Vienna-based so-called Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).³ He said the template of the neo-con strategy of taking control of Kyrgyzstan is identical to the one they tried and failed to implement in Sri Lanka.

Randeniya says OSCE "managed the 'Orange Revolution' fraud in Ukraine in 2004, [prompting] Vladimir Putin to comment: 'They are trying to transform the OSCE into a vulgar instrument designed to promote the foreign policy interests of one or a group of countries. Decision-making procedures and the involvement of so-called non-governmental organizations are tailored for this task. These organizations are formally independent but they are purposefully financed and therefore under control.'"

Another important collaborator of Britain's empire-servers in the region is international drug lord George Soros, who would like to make the Ferghana Valley the next opium/heroin center. Once a British citizen, now an American, and a multi-billionaire currency speculator, Soros, identified in the mainstream media as a philanthropist, spends his ill-gotten money to fund campaigns for euthanasia, and to legalize illegal drugs. The May 1996 issue of *Organization Trends* reviewed Soros's extensive financial support for nonprofit organizations working for the legalization of drugs.

In Georgia, Soros's protégé Mikheil Saakashvili rules with the help of Soros and other followers of the anti-Russia crowd, and is busy instigating uprisings within Russian territory. The Russian Foreign Ministry's spokesman, Alexander Lukashevich, speaking to the local media on March 27, said weapons used by Georgian troops in Afghanistan should not be brought to Georgia. "We view it as a very significant issue that weapons used by Georgian troops in Afghanistan should not be supplied to Georgia," Lukashevich said, adding that Saakashvili's regime could use them against Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and Russian nationals re-

siding there, as well. Georgia has one of the largest contingents in Afghanistan among non-NATO states.

What made Lukashevich say that? President Saakashvili, was in Seoul attending the late-March Nuclear Security Summit. In his speech, he said the territories of separatist Abkhazia and South Ossetia are black holes occupied by Russia. As if on a cue, the U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi said in a statement that Washington "recognizes neither the legitimacy of the de facto elections held in the Abkhazia region on March 24, nor those in the South Ossetia region on March 25." "Georgia's large number of citizens displaced from their homes in Abkhazia and South Ossetia were unable to participate in the polls, nor are they able to return to their homes," the statement reads, reiterating U.S. support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Lukashevich also warned against any military cooperation with Tbilisi, citing the grave consequences for global and Caucasus security that can be caused by Saakashvili's unstable and irresponsible regime. He said Russia had filed a note with the U.S. Embassy in Moscow in 2011, following a statement that the United States was planning to supply M4 carbines and armored Hummers to Georgia.


In Azerbaijan, another follower of the British colonial geopolitics, Israel, is reportedly developing a "secret staging ground" for a possible attack on Iran, according to an article in the March 29 *Foreign Policy*, "Attacking Iran: Did US just torpedo Israeli deal for a base in Azerbaijan?" by Brad Knickerbocker. Quoting unnamed senior U.S. diplomats and military intelligence officials, the article asserts that "Israel has recently been granted access to airbases on Iran's northern border." "The Israelis have bought an airfield," a senior administration official is quoted as saying, "and the airfield is called Azerbaijan."

Bases in nearby Azerbaijan (including abandoned former Soviet airfields) could be used for landing and refueling after any strike, allowing Israeli jets to carry more ordnance. Such airfields also could be a staging point for search-and-rescue helicopters that might be necessary to recover downed Israeli pilots. They also could be used to launch drone aircraft for bomb damage assessment once any strike is concluded. Israel and Azerbaijan have developed an economic and military relationship over the years. Israel buys oil from Azerbaijan, and Azerbaijan recently agreed to buy \$1.6 billion worth of military hardware from Israel, including drones, anti-aircraft, and missiles.

THE EURASIAN LAND-BRIDGE

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