

Nov 04, 2016 by **Rob Asghar**

## **That's Not A Red Carpet in Pakistan - That's A Blood-Stain** <sup>[1]</sup>

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is spending a few days in Pakistan, ostensibly to build up trust. It should be of great concern to the Obama administration, however, that one prominent Pakistani greeted her with a Daily Beast column headlined, "Hillary, Go Home." That column was penned by Fatima Bhutto, the young and progressive journalist and poet who just happens to be the niece of the late Benazir Bhutto. Fatima's concerns include this:

Clinton, who has fondly reminisced about her decades-long friendship with President Zardari, dating back to the time when they were both first spouses, promised when she landed in Islamabad today to stand "shoulder to shoulder" with Pakistan in its fight against terrorism.

Hillary, I think we're standing close enough as it is. This government, feted by Clinton as a much ballyhooed ally, doesn't have a very solid handle on what's what. President Zardari's party, the PPP, is run more like a corporation, negotiating billion-dollar aid packages for Pakistan from anyone who's willing to foot the bill.

Bear in mind that Fatima has been a vocal critic of her own dynastic family. She and many Pakistanis believe that Zardari and Benazir may have shared responsibility for the politically motivated murder of her father. Even while a resurgent Benazir was the toast of Westerners who hoped for renewed democracy in Pakistan, Fatima spoke out bitingly in a Los Angeles Times op-ed about her aunt's alleged corruption, hypocrisy and unfitness to govern.

So it is no surprise that she would view almost anything that Benazir's widower Zardari does as opportunism. Then again, I believe any reasonable person would agree with her. That leads to another complaint from her this week, which should be even more concerning for Washington:

Pakistan's sovereignty was signed over to Hillary and Barack some time ago. With a government willing to use U.S. drone technology against its own people, bomb various parts of its country when directed to, and allow a revolving-door policy for American officials, it's no wonder Washington is hell bent on supporting the disastrous Zardari government.

Many Pakistani nationalists and traditionalists, prone to conspiracy theories, believe that

Washington is taking over Pakistan, as I wrote in a [previous post](#). But Fatima represents a supple, modernized and fully progressive Pakistani spirit. If Secretary Clinton is to have any meaningful effect on American diplomacy and public diplomacy in the region, she will need to begin by winning over the hearts and minds of people like her.

Allow me to make one final observation on the occasion of Hillary's visit. I'd been a staunch critic of President Bush's policies in his war on terror and had been given new hope by Obama's demonstrated willingness to understand and address root causes of anger. Bush's aggressiveness seemed to unleash a Hydra effect, occupying a nation to kill five terrorists while inciting ten others to join the cause against the occupation. Obama seems to be operating the same way—openly in Afghanistan and by military proxy in Pakistan.

As both military strategy and public diplomacy, his approach has been unfruitful so far.

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