



## **Wishful Thinking. A lethal habit when it comes to Islamist terrorists**

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Osama bin Laden probably does not get home delivery of *Parade* but more than 30 million Americans do. And on the magazine's cover last Sunday was the not-quite-smiling face of Benazir Bhutto, along with this confident quote: "I am what the terrorists most fear."

By the time Bhutto's image and words reached America's breakfast tables, she was, of course, dead. The January 6 issue of the magazine had gone to press before Bhutto was assassinated on Dec. 27 during a campaign stop in northern Pakistan.

Not far from where she was killed are the "tribal areas" of Pakistan -- a swath of wild, mountainous territory along the Afghanistan border where al-Qaeda and its allies hold sway. Bin Laden is believed to enjoy sanctuary there. If he and other ter-

rorists did fear Bhutto, they evidently found an effective way to deal with their fear. To slightly paraphrase Joseph Stalin, the Soviet dictator and mass murderer: No woman, no problem.

Did Bhutto really believe she was more of a threat to the militant Islamists than they were to her? Perhaps what she intended to signal was that, should she take power, she'd lead an all-out military offensive against al-Qaeda in Pakistan. But it's also possible that she was expressing the too-common illusion -- implied by *Parade* magazine -- that election campaigns are tantamount to democracy and an antidote for Islamist terrorism.

In November, Bhutto also said: "I don't believe that a true Muslim will attack me. I believe Islam forbids

suicide bombings." Again, maybe she meant only to assert her interpretation of Koranic law. Surely she knew that wealthy, powerful and influential voices in the Muslim world argue that suicide bombings against infidels and apostates – including Muslim women who dare seek political power – are not merely permissible; they are a theological obligation.

Pakistan is a country with a brief, violent and fascinating history. It came into being in 1947, in the aftermath of World War II, a time when the British were relinquishing their colonial possessions. Many of India's Muslims did not relish the prospect of minority status in predominately Hindu India. The remedy was partition: the establishment of a homeland for Indian Muslims in some of the areas in where they were in the majority.

Pakistan's founding father, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, envisioned a secular state, one that would show tolerance toward Hindus, Sikhs, Christians and Buddhists. But Jinnah died just months after the nation was born and his vision of Pakistan was buried with him. In the end, more than a million people were killed during a massive population exchange. Today, 97 percent of Pakistan's 165 million are Muslim. India, by contrast, is only 80 percent Hindu with Muslims constituting more than 13 percent of its 1.1 billion souls.

In 1956, a military coup led to Pakistan becoming "the Islamic Republic of Pakistan." Even so, it was not yet

what you'd call a militant Islamist state. The country's elites, educated in British and American schools (Bhutto attended both Harvard and Oxford), were hardly theocrats, much less militant jihadis.

Pakistan's nuclear program was established in 1972 by her father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, then Minister for Fuel, Power and Natural Resources. He became Prime Minister the following year, but was ousted by a military coup in 1977. Accused of various crimes, he was hanged two years after that.

But the nuclear program continued and in 1998 Pakistan detonated an "Islamic" nuclear bomb. Military historian Victor Davis Hanson called letting that happen "the greatest foreign policy lapse of the last quarter-century." Coincidentally, 1998 also was the year bin Laden issued his infamous *fatwa*: "The rule to kill Americans and their allies--civilians and military--is a sacred duty for any Muslim."

The *Parade* article, written by Gail Sheehy – called by *The New York Times* "America's most therapeutic journalist" -- quotes Bhutto saying that without new and improved Pakistani leadership, al-Qaeda could be "marching on Islamabad in two to four years."

Sheehy concludes by saying that Bhutto "appears to be America's strong anchor in the effort to turn back the extremist Islamic tide threatening to engulf Pakistan." If so, America is now adrift in a nuclear-armed and therefore critical

corner of the world. At least part of the reason may be wishful thinking – the still widely held belief that militant Islamists – in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, Lebanon,

Gaza and elsewhere -- can be frightened by words, appeased with money, and defeated by subpoenas and good intentions.

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