REHMAN'S JINNAH INSTITUTE CAUSES STIR AS PAKISTANI FEDERAL MINISTER CALLS OUT SAUDI DESTABILIZATION

Back when she was Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States, Sherry Rehman rankled the Obama Administration when she said in an interview with Christiane Amanpour that US drone strikes in Pakistan's tribal regions "radicalize footsoldiers, tribes and entire villages". Rehman's time as Ambassador came to an end with the election of President Nawaz Sharif in 2013, and she has since moved on to reactivate a think tank she founded in 2010, the Jinnah Institute. In explaining the choice of name, the institute describes its core values of humanism and tolerance. Such values are quite at odds with current governance that brings Islamism to the forefront, even allowing laws banning blasphemy (with Rehman herself having been publicly accused of blasphemy).

The Jinnah Institute is holding a two day "Ideas Conclave", and a speech delivered there by Pakistan's Minister for Inter-provincial Coordination, Riaz Hussain Pirzada, is getting a lot of attention:

> Federal Minister for Inter-provincial Coordination (IPC) Riaz Hussain Pirzada has accused the Saudi government of creating instability across the Muslim world, including Pakistan, through distribution of money for promoting its ideology.
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> Addressing a two-day 'Ideas Conclave' organised by the "Jinnah Institute" think tank in Islamabad, the federal minister said 'the time has come to stop the influx of Saudi money into

> Pakistan'.

Tying Saudi funding to promotion of its ideology seems to be quite a courageous move. Pakistan's economy was in dire shape last year when a key $1.5 billion "loan" from Saudi Arabia helped to stop the fall in currency values. By pointing out the connection between Saudi funds and the promotion of Saudi ideology (which is clearly meant to be the extremist views held by terrorists) Pirzada seems to be saying that those funds come at too high a price.

Pirzada also admonished Pakistan's government for the institution of military courts for trial of terrorists:

> He also blasted his own government for approving military courts in the presence of an 'independent and vibrant judiciary' and said that military courts reflect 'weak and coward leadership'.
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> "Such cowardly leadership has no right to stay in power," Pirzada added.

It will be very interesting to see how Pirzada's speech is received across the country. Emotions are running high with the fresh memory of the Peshawar school attack and the more recent attack in Paris. Extremists, on the other hand, are looking for support from those offended by renewed and expanded attention to cartoons portraying Mohammad in the global response to the Charlie Hebdo attack. By tying the promotion of extremism to Saudi money, Pirzada and the Jinnah Institute are calling for Pakistan to pay careful attention to the consequences of accepting Saudi funds at a time when opinions on the attendant issues are being reinforced on both sides.

Rehman and the Jinnah Institute face a difficult road if they are to move Pakistan in the direction they intend, but Prizada's speech today seems well-timed and on point for at least beginning the discussion.