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Arrest Of Baradar May Signal Internal Feud

By Nicholas Sabloff, Faiz Lalani & Nico Pitney
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Why was Baradar captured? What was initially hailed as a turning point in American-Pakistani relations is now viewed by analysts in a less optimistic light. Previously, it was thought that Mullah Baradar's capture signaled a strategic, anti-Taliban shift in Pakistan's national security doctrine. Reuters now reports that General McChrystal thinks that the arrest of the Afghan Taliban's second in command in Karachi had less to do with Pakistan's cooperation and more to do with an "internal tribal feud."

From Reuters:

A theory in some intelligence circles, however, is that Baradar was captured only after he had already effectively been expelled from the Taliban after an internal tribal feud, leaving behind a more radical rump Taliban leadership.

U.S. and NATO commander General Stanley McChrystal said it was not entirely clear why Pakistan arrested Baradar now, but that an internal Taliban feud was one plausible explanation.

If the speculation that Baradar was purged is true, then it could signal a definitive change in the character of the Afghan Taliban. Taliban hard-liners may have effectively begun a campaign to purge ethnically or politically unreliable members. Baradar, who comes from the same tribe as Afghan President Hamid Karzai (the Popalzai tribe), had earlier indicated a willingness to join Karzai's peace talks. The purges may reflect the creation of a more ideologically hardened and Islamist Taliban insurgency.