

# افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نیاشد تن من مباد بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد  
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

[www.afgazad.com](http://www.afgazad.com)

[afgazad@gmail.com](mailto:afgazad@gmail.com)

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

AFP

## India, Pakistan's 'proxy war' in Afghanistan

3/5/2010

NEW DELHI (AFP) – India and Pakistan, implacable South Asian rivals, are locked in a new struggle for influence in Afghanistan, which analysts say is fuelling attacks on Indian interests there.

A suicide bomb assault in Kabul last week killed seven Indians, including government employees, following two bomb attacks at the Indian embassy in July 2008 and October 2009.

"The attacks are aimed at forcing India to withdraw from Afghanistan," Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, a South Asia specialist at the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies, told AFP.

"Both India and Pakistan are trying to limit each other's influence as they have competing interests."

After more than two decades without sway in Kabul, India swiftly established diplomatic ties with the new government there after the 2001 US-led invasion deposed the extremist Taliban.

New Delhi has poured money into the country since, becoming the largest regional donor with 1.3 billion dollars in aid.

About 4,000 Indians are busy building roads, sanitation projects and power lines in the volatile country. Even the new Afghan parliament is being built by Indians.

It is this steadily accumulating "soft power" in a country Pakistan sees as its backyard that has stoked insecurities in Islamabad, analysts say.

"Pakistan has existential concerns about Indian involvement in Afghanistan, as they see it as a form of encirclement," J. Alexander Thier of the Washington-based United States Institute of Peace, told AFP in an email.

"Pakistan relies on Afghanistan for 'strategic depth' -- it would support Pakistan in the event of another war with India," added Thier, an Afghan-Pakistan expert.

In Islamabad, the government is clear that it sees India's involvement in Afghanistan as a danger and an "unnecessary complication".

"We have strong evidence (that India is) using Afghanistan against Pakistan's interests and to destabilise Pakistan," Pakistani foreign ministry spokesman Abdul Basit said without elaborating.

"Obviously we do have concerns vis-a-vis India."

Pakistan and India have fought three wars since their independence in 1947, two of them sparked by the divided region of Kashmir. A third was over East Pakistan, now Bangladesh.

They started a slow-moving peace process in 2004, which was derailed in November 2008 when gunmen attacked the Indian commercial capital of Mumbai, killing 166 people.

New Delhi accuses Pakistan of supporting militants that target India and the government saw the hand of the Pakistani intelligence agencies in the embassy attacks in Kabul.

Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba, blamed by India for the Mumbai atrocities, denied Thursday it was behind the Kabul assault last week, adding that it had no network in the country.

"Increasingly Pakistan and India have become engaged in some kind of proxy war in Afghanistan," said Pakistani analyst Rahimullah Yusufzai.

C.U Bhaskar, who heads the National Maritime Foundation think tank in New Delhi, agreed.

"All these terrorist attacks have linkages with Pakistan either by way of material support or sanctuary (for the perpetrators)," he told AFP.

Islamabad denies supporting militants and points to its own fight against the Taliban in Pakistan, which has been blamed for an intensifying campaign of attacks in the country.

Recent arrests of Afghan Taliban leaders in Pakistan have also provided signs that Islamabad is prepared to crack down on the extremists.

"There is no other country more interested than Pakistan in having peace in Afghanistan," Pakistani foreign ministry spokesman Basit said.

But the US special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Richard Holbrooke, said on Tuesday that the deaths of the Indians in Kabul should not necessarily be seen as an attack on India.

"Let's not jump to conclusions," he urged.

Reflecting the US policy of encouraging dialogue between Pakistan and India, he said both countries had "legitimate interests" in Afghanistan that needed to be accommodated.

Analysts say India wants to ensure extremism does not take hold again in Kabul.

During and since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, Pakistan has supported hardline Islamic rebels, including the Taliban militia that came to power in 1996.

"Extremism is an internal threat to India, potentially radicalising Indian Muslims as well as creating the likelihood of more terror attacks directed at India," Thier said.