

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

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

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبان های اروپائی

<http://www.torontosun.com>

War next door creates havoc in Pakistan

By ERIC MARGOLIS

10/18/2009

Pakistan, increasingly destabilized by the U.S.-led war in neighbouring Afghanistan, is getting closer to blowing apart.

Bombings and shootings have rocked this nation of 167 million, including a brazen attack on army HQ in Rawalpindi and a massive bombing of Peshawar's exotic Khyber Bazaar.

Pakistan's army is readying a major offensive against rebellious Pashtun tribes in South Waziristan. Meanwhile, the feeble, deeply unpopular U.S.-installed government in Islamabad faces an increasingly rancorous confrontation with the military.

Like the proverbial bull in the china shop, the Obama administration and U.S. Congress chose this explosive time to try to impose yet another layer of American control over Pakistan as Nobel Peace Prize winner Obama appears about to send thousands more U.S. troops to Afghanistan.

Tragically, U.S. policy in the Muslim world continues to be driven by imperial arrogance, profound ignorance, and special interest groups.

The current Kerry-Lugar-Berman bill, advanced with President Barack Obama's blessing, is ham-handed dollar diplomacy at its worst. Pakistan, bankrupted by corruption and feudal landlords, is being offered \$7.5 billion US over five years -- but with outrageous strings attached.

The U.S. wants to build a mammoth new embassy for 1,000 personnel in Islamabad, the second largest after its Baghdad fortress-embassy. New personnel are needed, claims Washington, to monitor the \$7.5 billion in aid. So U.S. mercenaries are being brought in to protect U.S. "interests." New U.S. bases will open. Most of this new aid will go right into the pockets of the pro-western ruling establishment, about 1% of the population.

Washington is also demanding veto power over promotions in Pakistan's armed forces and intelligence agency, ISI. This crude attempt to take control of Pakistan's proud, 617,000-man military has enraged the armed forces.

It's all part of Washington's "AfPak" strategy to clamp tighter control over restive Pakistan and make use of its armed forces and spies in Afghanistan. Seizing control of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, the key to its national defence against much more powerful India, is the other key U.S. objective.

However, 90% of Pakistanis oppose the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan, and see Taliban and its allies as national resistance to western occupation.

Violence

Alarmingly, violent attacks on Pakistan's government are coming not only from once-autonomous Pashtun tribes (wrongly called "Taliban") in Northwest Frontier Province, but, increasingly, in the biggest province, Punjab. Recently, the U.S. Ambassador in Islamabad, in a fit of imperial hubris, actually called for air attacks on Pashtun leaders in Quetta, capital of Pakistan's restive Baluchistan province.

Washington does not even bother to ask the impotent Islamabad government's permission to launch air attacks inside Pakistan.

Along comes the Kerry-Lugar-Berman Big Bribe as most irate Pakistanis accuse President Asif Ali Zardari's government of being American hirelings. Zardari, widower of Benazir Bhutto, has been dogged for decades by charges of corruption. His senior aides in Pakistan and Washington are being denounced by what's left of Pakistan's media not yet under government control.

Washington seems unaware of the fury its crude, counter-productive policies have whipped up in Pakistan. The Obama administration keeps listening to Washington-based neoconservatives, military hawks, and "experts" who tell it just what it wants to hear, not the facts. Ottawa does the same.

Revolt

As a result, Pakistan's military, the nation's premier institution, is being pushed to the point of revolt. Against the backdrop of bombings and shootings come rumours the heads of Pakistan's armed forces and intelligence may be replaced.

Pakistanis are calling for the removal of the Zardari regime's strongman, Interior Minister Rehman Malik. Many clamour for the head of Pakistan's ambassador in Washington, my old friend Hussain Haqqani, who is seen as too close to the Americans. One suspects the wily Haqqani is also angling to get the U.S. to help him become Pakistan's next leader.

The possibility of a military coup against the discredited Zardari regime grows. But Pakistan is dependent on U.S. money, and fears India. Can its generals afford to break with patron Washington?