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Pakistan Implodes

Middle East piece by Alan Caruba

The wars going on in the Middle East will soon be the entire world's next war as the fanatic Islamists throughout the region threaten to take over Pakistan and Afghanistan while continuing to wage war in Iraq. If they're successful, India will be dragged into the full scale battle against the Taliban and al Qaeda. Where it spreads from there is anyone's guess.

It is a battle between the seventh century of Islam and the twenty-first century of the rest of the world. It is a battle between men who believe that Allah demands it and they are prepared to spend as much time as necessary to achieve victory.

It is a battle in which the United States has been an unwilling participant for a very long time. The jihadists drew blood in Beirut, Lebanon during the Reagan years in the 80s and again when they blew up two U.S. embassies in Africa during the Clinton years. Tellingly, it included an abortive effort to destroy the Twin Towers in 1993.

After September 11, 2001, Americans applauded the vigorous response of the Bush administration in Afghanistan, but in point of fact al Qaeda's Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri easily moved across the border into Pakistan and intelligence services believe they have been there ever since.

This enemy senses serious weakness in the new President. Obama has chosen Afghanistan, the worst place to fight a war, as his new "front" while at the same time announcing he is withdrawing U.S. troops from Iraq. The increase of bombings in Iraq is no accident. It is an al Qaeda calling card. The worst of the news is the potential collapse of Pakistan as Taliban factions acquire more and more territory in what has always been a very poor excuse for a nation.

As Pakistan's leading English-language newspaper, Dawn, recently said in an editorial, "... the Taliban are no longer a threat, but a grotesque reality," noting that "The writ of the government weakens by the hour, while the terrorists are steadily emboldened. Yet the state and its institutions - including the military - have so far shown an appalling lack of commitment or wherewithal to force back the swarm."

This is a newspaper in a Muslim nation, written by Muslims, who call the Taliban "grotesque." And they should know! The editorial warned that, "The time in which to turn back the tide is fast running out."

One of the most brilliant analysts of Middle Eastern affairs is Walid Phares, the Director of the Future Terrorism Project at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies. "As the U.S. administration and its allies are devising a new strategy for the next steps in Afghanistan, the jihadists have already begun their next move - but this time it's inside Pakistan."

“If Washington and its allies fail to see the big picture in the fight against the Taliban and Al Qaeda,” wrote Phares, “which unfortunately may be the case now, the rapidly deteriorating situation will soon exceed the northwestern provinces of Pakistan to spill over to both Afghanistan and India.”

Simply put, you cannot negotiate with the Taliban or al Qaeda. Their promises mean nothing because they operate under taqiyya, an Arab/Muslim term that terrorism expert, Douglas Farah tells us is “embraced by radical Islamists. It blesses the concept of disguising one’s beliefs, intentions, convictions, ideas, feelings, opinions or strategies from the enemy and the infidel.”

“In practical terms,” says Farah, “it is manifested as dissimulation, lying, deceiving, vexing and confounding with the intention of deflecting attention, foiling or pre-emptive blocking.”

In an excellent Policy Analysis published by the Cato Institute on April 13, Malou Innocent shared her observations after having recently returned from a fact-finding trip to Pakistan.

Just how bad is the situation there? All of the seven tribal agencies administered by the Pakistan government are either under the de facto control or threatened by the Taliban movement. A recent truce between the government and the Taliban is of no real substance and should not be treated as such. As Ms. Innocent notes, “the military agreed not to launch operations without consulting tribal elders...(but) the army is more inclined to fight India, not a civil war within its borders.”

That is extremely bad news, but Pakistan has been a nation of extremes since it came into being after breaking away from the newly independent India in 1947 to become an Islamic state. The army - currently some 600,000 soldiers - has been the only stable element and has provided a number of presidents or rulers via coups.

Elements within the government such as its intelligence service have leaned favorably toward the Taliban and al Qaeda. Even so, “U.S. officials acknowledge, however, that the Pakistani government has captured more terrorists and committed more troops than almost any other nation in the ‘war on terror’.”

In its urban, modern cities and areas, there appears to be a genuine desire for real democracy, but the Taliban threatens to drag Pakistan back to the seventh century in its quest for a new caliphate. While the nation has remained focused on war with India since its founding, the real threat has always been the growth of fundamentalist Islam and it now poses the potential overthrow of the government.

Should that government fail, you will watch India go to full battle-ready status. Afghanistan’s government will likely fail despite the presence of U.S./NATO forces and the momentum to continue the jihad into all the nations of the region would pose a grave threat to the West. It could only be solved only by combat.

And the question everyone is wondering, if not asking, is whether Barack Obama will make the tough decisions necessary to keep Pakistan from falling to the Taliban or is willing, as George W. Bush was, to drive out a tyrannical regime?

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