

“Humanitarian Warfare” in Pakistan: Bombs not Bread.

The scale of the disaster caused by the floods is barely comprehensible

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“ .. to wade through slaughter ... and shut the gates of mercy on mankind.” Thomas Gray (1716-1771.)

The scale of the disaster caused by the floods in Pakistan, is barely comprehensible. As Juan Cole has written, expressing near disbelief : “The submerged area of the country is as big as the United Kingdom, fourteen million Pakistanis are affected, two million are homeless.” Six million need immediate relief, according to the UN., and thirty six thousand are suffering from acute diarrhoeal symptoms, with cholera already diagnosed. 1,600 are reported dead, with the number certain to multiply. Famine is a real possibility.

The great Indus river, one of the world’s longest, which flows also through China, India and Kashmir, rising in Tibet and flowing in to the Arabian Sea, has flooded Sindh and Balochistan provinces, forcing the evacuation of over ninety percent of the villages. With no place to hide, people watched their homes washed away, in a monsoon season that continues through September. Hundreds of villages are inundated or completely under water, with roads, rail links, thus transportation cut, as frantic people try to flee to safer ground. It is the worst flooding in the country’s history, with some experts saying the region worst affected for nearly one hundred years. A far wider area is now threatened.

When the waters subside, the million-plus people who are directly or indirectly dependent on the mangroves, will have had their livelihood affected or erased, as will the fishermen along this great expanse.

Looking at US., news sites, the enormity of this tragedy has evoked not pity, but almost universal vindictiveness. One with over 19,000 comments are typified by:

-“Pray for more rain”; “Uncle Sam, I need your help again!!! ...”;

-“Doesn’t it just pull at your heartstrings that Dear Ol’ Uncle Sam wants to help out the enemy-”;

-“Ha, God truly works in mysterious ways ... forsaken by their false prophet”;

-“What did it cost to deploy this missile to kill a measly 12 people? Not good use of our tax dollars! Get a bigger missile, 12,000 would be better!”(1) are, sickeningly, a few of the milder ones, addressed to a River Valley civilization which dates to about 3,300 BC., with tools found, used fifteen thousand years ago.

Saturday 14th August, is Pakistan’s Independence Day, celebrated annually since 1947.

Flags and flowers, traditionally decorate all, homes, roofs, vehicles. This year celebrations were muted to sombre, devastation and death dominated. Prayers for both replaced festivity. The army cancelled their celebrations and donated the funds allocated for their day's events to the flood victims.

President Obama in a message for Independence Day, pledged U.S. support: "... in line with deepening partnership between the two nations", praising the Pakistani people " ... as they bravely respond to widespread and unprecedented flooding." He ended: "I have directed my Administration to continue to work closely with the Government of Pakistan and provide assistance in their response to this crisis."

Pakistan has requested helicopters from this US "partner", close by in Afghanistan, however : "A senior U.S. military official said transfer of additional helicopters, which are in short supply in Afghanistan, would require a political decision in Washington. 'Do they exist in the region? Yes', he said. 'Are they available? No' ", writes Robert Naiman.

What was available, on Pakistan's National Day, and the third day of the holy month of Ramadan, were US drones. A US missile strike on (as ever) a "militant" compound on the Afghan border, killing thirteen "rebels" and wounding five others on Saturday, in the village of Eisori, in North Pakistan, is widely reported. Wait for the bodies of the militant children, women, teenagers. It is still confusing to know how these "militants" are recognised from the air, from a computer in the US, given so many have turned out to be families having a meal, tending their land, or mince-meated infants. What happened to Courts of Law?

Unmanned drones, decimating lives since 2004 in the US's "deepening partnership" country, operated by those who have graduated from computer games to war games, with real human targets, has to be one of life's more memorable, bizarre, cowardly, illegal obscenities. Some "partnership."

The good news or the bad?

A shipload of U.S. Marines and helicopters did arrive to boost relief efforts in flooded Pakistan on Thursday (12th August.) However, given the number of US Special Services alleged to have been at sites of bombings in Pakistan, from schools to communal compounds, the cynic might wonder whether this is in spirit of co-operation and "partnership" or an eye to the main chance.

And the US has a bit of form when it comes to Ramadan missiles. In Ramadan in Iraq, the US., military signed their missiles with: "Have a nice Ramadan, Saddam."

UN Secretary General, Ban, has finally limped in to Pakistan, saying not a lot. The Taliban have offered, allegedly, twenty million dollars in aid if Pakistan rejects US aid (given US form, they could possibly be on to something - further once in, the US., have a tendency to stay) and President Obama and his family are swimming in Florida to promote tourism in BP infested waters.

One commentator reached a US news site, and compared poor Michelle Obama to Marie Antoinette. A long way from: "Change we can believe in."

Nearly five hundred years ago, William Shakespeare put it well : " ... perjured, murderous, bloody, full of blame; savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust."

Funny world.

Note

(1) http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/as_pakistan#mwpphu-container

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