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<http://blogs.rediff.com/mkbhadrakumar/2012/03/22/china-condemns-us-afghan-war-strategy/>

China condemns US' Afghan war strategy

3/22/2012

The government-owned China Daily featured an editorial today containing a devastating condemnation of the US-led war in Afghanistan. The context is the massacre of 16 Afghan civilians in Kandahar on March 11, which has “infuriated” the Afghan people and “strained the already tense” Afghan-US relations.

The editorial demands that “Washington owes the Afghan people an honest explanation” of what actually happened — in an oblique challenge to the Pentagon’s doctored version that the killings were the rampage by a ‘rogue’ US sergeant.

The editorial suggests that the “US should be held accountable” for the civilian deaths, which cause “widespread concern among the international community” over the US’ war strategy.

In a strong condemnation of the US, the editorial concludes that the world community is “sickened” by the civilian deaths caused by the US “in the name of anti-terrorism.”

Inter alia, the editorial estimates that the Barack Obama administration’s proposed ‘transition’ and troop drawdown in Afghanistan may not turn out to be “smooth”. It observes caustically: “There is also no guarantee that the US will not leave Afghanistan in as big a mess as it did in Iraq.”

Needless to say, Beijing is taking off the gloves; this is a no-holds-barred attack on the US’ war in Afghanistan. The tone of condemnation is harsh and is unprecedented.

What has caused this? Obviously, China is judging that the US is quickening its exit and the entire war strategy has now come to devolve upon the modalities of exit. Beijing is deeply concerned that US is leaving behind a highly unstable country on China’s borders and the prospects of Afghanistan stabilising in a near term are dim indeed.

The editorial no doubt factors in that “anti-American” feelings are on the rise in Afghanistan. The attack makes no direct reference to the US efforts to establish long-term military presence in Afghanistan, but the implication is that Beijing will be opposed to those efforts.

The ISAF’s mandate is coming up for renewal in the UN Security Council and during the ensuing debate, there is likely to be severe questioning of the US’ war strategy in Afghanistan. Russia has questioned how Washington could unilaterally wind up the ISAF’s ‘combat mission’ in Afghanistan through next year when the security situation remains so acute and the terrorist threat is continuing.

It will be interesting to see if there is any coordinated stance by Moscow and Beijing at the Security Council over Afghanistan — as happened in the case of Syria. At any rate, China Daily editorial concurs with Moscow’s contention that the world community cannot accept the US’ ‘unilateralism’ in Afghanistan.