

Afghanistan three years after American invasion

Out of almost 4 years in office, Bush has spent three years fighting endless wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Another 4 years, if he wins the November elections would be spent in making the world more insecure and dangerous than it was before 9/11. A policy of conquering and ravaging first and then rebuilding it on its ashes had not succeeded in the past and would not succeed in the future. Perhaps the US administration was absolutely blinded by its absolute power and could not see beyond its corporate interests; open corridors to Central Asian riches and to keep a check on the increasing economic and political Chinese influence in the region. It was a deception that the war on Afghanistan was launched to annihilate Taliban and al-Qaeda. Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld and Powell quartet was so ignorant of Afghan history that it could not possibly see what could possibly grow from the Afghan rubble; an unending turmoil that would carry whole of Central and South Asia in its sway.

In the face of the prevalent turbulence, President Bush still describes his failures in Afghanistan, as an illusory success. In comparison to Iraq, perhaps, it is. But looking at Afghanistan on its own merits, the lack of achievement of desired goals is disheartening. It is said that nothing fails like success, and nothing is so defeated as yesterday's triumphant cause. Apparent success holds in its rough armour, the germs of destruction. Nevertheless, the US, possessed by the apparent triumph is bent upon following its own agenda.

Addressing the latest UN General Assembly Session, Bush boasted that the Afghans were on the path to democracy and freedom (US brand). Admitting in the same breath that during the 3 years they have failed to create security, stability, prosperity and the rule of law. He must understand that a state where there is no law and no security, anarchy and not the stability and prosperity come. People crushed by belligerent force have no hopes but from

Afghanistan Ghulam Asghar Khan 3/4/06

power, and those who have much to hope and nothing to lose, are always dangerous, more or less. While wailing over the killings in Beslan, Madrid, Istanbul, Jerusalem and Baghdad he conveniently ignored the massacre of the innocents in Afghanistan. And this he did on the pretext of apprehending Osama, the one man who has not yet been netted, and nobody is sure whether he is dead or alive. And in the name of the ghost of Bin Laden, the US war president devoured whole of Afghanistan. Did the Afghan populace deserve this holocaust let loose by the heavy missile rattling?

Russian children did not deserve such awful death. Absolutely true! But who brought the world to this brink? Russian forces, over the years massacred tens of thousands civilians in Chechnya only because the Chechens wanted independence, which is their right. While the backdrop to the events in Beslan remains doubtful due to official policy of secrecy, reinforced by Putin's outright rejection of an independent probe that would further strengthen his hands to become an autocrat.

The Russian declaration that it possesses the prerogative to undertake all measures to liquidate terrorist bases in any part of the world has been interpreted as a translation of Bush's doctrine of "pre-emptive war" from American into Russian. Are we reverting back to the primitive times when 'might was right'?

The number of continual killing of civilians during the last 3 years by US forces in Afghanistan has far surpassed those killed by all the terrorist groups around the world. When the so-called civilised states indulge in wanton killings of the civilians in utter violation of international humanitarian law, how could they expect the vanquished people to observe the rules of morality and conscriptions of international law?

Arms alone are not enough to keep the peace; it must be kept by men of peace and not by 'war

presidents'. You cannot bring peace with the force of arms; it always is a façade, a temporary lull that boomerangs with greater force. It was Roosevelt, the US president who said, "When peace is broken anywhere, the peace of all countries everywhere is in danger". The most painful drama to see is that the US advocates of human rights, democracy and rule of law are turning away from what clearly is genocide by pulling the thread of holding elections on October 9, 2004 to bring peace and prosperity in the ravaged land.

After failure of his attempts to restore mock-democracy in Iraq, which could have boosted his November election campaign, his only hope is to go with the exercise in Afghanistan on October 9, to win back the disillusioned voters. In this haste and self-centred approach, Bush will surrender the country to the warlords and not to the true representatives of the people. There barely remains any possibility for fair and impartial elections under conditions in which they are being held. Amid terrorist attacks and infighting amongst the warlords, the polls could possibly be disrupted. But the US overriding objective is to see the completion of October polls and confirmation of their man, Hamid Karzai as the elected president.

The poor man is a hostage in the hands of US forces and the Northern Alliance and has become subservient to the American agenda. US hopes that holding of elections on Oct 9, would justify it heralding Afghanistan as 'mission accomplished' after 3 years of invasion but ahead of US presidential elections in November. Expediency is the name of the game, which Bush is so keenly trying to play in Afghanistan. When peace and Iraq elections are in jeopardy, he must win the Afghan election at all costs and put his man, Karzai, as the president and would go all the way to buy it even if he has to compromise with evil.

Karzai had a taste of "Afghan

normalcy" when he was greeted with an assassination attempt during his first election sojourn outside Kabul in mid-September and had to rush back to the safety of his presidential palace. It took him 10 days to come out of the shock when on Sunday, the US sponsored frontrunner travelled north to inaugurate a road project in Shibergan. What an anomaly that the US "Dr. Fell", under around-the-clock US security, had an audience where his US-led guards outnumbered local dignitaries who came to welcome him at the inauguration site.

Presently vote-buying, intimidation and enormously disproportionate resources allocated to pro-government candidates raise serious questions as to how democratic and fair October 9 election would be. Currently, there are more Afghan males registered to vote than there are eligible male voters. Duplicate voting cards are on open sale in the market. There is no credibility of the voters-lists of Afghan refugees being prepared in Pakistan or elsewhere. The Karzai government lacks solid control over much of the country outside the capital Kabul.

The ongoing bloodshed and anarchy raise serious questions whether the election the US is trying to coerce would have any credibility among the Afghans themselves? The possibility of holding free and fair election is remote as there is extreme polarisation between the pro-Karzai and anti-Karzai groups. "VOTE for Karzai or we will torch your houses", that was the message radioed by Tereza tribe in the South East province of Khost.

There is a counter-threat from the Taliban who have vowed to kill those who would vote for the American "pick". With the government, the warlords and the Taliban openly intimidating the voters, the poor voters cannot afford to defy any of them at the cost of their life. That would amount to holding hoax election in the country, which would be disastrous and would bring more insecurity in the region. But Mr. Bush is determined to shake hands with the hurricane to understand disaster.