

It is a fragmented form of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. While it used atom bombs to raze the people and infrastructure of the two cities in one go, the US is now using the step-by-step approach to annihilate all living and non-living things in Afghanistan. At one time it is the prison siege at Qala-i-Jangi and the next hour it is the Tora Bora caves. Mission—burn, bulldoze, smoke out all those who dare to stand in the way of the American stampede.

**Human rights-wherefore art thou?**

The carpet-bombing pounding, battering and blasting of innocent civilians have been very conveniently given a guise of a few dozen deaths "by mistake" by the American media. The actual death toll can easily be multiplied by thousands. Human rights groups, which normally create a furor over ethnic killings and extra-judicial killings in Pakistan, are raising academic protests that are not enough to represent the horrific atrocities of the massacre in Afghanistan. For years, countries like Pakistan and China have been subject to sanctions and watch-lists due to their "deteriorating" conditions of human rights. The burning question in everybody's mind is whether Amnesty International is also just a puppet on the US chain, like UN, WTO etc? This is the real test for the UN Human Rights Commission to prove its merit for justice.

America has a record of escaping the human rights sword of justice every time it goes for manslaughter. It still faced demands to apologise for the 1968 My Lai massacre in Vietnam, while the remains of charred Iraqi soldiers on the Mutlie Ridge, outside Kuwait, provided a chilling illustration of Washington's overwhelming firepower during the Gulf War.

The foreign fighters in Afghanistan ie Arabs, Chechens, Uzbeks and Pakistanis were asked to surrender by Mullah Fazl, the Taliban commander at Kunduz. They surrendered their weapons under the impression that they would later be set free. They got into the hands of the corrupt warlord General Dostum, popularly known as Carpet Thief all round the world. General Dostum took the prisoners to his own personal fortress on the muddy outskirts of Mazar-i-Sharif, the Qala-i-Jangi. The prisoners carried hidden grenades and preferred to kill themselves rather than become a victim of Northern Alliance torture chamber. The other prisoners were then chained and tied up. As the prisoners tried to escape knowing that they were going to be shot, General Dostum and CIA personnel opened fire at all of them. Overhead, the B-52 bombers made sure that every single body of the Taliban fighters was charcoaled to ashes. It was deliberate and indiscriminate murder.

While Washington predictably denies

any involvement in the issue, it is increasingly visible that their obsessive drive to suppress and oppress any form of opposition has now reached fanatic limits.

Washington insists that the Northern Alliance was responsible for the massacre. British Secretary Jack Straw dismissed calls for investigation on the basis that it was not feasible or possible, obviously afraid that the truth will be too difficult to digest. It is a gross violation of the Geneva Convention on Rights in Wartime, which bans all indiscriminate attacks and makes it illegal to order that there shall be no survivors.

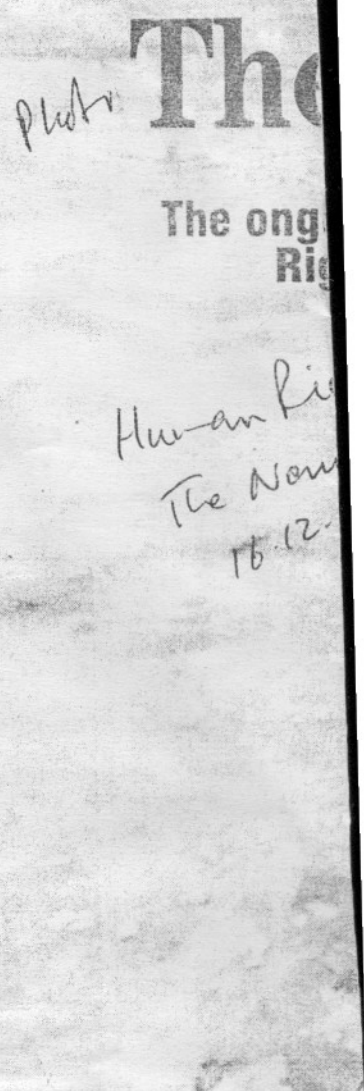
**Destruction and reconstruction**

The irony of the situation is that while bloody massacres and bombing raids are going on with open declarations by the US of continuing them indefinitely, the UN conference at Bonn, and many other conferences all around the world, are being held to plan the next government of Afghanistan and the strategies needed for rebuilding the country.

The Bonn conference which is supposed to bring the "ideal political" solution to a broad-based government proposed by the UN is a complete sham. How can you have a "fully represented" government without including the Pashtun representation? The Pashtoon group was ignored by the UN while doling out invitations to the various groups and a conscious effort was made to undermine their dominance in Afghanistan. Northern Alliance and Zahir Shah group were both allotted 11 seats each, while the Peshawar Process close to Pakistan, and Iran backed Cypress Process were given five seats each. The common factor in all these four groups was their unconditional support to the US attack on Afghanistan. All of them have offered support to over throw Taliban and destroy al Qaeda. The Taliban who still control many provinces were not invited to the conference.

To put it simply, the criteria of entry into this conference was how similar your thinking is to the West. None of the participants spoke in favour of ending the brutal US bombing of their homeland and no one lodged a complaint against the massacre of Mazar-i-Sharif. Most of them were dressed in Western suits and spoke English or Persian rather than the Pushtoon language, which in effect means that they are on the pay-roll of the CIA.

The reconstruction of Afghanistan is being eyed by the US and Pakistan with high hopes of economic gains. The physical destruction and the political division of the country has made the UN and US entry as "peace keepers" mandatory. No matter what the formula of the representative government is, US will be playing a major role in running the structure. The reason why US is interested in this apparently war stricken and famine driven wasteland is because it represents \$5 trillion of oil and gas reserves. Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turk-



menistan and Uzbekistan jointly hold around 15-30 billion barrels of proven oil reserves and around 240 trillion cubic feet of power gas reserves in the Caspian Sea Region. Pakistan, on the other hand, is expecting a realization of \$ 2b through a Pakistan/Turkmenistan gas pipeline in the post-Afghan war scenario. Also, the sagging economy of Pakistan hopes to get a stimulus in major industries like cement, logistics, food etc due to the massive demand expected to recur once the battle is over.

**The peace imperatives**

The US must realise that applying brutal force in the region is a repetition of the errors made by the Soviet Union in the early '90s. The Soviets departed leaving power hungry armed groups in charge. That is why most of Afghanistan remains a battle zone till today. While the West sits in sophisticated conference halls and talks about the urgency of peace and reconstruction in Afghanistan, it has acted in the opposite direction by consistently feeding its favoured groups with more money and guns.

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alliance itself is full of greedy, plundering rogues. At the moment the money and weaponry provided to them by the US is keeping them together, but with their explosive nature and destructive capability they just might turn their guns at each other. There are already signs of unrest: some groups already claim legitimacy to hold power. There has been a race between various factions for the capture of Kunduz. The march of Hazara army is evidence of mistrust within

Northern Alliance.

UN-sponsored political discussions are great publicity material but dangerously exclusive. Sidelining the Taliban is the prime mistake of the Bonn Conference and represents a lack of understanding of Western policymakers.

## Pakistan's role

Pakistan's stance to side with the US was understandable in the beginning. However, the very reason given for tak-

ing this stance has become redundant and, thus, Pakistan needs a readjustment in its policies. The two major gains Pakistan expected were economic and greater natural security on its borders. However, recent events have started giving opposing signals. Economic gains have yet to be realised properly. While aid has started trickling in, trade has not yet received any significant benefit. The US market, which was expected to become more open and cordial, has reverted to its original hostility. The removal of tariffs and duties on Pakistani textiles has not materialised. In fact, US local textile industry has strongly refused to lower the barriers to accommodate Pakistani goods. US buyers have already shifted their orders to alternative sources and it looks highly unlikely that the situation may change in the near future.

Pakistan must remember that it is blamed for encouraging the Taliban resurgence in the last Soviet war, and as such are not viewed positively in many Muslim countries. The President's rather non-committal reaction to the Mazare-i-Sharif atrocities will not be taken very kindly in the anti-West or the human

rights circles. It is necessary for the President to clearly define limits to the extent of support to be lent to the US and also analyse the cost and benefits of this support. Ethics and principles must be upheld. It is imperative that the President must:

\* Adapt his strategies to the need of the country. At the onset of this war, the need of the country was to side with the US against terrorism. Keeping the same need in mind, it must now start voicing its concerns more vocally against their inhuman wrong-doings in Afghanistan.

\* The foreign victims both in the US and in Afghanistan are mostly of Pakistani origin. Out of 1,300 or so people detained under supervision by the CIA, majority are Pakistanis and detained without any particular crime. Pakistani embassy in the US has at maximum protested against this detention, but not a single statement has been issued by the President to the higher command in the White House against this glaring breach of human rights and injustice being carried out against Pakistanis.

\* The President has made little effort in establishing a link with Pakistani Pashtoon fighters. These fighters, if ignored, can become a dangerous element for the country in the future. The cause of fighting against Northern Alliance or against the US can quickly turn to fighting against Pakistan. The President must express his concern for their well being and start demanding protection for them. We know from history that the Afghan government for years has held grudges against Pakistan. Even the Taliban, whom we seemed to have nourished, were not happy with our dilly dallying stance towards them.

\* The President must realise that no matter which broad-based government comes to power in Afghanistan, their stance is probably going to regard Pakistan as a country which can become their enemy whenever the need arises. Pakistan must act proactively to establish links with the Afghan factions directly, rather than relying and waiting for the US and UN to dictate Pakistan's liaison with Afghanistan. The Indian mission is already in Afghanistan trying to get a feel of the new government and also to instigate feelings against our country.

Countries which subjugate their interests, values and pride to foreign pressures and manipulation enter into endless enslavement at the hands of the ruthless machinery of Super Powers. The focus of Pakistan now should be to prove to the rest of the world that it upholds its honourable independence as far as justice, equality and human rights is concerned. Countries like China and Malaysia, who remain independent, earn much more respect and world standing than countries like Saudi Arabia and the UK. The act of choosing the right path will require vision, courage and commitment. Leadership, after all, is all about initiating difficult tasks and judicious risk-taking, and not about following the easy way out.