

strive to bring light to the darkness of human affairs with works of peace.”

### **A Vision For America**

On Sept. 13, with the American mass media intensifying its brainwashing barrage for revenge and war, the Pope received the new United States Ambassador to the Holy See, James Nicholson. He told Nicholson, “You are beginning your mission at a moment of immense tragedy for your country. I pray that this inhuman act will awaken in the hearts of all the world’s peoples a firm resolve to reject the ways of violence, to combat everything that sows hatred and division within the human family.”

He then turned to a vision of a better America, which could play a positive role in the development of the world, instead of leading the world into war. He recalled that, “in my recent meeting with President Bush, I emphasized my deep esteem for the rich patrimony of human, religious, and moral values which have historically shaped the American character. . . . Underlying your nation’s commitment to freedom, self-determination, and equal opportunity are universal truths inherited from its religious roots,” from which spring values including “respect for the sanctity of life and the dignity of each person.”

In the century now opening before us, the Pope told Nicholson, “the possibilities before the human family are immense, although they are not always apparent in a world in which too many of our brothers and sisters are suffering from hunger, malnutrition, the lack of access to medical care and to education, or are burdened by an unjust government, armed conflict, forced displacement and new forms of human bondage. In seizing the available opportunities, vision and generosity are necessary, especially on the part of those who have been blessed with freedom, wealth, and an abundance of resources.”

### **‘Promote A Realistic Dialogue’**

The Pope called on the United States to “promote a realistic dialogue” in the Middle East, as key to resolving the present world crisis. Only such a dialogue “will enable the parties to achieve security, justice, and peace, in full respect for human rights and international law.”

Finally, John Paul pointed again, as he has so often in the past, to the “spiritual roots of the crisis which the Western democracies are experiencing, a crisis characterized by the advance of a materialistic, utilitarian, and ultimately dehumanized world view which is tragically detached from the moral foundations of Western civilization.” He stated that “economic and political structures must be guided by a vision whose core is the God-given dignity and inalienable rights of every human being, from the moment of conception until natural death. . . . Never has it been more urgent to re-invigorate the moral vision and resolve essential to maintaining a just and free society.”

## **Region Concerned Over Focus On Afghanistan**

by Ramtanu Maitra

As Afghanistan’s ruling Taliban have virtually turned down Pakistan’s request to hand over the Yemeni terrorist Osama bin Laden, the probability of an American surgical, or a full-fledged military strike on Afghanistan looms on the horizon. Meanwhile, regional leaders have begun to express their concerns about the impending war.

Hectic diplomatic parleys are in progress in Washington to respond to the ghastly killings of thousands of Americans and foreign nationals, on Sept. 11 by suicide-terrorists. India’s External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh and National Security Adviser Brajesh Mishra were in Washington to discuss strategy. New Delhi was in close contact with Moscow, and Mishra had spent three days there before arriving in Washington on Sept. 18. Jaswant Singh also had a long telephone discussion with his Russian counterpart, Igor Ivanov, before coming to Washington. Ivanov, as well as Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan, were also scheduled to arrive in Washington that week.

In the region, responses to the U.S. call for eliminating the terrorists who allegedly masterminded attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, have been overwhelmingly positive. India offered its air space and even the use of its air bases, if such need arises. Pakistan has promised “unstinted support” to Washington’s efforts. Bangladesh, a Muslim nation of about 120 million people, is now preparing for its general elections, scheduled in October. Despite the fact that the country has no government in power now, Dhaka has also extended full support to Washington.

### **Reasons Behind Concerns**

Despite such unequivocal support extended by all and sundry in the region, there exist some genuine concerns. India, a victim of Pakistan- and Afghanistan-aided terrorism, is not comfortable with the proposal to dismantle only the terrorist network around Bin Laden and his lieutenants.

In India’s north, Kashmir remains a volatile area where terrorists from outside the area and the Kashmiri separatists have waged war against India’s security personnel for almost 12 years. In 1989, following the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan after a decade of bloodletting, India began to experience a massive increase in terrorism in the Indian part of Kashmir. India’s outcry against such state-backed terrorism was virtually ignored by the rest of the world.

In 1999, the terrorists, aided by Pakistani Army regulars,

annexed the snow-clad mountainous region of Kargil in the Indian part of Kashmir. Their objective was to cut off the Indian Army's access to the area to the north, to Ladakh along the Tibetan border. Although, India succeeded in driving out the invaders, who have been consistently labelled by Pakistan and Afghanistan as Islamic *jihadis*, the terrorists nonetheless exhibited their firepower and access to intelligence. Things have not improved much since, but last July, Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Pakistani President Gen. Pervez Musharraf did come together at Agra, India to discuss ways to improve the bilateral relations between the two countries and to formulate a discussion on how to resolve the 54-year-old Kashmir issue.

North of Afghanistan, a number of Central Asian nations, including Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan, have also experienced the impact of Afghanistan-spawned terrorist activities. With a large Muslim population, the majority of whom are exhibiting an eagerness to rejoin Islam after spending years under Bolshevik rule, leaders of these countries are experiencing increasing militant Islamic activities from within and outside. Reports of Islamic *jihadis* slipping into these countries from Afghanistan are issued routinely. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), probably the largest of these militant groups, has already called for setting up an independent Islamic nation in the Fergana Valley, where Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan meet. These militants have shown that they are well armed and are ready to sacrifice their lives to achieve their goal.

Pakistan, on the other hand, is at a very advanced stage of "Talibanization" (Talibanization must be interpreted here as "takeover of the nation by an orthodox branch of the Sunni Muslim sect"). Pakistan's Army, which uses the Afghans to carry out operations within the Indian part of Kashmir "to bleed India," is divided. A significant segment of the Army is now led by orthodox religious commanders, who neither see eye-to-eye with the India-born President Musharraf, nor are they close to the Western military establishment. This segment of the Army is often described as the "Army of Islam."

This radical change in the Pakistani Army came about as a fall-out of the decade-long Afghan war against the Soviet Union. This change has also immensely helped the Islamic militants. This nexus of high-level Army personnel, clerics, and bureaucrats, in the midst of an all-pervasive poverty and illiteracy, has now made Pakistan a bastion of Islamic *jihadis*.

Drugs and guns, which have proliferated in the region have further exacerbated the problems. Pakistan has also become a major beneficiary of drug production in Afghanistan and some poppy cultivation within Pakistan, mainly in the Federally Administered Tribal Authorities (FATA) area bordering Afghanistan. An Indian estimate indicates that Pakistan gets as much as \$10 billion of this drug booty annually. This has corrupted the Pakistani Army, bureaucracy, and the people in general. Needless to say, this unaccounted for money has kept many terrorist organizations in the region,

## Afghanistan And Neighboring Nations



and beyond, alive and kicking.

The worry that has gripped India and Central Asia at this point is of the United States' intent only to remove Bin Laden while leaving the massive terrorist infrastructure and the drug- and gun-running network intact. New Delhi worries that this will put further pressure on India, which has been identified as an "ally" of the United States, in the latter's battle against Islamic *jihadis*.

There are good reasons why India must worry. The Taliban have already assembled 25,000 troops along the porous Afghan-Pakistan border, and have threatened Islamabad that it will wage holy war, if Pakistan allows the United States use of its soil to launch an attack of any kind on Afghanistan. Pakistan remains highly vulnerable on its western border because of the Pushtoon and Baloch tribes. These ethnic groups, and sub-groups, have never given up their ethnic identity.

Residents of the two Pakistani provinces bordering Afghanistan, the North West Frontier Province and Baluchistan, strongly resent the Punjabi-dominated Pakistani establishment. They tolerate it as long as they are not directly threatened. The moment an attack is launched against the Taliban, these provinces will erupt in opposition. About 70% of the Pakistani Army personnel are Punjabis and another 25% are Pushtoons. The rest are Baloch, Sindhis, and Mohajirs. It is likely that the Army will split under the strain, and the Pushtoons and the Baloch will back their brethren on the other side of the border.

Things are not calm even in Punjab, the base of Pakistan's military, agricultural, and industrial strength. On Sept. 18, in the port city of Karachi, the police had to fight off 5,000-odd angry demonstrators trying to attack the U.S. Consulate located there.

Following the withdrawal of the Soviet troops in 1989,

Pakistan became most actively involved in supporting the Pushtoons within Afghanistan to gain control of the country. Pakistan's arguments were:

- Pushtoons are the largest ethnic group within Afghanistan and without the Pushtoons at the helm, Afghanistan would remain permanently divided.
- With the Pushtoons sharing power in Kabul, the issue of an independent Greater Pakhtoonistan, which includes a large part of Pakistan, would not be a rallying cry of the Pushtoon tribes. The fear of an independent Greater Pakhtoonistan has haunted the Pakistani leaders since the 1950s.
- By maintaining friendly relations with the Pushtoons, and providing them with material and military help, Afghanistan can be kept under Pakistan's political influence. This is a geopolitical concept, designed to play on Pakistan's concerns about the intent of the Central Asian states. Some in Islamabad believe that the Central Asian states will remain under the influence of Russia, Iran, and the United States. Hence, it is evident that Islamabad's strategy is to keep Afghanistan as a "buffer state" between Pakistan and the "unknown."

These were the basic working assumptions which formulated Pakistan's involvement with the Taliban and other Pushtoon groups earlier.

### Soft Handling, Please

Under the circumstances, many in New Delhi believe that further pressures brought to bear on Pakistan to cooperate with the United States against the Taliban, could lead to disastrous developments there. The disaster that New Delhi foresees is the breakdown of Pakistan and the spawning of zillions of radical Islamic groups ready to commit terrorism to weaken India. India is afraid that such outfits may also be able to garner support of a section of 150 million Muslims who are Indians. This is a terrible scenario and no one in New Delhi for even a moment believes that Washington will step in at that point to protect India's sovereignty.

In addition, despite its problems, the Pakistani elite, like the Indian elite, has the willingness to absorb modern technology and universal education. Pakistan has a nuclear power program; with outside help, it has built rockets and missiles and still is in possession of an efficient army. Pakistan has the best army (Saudi Arabia has perhaps the best Air Force among the Islamic nations, thanks to the United States) in the Islamic world. Over the years, it has protected many important institutions in the Middle East on behalf of the United States.

Pakistan is an Islamic country, and yet, unlike Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Egypt, or even Libya, does not seek leadership in the Islamic world. It opposes Israeli policy toward the Palestinians, but it does not send *jihadis* to commit terrorism in the Middle East.

Finally, within Pakistan there exists a large group of educated and enterprising individuals who would like to develop a strong and purposeful relationship with India and other South Asian nations. They want to become a responsible and contributing member in the subcontinent. They have been

greatly weakened by the Army of Islam, terrorists, Afghans, *jihadis*, and the Taliban. If Pakistan is pushed to the brink, through issuance of undeliverable demands, these people will cease to exist.

The same fear is widespread among the Central Asian states, and in Russia as well. Drug money in the hands of the Islamic *jihadis* sporting sophisticated machineguns and other weaponry, has corrupted a vast number of individuals in that area. The governments in the region are steadily losing out to these *jihadis* and are in no position to take on the fresh wrath of new waves of terrorism.

On Sept. 9, the main opposition leader to the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, Ahmed Shah Massoud, was mortally wounded in an assassination attempt. The act was carried out by the Taliban with help from the Pakistani Army, some reports from that area assert. The loss of Massoud, who was receiving active backing from Iran, Russia, India, and France, among others, is a major setback to the Central Asian nations. Massoud, and his Northern Alliance, comprised of Afghans of Tajik and Uzbek origins and the Shi'ite Muslim minority within Afghanistan, is the buffer between the Taliban and all Central Asian nations. It will take months, if the search succeeds at all, to find a leader who will be approved by all the ethnic groups the way Massoud was accepted. Meanwhile, Central Asia remains a soft target of the Islamic *jihadis*, based in Afghanistan.

## GENOCIDE RUSSIA AND THE NEW WORLD ORDER

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