

AFGHANISTAN / DIFFERENCES PERSIST

HPD-16
37/112

Loya Jirga calls for voting on Constitution

KABUL, DEC. 30. Afghanistan's Grand Council called on Tuesday for voting on a post-Taliban constitution, hoping to settle rows over sharing power and respecting Islam that are clouding the nation's march toward stability.

After more than two weeks of debate, most of the 502 delegates to the Council, or *Loya Jirga*, appear to support the U.S.-backed President, Hamid Karzai's call for a strongly centralised government.

But opponents are still pressing to award Parliament enough powers to keep the President in check, and for a stronger role for Islam.

Exasperated Council leaders tried on Tuesday to end the bickering, reading out a dozen proposed amendments and saying they would be voted on before the end of the day.

"No one else is allowed to speak," said Farooq Wardak, Director of the constitutional commission. "We have no more time for talking."

Officials have complained

about the \$50,000-a-day bill to the impoverished country, and on Tuesday cut the floor microphones in the huge tent where the meeting is taking place to halt the interventions of several delegates.

The delegates said they were still divided, but tired of the bickering.

"Everyone should be glad that the *Jirga* is at last getting going," said a cleric from northern Samangan province who said he wanted a parliamentary system of government. "We have a great responsibility to help bring peace to our people."

Mr. Karzai argues a powerful presidency is the only way to hold the country together as it recovers from more than two decades of fighting.

But leaders of the factions which fought Soviet occupation in the 1980s and returned to influence by helping the United States oust the Taliban two years ago are warning that such powers could lead to a dictatorship.

A compromise draft unveiled on Sunday would force the President to consult Parliament on all major policies and seek its approval on key appointments. It also contains amendments apparently in response to rival demands of Islamic hard-liners and human rights advocates. The draft would also force parliamentary and presidential elections to be held simultaneously.

Meanwhile, the U.S. military said it killed 10 suspected rebels and captured more than 100 other people in a four-week old operation it has billed as the largest since the fall of the Taliban two years ago.

Two Afghan soldiers also were killed, while two Afghans and two coalition soldiers were injured in action during Operation Avalanche, which ended on Monday after four weeks, a military spokesman said.

The operation involved more than 2,000 U.S. troops in an area of southern and eastern Afghanistan, though there were no major skirmishes. — AP

Loya Jirga debating final draft proposals

KABUL, DEC. 29. Members of a marathon constitutional council scrambled to present final amendments to Afghanistan's first post-Taliban charter on Monday amid heightened concerns about security following a suicide attack near the airport on Sunday.

The *Loya Jirga*, or Grand Council, is expected to ratify in the coming days a constitution putting the country under the strong presidency sought by the U.S.-backed incumbent, Hamid Karzai. But critics are still pressing after two weeks to give Parliament power to keep the chief executive in check.

The Council, taking place in the capital,

has been debating a 160-article draft constitution.

A version presented by the Council Chairman, Sibghatullah Mujaddedi, late on Sunday contains a mix of amendments apparently in response to rival demands of Islamic hard-liners and human rights advocates. A Western diplomat said the draft contained no major changes to the presidential system.

Still, a passage in one key article that had said that no law could be contrary to Islam or the values of the constitution now only says legislation cannot contravene "the principles and values" of Islam.

On the other hand, the Council has heeded the protests of female delegates to spell out in the constitution that both men and women enjoy equal rights.

The new basic law is supposed to underpin a state strong enough to prevent the country reverting to a haven for international terrorists such as Osama bin Laden. It is also a step toward national elections next summer. The Council has bogged down as powerful faction leaders, most of them veterans of the 1980s resistance against Soviet occupation and the civil war that followed, contested the strongly centralised powers sought by Mr. Karzai. — AP

Taliban rockets strike Kabul

Al-Qaeda

SI-3
2/3/12

Agencies

KABUL, Dec. 22. — Afghanistan's ousted Taliban regime claimed responsibility today for four suspected rockets that hit Kabul overnight as a historic convention continued debating the country's new Constitution.

The International Security Assistance Force said four explosions, believed to have been caused by rockets, occurred around Kabul between 11:00 p.m. yesterday (12 midnight IST) and 2:00 a.m. (3:00 a.m. IST) today but caused no casualties. A Taliban spokesman who identified himself as Abdul Samad claimed responsibility for the attack and warned there would be more to disrupt the historic loya jirga (grand assembly) which opened a week ago.

He also claimed responsibility for a bloody assault on Saturday on a border post in the southern town of Spin Boldak in which five Afghan

All eyes on Osama

NEW YORK, Dec. 22. — Osama bin Laden will try to capitalise on Saddam Hussein's humiliating arrest to radicalise and "Islamise" the anti-US resistance in Iraq, a media report said today quoting Taliban fighters. The deposed Iraqi president's capture has not changed Osama's plans to shift anti-American "forces" from Afghanistan to Iraq, Turkey and West Asia, they said.

"The arrest of Saddam will have a positive affect on the anti-US jihad and Al-Qaida operations in Iraq," Rahman Hotaki, a Taliban official who works with Al-Qaida fighters in Waziristan on the Pak-Afghan border, was quoted as saying. "Many Iraqis hated Saddam, so they didn't join the fight. Now that he is gone, more Iraqis will join a holy jihad against the US," he told *Newsweek* magazine. It quoted sources as saying that US man-hunting teams in Afghanistan have come close to finding bin Laden on several occasions. — PTI

soldiers were killed and three wounded. "We claim responsibility for the rocket attack last night in Kabul and the Spin Boldak attack," he said over satellite phone.

Separately, four rockets exploded in the north of the Capital overnight.

One hit a house in a residential area, blowing a hole in the roof and shattering windows, but not hurting anyone.

Kabul is currently on a high

security footing as it hosts a constitutional council, amid concerns that Taliban insurgents may try and target the meeting. The loya jirga is being held in a huge tent on a city college campus several km west of where the four rockets landed. US spokesman Roy Glover said guards at the embassy in downtown Kabul reported seeing flash of two explosions several km away, but had no further details.

Afghanistan set to adopt powerful presidency

Kabul: Discussions in Afghanistan's historic constitutional convention appeared to be nearing a conclusion Sunday, amid signs that the war-ravaged country will adopt a powerful presidency.

Some 500 delegates at the loya jirga, or grand council, are talking over a draft charter presented by President Hamid Karzai's US-backed government. The draft foresees a tolerant Islamic state under a strong chief executive. A new constitution is supposed to pave the way for national elections in mid-2004, crowning a two-year drive to stabilise the country after more than two decades of conflict.

In a progress report at the start of the jirga's eighth day, deputy chairman Qaimddin Kashaf said three of the 10 groups of delegates had completed article-by-article discussions. "I'm very pleased with their hard work," Mr Kashaf said. "I hope that all



Former president of Afghanistan and chairman of the Loya Jirga Sibghatullah Mujaddedi (left) gestures while addressing the media, as vice-chairman Safia Sidiqi (centre) and deputy chairman Mohammad Azam Dadfar look on during a press conference in Kabul on Sunday.

the others will finish today." Council leaders must still decide which recommendations from the 10 committees should be incorporated into the draft, which would then need ratification in a vote by the whole assembly. No end

date has been set for the gathering.

Mr Karzai said on Saturday he hoped the council, meeting in an enormous tent on a Kabul college campus, would finish its work by the end of the year. AFP

Six kids dead in Afghanistan: US

REUTERS
KABUL, DECEMBER 10

THE US Military said on Wednesday that six children and two adults were killed last Friday in an attack on a compound in southeastern Afghanistan, the day before nine children were killed in a bungled air strike.

The bodies of the six children were found after a US air and ground attack on a compound used by a "terrorist" commander to store arms near Gardez in Paktia province, US military spokesman Lieutenant-Colonel Bryan Hilferty said.

"After we went in there, we

discovered the next day, when we were trying to clear it, the bodies of two adults and six children under a collapsed wall," he said. "We don't know what caused the wall to collapse, because although we fired on the compound, there were secondary and tertiary explosions."

Hilferty told a news conference that Friday's attack was launched by special operations forces on a compound used by militant commander Mullah Jalani to store hundreds of rockets, rocket grenades, mines as well as artillery pieces. "We were conducting a night assault on the compound," he said.

Another US bungle, another 6 kids die

Reuters
Kabul, December 10

THE US military on Wednesday said six children and two adults were killed in a US strike in southern Afghanistan, the second incident in less than a week in which children have died.

Nine children were killed in a bungled air strike on Saturday that raised fears of a backlash from Afghans.

The bodies of the six children were found after a US air and ground attack last Friday on a compound used by a "terrorist" commander to store arms near Gardez in Paktia province, US military spokesman Lieutenant-Colonel

Bryan Hilferty said.

"After we went in there, we discovered the next day when we were trying to clear it, the bodies of two adults and six children under a collapsed wall," he said. "We don't know what caused the wall to collapse, because although we fired on the compound, there were secondary and tertiary explosions."

The news is an embarrassment to the US military coming days after it said it had killed another nine children in a bungled airstrike in the neighbouring province of Ghazni meant to target another militant.

Hilferty told a news conference Friday's attack was launched by special forces on a compound used by Mullah Jalani to store hundreds of

rockets and mines as well as artillery pieces. "We were conducting a night assault on the compound," he said. "We observed a heavy machinegun firing from a compound that we had no indication there were non-combatants in. We fired on the compound from the air and the machinegun stopped."

Hilferty described Jalani as an "opportunistic terrorist" with ties to guerrillas of the former Taliban regime, al-Qaida and renegade warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. He said Jalani was not found, but nine suspected militants were detained.

The spokesman said US rules of engagement were stringent, shown by the fact they had not fired on 10 people seen leaving the compound,

because they could not be identified as combatants.

On Monday, Hilferty said the military was concerned Saturday's bungled attack could alienate Afghans in the troubled south, a concern shared by the United Nations which has already had to curtail aid work in the region because of militant violence.

The UN said it was "profoundly distressed" by the Ghazni incident and called for a swift inquiry with the results made public.

In both incidents, the military did not reveal the children's deaths until it was asked specific questions by journalists. It has been criticised in the past for failing to reveal civilian deaths promptly.



An Afghan student at a rally by the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan in Islamabad.

Taliban threatens to kill abducted Indians

SPIN BOLDAK (AFGHANISTAN), DEC. 9. The Taliban has said that its fighters killed a Pakistani engineer in southern Afghanistan this week and threatened to kill the two kidnapped Indian workers who, they alleged, were intelligence agents.

The Pakistani engineer, Anwar Shah, was killed and another Pakistani wounded when a group of armed men ambushed their car in southern Afghanistan yesterday, while the two Indians were abducted from a U.S.-funded road project on Saturday.

Mullah Abdul Samad, Taliban intelligence official, alleged the two abducted Indians, a soil sampler named Murali and a foreman named Vardharai, employed on the Kandahar-Kabul

road, were Indian intelligence agents.

Embassy in touch with authorities

Amit Baruah reports from New Delhi:

The Indian Embassy in Kabul is in touch with Afghan authorities and is closely monitoring the situation. Government officials said there had been no direct contact with the abductors so far. There was also no way to verify whether the threat made by the so-called Taliban commander to execute the Indian workers was genuine.

"It is not as if the threat is to Indian nationals in particular. The Taliban seem to be targeting foreigners in general," the officials added.

AFGHANISTAN / AMERICANS REGRET DEATHS

HQ-121
8/12

Nine children die in U.S. attack

HUTALA (AFGHANISTAN), DEC. 7. A U.S. warplane in pursuit of a "known terrorist" attacked a village in eastern Afghanistan, mistakenly killing nine children, officials said on Sunday.

The U.S. Ambassador, Zalmay Khalilzad, said the attack had targeted a former Taliban commander Mullah Wazir. He added he was "deeply saddened" by the "tragic loss of innocent life". The United Nations also said it was "profoundly distressed" and called for a swift investigation.

In the mountain village of Hutala, blood and children's hats and shoes littered a field marked by dozens of small craters from the American A-160 aircraft's guns.

"They were just playing when the shots came down," said a distraught villager who said his 8-year-old son, Habibullah, was among the dead in Saturday's attack.

U.S. Army Maj. Christopher E. West said Wazir, a "known terrorist," was killed in the attack, south of the city of Ghazni, 160 km southwest of Kabul.

But residents and local officials said Wazir, a former district commander under the Taliban, had escaped.

"At the time we initiated the attack, we did not know there were children nearby," Maj. West said from the U.S. military headquarters at Bagram, north of Kabul.

The U.S. ambassador stopped short of acknowledging that the military was responsible, saying an investigation was under way. Mr. Khalilzad said a senior U.S. military officer and Afghan officials were meeting on Sunday the bereaved families, and that he had spoken to the President, Hamid Karzai, about the attack.

"This incident, which follows similar incidents, adds to a

sense of insecurity and fear in the country," Lakhdar Brahimi, the U.N. Special Representative to Afghanistan, said in Kabul.

The Afghan government said it fully supported fighting terrorism but urged the U.S.-led coalition to "be very careful not to repeat such tragedies".

Maj. West and Mr. Khalilzad said the U.S. troops had gone to the scene and identified Wazir among the dead, and also discovered the bodies of the nine children.

In Hutala, about a dozen American soldiers stood guard on Sunday outside a mud house which locals said belonged to Wazir.

A villager said the man was a cousin of Wazir called Abdul Hamid. Another villager said the mullah had left two weeks earlier.

Jawaid Khan, the Ghazni Governor's secretary, also said Wazir was not killed. — AP

9 children killed in US air strike in Afghanistan

Kabul: A US air strike apparently killed nine children and a suspected militant in eastern Afghanistan, a spokesman said on Sunday.

An American A-10 aircraft struck a site south of Ghazni, 160 km southwest of the capital, Kabul, where a "known terrorist" was believed to be hiding at about 10:30 a.m. on Saturday, Army Major Christopher E. West said. "At the time we initiated the attack, we did not know there were children nearby," he said from the US military headquarters at Bagram, north of Kabul.

Jawaid Khan, the Ghazni governor's secre-

tary, said that eight children and two men were killed. He said the intended target, whom he identified as a former Taliban commander named Mullah Wazir, was not killed. "The Americans wanted to bomb Mullah Wazir, but they bombed a different house," Mr Khan said. "The people there are very afraid. They have no idea why the Americans bombed their village."

Maj West said the target was a suspected militant believed responsible for the killing in October of two foreign contractors who were working on an Afghan road. Maj Ralph Marino, another spokesman at Bagram, would give no

further information about the children or the suspect militant. He was also unable to provide details of the killing of the contractors.

Maj West said US troops collected "extensive intelligence over an extended period of time" and located the suspect targeted in Saturday's strike at an "isolated, rural site." "Following the attack, ground coalition forces searching the area found the bodies of both the intended target and those of nine children nearby," he said on Sunday.

Military investigators were going to the scene to try to determine if the US forces were

at fault, Maj West said. Afghan officials said the site was still sealed off by coalition forces on Sunday. He said other houses were near the area attacked, but the aircraft did not strike them. Coalition forces "will make every effort to assist the families of these innocent casualties and determine the cause of the civilian deaths," Maj West said.

"We regret the loss of any innocent life and we follow stringent rules of engagement to specifically avoid this type of incident while continuing to target terrorists who threaten the future of Afghanistan," Maj West said. ^{AP}

Indian duo kidnapped in Afghanistan

Kabul, Dec. 7 (Agencies): Two Indians, working on a US-funded project to reconstruct an Afghan highway, have been kidnapped by suspected Taliban guerrillas in the same area where a Turkish engineer was abducted in October, officials said today.

An official at the Indian embassy said the two Indians, both 24, were working with an Indian firm contracted to Louis Berger Group Inc., the US company leading the project.

She said one was a soil sampler and the other a foreman, but declined to give their names.

But AFP quoted a project manager who identified the missing men as Murli and Vardaya.

The men were abducted in Shah Joy district of Zabul province yesterday afternoon while they were out shopping, Zabul police chief Haji Mohammad Ayub said.

"They were picked up by suspected Taliban along with three Afghan colleagues who were released and informed the authorities about the kidnapping," he said. "Efforts are underway to trace the Indians and their captors."

The Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press news agency said it had received a call from a man claiming to be a member of the Taliban, who said the Indians were kidnapped by the guerrillas on the border between Ghazni and Zabul provinces. AIP said he declined to answer questions on the incident.

News of the abduction comes a week after Turkish engineer Hassan Onal was released by Taliban kidnappers following a month's captivity having been abducted on the same Kabul-Kandahar road.

Mullah Roazi, who the government described as the leader of the Taliban kidnapping gang, said Onal was freed after the government released two Taliban prisoners held in Ghazni.

But Kabul denied any deal was done.

Roazi also said the main reason Onal was freed was that he was a Muslim.

The Indian embassy official said: "We are in touch with the Afghan authorities and we are working very closely with them to secure their release."

A source said their white Toyota pickup truck was stopped by three armed men, who dragged the Afghan driver out and beat him before getting into the vehicle with the Indians about 10 km north of Shah Joy.

The Indians were returning from Bazargan village, the Zabul police chief said. He said two Afghans from Bazargan working with the Indians had been arrested and were being questioned.

He said they had gone to the village without informing the authorities. "They were not supposed to go out of the specified security area without informing the guards and the road security team."

India is in close touch with the Afghanistan authorities, external affairs ministry spokesperson Navtej Sarna said in Abuja, the venue of the Commonwealth summit, today.

External affairs minister Yashwant Sinha "is in close touch with Delhi for update and is monitoring the situation", the spokesperson said.

The kidnapping is another blow to the road project, the single largest reconstruction scheme in Afghanistan, which has been hit by a wave of deadly guerrilla attacks on workers and de-miners renovating the badly-damaged route.

Despite the violence, the US, leading an 11,500-strong foreign force hunting Taliban remnants and their al Qaida allies, has vowed to complete work on the 500-km road by the year-end.

Two Turkish engineers and an Afghan were kidnapped outside Kabul, an official said today, bringing the number of workers abducted to five in the last three days.

Afghanistan unveils draft Constitution

Associated Press

KABUL, Nov. 3. — Afghanistan unveiled a draft constitution today, a historic milestone on what has been a bloody, bumpy and often tragic path to recovery after decades of war.

The draft's first article declares that "Afghanistan is an Islamic Republic", an indication of the government's desire to bring the country together under the banner of Islam, which is practiced by the vast majority of Afghans. However, the hardline Islamic law enforced under the former Taliban regime is not expected to be a part of Afghanistan's future.

"The religion of Afghanistan is the sacred religion of Islam. Followers of other religions are free to perform their religious ceremonies within the limits of the provisions of law," the draft states.

While avoiding direct mention of *Shariah* (Islamic holy law), the draft states: "In Afghanistan, no law can be contrary to the sacred religion of Islam and the values of this Constitution."

The draft creates the post of President and Vice-President, and envisions two Houses of congress. The post of Prime Minister — included in previous versions of the Constitution — was cut from the final draft.

Many feared a strong Prime Minister could have emerged as a political and

HIGHLIGHTS

● **RELIGION:** Afghanistan to be an Islamic Republic. Followers of other religions will be free to perform their religious ceremonies within the limits of the provisions of law. No mention of *Shariah*.

● **GOVERNMENT:** Presidential system with two Houses of congress. President will serve a five-year term and act as commander in chief of the armed forces. He will appoint one-third of the members of the upper House of parliament, judges, military officers, police and national security officials. Congress has power to impeach the President, but he cannot dissolve Congress.

● **POLITICAL PARTIES:** They can be established as long as their charters 'do not contradict the principles of Islam'. They cannot have any military aims or foreign affiliation.

● **LANGUAGE:** Pashto and Dari to be the official languages, but the national anthem will be sung in Pashto.

● **GENDER:** No specifications on gender, but 'any kind of discrimination and privilege between the citizens of Afghanistan are prohibited. The citizens of Afghanistan have equal rights and duties before the law'.

military rival to the President, a major concern in a country that has known little but war for a quarter-century.

"The most important thing that a country like Afghanistan needs is stability," Mr Jawid Luddin, a spokesman for President Mr Hamid Karzai, said. "This Constitution is made for Afghanistan for the next 100, 200 years."

The draft must still be debated at the loya jirga (grand council) next month. Ratification of the document will set the stage for nationwide elections scheduled for June.

A red-bound copy of the long-awaited draft constitution was handed to former King Mohammad Zahir Shah, Mr Karzai and Mr Lakhdar Brahimi, special envoy of UN Secretary-General Mr Kofi

Annan, during a ceremony at Kabul's Presidential Palace.

"I hope this will be acceptable for the people and will direct people toward peace, security and democracy," said the 88-year-old Shah. The Constitution enshrines Shah as the ceremonial "father of the nation", but he has no official political role and the title will not be passed along to his son. Mr Karzai made no comment during the unveiling ceremony.

The draft allows political parties to be established as long as their charters "do not contradict the principles of Islam" and sets other conditions such as not having any military aims or foreign affiliation. It sets Pashto and Dari as the official languages, but the national anthem will be sung in Pashto.

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AFGHANISTAN / 'ISLAMIC REPUBLIC'

Draft constitution unveiled

4/11
KABUL, NOV. 3. Afghanistan unveiled a post-Taliban draft constitution on Monday, a historic milestone on what has been a bloody, bumpy and often tragic path to recovery after decades of war.

The draft's first article declares that "Afghanistan is an Islamic Republic," an indication of the Government's desire to bring the country together under the banner of Islam, which is practised by the vast majority of Afghans. The hard-line Islamic law enforced under the former Taliban regime is not expected to be a part of Afghanistan's future.

Under the Taliban, men were forced to grow beards and pray, women were banned from schools and almost all public life, and music was forbidden. Executions were carried out before large crowds at Kabul's sports stadium.

"The religion of Afghanistan is the sacred religion of Islam. Followers of other religions are free to perform their religious ceremonies within the limits of the provisions of law," the draft states, according to an English translation provided by the Government.

While avoiding direct mention of Sharia, Islamic holy law, the draft states that "in Afghanistan, no law can be contrary to the sacred religion of Islam and the values of this Constitution".

The draft creates the post of President and Vice-President, and envisions two houses of congress.

The position of Prime Minister — included in previous versions of the constitution — was cut from the final draft.

Many feared a strong Prime Minister could have emerged as a political and military rival to the President, a major concern in a country that has known little but war for a quarter-century.

"The most important thing that a country like Afghanistan needs is stability," said Jawid Luddin, a spokesman for the President, Hamid Karzai. "This constitution is made for Afghanistan for the next 100, 200 years."

The draft must still be debated at a grand council, or *loya jirga*, next month. Ratification of the document will set the stage for nationwide elections scheduled for June.

A red-bound copy of the draft

was handed to the former King Mohammad Zahir Shah, Mr. Karzai and Lakhdar Brahimi, special envoy of the U.N. Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, during a ceremony at Kabul's Presidential Palace.

"I hope this will be acceptable for the people and will direct people toward peace, security and democracy," said the 88-year-old Shah. The constitution enshrines Mr. Shah as the ceremonial "father of the nation," but he has no official political role and the title will not be passed along to his son.

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It sets Pashto and Dari as the official languages, but the national anthem will be sung in Pashto.

While not specifying gender, the draft states "any kind of discrimination and privilege between the citizens of Afghanistan are prohibited. The citizens of Afghanistan have equal rights and duties before the law." — AP

Afghans get Islamic state

Kabul, November 3

AFGHANISTAN'S draft constitution, unveiled on Monday after a two-month delay due to political wrangling, envisages a strong President elected directly by the people and describes the country as an Islamic republic. The document lays the political foundation for a return to normalcy and aims to unite the diverse people under democratic principles with an Islamic core.

The document, which also envisages a bicameral Parliament, paves the way for elections in mid-2004 that President Hamid Karzai is expected to contest.

Copies of the draft, which must be formally adopted by the Loya Jirga, grand assembly of the main tribes, in December, were handed to Karzai, ex-king Zahir Shah and UN envoy Lakhdar Brahimi at a ceremony here. It will be debated by 500 delegates from around the country, setting the stage for nationwide elections in June.

"There will be a strong presidential system which will have one vice-president," Constitution panel member Shukrya Barikzai said. She added that there would be no position of Prime Minister and that the President would be elected directly by the people.

Declaring the country to be an Islamic state, the document says: "No law contradicting the values of Islam can be enforced". But there is no mention of the strict imposition of Sharia law enforced under the Taliban. The Taliban banned girls from attending school and most women from work, and carried out public executions in the name of Sharia.

The role of religion has been one of the most sensitive areas in drawing up the draft, with Islamic parties made up of former Mujahideen arguing for a more conservative approach than moderates like Karzai. The document al-

Muttawakil asylum

FORMER TALIBAN Foreign Minister Mullah Wakil Ahmad Muttawakil has already declined a Cabinet post and is considering asylum in an Arab country, possibly Qatar.

Muttawakil, Karzai's mediator to the Taliban, was released last Monday after 20 months in custody, Karzai's advisers were quoted by *Time* magazine. Taliban hardliners, including chief Mullah Omar, consider him a traitor for surrendering to US forces and have ordered his assassination.

AFP, Kabul

allows other religions to practice freely "within the limits of the provisions of the constitution."

The draft says the President will nominate 50 per cent of the Upper House of Parliament, or the "Meshrano Jirga" (House of Elders). The lower chamber will be called "Wolesi Jirga" (House of People), according to a statement. The President will also have the power to dissolve and appoint the Cabinet "in consultation with Parliament".

The draft also calls on the government to promote the education of women, an attempt to reverse discrimination against women under the Taliban.

The constitution was drafted by a 35-member Constitutional Review Commission that started work a year ago. The process was criticised by Western diplomats who said it failed to take into account ordinary people's views and had been rushed through for the convenience of those in power. "I hope this will be acceptable ... and direct people towards peace and democracy," said Shah.

Reuters

Quetta new Taliban HQ: *Post*

WASHINGTON, Nov. 1. — The Pakistani province of Quetta has become the new headquarters of the Taliban, with militia leaders living openly in the province, raising money and preparing for attacks on security forces in Afghanistan, according to the *Washington Post*.

"Thousands of Taliban fighters reside in mosques and madrasas with the full support of a provincial ruling party and militant Pakistani groups. Taliban leaders wanted by the US and Kabul governments are living

openly in nearby villages," the *Post* said today quoting a recent report in Pakistani media. The report by Pakistani journalist Ahmed Rashid quoted the provincial government's information minister as saying: "Only the Taliban can constitute the real government of Afghanistan."

Rocket attack: Two rockets struck an army compound in Quetta, capital of southwestern province of Baluchistan here, near the Afghan border today. One security guard was injured. — **PTI & AP**

Resurgent Taliban causes concern

55-
11
16/10
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

UNHQ, Oct. 25. — Expressing serious concern over resurgence of Taliban in Afghanistan, a top United Nations peacekeeping official has said the militia has established de facto control over administration in several border districts and that could affect the electoral process in the war-torn country.

Because of deteriorating security situation, all UN missions have been suspended in Nimroz, Helmand, Uruzgan and Zabul provinces which, in turn, has greatly restricted reconstruction process and world body's ability to monitor the political process in the south, he said.

The primary sources of insecurity remained terrorist attacks and cross-border infiltration by suspected Taliban, Al-Qaida and Hizb-Allah insurgents, Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Mr Jean-Marie Guehenno told the Sesian prosecutor's office has been investigating Yukos company officials and Yukos shareholders hoping to find evidence of tax evasion and theft of state property.

Interfax quoted Mr Alexander

FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER FREED

KANDAHAR, Oct. 25. — The Taliban's former foreign minister has been released from US military custody and is living at his home in this southern Afghan city, the spokesman for the governor of Kandahar province said today. Mr Wakil Ahmed Muttawakil was released 10 days ago and is in the former Taliban stronghold of Kandahar, said Mr Khalid Pashtun, spokesman for Gov. Mohammed Yusuf Pashtun.

Mr Muttawakil's precise whereabouts weren't known and the circumstances of his release weren't clear. — AP

Shadrin, a press spokesman for Yukos, as saying that after the plane

landed in Novosibirsk it was surrounded by trucks. Special forces in black uniform boarded the plane, shouting "FSB, put your weapons down or we'll shoot." The FSB is the acronym for the Federal Security Service, a successor of the Soviet-era KGB.

A representative of the security forces then told Khodorovsky to accompany them and he agreed.

The Afghan government, Mr Guehenno said, has made some progress in addressing the causes of insecurity.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai had postponed the Constitutional Loya Jirga until the end of Ramadan, providing the Constitutional Commission more time for finalis-

'Terror aiding regimes ineligible for UNSC'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

WASHINGTON, Oct. 25.

— In what should be music to India's ears, the USA has proposed that regimes which threaten their neighbours and support terrorism should be declared ineligible for membership to the UN Security Council and said more democratic countries should serve on the

Security Council. Proposing a seven-member proposal for reforming the UN, assistant secretary of state for international organisation affairs, Mr Kim R Holmes said, "A regime that threatens its neighbours, supports terrorism and abuses the rights of its citizens should be ineligible for Security Council membership." India accuses Pakistan of supporting cross-border terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir.

Holmes also proposed yesterday that Japan be made a permanent member of the UN Security Council.

UN concerned by Taliban's resurgence

11-15
Afghanistan
26/10

United Nations: Expressing serious concern on the resurgence of Taliban in Afghanistan, a top United Nations peacekeeping official has said the militia have established de facto control over administration in several border districts and that could affect the electoral process in the war-torn country.

Because of deteriorating security situation, all UN missions have been sus-

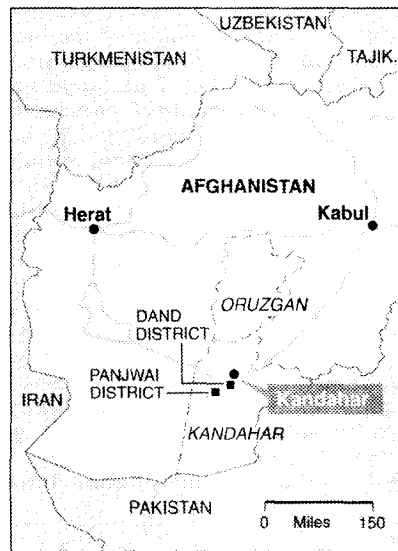
of disarmament and electoral registration is dependent on improvement of security conditions. The Afghan government, Mr Guehenno said, had made some progress in addressing the causes of insecurity.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai had postponed the Constitutional Loya Jirga (CLJ) until the end of Ramzan, providing the constitutional commission

more time for finalising the draft constitution.

Five hundred delegates would participate in the CLJ, of which 344 would be elected on a provincial basis by the district representatives of the 2002 emergency Loya Jirga.

The rules of procedure for the CLJ elections had been finalised and distributed to all regions,



The New York Times

ended in Nimroz, Helmand, Uruzgan and Zabul provinces which, in turn, has greatly restricted reconstruction process and the world body's ability to monitor the political process in the south, he said.

The primary sources of insecurity remained terrorist attacks and cross-border infiltration by suspected Taliban, Al Qaida and Hizb-i-Islam insurgents, under-secretary general for peacekeeping Jean-Marie Guehenno told the Security Council on Friday, days before a UNSC mission to the country.

As a result, he said, all but one border district had been classified as "high risk" by the October 15 UN security coordinator's assessment.

Attacks by suspected terrorists against the government, military and humanitarian workers are steadily increasing and they are predominantly targeting national, rather than international, personnel, he said.

Briefing the Council on the security situation, Mr Guehenno said the success

along with the final seat allocation per province, the UN official said.

National advisory committees for special category elections, including women, refugees and internally displaced persons, Hindus and Sikhs are being established, he said.

The success of the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process and electoral registration are, he said, dependent on improvement of security conditions. If held today, those processes would not succeed, as some 60 per cent of the south and some 20 per cent of the southeast are, at any one time, not freely accessible.

In the long term, he said, peace and stability in Afghanistan would require national unity, but there were "worrying signs" such as the several meetings held by the so-called "jehadi leadership".

They demonstrate the balance that must be struck between moving the peace process forward and ensuring that major stakeholders remain willing participants, he said. PTI

26 OCT 2003

Karzai urges Pak clerics to stop backing Taliban

Kabul, Sept 12 (Reuters): Afghan President Hamid Karzai called on Pakistani Muslim clerics today to stop backing the ousted Taliban and reiterated an amnesty to members of the radical militia who had not been involved in bloody "oppression".

Speaking to a group of Afghan clerics at his heavily for-

tified presidential palace, Karzai said Pakistani clerics and preachers were involved in recruiting and sending members of the Taliban to destabilise Afghanistan.

"I am addressing those who, in the name of madarsas, are building a force of war against Afghanistan," he said, referring

to Muslim religious schools. "I am calling on Pakistani ulema to stand by Afghan ulema and feel pity for Afghanistan and not bring misery to Afghanistan." Ulema are religious scholars.

Afghan officials have expressed concern over the election success last year of a six-member Islamic coalition in

Pakistan that includes parties that were instrumental in training and arming the Taliban during its rise to power in the 1990s.

Many of the first wave of Taliban fighters emerged from religious schools on the Pakistani side of the border in the early 1990s. The Muttahida Majlis-e Amal alliance controls Pak-

istan's North West Frontier Province and has a share of power in Baluchistan, the two Pakistani provinces bordering Afghanistan.

While local officials in Pakistan deny religious seminaries near the Afghan border are being used to breed Taliban fighters, some young militants

caught in Afghanistan said they were recruited in Pakistani madrassahs and mosques.

Afghanistan is in the grip of the worst few weeks of bloodshed since the Taliban were driven from power, and most of the violence has been blamed on remnants of the ousted regime and its allies.

Ready for a second coming

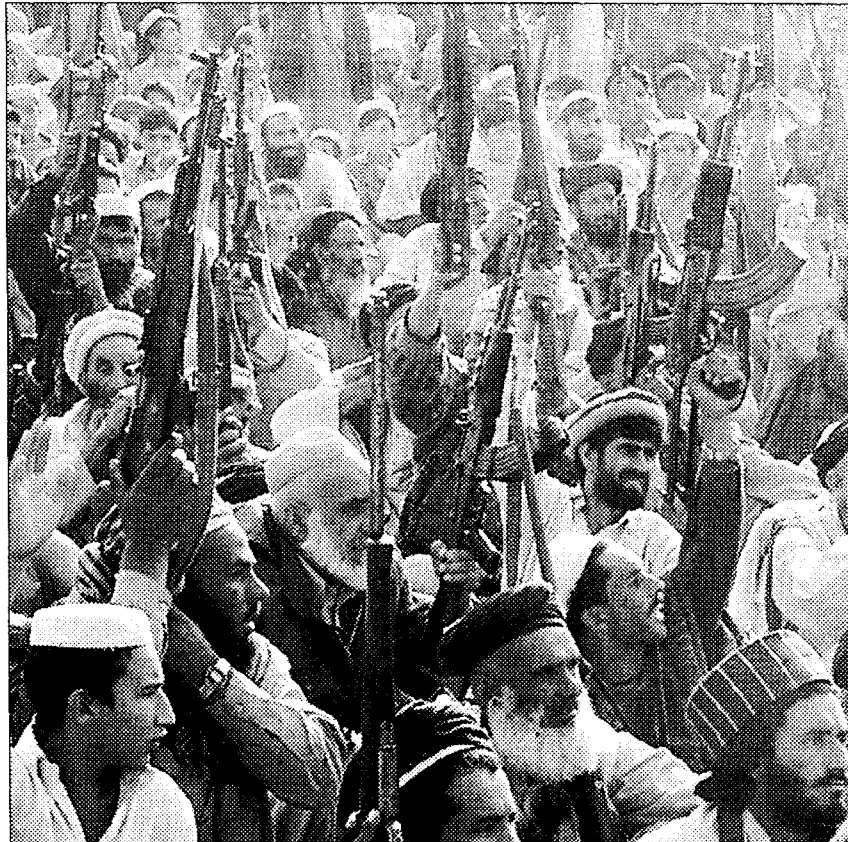
From the dusty bazaar of the border towns of Peshawar and Gulanai in Pakistan, bristling with guns and *jihadi* fighters, the lightning victory achieved by the Americans in the wake of the September 11 attack two years ago seems like a distant past. It's as if September 11 never happened and the taliban were never routed. In the last ten days of August, the taliban, who were driven out of Kabul under withering US bombardment and ground assault, assembled some 1,000 troops in the two tribal provinces of Afghanistan to launch attacks on US and Afghan forces. A mix of Pashtun tribal passion and Islamic extremism, combined with political failure in Pakistan, lies behind the taliban resurgence and explains why the American war on terror is faltering.

The war on terror has done little to address the issue of Pashtun desire for political autonomy. The taliban's dramatic offensive in Afghanistan during the past few weeks has been fuelled by recruits, arms, money, and logistical support from Pakistan's two provinces of North West Frontier and Baluchistan, where Pashtun tribesmen and Islamic parties are sympathetic to the taliban. Pakistan's Pashtuns find common ethnic and political cause with the taliban, who are also largely Pashtun. Pashtuns on both sides of the border are bitterly opposed to the presence of US forces in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The sense of Pashtun brotherhood is even stronger in Pakistan's seven Federal Administered Tribal Agencies, which run north to south forming a 1,200-kilometre wedge between Afghanistan and the settled areas of NWFP. The FATA are nominally under the control of Pakistan, but the tribes have been semi-autonomous since the British *raj*. They have always carried arms and sold arms to everyone in the region, from Tamil Tigers and Kashmiri militants to the taliban. These days the bazaars in FATA are filled with taliban — both Afghan and Pakistani — looking to stock up before going into Afghanistan. "The taliban are clean, honest, believe in Islam, and will rout the Americans," says Shakirullah, a Mohmand shopkeeper. "Anyone fighting the Americans is our friend," he adds.

The Mohmands are just one of the dozens of major tribes that straddle the border, but their views are similar to most tribal Pashtuns. Isolated from mainstream Pakistan and the media, misinformation is rampant. After dozens of interviews it is apparent that most Mohmands refuse to accept that al

Driven out of Kabul by the US, the taliban continues to batten on Pashtun disaffection in the border areas between Pakistan and Afghanistan, writes **Ahmed Rashid**



Arms and the men

Qaida carried out the attacks of September 11, believing instead that they were perpetrated by "the CIA and Jews". Most Mohmands also believe that the Americans and, in particular, the president, George W. Bush, hate the Pashtuns.

After the defeat of the taliban in Afghanistan, the Pakistan army entered FATA agencies one by one at the request of the US forces who are patrolling the Afghan side of the border looking for al Qaida militants. In August, at the behest of the Americans, thousands of Pakistani troops occupied the Mohmand Agency for the first time. But the army has been unable to stop the flow of guns and fighters to the taliban. For the first time since their defeat

nearly two years ago, the taliban battling US and Afghan government troops in southern Afghanistan are not retreating under withering air bombardment by the Americans. Instead, they are standing their ground and bringing in more recruits from Pakistan, while at the same time trying to open up other fronts in eastern Afghanistan to broaden the attack against US forces.

The taliban are now striking at Afghan and US positions all along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. Just last weekend they launched an audacious attack a few miles outside Kabul. The taliban aim is to humble the Americans and the government led by the Afghan president, Hamid

Karzai, and delay the political process — including the adoption of a new constitution this December and general elections next June — all the while preventing reconstruction by aid agencies and ensuring that instability remains.

The Pakistani army's actions in FATA are designed to apprehend taliban and al Qaida leaders such as Osama bin Laden, who is believed to be hiding out further south. With American funds, the army is building schools, hospitals and roads in FATA to try to win the tribesmen's support and glean intelligence from them as to the whereabouts of taliban and al Qaida leaders.

But the army's one hand is tied behind its back. General Orakzai promised tribesmen that the army would not interfere in their main economic livelihood — the smuggling of goods (and drugs) between Afghanistan and Pakistan — trade, which also provides the taliban with supplies. The army has also not prohibited the sale of guns and ammunition in FATA, which supply the whole of Pakistan.

Meanwhile, US officials and Afghan leaders have charged that Pakistan's powerful Inter-services Intelligence is clandestinely providing its own support to the taliban, a charge Pakistan vehemently denies. However, on August 31, the army spokesman, Major General Shaukat Saulat, admitted that three to four officers had been arrested for links to Pakistani extremist groups who are also backing the taliban — the officers were all posted near FATA. In Afghanistan, officials close to Karzai say the officers were in fact captured in Zabul province while helping the taliban and were handed over to US forces who took them to Pakistan for questioning. The army denies the charge.

The arrests come amidst rising concerns that as the president, Pervez Musharraf, who is also army chief, allies himself closely to the US in its war against terrorism and in Iraq, Islamic extremism is rising in the army's officer corps. The army backed extremist Islamic causes such as the taliban regime in the past, but since September 11, Musharraf has been at pains to stress that Islamic fundamentalism has been eliminated in the army.

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‘As Pervez Musharraf allies himself closely to the US, Islamic extremism is rising in the army's officer corps’

Thousands join Taliban's new jihad: Report

London, September 9

ALMOST TWO years after they were defeated, the Taliban leadership is recruiting thousands of extremists popularly called "Sarbaz" — those who care nothing for their own lives — to fight the government of Mohd Karzai and the US-led forces in Afghanistan, reports here said.

The Taliban were supposedly vanquished in December 2001 when the US and Northern Alliance forces drove them from power, are reviving and fighting back across southern Afghanistan. According to the report from Kandahar, students from religious seminaries across the border in the Pakistani province of Baluchistan have joined the war within Afghanistan and are ready to take part in suicide missions, the report in *The Telegraph* said.

The scarcity of reconstruction work in Afghanistan's southern regions, where people lack healthcare, education or even wells for drinking water, has boosted the Taliban's recruitment drive, the report said.

While hundreds have already joined the fight, Taliban leaders claim that many more religious students from Pakistan are ready to go.

Hundreds of tribesmen were acting as the eyes and ears for the movement, supplying information on the movement of government forces. Quoting Mohammed Amin, 30-year-old leader of a Taliban group, the report said Taliban fighters had managed to join the Afghan government army, where they acted as spies and saboteurs. "They either confide to us information about the planned movement of Afghan-US troops, or they attack these troops and kill them," Amin said.

Agencies

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

10 SEP 2003

17 ultras killed in Afghanistan clash

Agence France Presse

KABUL, Aug. 31. — At least 17 militants were killed and four US soldiers wounded in overnight clashes between suspected Taliban and Afghan and coalition forces in Afghanistan, as the death toll from a week of fighting rose to 85, officials and the US military said today.

Afghan and US-led coalition forces have been engaged in a major operation against suspected Taliban and al-Qaeda bases in the mountains of Daychopan district of Zabul province, 300 kilometres southwest of Kabul. Ten suspected

Taliban were killed last night and three this morning in fighting between militants and Afghan troops backed by US soldiers and aircraft, said Mr Noor Rahman, spokesman for Zabul Governor Hafizullah Hashim.

"Ten Taliban were killed last night and three were killed this morning in the Mari mountains of Daychopan district and the fighting is still going on," Mr Rahman from Zabul. "Totally, in more than a week of fighting between government forces and Taliban fighters up to 80 Taliban have been killed, five government soldiers were martyred and three were injured," he said.

Grenade attack on Indian consulate

PESHAWAR, Aug. 31. — Attackers hurled a hand grenade at the Indian consulate in Afghanistan's eastern city of Jalalabad, damaging a wall of the building and shattering windows, Afghan police said today. No injuries were reported.

The drive-by attack occurred late yesterday in the city, capital of the eastern Afghan province of Nangarhar, Mr Gul Karim, the provincial police chief, said over satellite telephone. Witnesses spotted four people

driving by the consulate in two cars. The hand grenade was tossed into the building from one of the cars before they sped away, Karim said. There was no immediate claim of responsibility. Four Afghan men were detained after they were caught speeding on a road near the consulate immediately after the explosion. Mr Indra Manipandy, first secretary of the Indian Embassy in Kabul, confirmed there had been an attack and that nobody was hurt. — AP

Pak. Foreign Minister visiting Kabul

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, AUG. 20. The Pakistan Foreign Minister, Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri, is leaving on a two-day visit to Afghanistan tomorrow to discuss a host of issues that have strained relations between the two countries. Since June this year, Islamabad and Kabul have been engaged in war of words on the law and order situation in the war-ravaged country and the operations in the border areas in pursuit of suspected Al-Qaeda and Taliban. Though Pakistan is committed to the Bonn process and had pledged to extend all cooperation to the Hamid Karzai Government, it had reservations on the manner in which his administration and the international community going on the peace and reconstruction process.

Having lost the so-called stra-

tegic depth it enjoyed during the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, Pakistan faced a serious problem on its eastern border with pressure from the United States-led coalition to "do more" to ensure that the fleeing Al-Qaeda and Taliban operatives do not sneak in to its tribal areas.

There had been a major clash of interest with both the U.S.-led coalition forces and the Karzai Government over the Durand line that defines border between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

When Islamabad moved military and para-military forces into the hitherto untouched sensitive tribal areas to guard against the entry of Al-Qaeda operatives, some of the Afghan forces accused it intruding into its territory. The story with regard to the U.S.-led coalition is no different.

THE HINDU

21 AUG 2003

Manipulating Afghanistan

By M.K. Bhadrakumar

Afghan security has come to be defined in terms of Hamid Karzai's extent of authority over provinces outside of Kabul.

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THE ASSUMPTION by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) of the command of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the U.N.-mandated peacekeeping force in Afghanistan, on August 11 has wide-ranging implications for the country and for the security scenario in the region. The ISAF command had previously been held by rotation every six months by the NATO countries — the U.K., Turkey, Germany and Netherlands. Every time a change of command came up, one of the NATO countries needed to be persuaded to assume responsibility. Arguably, it made sense that a NATO command permanently took over the ISAF. Thus, the NATO summit meeting in Prague last year endorsed the idea when the United States argued for it.

The reasoning given out for such a NATO decision was that in the aftermath of September 11, the NATO included countering of terrorism (and weapons of mass destruction) as one of its military strategies in the post-Cold War world order. Its involvement in Afghanistan is invested with a lot of significance. Member-countries of 'old Europe' will be setting aside discords over the Iraq war and working with the U.S. Afghanistan will also test the NATO's effectiveness as a military alliance in countering violence arising out of religious extremism, ethnic divides, collapse of state structures, foreign interference, contradictions of social formation. For the first time, the NATO will be engaged in an "out of area" (outside Europe) operation. And it may herald other engagements, such as in Iraq.

The NATO has announced that its presence in Afghanistan will be for an indefinite period. This poses the question: what kind of shadow will the NATO cast on regional security? In Central Asia, two other regional security systems are already at work — namely, the Collective Security Treaty of the Confederation of Independent States (under Russia's leadership) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (which includes Russia and China). The NATO also enjoys 'partnership' programmes with Central Asian states. Whether three overlapping security alliances (apart from the direct U.S. military presence) will work in har-

mony and enhance Central Asia's stability or introduce competitive pressures in an already volatile region remains to be seen.

The NATO presence will be confined to Kabul in the immediate context but it is a matter of time before its activities expand to the entire country. In fact, the NATO officials do not rule out such expansion. The U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., John Negroponte, cautiously admitted that "There is the expectation that one of the issues that NATO might discuss in the weeks and months ahead is the issue of considering the possibility of the expansion of the ISAF's role beyond Kabul."

There have been calls by the U.N. special envoy, Lakhdar Brahimi, the Chairman of the Afghan Transitional Government, Hamid Karzai, western aid agencies and human rights organisations and, of course, Pakistan, that ISAF's role must be expanded. The main hitch at the moment is two-fold: firstly, some NATO countries need to be convinced; secondly, ISAF's expansion requires specific authorisation from a new U.N. Security Council resolution. Without doubt, a western military alliance taking Afghanistan's security exclusively in hand will require consensus involving Russia and China.

For the West, Afghan security has come to be defined in terms of Mr. Karzai's extent of authority over provinces outside of Kabul. Afghan reconstruction has come to be seen as being impeded by worsening security, which prevents Mr. Karzai's Government from bringing tangible improvements to the lives of the Afghan people. This in turn shows Mr. Karzai in a poor light in the public perception. Reconstruction would involve extending political patronage to the impoverished country to create political constituencies supportive of Mr. Karzai.

With a broad brush, local leaders are being tarred as 'warlords' in so far as they reign supreme in their respective regions. True, any number of freewheeling field commanders (mostly on the payroll of U.S.

Special Forces' post-Taliban 'pacification' campaign) have incrementally become a law unto themselves. But, the sustained western campaign against Ismail Khan or Mohammad Fahim cannot but be seen in terms of their political standing.

Under Ismail Khan's dispensation as Governor of Herat, this western region enjoys a degree of stability unknown in Afghanistan. Yet, Mr. Karzai stripped him of military command on August 12. The problem with Mr. Khan seems to be not 'warlordism' but his dogged refusal to make the formidable Soviet-built Shindand military base available to U.S. forces, his ability to thwart repeated attempts by Amanullah Khan (a field commander supported by the U.S.) to seize control of Shindand, his close links with Iran, and his control of a vital region through which trans-Afghan oil and gas pipelines must eventually pass.

Similarly, Gul Agha was removed as Governor of Kandahar on August 12 despite his local standing and his impeccable anti-Taliban pedigree. His problem also seems to be that, like Ismail Khan, he is independent, has a local support base, and has maintained cordial links with Iran.

Under the Bonn agreement, an elected legitimate Government must take over in Kabul next year. The U.S. would ideally like to see Mr. Karzai head that Government. Therefore, there are tactical manoeuvres to ensure that Mr. Karzai's political stature grows during the limited time between now and the June 2004 elections.

But, questions of fundamental importance arise. Is Mr. Karzai's political stature to be enhanced by cutting down strong regional leaderships? More pertinently, can Afghanistan be run purely as a unitary state? Will Afghanistan's long-term stability be served by ensuring that the local leadership in the various regions is kept weak and subservient? Is it necessary that all other foreign influences should be made subservient to the U.S. influence? The propaganda tarnishing the Northern Alliance leaders as 'war-

lords' is self-revealing. This campaign ostensibly in the name of 'security' catches regional countries supportive of the Northern Alliance in a circle they cannot easily escape so as to establish a starting point again.

Meanwhile, the U.S. is introducing Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) comprising its Special Forces and aid officials to spearhead the effort to bolster Mr. Karzai's influence outside Kabul. The PRTs have already begun operating in Gardez, Bamiyan, Kunduz and Mazar-i-Sharif. The PRTs, it is argued, are being run directly under the U.S. forces and not under the U.N., and, therefore, their operations do not require any new Security Council resolutions!

The PRTs will 'expand' to Kandahar, Jalalabad, Herat and Charikar by September. Indeed, if the PRT strategy works, Mr. Karzai will have a fighting chance of rubbingish the Northern Alliance's influence between now and June 2004. And, when an elected Government under Mr. Karzai replaces the Transitional Government, it will be entirely legitimate for it as a sovereign Government to demand an expanded role for the NATO. No specific resolution of the U.N. Security Council will be necessary then.

It is a heady thought that Afghans can be easily manipulated. But the Bonn agreement was predicated on an important assumption that the Afghans will be largely left to themselves. Afghans resent being manipulated. It must be remembered that the Taliban, for all its million excessive acts, still has indigenous roots that run deep, as recent events testify. Police stations and other symbols of Government authority have increasingly come under attack from pro-Taliban forces across Afghanistan. The Taliban drew sustenance from a curious mix of religion, ethnicity and nationalism, depending on the season, and could still do so. Moreover, leaders like Ismail Khan or Fahim or Gul Agha may not simply walk away into the sunset. They too have their support base. All the more reason why the war on terror must remain focussed on its primary objective.

(The writer is a former Indian Foreign Service officer who has served in Afghanistan and its neighbourhood.)

20 AUG 2003

ATTACK / 'ASSAILANTS IN PAK.'

22 dead in Taliban raid on police station

KABUL, AUG. 18. Just hours after a deadly raid on a police station that left 22 persons dead, insurgents attacked another police compound in southeast Afghanistan, setting it ablaze and taking four policemen hostage, officials said on Monday.

The attack took place on Sunday night at Tarway, a village in Paktika province a few km from the Pakistan border, said the provincial police chief, Daulat Khan. "There were several hundred of them," Mr. Khan said of the assailants. "They set the police station on fire, took four of our men and fled to Pakistan."

In neighbouring Pakistan, the Foreign Ministry at its weekly briefing in the Capital of Islamabad said the Taliban was a worry for both countries and there were still large numbers in Afghanistan.

"The Taliban pose a threat throughout Pakistan and Afghanistan. We must work together," said Masood Khan, Pakistan's Foreign Ministry spokesman. "There are remnants of the Taliban on the Afghan side. They have large concentrations there and they are very active there."

"There may be some remnants on the Pakistani side. So it is a common fight and we should coordinate our strategies and work together and not find refuge in accusations," Mr. Khan said.

It was not possible to independently confirm the details of the Tarway attack. Other policemen who were in the police station in Tarway fled the scene and the remoteness of the area made it impossible to get independent confirmation.

Nadir Khan Zadran, another police chief in the area, said three corpses were found in nearby fields, but it was not known who they were or how they died. He said the attackers — he estimated there were 200 — were members of the former Taliban regime, ousted in a U.S.-led war in 2001.

It was unclear if they were the same group that carried out a similar assault earlier on Sunday at Barmal, much farther to the north, but also in Paktika province.

The violence in Paktika province took place despite the presence of 11,500 coalition troops deployed in the country to hunt the guerillas down. In the attack at Barmal, hundreds of insurgents in a convoy of trucks assaulted a police headquarters, triggering a gunbattle that left seven police and 15 attackers dead, officials said. It was one of the largest shows of anti-government force in over a year.

Assault

The assault began shortly before midnight on Saturday. The guerillas, reportedly numbering several hundred and equipped with rockets, heavy machine guns and grenades, overwhelmed the police headquarters and held it until dawn, when they destroyed the building, got back in their vehicles and fled to Pakistan, 8 km away, according to provincial Gov. Mohammed Ali Jalali. Anti-Government forces usually move around in small groups and on foot. Previous attacks have rarely involved more than 80 guerilla fighters. Mr. Jalali said the insurgents responsible for attack at Barmal included Taliban and fighters loyal to Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a former Prime Minister who heads Hezb-e-Islami, a faction that has called for attacks against foreigners in Afghanistan. He also blamed Pakistan's intelligence service for playing a role in organising the assault.

The ongoing violence has angered officials in the President, Hamid Karzai's administration, who say Pakistan is not doing enough to police its side of the border. Thousands of Pakistani soldiers have been deployed along the porous and rugged border, but tribesmen in the area openly say they would protect Taliban. — AP

61 die in bloody Afghan clashes

Kabul, Aug. 13 (Reuters) Sixty-one people were killed and dozens wounded in outbreaks of violence across Afghanistan in the troubled country's bloodiest 24 hours in more than a year, officials said today.

At least 25 people, most of them factional fighters, were killed after fighting erupted early today between forces of a sacked provincial official and his successor in a remote district of Uruzgan province, a cabinet minister said.

At least 15 also died today, including a woman and children, when a suspected Taliban bomb blew apart a bus in the southern province of Helmand.

Government forces said they killed 16 Taliban and al Qaida fighters and lost five of their

own in clashes in the southeast that began late yesterday.

The cabinet minister, who did not want to be identified, said the fighting in Uruzgan involved supporters of Amanullah, the former ruler of the remote district of Kajran, and his successor, Abdul Rahman Khan.

He quoted Khan as saying it started after Amanullah's fighters opened fire on a bus carrying his supporters.

"Khan told me eight of his people died in the bus incident, in which 20 were wounded, and he lost seven others. Amanullah told me 10 of his men, including close family members, were killed." The minister said the fighting was continuing and the central government was trying to broker a ceasefire.

Ghulam Mahaiuddin, head of administration in Helmand, said the bus blast took place early in the morning in Nadi Ali district, west of the provincial capital Lashkargah.

"Eight of those killed on the bus were male, six of them were children and there was a woman too," he said.

Mahaiuddin said it appeared the bomb had gone off accidentally inside the bus and may have been intended for an attack on independence celebrations in Lashkargah next week.

He blamed guerrillas from the Taliban regime ousted in late 2001 and said it was possible the bomber died in the blast.

Troubled Helmand was a key bastion of the Taliban until they were overthrown and has been

hit by several bloody attacks by a resurgent Taliban guerrilla movement in recent months.

In the southeastern province of Khost, border forces said they had killed 16 Taliban and al Qaida guerrillas repulsing a major attack in which five border policemen were also killed.

Border police officer Major Ghafar said the insurgents used heavy guns, rifles, mortars and rocket-propelled grenades to attack a base used by a border battalion in the Shinkai area east of Khost and adjacent to the border with Pakistan yesterday.

He said the fighting continued overnight.

"The Taliban attack has been foiled. But we are continuing our mopping up," he said, adding that two Arabs from the al Qaida

network had been captured.

Ghafar described it as the biggest attack in the area since the Taliban fell. "In the past, they have staged small-scale attacks, but this one was the most serious of all," he said.

Shellfire could be heard in the background as Ghafar spoke by satellite telephone.

"The sound you can hear is outgoing fire," he said, adding that government forces had counterattacked after a three-phase guerrilla assault that lasted until 0200 GMT.

The violence comes despite the presence in Afghanistan of a 12,500-strong US-led coalition pursuing Taliban and al Qaida remnants, and Nato which is commanding a 5,000-strong peacekeeping force in Kabul.

VV

14/8

Pak, Afghanistan vow to work for stability

IMTIAZ GUL

Islamabad, Aug. 6: Pakistan and Afghanistan today concluded the second joint ministerial commission meeting with mutual pledges to work for political and economic stability in both countries.

Pakistan's finance minister Shaukat Aziz and his Afghan counterpart Ashraf Ghani headed the talks. Pakistan promised to repair and upgrade the road connecting the Torkham border check post with Jalalabad, the capital of the eastern Afghan province of Ningarhar, as soon as possible.

Pakistan offered to train employees of Afghanistan's banking, accounting, and postal services. It also removed six items from the list of goods that Afghan traders are allowed to import via Pakistan under the 1965 Transit Trade Agreement.

Aziz said the meeting was very productive and hoped the next instalment, to be held in Kabul later this year, would accelerate bilateral trade and cooperation between the two countries.

Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan during the last fiscal was \$435 million compared to imports worth \$35 million only.

Responding to a question from journalists on whether



Pakistani finance minister Shaukat Aziz (left) and his Afghan counterpart Ashraf Ghani in Islamabad. (AFP)

Afghanistan was making any effort to improve Pakistani investment in the country, Ashraf Ghani, a banker and a former World Bank official, said: "It is a question of reason not of emotions and reason dictates that we work to improve our economies and facilitate each other."

"We will provide a level playing field to Pakistani banks seeking to set up operations in my country... but the quality of the services is the factor that is going to count whatever we decide," Ghani said.

The Afghan finance minister urged Islamabad to forget the past and look at a future relation-

ship based on equality and mutual respect.

On the Gwadar port, which is under construction, 500 km west of Karachi, Ghani said: "We hope Gwadar becomes a port of peace... a hub of trading activity for the entire region." Gwadar offers the shortest trading route to landlocked Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

However, the two ministers avoided questions relating to Anwarul Haq Ahady, Afghanistan's central bank governor, whose inflammatory speech instigated an armed attack on the Pakistani embassy in Kabul on July 8.

Karzai warns Pak over border clash

Vijay Dutt
London, July 18

AFGHAN PRESIDENT Hamid Karzai has issued a stern warning to Pakistan, saying his country would no longer condone Pakistani aggression.

A war-like situation seems to be developing on Afghanistan's border. According to reports, Pakistani troops have advanced five miles beyond the Durand Line, drawn by the British in the late 19th century.

In an interview with *The Telegraph*, Karzai stressed that he "sought a civilised relationship with Pakistan" but was unwilling to back down in the face of serious confrontation.

"I want to establish parameters of our relationship with Pakistan," said Karzai. "One, we want friendship. Two, we want trade and business links. Three, we want a civilised relationship."

But he added, "Pakistan must avoid acts of aggression against Afghanistan and attacks across the border by extremists must stop. We will not remain silent spectators."

Karzai, while talking to *Hindustan Times* some time back at Oxford, had said he talked to President Musharraf regularly and they exchanged views very frankly.

But this time, the Afghan President said he felt personally betrayed by Musharraf with whom he shared a close personal relationship since the September 11 attacks in America, despite Pakistan's previous support to the Taliban regime.

"I want to develop a relationship of friendship and understanding with Pakistan. But both the United States and Pakistan should have no illusions or doubts that this will not happen with the present attitude of Pakistan."

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

19 JUL 2003

Pak., Afghanistan 'sort out' row

199.14
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By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, JULY 9. The Pakistan Foreign Minister, Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri, said today that Islamabad had decided to re-open its embassy in Kabul after carrying out repairs to the damage caused by an attacking mob on Tuesday morning.

The Minister said that after the Afghan President, Hamid Karzai, telephoned the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, yesterday, the 'matter is treated as closed' and the differences had been sorted out.

However, political observers here are far from convinced that the strains between Pakistan and Afghanistan could be pa-

pered over so easily. The attack by mob is seen as culmination of the tension building up between the two neighbours for the past several weeks.

In a way, the recent incident and the aftermath is a replay of events involving the Pakistan embassy in Kabul just before the advent of Taliban in 1996.

Though Pakistan played a major role in the ouster of the Taliban, as a coalition partner of the U.S., in the post-Taliban era Islamabad has been uneasy over the way events unfolded, particularly the perceived marginalisation of Pashtuns.

Analysts believe that three major factors seem to have contributed to the slide in the ties

between Kabul and Islamabad. Mr. Karzai was vocally unhappy over some of the statements made by Gen. Musharraf during his recent foreign trip about law and order situation and terrorist infrastructure in Afghanistan.

Skirmishes

In recent weeks, Pakistan and Afghanistan paramilitary and military forces have been involved in skirmishes over the alleged incursions by the former into the latter's territory in pursuit of the remnants of the Al-Qaeda and Taliban.

Pakistan has strongly denied the charge.

Pakistan is bitter over what it perceives as 'preferential treat-

ment' being given to India by the Karzai Government. Just before he left on his foreign tour, Gen. Musharraf made it a point to go public about the protest he had lodged with Mr. Karzai on allowing India to establish consulates in areas of Afghanistan close to Pakistan border.

The Pakistan Prime Minister, Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali, told reporters in the context of the Quetta mosque attack on Friday that the presence of Indian consulates in Kandahar and Herat could not be overlooked.

It is for the first time since Mr. Karzai took reins of power in Kabul that matters have come to such a pass between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Taliban regroup to fight coalition

James Bone & Zahid Hussain
The Times, London

KABUL, June 25. — Resurgent Taliban forces have reorganised their command structure to fight against coalition troops in Afghanistan and the US-backed government of President Mr Hamid Karzai.

The Taliban has stepped up attacks on coalition forces and Al-Qaida is displaying a "new boldness" despite efforts by the UN to crack down on both groups, according to a UN report obtained by *The Times*.

As thousands of Pakistani, American and Afghan government troops continued operations against the rebel fighters along Afghanistan's eastern borders with Pakistan, Mullah Md Omar, the fugitive supreme leader of the former Taliban regime, has

named a 10-man leadership council.

Mullah Omar announced the formation of a *Rahbari Shura* (leadership council) in an

audio tape mes-

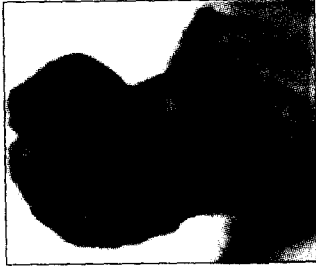
sage said to have been sent from his hiding place in Afghanistan. The council comprises former military commanders, including Jalaluddin Haqqani, Mullah Akhtar Md Usmani and Mullah Dadullah, who are being hunted by the US and Afghan government troops.

Mukhtar Mujahid, a spokesman for the

Taliban movement, said the Pushto-language tape contained Mullah Omar's message urging Afghans to intensify resistance against foreign troops.

The UN team that is tracking UN sanctions on the two groups says that the present travel ban, arms embargo and financial restrictions have had little effect on curbing Al-Qaida.

The fugitive Taliban chief, Mullah Omar, has announced a 10-man leadership council from a hiding place in Afghanistan



Its report says: "Despite the travel ban, members of the al-Qaeda network have retained a high degree of mobility, and have

been able to carry out and contribute to terrorist attacks in several countries around the world." Al-Qaida has been able to exploit "loopholes" in the international banking system, using charities and informal transfer mechanisms such as "hawala" Islamic banking, to receive and transfer funds. "Many of the Al-Qaida sources of funding have yet to be uncovered and frozen," the report says. Al-Qaida and its members are continuing "attempts to acquire weapons of mass destruction".

The UN team, chaired by a British expert named Mr Michael Chandler, says that a recent assault on a guarded foreigners' housing complex in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, suggests that Al-Qaida "may be willing to expand its activities beyond 'soft targets' to underscore its continued strength".

49-10
27/5

Stalemate in Afghanistan

By T. Sreedhar

THE GLOBAL war on terrorism led by the U.S. completed 18 months on May 7. Still, the leaders of the Taliban and the Al-Qaeda, as also their family members, are eluding the U.S. dragnet. The combing operations by more than 10,000 Pakistanis and American troops have only resulted in apprehending some junior cadres of the two outfits. According to Indian intelligence assessments, the "big fish" (Osama bin Laden, Mullah Omar and Ayaman Zawahiri) who escaped the U.S. bombing of southern Afghanistan in the last week of November 2001, seem to have found safe havens in and around the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

Before examining the issue, three factors need to be taken into consideration. The initial U.S. strategy of tracking down the leadership of the Taliban and the Al-Qaeda was focussed on extensive aerial bombing of every suspected area. Pakistani intelligence provided the main input in identifying these hideouts. This failed to produce the desired results. At the ground level, Pakistani intelligence operatives refused to obey the orders from Islamabad. There were reports that field intelligence staff used to forewarn the villagers in the tribal areas adjacent to the Pakistan-Afghanistan border about the impending air attacks. This allowed the Taliban and the Al-Qaeda men to move out to safer places.

At another level, the indiscriminate American aerial bombings proved counter-productive. The local population turned hostile to the U.S. Realising the futility of its initial approach, which continued till April-May 2002, the U.S. brought about a qualitative change in its strategy. It divided the entire terrorist network into three components — Pakistan, Taliban and the Al-Qaeda. Washington was able to force the Pakistani rulers to give up their support to the Taliban and the Al-Qaeda through persuasion, threats and financial incentives. This did bring in the Islamabad ruling elite's support to the U.S.' war on terrorism. Here again, two things were ignored by the U.S. — that a large number of ex-Pakistani army personnel joined

the ranks of the Taliban and the Al-Qaeda; and that their links with their juniors in service could not be underestimated. The best example of this is the manner in which Maj. Gen. Hamid Gul, once of the Inter-Services Intelligence, turned into a Taliban-Al-Qaeda ideologue. Then there were a whole lot of those who participated in nurturing the 'jehadi' culture in and around Pakistan.

After isolating the higher echelons

the protection of Osama a responsibility of the entire Gilzail Pashtoon tribe, cutting across the Pashtoon belt — until and unless there is a blood feud, the Duranis and the Gilzai Pashtoons do not cross each others' paths.

Last, the U.S. did not understand the complex nature of the networking of the Taliban and the Al-Qaeda across the globe, and in Pakistan in particular. It thought that after the demolition of the infrastructure in Af-

Iraq lent sufficient credence to the Al-Qaeda and its Islamic front for the propaganda war against the U.S. and Israel. All this means that the U.S.-led war against terrorism is suddenly confronted with stumbling blocks. The expected support from the Islamic world to the war is not total and complete.

Reports from Pakistan say that the Taliban and the Al-Qaeda have even set up a radio station, Azad-e-Afghanistan, in the North West Frontier Province-Balochistan belt. According to the Pakistani media, "they don't broadcast regularly, but whenever they go on air, they relay Quranic verses pertaining to jihad and other messages, to boost the morale of locals and to encourage them to fight against the U.S. infidels." People in the Pakistani tribal areas have also been receiving *shabnamas* or night letters.

Again, going by the media reports, Osama bin Laden has become a cult figure not only in Pakistan but also in the entire Islamic world. A shopkeeper in Karachi told the *Newsline* (April 2003) that "in the last two weeks, I have sold at least 20,000 Osama pictures. The pictures particularly in demand were images of bin Laden against the Twin Towers carrying the message, Down with America." With feelings running high in the wake of the U.S. war on Iraq, most of the Pakistanis see Osama as the only ray of hope in the Islamic world to challenge U.S. imperialism. If this is the situation, Osama and his associates can find safe havens in every city, town and village in and around Pakistan. Even the official machinery, though it has publicly made tactical shifts in its support to the Taliban and the Al-Qaeda, knows that the U.S. cannot do in Pakistan what it did in Iraq or Afghanistan.

For the time being, it appears that there is a stalemate in the hunt for Osama and Mullah Omar. As for the Taliban and the Al-Qaeda, sufficient time has been given to them by their friends in Pakistan to regroup. And, apparently, not to disturb the status quo, the Taliban and the Al-Qaeda have started attacking Western objects outside Pakistan.

(The writer is Visiting Professor, School of International Studies, JNU.)

The U.S.-led war against terrorism is suddenly confronted with stumbling blocks. The expected support from the Islamic world to the war is not total and complete.

of the Pakistani state machinery, the U.S. tried to divide the ranks of the Taliban and the Al-Qaeda. Here, the traditional chequebook diplomacy was used along with some dose of coercion. Since the Taliban was perceived as a Pashtoon movement, the Pashtoons on both sides of the Durand Line (Pak.-Afghan border) were offered extensive financial incentives. Going by media reports, this move resulted in the decline of American clout among the Pashtoons. Their initial enthusiasm to cooperate with the U.S. came down with the passage of time largely due to the feeling that Washington was making tall promises, which were not likely to be fulfilled. They started citing how the U.S. fulfilled very few of its promises made to the Karzai Government in Kabul.

Besides, the U.S.' cozying up to the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, made many Pashtoons uneasy. Gen. Musharraf's Government is seen by the Pashtoons as one that betrayed their cause by changing sides, in spite of possessing nuclear weapons. The U.S. war-planners on terrorism also misread tribal loyalties. Mullah Omar, the Taliban chief, is a Gilzail Pashtoon, who traditionally remained second in command to the Durani Pashtoons. For the first time, after the Taliban came to power, a Gilzail Pashtoon ruled Afghanistan. The matrimonial relationship between the families of Mullah Omar and Osama makes

ghanistan, the Taliban and the Al-Qaeda would be crippled; and could be tracked down over a period of time. The Al-Qaeda cadres, as can be seen from the September 11 attacks, are well educated and committed to their leader and their cause. The way the Al-Qaeda operatives have been captured from different cities of Pakistan also shows that they are not just hiding in the Hindukush mountains. They are living in important towns and cities and they have sympathisers and supporters across the Islamic world.

In these circumstances, where can the Taliban and the Al-Qaeda leadership hide safely and direct their operations? The long American search for them along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border shows that the possibility of their being stationed in one place is highly unlikely. And that they are on the move continuously. There have been reports of the Taliban and the Al-Qaeda running mobile training camps to keep their cadres fit. There is another theory that the Taliban and the Al-Qaeda moved out of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border in November 2001 and went to Yemen with the help of the underworld in Pakistan and Dubai. And that they came back in the middle of last year to relaunch their campaign. The series of bombings in Riyadh, Karachi and Casablanca from May 12 onwards shows they are back in business. The U.S. war in

THE HINDU

1 MAY 2003

'We don't want to be involved in Indo-Pak politics'

Afghanistan President HAMID KARZAI recently visited Pakistan amid a standoff between Pakistani troops and Afghan-US troops. Excerpts from an interview he gave to MOHAMMAD SHEHZAD

afghanistan does not want to be involved in the politics of the two countries. We will not allow its territory to be used by one friend of ours against another friend and brother of ours. That has to be understood very carefully. Our relations with India are 'Afghan-India' relations. These relations will have no negative bearing, whatsoever, on Pakistan. It is the same with Pakistan. Our relations with Pakistan will not, in any way, affect our relations with India in a negative way.

■ **Almost a year-and-half since 9/11 and Afghanistan is still a nation without a state.**

Well I can say that Afghanistan is hell of a nation. That has been proven by many years of war and the holding together of this country by the people of Afghanistan. But I can also say that Afghanistan is a nation without strong state institutions. We have to give Afghanistan the state institutions.

■ **Can Mulla Omar destabilise the transitional authority in Kabul? Could he be forming alliances that might have to be dealt with in the future? Is he receiving support from the outside, or even inside?**

Mulla Omar cannot play any role in destabilising Afghanistan or getting people together in Afghanistan especially if Afghanistan and Pakistan can adopt a proper operational strategy to curb extremism and terrorism on both sides.

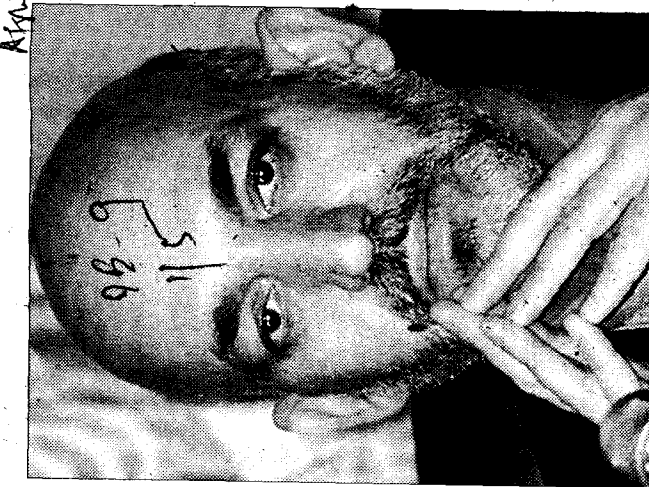
■ **Reports suggest Afghanistan is witnessing anti-American sentiment in the wake of the US-led attack on Iraq. Are people free to express themselves? Are you censoring any popular expression?**

No. In terms of press freedom and freedom of popular expression, Afghanistan is the most democratic country. And if I am wrong, let me know!

■ **Mulla Omar is meeting people in Kandahar. Why are you not taking any steps?**

How do you know he is in Kandahar? Where he is then? I am not going to tell you! Is he in Afghanistan or in Pakistan? I am not going to speak!

■ **I recently interviewed Gulbadin Hekmatyar. He said you had offered him a senior level portfolio in your government.**



TALKING WITH
HAMID KARZAI

■ **"We are aware of the sensitivity between India and Pakistan. Afghanistan will not allow its territory to be used by one friend against another friend of ours"**

Did he tell you that?

■ **Yes!**

It is not true! Did he say in that interview that he was behind an attack on me in Kandahar?

■ **Yes he did. Meanwhile, we hear you are willing to recognise Israel?**

No! Never! We have no such plans.

■ **"If Pakistan doesn't check terrorism, the use of religion by terrorists, very soon it will face a serious situation. These people are criminals. They will do anything to justify their crimes. Yesterday, they were in Afghanistan. Today, if Pakistan allows them a place, they will probably cause the same trouble here"**

■ **Is Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan over?**

Pakistan is a neighbour! And neighbours always have relations and influences. We are interacting with each other. We have trade. We have a massive population movement between the two countries. Pakistan influences us. We influence Pakistan.

■ **What are your thoughts on the rise of Mullahs-e-Amal on Pakistan's political scene?**

I have a specific opinion here. I don't think it is right for any honest Muslim to use religion to exploit political agendas for one's self interests. Afghanistan is a Muslim country. Religious elements in Pakistan who believe in brotherhood, in the prosperity of Muslims, will help Afghan people rather than undermining their prosperity and stability.

■ **Will elections be held in Afghanistan in 2004?**

I am committed to the elections. We are working to create proper conditions to hold elections. We recognise very much that free and fair elections require proper institutional structures. The problem is the Constitution: where is the army and police to protect them, if you give them the right to vote.

■ **Do you think you should be running Afghanistan to establish the institutions?**

I have not decided not to run. I am just not thinking about elections this time for myself. I am thinking about building the institutions necessary to hold elections in Afghanistan.

■ **And Afghanistan will be stable enough for a political transition by 2004?**

It will be stable enough provided our brothers in Pakistan find a proper mechanism to curb terrorism. I keep repeating this. Please note this.

■ **What do you mean by "proper mechanism"?**

First of all, there must be very good intentions between the two countries, which I find in President Musharraf and Prime Minister Jamali, which I hope will be translated into action down the line. We recognise that brotherhood and friendship and relations between Pakistan and us are of absolute interest to both the countries. I don't think pushing extremism or radicalism or ignoring the threat of terrorism is in the interest of anybody.

■ **You were frustrated last year with the lukewarm attitude of the donor community towards Afghanistan's reconstruction. Do you still have the same feeling?**

There was a kind of frustration last year. We have a more improved situation this year. More money is coming to the Afghan government. More projects will be under the control of Afghan government. We have a serious problem of information sharing and statistics. Now information has started coming from various provinces of Afghanistan, the reconstruction is taking place — through the NGOs and friendly governments. The picture of reconstruction is much better than you could have earlier imagined. Liberation of women was an important justification for Washington's initiative on Afghanistan.

■ **Has their lot changed significantly? And how about the plight of the minorities?**

Minorities, particularly the Hindus, are returning to Afghanistan. They are setting up their business, their homes. The state of women in Afghanistan is much better. Our First Secretary in Islamabad is a woman! There are hundreds of thousands of little girls in schools now.

(Courtesy: The Friday Times)

Karzai rushes to Pakistan after clash on border

DAVID BRUNNSTROM
KABUL, APRIL 20

AFGHANISTAN President Hamid Karzai will visit Pakistan this week alarmed by what his government sees as renewed Pakistani support for remnants of the former Taliban regime. Karzai will spend Tuesday in Islamabad on a state visit, during which he will meet President Pervez Musharraf. Afghan officials say security worries will top the agenda.

The two countries traded shell and rocket fire across the border on Thursday night. Afghanistan's military commander in Khost accused Pakistani militia of occupying several parts of Afghan terri-

tory along the ill-marked border. Afghan officials accuse Pakistan of repeated incursions in recent months and say guerrilla attacks by remnants of the former Taliban regime have been orchestrated from Pakistani territory.

In an indication of the seriousness of the problem, the US Special Representative to Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad visited Islamabad last week to warn that anything that undermined the Afghan government's stability was a challenge to US interests. Pakistan was the main backer of the Taliban when it was in power. But Islamabad sided with Washington in its campaign to oust the movement after the

September 11, 2001 attacks, blamed on Taliban ally Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda network.

US forces continue to scour the harsh, mountainous terrain along the border for Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters. The border Pakistani agents deep inside Afghanistan have alarmed Karzai's fragile government, which sees them as cover to allow Taliban guerrillas to mount attacks, diplomats in Kabul said.

A senior Afghan government official said some Taliban guerrillas seemed to have received guns and money before crossing from Pakistan into Afghanistan.

Diplomats and other analysts

say Taliban officials have been living openly in several Pakistani cities, including Quetta, Peshawar, Rawalpindi and even Islamabad.

Vikram Parekh, a senior analyst with the International Crisis Group, a non-partisan think tank, said the Taliban was given a boost when radical Islamic parties sympathetic to its aims gained control of Pakistani border provinces in October elections.

"Within the Karzai administration, it has for several months now been an issue of great concern," he said.

The US-led coalition forces rely on Pakistan's cooperation along the porous border, but Parekh said Pakistan seemed

keener to track down Al Qaeda suspects than former Taliban leaders. Analysts believe Pakistan's policy is partly driven by concerns about the increased influence of bitter rival India, given close links between Karzai's administration and New Delhi. India has become a competitor of Pakistan in both trade and aid to Afghanistan, fueling fears in Islamabad of strategic encirclement.

A diplomat in Kabul said the Afghan government was nevertheless confused by Pakistan's attitude. "They say they don't know how to account for Pakistan's behaviour and why Musharraf should permit such unfriendly behaviour," he said.

—Reuters

Pro-15
84

Resurgent Taliban creates insecurity in Afghanistan

KANDAHAR, APRIL 7. Before executing the International Red Cross worker, the Taliban gunmen made a satellite telephone call to their superior for instructions: "Kill him?"

"Kill him", the order came back, and Ricardo Munguia, whose body was found with 20 bullet wounds last month, became the first foreign aid worker to die in Afghanistan since the Taliban's ouster from power 18 months ago.

The manner of his death suggests the Taliban is not only determined to remain a force in this country, but is reorganising and reviving its command structure.

There is little to stop them. The soldiers and police who were supposed to be the bedrock of a stable post-war Afghanistan have gone unpaid for months and are drifting away.

At a time when the U.S. is promising a reconstructed democratic post-war Iraq, many Afghans are remembering hearing similar promises not long ago. Instead, what they see is thieving warlords, murder on the roads, and a resurgence of Taliban vigilantism. "It's like I am seeing the same movie twice and no one is trying to fix the problem," said Ahmed Wali Karzai, the brother of Afghanistan's President and his representative in

southern Kandahar. "What was promised to Afghans with the collapse of the Taliban was a new life of hope and change. But what was delivered? Nothing. Everyone is back in business."

Mr. Karzai said reconstruction has been painfully slow — a canal repaired, a piece of city road paved, a small school rebuilt. "There have been no significant changes for people," he said. "People are tired of seeing small, small projects. I don't know what to say to people anymore."

When the Taliban ruled they forcibly conscripted young men. "Today I can say 'we don't take your sons away by force to fight at the front line,'" Mr. Karzai remarked. "But that's about all I can say."

From safe havens in neighbouring Pakistan, aided by militant Muslim groups there, the Taliban launched their revival to coincide with the war in Iraq and capitalise on Muslim anger over the U.S. invasion, say Afghan officials.

Mr. Karzai said the Taliban are allied with the rebel commander, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, supported by Pakistan and financed by militant Arabs. The attacks have targeted foreigners and the threats have been directed toward Afghans working for international organisations. — AP

8 APR 2003

THE HINDU

4 senior Taliban officials arrested

Agence France Presse

Al-Qaeda
5/2/26/3

KABUL, March 25. — Four senior Taliban officials, including one of the regime's former deputy education minister, have been arrested in southern Afghanistan, officials said today. General Abdul Khalil Ajabiyar, security commander of southern Ghazni province, said the arrests were made after a week-long chase during which the four set fire to a school in the area.

He said among those arrested was Akhund Sayeed Shaheed Khail, a deputy education minister under the hardline Taliban regime which was ousted in December 2001 by an international military coalition.

"Four Taliban have been arrested in Ghazni, four kilometres southwest of Ghazni city," Gen. Ajabiyar said.

"We have identified one of them as Khail and the investigation is going on to discover who the other three are, but they seem to be senior Taliban." The commander said that in addition to torching the school in Ghazni's Andar district, the men also distributed so-called "night letter" leaflets calling for uprisings against the US-led military action in Iraq.

He said security forces had been tailing the four for a week after they emerged from hiding across the border in Pakistan and returned to Afghanistan.

Several schools, particularly those educating girls, have been torched in Afghanistan during the past few weeks in attacks blamed on supporters of the Taliban which banned girls from the classroom during its 1996-2001 rule.

Al-Qaida man provides vital clues

The FBI has launched a global manhunt for several key Al-Qaida militants, plotting terrorist attacks on US and other Western interests, based on information provided by a planner in the terrorist network Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. Mohammed was captured in Pakistan early this month, PTI adds from New York.

Mohammed, Al-Qaida's chief operating officer and the brain behind the 11 September terror attacks, has given details on several suspects and filled in important gaps in what US intelligence knows about Al-Qaida's practices, officials were quoted as saying by *Time* magazine.

26 MAR 2003

THE STATESMAN

Karzai hopes Pak. will curb cross-border militancy

By C. Raja Mohan

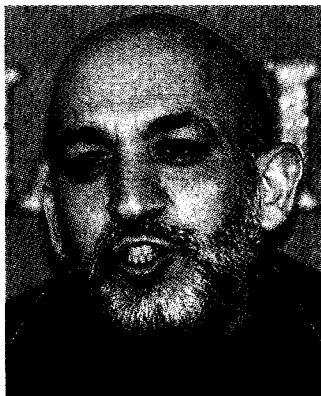
KABUL, FEB. 27. Afghanistan is looking for effective cooperation from Pakistan in curbing the growing activity of the Taliban and the Al-Qaeda across the long border between the two countries.

In an interview to *The Hindu* and Third Eye Television network here, the Afghanistan President, Hamid Karzai, conceded that a decisive victory over the forces trying to destabilise the new government remained to be achieved.

After their ouster from power at the end of 2001, the Taliban and Al-Qaeda terrorists are believed to have taken shelter in the border areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan. In the last few weeks, the frequency and intensity of the attacks inside Afghanistan from these elements have been on the rise, causing concern here and in Washington.

"It is natural that they will try to either escape or protect themselves," Mr. Karzai said. The struggle against the Taliban, according to Mr. Karzai, "will go on until we have achieved complete victory over such elements".

Asked about the level of cooperation from Pakistan in



controlling cross-border activity, Mr. Karzai said he had been in touch with the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, on the subject.

According to Mr. Karzai, Gen. Musharraf said that "there is need for more cooperation on the two sides of the border to fight terrorism more effectively. I trust him very much on that and we need to discuss this further when I visit Pakistan in March". Mr. Karzai is slated to visit Pakistan in the third week of March.

Mr. Karzai is arriving in New Delhi tomorrow for an intensive engagement with the Indian leadership.

During his visit, India and Afghanistan are slated to sign a preferential trade agreement

that will boost bilateral commerce.

India is also expected to hand over a civilian airliner to Afghanistan. India has already donated two transport aircraft to Afghanistan, which have helped revive the national air carrier of Afghanistan.

Mr. Karzai is bullish on the prospects for relations with India, and hopes that the trilateral Chah Bahar project with Iran will improve connectivity between the three nations. Mr. Karzai believes that "Afghanistan's future lies in a free market economy and extensive business relationships, transit relationships with the region".

Mr. Karzai is confident that the U.S., now preparing for a war with Iraq, will not abandon Afghanistan. "For obvious reasons, Afghanistan cannot be left alone again to fall into the hands of the people that brought the calamity to New York and in the rest of the world," Mr. Karzai insisted.

The Afghan leader does not expect any negative reaction in Afghanistan against the American war in Iraq. "We are too busy rebuilding our own country and too experienced now to act wrongly or sentimentally on this," Mr. Karzai said.

Details on Page 13

26 FEB 2003

THE HINDU

ERA 1811

Afghanistan rebuilds

The extraordinary progress of the past year is a tribute to the spirit of the Afghan people, and the dedication of the global coalition that was formed to help them rid their country of tyranny and terror, says **Robert D Blackwill**

THERE is a quality in the human spirit that delights in defying the sceptics. Look at Afghanistan. There has been much progress there since October 2001, a time when 24 years of poverty and civil war had eroded the physical infrastructure and demoralised the people. The civil war that brought the Taliban to power, and the subsequent brutal rule by that regime, made life a terrible trial for Afghans. Most important, the Taliban turned Afghanistan into a terrorist stronghold.

That was then. Today, the Taliban are gone from government, al Qaeda is on the run, Afghanistan does not export terror, there is no civil war, and the central government is increasing the reach of the rule of law in the country. Afghan lives are better and hope is real. Schools are re-established. Women are working. Crops are planted. Girls are being educated. Irrigation canals, tunnels and roads are constructed. Government institutions function. Security is improved in most of Afghanistan. America, India and their coalition partners have made a major difference in this profoundly positive change. Let me cite more examples.

Afghanistan was an engine of terror, training terrorists for murderous tasks in this region and beyond. Today, those terrorist training camps are holes in the ground, destroyed by the US Air Force. Afghanistan exports dried fruit, not terror.

Under Taliban international relief organisations feared that hundreds of thousands of Afghans might starve during the winter. But famine was averted during the winter of 2001. Since October 1, 2001 365,000 metric tons of food aid has been delivered to Afghanistan, feeding over 9.8 million people.

More than 3.5 million Afghans were in refugee camps outside the country and over 1.3 million were internally displaced under Taliban. Today, more than 2 million refugees have returned to Afghanistan, and about 630,000 internally displaced persons returned to their homes.

Girls over the age of eight were then banned from school. Many girls had not been in school for six years. 7,800 women



teachers, or 74% of the total, were prohibited from teaching, leaving most girls and 148,000 boys without schooling. Kabul University was closed. Today, over 3 million children have returned to school. Afghan girls comprise 30% of the total student population. Fifteen million new textbooks, nearly two million supplementary teaching materials, supplies, and 6,000 temporary classrooms accommodate the sudden surge of schoolchildren. The university reopened in 2002.

Freedom of religion under Taliban rule, was determined primarily by the unofficial, unwritten, and evolving policies. Today, religious freedom is restored under the Bonn Agreement and the 1964 Constitution, which says, "non-Muslim citizens shall be free to perform their rituals within the limits determined by laws for public decency and public peace."

Taliban edicts prohibited or severely restricted the most ordinary human activities, such as listening to music, publishing, shaving, kite flying, and dancing. Severe punishments were exacted from those caught engaging in these "subversive" actions. Today, Afghans have elected an interim government through a representative *Loya Jirga* process. Newspapers, radio,

and TV have been reborn. Individual and political freedoms are being re-established.

Although 40% of Afghanistan's doctors are women, most female physicians were banned from practicing medicine by the Taliban. Male doctors were prohibited from treating women. But now women doctors have returned to their profession, and male physicians may treat women once again. Many medical professionals are back from exile.

TO assist the new Afghanistan government in achieving these impressive results, the US government has committed \$840 million to humanitarian aid and reconstruction for Afghanistan since October 2001 to stave off starvation, immunise children, build schools, restart agriculture, and improve health care. The US Agency for International Development (USAID) concentrates on emergency food assistance totalling \$138 million and agricultural rehabilitation of \$36.7 million. The Office of Transition Initiatives allocates \$6 million to Afghan NGOs, with a particular emphasis on women's groups and community development projects. USAID plans to fulfill President Bush's \$80 million pledge to help rebuild the

road linking Kabul through Kandahar to Herat. Education projects include procurement of 10 million textbooks.

From delivering 2.4 million humanitarian food rations worth \$10 million to rebuilding 230 schools, American military personnel help the people of Afghanistan. Their efforts also include 10 water projects, digging a total of 83 wells that benefit 260,000 people. 28 hospitals and clinics have been repaired serving 526,000 Afghans. Eight road and bridge projects are underway.

In addition to coordinating programs for Afghan women, and educational and cultural exchanges, the State Department provides the United Nations and international NGOs with \$145.7 million in refugee assistance funds for repatriation of Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran and internally displaced persons. Projects include shelter, water and sanitation, as well as health and education for refugees. The State Department also allocates \$7 million to clear land mines in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the US Congress considers legislation authorising \$1.45 billion in assistance for Afghanistan over the next four years.

India has made parallel commitments. The groundwork is being laid for a future Afghanistan that remains peaceful and free from the export of terrorism. The Afghan people rebuild their country, their society and their political system. This process is not easy, and there are no short cuts. Afghanistan remains very poor, devastated by a generation of war. It could face future internal turmoil without continued and sustained commitment from the international community. But the extraordinary progress of the past year is a tribute to the spirit of the Afghan people, and the dedication of the global coalition that was formed to help them rid their country of tyranny and terror.

Despite the sceptics, the US and India have reason to be proud of their part in what has been achieved thus far in Afghanistan — yet another productive dimension of our transformed bilateral relationship.

(The author is the ambassador of the United States of America to India)

18 JAN 2003

DECEMBER was an important month for Afghanistan. A conference to discuss a non-aggression pact was held in Kabul exactly a year after President Hamid Karzai assumed power as the head of the interim government formed at a conference in Bonn, Germany, on 22 December 2001. Among the expected signatories to the pact were Afghanistan's immediate neighbours, China, Pakistan, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Representatives of India, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the European Union and the UN too attended the conference. In the words of the Afghan foreign ministry, "the Kabul Declaration would be signed to emphasise constructive and amicable relations, respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity and to refrain from actions that may jeopardise peace and stability in the region." President Karzai went a step further: "A secure, peaceful, friendly Afghanistan is a key to our collective success. We need to strengthen our bonds of brotherhood and friendship and work for a region free of terror, extremism and backwardness."

The second development in December was more interesting. President Mohammed Khatami's visited Pakistan when the Kabul conference was on. He told General Pervez Musharraf that Iran was eager to work closely with Pakistan for Afghanistan's reconstruction and for durable peace in the region. Iran and Pakistan are two key players, with a lot at stake in Afghanistan. No wonder, their presence in Afghanistan precedes the December 1979 invasion of that country by the erstwhile USSR. But last year saw their hostilities reach new heights. The reason: Iran being a Shia Muslim majority country backed the Opposition Northern Alliance last year in its war against the Taliban, which for long had had the blessings of Pakistan, a Sunni Muslim nation. Khatami exhibited enough diplomatic and political sense to declare his visit to Pakistan marked a paradigm shift in Iran-Pakistan ties after the fall of the Taliban.

Bloody past, messy future

Afghanistan is a highly pluralistic society and if Karzai fails to embrace all sections of the people Iran and Pakistan may exploit the country's vulnerability, writes SK SADAR NAYEEM

But given Iran's and Pakistan's internal situations and their past record will their improved relations bring hope for a durable peace in Afghanistan? Afghanistan is still a highly pluralistic society, not only ethnically and culturally but also in the sects of Islam. These divisions have been exploited in the past by Iran and Pakistan to the hilt for their respective national interests. And there's no guarantee that it would not be repeated in future if the Karzai government does not respect this pluralism.

Let us go back in time. Pakistan had little option but to hastily recognise the Taliban government, for it wanted desperately a friendly government in Kabul which would help it access the Central Asia market. President Zia-ul-Haque's tactical legacy slowly led Pakistan into a tricky situation where it had to resolve the ethnic conflict. Zia backed the Afghan cause and thus divided the

Afghans, favoured the Pashtoon leaders and ignored the minorities, and allowed outsiders to continue the "jihad" from Pakistani soil. Pakistanis had to pay the price for this legacy because Afghanistan's ethnic war spilled over into Pakistan.

In post-Zia Pakistan, the Taliban movement was born with the active support of its government to ward off danger to its territorial integrity. Prominent Pakistani Pashtoon and Jamaat-e-Islami leaders such as Qazi Hussain Ahmed, Wali Khan or Mir Afzal continued pressuring the Pakistani government to try and reimpose Pashtoon hegemony on Kabul. No wonder, the Pashtoon dominated Taliban rose to power in Afghanistan.

The crisis in Afghanistan deepened because the levers of immediate power, for the first time after the Sebghatullah Mojaddidi regime, were no longer controlled by the Pashtoons. The mainstay of Rabbani's government were the Ta-



WHAT CAN THEY LOOK FORWARD TO? An Afghan girl holds her brother at a refugee camp in Kabul. About 2 million refugees returned to Afghanistan last year but didn't get relief, promised by international agencies. — AFP

jik, Ahmed Shah Masood, and the Uzbek, General Rashid Dostum. The key figures behind the government from Nabi Azmi to General Dilawar and Momin were all Persian speakers. The composition was enough to create the impression that a "Persian dominated" government was in control in Afghanistan — enough to make Pakistan and Saudi Arabia oppose, because for both Persian speakers and Irani Shias are synonymous. The Pashtoons too were opposed to it; they, especially the Durrani, had for over a hundred years ruled over Afghanistan. During those years, only Bacha-e-Saqqa — a Tajik and Kohistani rebel, had revolted against Amanullah in 1929 and established his own government, only for a few months though, after which he was executed by Nadir Shah. The Pashtoon tribes have always fought each other but were united the moment it came to driving out a Tajik from Kabul.

But Pakistan was not the only country to help another Pashtoon government to power. It had Saudi Arabia's full support. Iran, on the other hand, had been backing Burhanuddin Rabbani. The former Afghan President, is alleged to have turned Afghanistan into an Iranian surrogate, and fled to Iran after the Taliban assumed power. Saudi Arabia helped Pakistan to check Iran's influence and stop Teheran from reimposing a pro-Iran, pro-Shia and non-Pashtoon government in Kabul.

Earlier, Saudi Wahabis (hardline Islamists) funded by rich Arab princes ran a mini-Wahabi kingdom around Jalalabad and were loathed by most Afghans. But the Wahabis used money to woo Pashtoon Mujahideen and Sunni groups because the Saudis wanted a rule for themselves to check growing Iranian influence in Afghanistan. This is when the Taliban movement came in handy, obviously because Muslims both in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan could be rallied

in the name of a jihad.

But was it really an Islamic jihad? The internecine war in Afghanistan had long ceased to be one — neither against alien occupation nor against the Communists whom the Saur Revolution had brought to power. Islam had never been in contention in Afghanistan. It was not Taliban who forced women behind veils and enslaved them. Only in King Amanullah's regime and later during Prime Minister Daud's tenure were women encouraged to do away with their veil.

The war in Afghanistan was the result of rivalry among the ethnic groups — in which no ideology or nationalistic feelings were involved. It was war where people switched sides for a few dollars and the warlords were only interested in keeping their hold intact over tracts of land — be it Kabul or Jalalabad, or Herat or Mazar-e-Sharif. No wonder, the Taliban bought Herat, Jalalabad and Kabul with Saudi money. In Mazar-e-Sharif, General Malik Pahalwan switched allegiance from Uzbek militia leader General Rashid Dostum to the Taliban. But within a couple of days, he changed sides again to attack the Taliban forces, trapping them in the Shia territory loyal to the opposition Hezbe-Wahadat, a pro-Iran outfit. The Taliban had to finally flee from the key northern territory. They were further driven out from Jebul-al-Siraj near Panjshier that paved the way for the safe return of ousted President Rabbani to Afghanistan. Masood captured from the Taliban the strategic towns of Faryab, Jozan, Saripul and Jebul-al-Siraj.

But then the uneasy Tajik-Uzbek coalition fell apart, though later they joined forces against their common enemy, the Taliban. This time, General Malik replaced General Dostum as Uzbek militia leader who became the National Islamic Movement leader. Thus it became clear that at least in the future Afghanistan wouldn't have a unified central government.

Pakistan's assessment of Taliban's victory proved embarrassingly wrong and jolted its foreign policy. Even if the Taliban had succeeded in controlling the whole of Afghanistan, they couldn't have held on to power for long because a new round of clashes, conspiracies and coups would have anyway plunged the country into anarchy. So even if the USA wouldn't have driven away the Taliban from power after 9/11, the hardline rulers would have been hard pressed to hold on to power.

It's ironic that Pakistan became the worst sufferer. The drug and gun-running mafia and the booming black economy had had its toll on Pakistan. The Taliban victory, though partial, had stoked the fire of Pashtoon ethno-nationalism in Pakistan. Pakistan's Baluchistan province faced unrest since the Baloch people had become a minority in their own province. To make matters worse, the Pashtoons in Baluchistan were demanding a homeland for themselves by dividing the province. So much for Pashtoon nationalism.

But despite all these problems, the Taliban, with Pakistan's help, ruled Afghanistan till 2001. Islamabad, however, switched sides to support the USA when it invaded Afghanistan to overthrow the Taliban last year.

Given the present scenario, President Karzai has to first overcome the inherited democratic deficit of feudalism and strategic insecurity to stop external interference, particularly from immediate neighbours. The internecine war of the last two decades has widened the divisions in Afghan society. The Karzai government has to take bold steps to ensure that the way forward lies in the genuine political participation of marginalised groups such as women, the rural and urban poor. This is the only way to bring Afghanistan from the edge of precipice. Because even the USA's presence and its support to the Karzai government won't be enough to stop the ethnic conflicts fought on the streets with guns and ammunition. And no no-aggression pact would be of any help.

(The author is a freelance writer)

Karzai forms panels to disarm warlords

Kabul: President Hamid Karzai has formed four commissions to accelerate the disarmament of warlords' armies and rebuild the national army, his spokesman said on Sunday.

Separate commissions will supervise disarmament and reintegration of factional fighters and the recruitment and training of the army, Sayed Fazl Akbar said.

These steps will enable Mr Karzai to expand his authority beyond Kabul, where security is ensured by international peacekeepers.

The Disarmament Commission will be headed by Abdul Karim Khalili, one of four vice presidents and leader of the Shi'ite Hezb-e-Wahdat faction.

"The Disarmament Commission is the main one," said Mr Akbar. "Several ministries are involved in this and the idea is to collect arms from people and find them jobs."

The Reintegration Commission will be headed by deputy defence minister Attiqullah Barlai, a Tajik from the Northern Alliance faction that forms the backbone of Mr Karzai's government.

Two ex-army generals, Rahim Wardak and Gulzarak Khan, from the majority Pashtun ethnic group, will

head the recruitment and training commissions.

Mr Karzai announced the formation of the new bodies at a meeting on Saturday attended by key regional commanders and governors, including the powerful governor of Herat Ismail Khan.

Also attending were UN special representative for Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi and the commander of coalition forces, US Lieutenant-General Dan McNeill.

Disarming the regional factions and building the army has been slow work, despite training provided by the United States and other Western countries.

The army has faced a tough job finding recruits, given low rates of pay and factional armies have been reluctant to give up their weapons.

The Reintegration Commission will have to find jobs and vocational training for up to 250,000 men with little experience besides fighting in the past 23 years of war.

Mr Akbar said all the regional commanders and governors had shown support for the plan.

But it will not be easy to persuade factional fighters to part with weapons in a country where owning a gun has become part of the way of life. Reuters

13 JAN 2003

A rebel with a capitalist cause

THE GANGLY marabou storks waiting patiently atop the buildings of Uganda's capital, Kampala, are messengers both of despair and of development. The long-legged scavengers disappeared from the city during the massacres in neighbouring Rwanda, where they fed on the corpses of slaughtered Tutsis, but the birds returned, and are now thriving on the discarded delicacies on rubbish heaps during these relatively good times in Uganda.

Surrounded by unstable neighbours and still coming to terms with its own brutal past, Uganda is the darling of the donor community and an emerging symbol of hope in a region that has evolved in reputation from a collection of basket countries to a basket continent. The fighting hasn't finished in Uganda. A limited rebellion continues in the far north by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), whose biblical inspiration is as eccentric as its tactics are cruel, but the country is gradually making peace with itself, and its 23 million people are beginning to concentrate their energies on the humble, honourable chore of building a life.

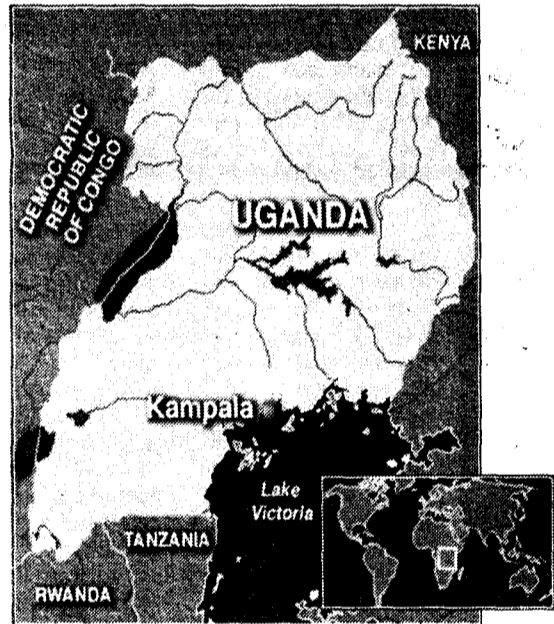
If the economy develops at the present annual rate of just over 6 per cent, and promised political reforms are delivered and press freedom continues to expand (there was one recent exception to the trend), Uganda will rightly be a model for other countries trying to cope with civil war, tribal rivalries, the colonial hangover, the Aids epidemic and a history of resource mismanagement that has rewarded the corrupt and humiliated the hard-working. And if that deeply rutted, almost impassable, dirt road is traversed, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, a blend physically and philosophically of Nelson Mandela and the late Deng Xiaoping, will have an influence far beyond his country's borders.

For all the relative success, Uganda's President is dressed in the olive green of the combat-ready commander-in-chief, and not the Western suit of the bureaucrat-in-chief. His military boots are shined, but without the excessive sheen of the obsessive warrior, and his chest is free of the self-awarded medals that have traditionally been a measure more of ego than of battlefield bravery in Africa.

After the interview, he is to head north to oversee what he claims will be the final phase in his campaign against the LRA, which has kidnapped classrooms of boys and, allegedly, completed their initiation into the cult by forcing the young captives to kill a schoolmate. The theory is that, having committed the murderous act, the abducted youth is so overwhelmed by shame that life with the armed zealots seems more normal than a return to the village.

"We have rescued a lot of abductees. More importantly, we have broken the morale of the

President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni is credited with dragging Uganda into the 21st century. Rather than commanding guerrillas, he now marshals market forces and has become the model leader for the rest of a blighted continent, writes ROBERT THOMSON in the first of a two-part series



A blend physically and philosophically of Nelson Mandela and the late Deng Xiaoping is President Museveni; top, with Mr Mandela; above, Uganda has a promising future

bandits. We have shown them that we can get them wherever they go. Fighting doesn't mean killing everybody. Fighting is about making clear the balance of forces. The contest of will is in our favour."

In the contest of wills Museveni's victory has been to graduate from a university-educated rebel taking refuge in the jungle to occupying the presidential compound in Kampala. He was a legend as a guerrilla, somehow evading capture when apparently hopelessly surrounded, and had a reputation as a commander who, by the standards of most such

wars, was neither vengeful nor gratuitously violent. That was not true of his presidential predecessors, including Idi Amin (now in exile in Saudi Arabia) and Milton Obote, who trashed an entire country.

Museveni, probably 58 (he was born to a nomadic family that kept no records), is well read, and able to muse on the collapse of Enron, display an understanding of the subtleties of drug pricing, quote Tennyson to support his development theories, and put last weekend's Kenyan elections into a broader regional context. Politely described,

Uganda and Kenya have a complex relationship, as do Kenya's outgoing leader, Daniel arap Moi, and Museveni, generally not reticent in criticising fellow African leaders for their ineptitude, corruption and cronyism. Museveni says the election, in which the governing party for nearly four decades was voted out of office, is a sign of political maturity: "We are happy for the Kenyans. Democracy needs time and a coalescing of social and political forces. It is also good that Mr Moi seems to have accepted the result."

The Kenyan transition will put

extra pressure on Museveni to leave gracefully after his second five-year term as President ends in 2006. He claims not to be motivated by power alone, but will surely be tempted to believe that the country will falter without him at the helm. If he does go quietly, as prescribed in the constitution, and if Uganda continues on its present course, Museveni will have a profound international voice as the man who turned an ungovernable mess into a thriving democracy. — *The Times, London*

(To be concluded)

