



COMMENTARY & OPINION

Where Do We Go From Here? The Aftermath of September 11

Editor's Note: The acts of terrorism against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001 have been condemned as crimes against humanity. The attacks themselves and the subsequent US-led "war on terrorism" have raised profound questions about the roots, the goals, and even the definition of terrorism; how an effective response to terrorist acts can be mounted within the norms of international law; how to prevent acts of terrorism in the future; and how to address the intolerable economic and social gaps between the Global North and South that have created a breeding ground for terrorism. The following articles, written during the weeks immediately following September 11, look beyond the short term objective of finding and punishing the individuals and groups responsible for these heinous acts to consider the principles and goals that should guide policy makers concerned not only with the prevention of terrorism, but with the prevention of war. The opinions expressed are those of the individual writers and do not necessarily represent the views of the M&GS editors or the organizational position of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War. M&GS welcomes reader response.

The Future Depends on Treaties Not Threats

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Over the last century and the past fifty-odd years in particular, an extensive network of charters, conventions, and treaties has evolved. These cover not only arms control but also issues of human rights, environment, and development, down to mundane but equally valuable topics such as the organization of postal and telecommunications services. They include broad-based, multilateral documents such as the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as widely recognized treaties such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Ottawa Convention banning anti-personnel landmines, and The Hague and Geneva conventions governing the conduct of war. Others, such as the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty between the United States and the former Soviet Union may have as few as two signatories.

These treaties comprise a major part of international law and significantly constrain the activities and powers of the signatory states. Those responsible for drawing them up and persuading sovereign states to accede to them understood that they were not just dealing with isolated issues but were contributing to the construction of a peaceful, stable, and sustainable world order. The tragic events of September 11, 2001 and the "war against terrorism" that has followed not only show how much still needs to be done, but also threaten to undermine much of the progress that has been made.

Not all states have signed and ratified all these treaties and not all parties to them have observed their provisions (notably Iraq in its program to develop weapons of mass destruction [WMD], which came to light after the Gulf War). Cynics have compared the contemporary situation in international law to that of national law in medieval Europe, when robber barons terrorized the countryside and competed with one another and with central kingships of variable integrity and power. But overall, particularly with the ending of the Cold War, progress has been made, if not always steadily.

It is sad, therefore, that the first nine

months of the George W. Bush Administration in the US were noteworthy mainly for the repudiation or threat of repudiation of several very important treaties, including the Kyoto protocol on climate change and the abrogation of the ABM treaty as part of the Administration's proposals for National Missile Defense (NMD). In the case of Kyoto, the stated motive is a refusal to curb "the American way of life"—which is responsible for 25% of global carbon dioxide emissions from about 4% of the world's population. The links between senior members of the Administration and the oil industry have not escaped notice outside the US.

Suspect Motives Not Only a US Problem

While the motivations behind other Administration decisions are equally mixed, underlying them all, as it seems from outside, is a general dislike of being tied down by treaty restrictions. A welcome proposal to significantly reduce stocks of strategic nuclear weapons has no link to the START process with Russia or to any desire for a Nuclear Weapons Convention. The US seems to have a general fear of the outside world. The September 11 tragedy perhaps provides some justification for such fear. But outsiders find themselves asking to what extent that fear has

generated policies that, in turn, were a provocation, though in no way a justification, for the attack. When the initial and understandable horror has died down, the American people must look again at their attitude to the wider world. Sometimes American motives seem contradictory: the proposed verification protocol for the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) is rejected as likely to be ineffective; but it is also a threat to the confidentiality—and therefore the profits—of the US biotechnology industry. A recent report in *The New York Times* suggests a more sinister motive.¹ The Pentagon and the CIA may have been engaged in research on bioweapons that is purportedly defensive but could be in breach of the BWC.

At other times, the interests of pressure groups and the Administration's view of security act in the same direction. At the July 2001 UN conference on the illicit trade in small arms, no firm final conclusion was reached because of pressure from the National Rifle Association and the perceived need to support guerrilla groups opposed to regimes not favored in Washington, among whom past beneficiaries would have included

Gen. Pinochet in Chile and the contras in Nicaragua.

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) was signed as a parting gesture by President Clinton. His successor seems unlikely to ask the Senate to ratify the ICC, on the ground that US citizens might be brought before the Court. But the statute makes it clear that the court can be activated only if a country's own judiciary had failed to act; outsiders find it hard to believe that George W. Bush has so little faith in his own courts.

The status in international law of major terrorist actions such as those of September 11 is not clear, but the surviving perpetrators of this outrage could surely have been brought before the court had it been in existence at that time—its remit will not be retrospective. Certainly the representatives of governments alleged to be behind the actions could be indicted.

The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) was also signed by the previous administration but is unlikely to be ratified in the near future. In international law, a state that has signed but not yet ratified a treaty is nevertheless de facto bound by its provisions. Yet the Department of Defense is reportedly anxious to bypass or reject this provision in order to test small, low-yield, tactical nuclear weapons—so-called mini-nukes. At the November 2001 review of the CTBT, the signatories could do no more than call on the 13 states that must sign and/or ratify the treaty for it to enter into force to do so. These include India and Pakistan as well as the US.

Of course, the US under the Bush Administration is not unique in rejecting or bypassing treaty commitments. Iraq's WMD program has already been mentioned, and the former Soviet Union continued with a biological weapons program long after becoming a party to the BWC (with fatal results for some citizens of Sverdlosk when anthrax spores escaped from the plant).² None of the other established nuclear weapon states are keen to observe their obligation (the term used by the International Court of Justice) to negotiate nuclear disarmament under the NPT. India and Pakistan cite their reluctance as a reason for refusing to sign the CTBT, but many believe this to be a fig leaf to hide their reluctance to agree upon a settlement in Kashmir.

In the human rights sphere, Australia was recently pilloried for its treatment of 400 Afghan refugees on the Tampa. European countries try their utmost to palm off asylum seekers, refugees, and economic migrants onto others, and the US has often dealt harshly with Mexicans trying to cross the border—all this when the numbers concerned are a tiny fraction of the 20-million-odd refugees

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worldwide. Several European countries, including the UK, refuse to apologize for the slave trade, while the US walk-out from the Durban UN conference on racism, though nominally over the issue of whether Zionism is racism, is widely believed to have been motivated by resentment over calls for reparations for slavery.

On environmental issues, Australia (which uses large amounts of energy for aluminum smelting), Canada, and Japan all contributed to the watering-down of the Kyoto Protocol. Norway and Japan wish to increase commercial whaling, while the latter also continues some whaling for dubious research purposes.

The Way Forward

In the face of all this, it is easy to be pessimistic about the prospects for a better world. Sometimes treaties can be patched up. For example, the 2001 review in Bonn of the Kyoto Protocol resulted in an agreement for reductions of around 2% of global carbon dioxide emissions—less than the 7% to which the participants originally agreed and far less than the 50% reduction or more that many climate scientists believe is needed to stabilize the global climate.³ US rejection of the BWC verification protocol could well scupper the project.^{4,5} The Bush/Rumsfeld NMD program will take many years, if ever, to complete, and we must hope that the program can be cut short before it has triggered a new arms race. Many outsiders hope that the mid-term Congressional elections in 2002 will strengthen opposition, and took heart from the defection of Senator Jeffords in the early months of the Administration. The imminent departure of other influential figures, such as Sen. Jesse Helms, also inspires hope. Meanwhile, numerous commentators have pointed out that no conceivable NMD program could have prevented the September 11 atrocities.

But all this is, nevertheless, only papering over the cracks. The essential framework for longer term stability will not be easy to achieve, but the broad outline of what is needed may already be in place. International cooperation is increasing in many respects, notably in health; smallpox has been eradicated (except for some virus stored in laboratories that has now become the focus of bioterrorism concerns) and polio could follow in a few years. Inevitably, progress will be slower on environmental issues, owing to the commercial interests involved, but world population should stabilize at a lower level than previously feared. The problem of what constitutes an optimum human population—and at what levels of resource consumption and pollution—will remain.⁶ The general

principles of greater equity and sustainability in distributing and using resources are clear,³ but will require significant sacrifices for the population of the developed countries including the US. The “ecological footprint” of the billion or so living in these countries is far larger than that of the five billion in developing countries who will not accept persisting inequality. Improving the standard of life in developing countries will also greatly increase the chance of a stable peace. For the Global North to raise the barriers between itself and the Global South still higher is a recipe for increasing instability,⁷ which in turn is sure to fuel the kinds of terrorism committed on September 11. Global problems such as climate change, overpopulation, human rights, and common security need global cooperation.

International disputes should be settled by law not war, declared or otherwise.⁸ Regional organizations such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) must play an increasing role as mediators in international disputes, and must be given far more extensive resources. Military groupings such as NATO must become no more than adjuncts to the UN and to its regional organizations. The institutions of civil society, including non-governmental organizations, can also contribute to peaceful mediation.^{9,10} Of all the current conflicts, that in Israel/Palestine is most urgently in need of resolution. The European Union is becoming more active here, but only the US Administration can bring sufficient pressure to deal with the key issues, the settlements in the Occupied Territories and statehood for Palestine. In the longer term, a reformed UN must continue to increase its role in this and other regional disputes. The US must adopt a far more positive attitude to the UN, and in particular not take military action without the authorization of its Security Council, if the UN is to fulfill its role to “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.”

Last but not least, the issue of globalization must remain in the forefront. Speedy travel and even speedier communications mean that we do now live in one world; the work of civil society in ensuring peace, health, social justice, economic equity, and environmental protection depends upon the Internet and other new technologies.

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Globalization must not mean that the world is to be run in the interests of a few large transnational corporations and financial institutions based in a few developed countries. The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization must become, as John Maynard Keynes intended, part of the international community by being answerable, perhaps through an Economic Security Council, to the UN General Assembly.¹¹ Once again, the active support of both the government and the people of the US is essential. Regretably, the prospects for such support are eroded when the news coverage of meetings of the WTO, G8, and others is distorted by an emphasis on violent protest, with little or no constructive criticism of the present activities of such bodies.

In the last 20 years the risk of global nuclear war has significantly diminished. At the May 2001 Review Conference of the NPT, the nuclear states accepted that Article VI of the Treaty implies global nuclear disarmament—though with no timetable. The global community must insist that the nuclear powers comply with obligations under this treaty. Almost all nations are signatories to the NPT. The key exceptions—Israel, India, and Pakistan—must join them. Likewise, all countries must become parties to other vital arms control, disarmament, and environment treaties, and must fully and openly comply with their provisions.

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Properly Diagnose Terrorism and Work for a Just Response

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On June 22, 1985, a bomb planted on Air India Flight 182 from Toronto to London detonated over Shannon, Ireland. Three hundred twenty nine people—a majority Canadians of East Indian origin—lost their lives. This was by far the most massive terrorist attack on Canadian citizens. An hour later, at Narita airport near Tokyo, another suitcase bomb in transfer from a Canadian Airlines flight to Air India killed two baggage handlers. Sikh terrorists, who had killed the Prime Minister of India the previous year in their fight for an independent state, were proved to be responsible for the Narita incident. The other bombing is only now coming to trial in Canada. As a Canadian of East Indian origin, and one who had just missed taking the same plane a week earlier, this tragedy hit me personally.

The events of September 11, with four plane crashes and more than 3,000 deaths, have left us all shuddering in disbelief, even months later. Citizens from 40 countries are known to have died. Many of them must have died horrible deaths—crushed, asphyxiated, or burned. To target so many innocent civilians, for whatever political goals, is a crime against humanity. And the effects go beyond these deaths and inconvenience to travel. My own patients have suffered with depressive symptoms, hopelessness, and fear and I, too, have found going to work emotionally difficult. The perpetrators may be dead, but justice requires that those who helped organize the attacks be rounded up and that countries and non-state groups who harbor and encourage terrorists be identified and prevented from abetting such acts in the future.

To deter further attacks and limit future damage, we must examine why the events of September 11 happened and develop appro-

priate strategies for dealing with these situations. Will the measures taken so far—military strikes on Afghanistan, border controls, increased tightening of domestic liberties, increased military budgets—reduce or exacerbate the problem?

However satisfying it may be for the US population, is going after terrorism “everywhere,” with indiscriminate attacks on bin Laden, Saddam Hussein, Ghadafi, Hamas, and Hizbollah in the “free world’s” best interests? On a moral plane, killing many innocents in other lands in the pursuit of the guilty parties would only propagate the injustice of September 11th, violating basic values including the rights to life, liberty, freedom, and justice and the respect for law.

But the dangers of such a wider war are infinitely greater than even the military operations carried out in the first two or three months after the attacks in the US, despite some apparent military successes, including the removal of the Taliban from power. If many innocent lives are lost, resentment will be cultivated and the supply of suicide bombers will only be increased. The policy of civilian sanctions on Iraq, which has led to the deaths of more than half a million children, has inculcated a sense of grievance throughout the Muslim world. Israel’s targeted assassinations and its harsh treatment of families of suicide bombers and of the Palestinian population in general has been like slashing heads off a hydra, only breeding more people willing to die for the cause.

The military, economic, and technological might that the US has proudly paraded since the end of the Cold War has been tragically shown to be vulnerable to penknives and box-cutters. Will the addition of \$20 billion or even \$200 billion to the defense budget solve that problem? Even if by some miracle it were to be functional, the \$100 billion National Missile Defense (NMD) plan would have offered no protection from these attacks. We are also left to ponder what might have happened had the terrorists actually used nuclear weapons. Horizontal proliferation occurs when nuclear powers refuse to eliminate their weapons.

While militaries may be the most effective means to fight wars, dealing with terrorism requires a more holistic human security approach that neither military forces nor politicians seem capable of providing. Doctors see this as a public health emergency of the highest order.

What alternatives do we propose? In the short term, end the bombing and treat the pursuit of Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda as a police action, where protecting human lives is of primary importance. But this is only a first step: to regain the respect of Afghans

over the long term, the US and its western allies must move back from their roles as combatants to become honest brokers—peacekeepers and peacebuilders—putting their own financial resources into such an effort. The massive operation launched by the US has made it painfully apparent that dedicating comparable resources to supporting peace processes in Peshawar, Rome, Cyprus, Kabul, and Northern Alliance-controlled territories before this crisis unfolded might have saved millions. A meeting of the Loya Jirga—the Grand Assembly of Afghans—was estimated to cost less than \$1 million. We should move immediately to provide more monetary and logistical support for peace processes, not only in Afghanistan but in the entire Middle East.

After a time of isolation, in which the Bush Administration refused to participate in completion of the Kyoto agreement on climate change, stepped back from enforcement of the Biological Weapons Convention, undermined efforts at the UN to limit small arms, and flaunted its disdain for the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, the US now sees some benefit to international collective action. Internationally recognized structures such as the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the United Nations must be supported.

US Congress ratification of accession to the ICC, whose provisions might have allowed the US a mechanism to deal with terrorists in a framework of international law, must become a priority. The recent conviction in New York of the bin Laden-linked perpetrators of the US Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 points to the effectiveness of strengthened law enforcement in dealing with terrorism.

While many in the US administration are talking about a flexible military response and have obstinately and dangerously refused to rule out the option to use small nuclear weapons, what would be more helpful are concrete steps toward nuclear abolition. Reducing stockpiles would diminish the opportunities for terrorists to acquire fissile materials for suitcase or backpack bombs and would alleviate the pressures behind the spread of nuclear weapons to other states, some of which are unstable or even hostile powers.

Increased international control of money supply networks and border controls may be necessary but must be balanced with respect for civil liberties. Creating resentment inside or outside national borders will not

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address the underlying problems that fuel terrorism. Extra or intra-territorial US military trials without the right to appeal and with the possibility of death penalties for foreign and US citizens are unlikely to inspire the confidence of even the staunchest US allies.

A public health model denies the quick fix that military and political leaders want. While many patients want to deal with problems such as obesity with fad diets or surgery, only lifestyle changes—balanced food intake and exercise—can help one achieve and maintain a healthy weight. Similarly, dealing with root causes of political, social, and economic injustices would be in accordance with enlightened self interest. Respect for human rights, democracy, and good governance, more equitable distribution of resources, investment in education—especially female literacy—and health care give people alternatives and an investment in the stability of their governments. Perhaps a post-conflict investment in Afghanistan along the lines of the Marshall Plan will safeguard us more than any further military buildup. True security is founded upon cooperative, just, and equitable relationships with others.

In February, the President-elect of Physicians for Global Survival (IPPNW-Canada), child psychiatrist Joanna Santa Barbara, spent two weeks in Afghan refugee camps in Peshawar, Pakistan on a peace education project. Educators there have developed primary school primers to deal with alienation and prejudice that war brings. These are meant to focus attention on supra-ordinate goals: the long term interests of people, including their own financial and leadership state, which might better be achieved through non-armed means.

It has taken 16 years for the presumed Air India bombers to come to trial. In the meantime, Sikh terrorism in India and around the world has been largely controlled. Lesser known are the al Qaeda-associated terrorists who have been responsible for various massacres in Kashmir in the last five years, involving hundreds and likely thousands of innocent civilians. Yet if India had chosen to enter Kashmir or nuclear-armed Pakistan in pursuit of the terrorists, their trainers, and their financial backers and supporters, the US would have justifiably criticized the foolhardy nature of such an adventure.

Indeed there were and are a number of more productive alternatives to bombing. Sober reflection on our long term interests could help us discover ways to prevent terrorist acts in the future that are not just undertaken to feed public demands that something be done immediately. ☺

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Let Us Not Go Back in Time

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What insights can an organization of doctors bring to the question of how the world should respond to terrorism? First we begin with the goal of preventing suffering and death whenever possible, striving to do no harm in the course of our treatment. In cases where it is impossible to do no harm, we must carefully weigh whether our actions will lead to greater benefit than harm. Our work is founded on an ethic of care that calls upon us to respond to all people, regardless of their nationality or religion, race or gender. In valuing every life, we align ourselves with healing rather than with vengeance.

As doctors committed to the prevention of all war, we condemn terrorism and atrocities against civilians. Just as we study the causes of disease we hope to prevent, we must carefully study the root causes of terrorism if we are going to succeed in preventing further attacks. One of the lessons of World War I was that the humiliation and impoverishment of Germany provided an environment that encouraged the extremism of the Nazis and led to the rise of Hitler. Learning from that history, the allies provided the Marshall Plan after World War II to rebuild Germany with a demilitarized economy. The Marshall Plan may be one of the greatest war prevention measures in history. Unfortunately, the importance of rebuilding a country devastated by war was forgotten when the Soviets were defeated in Afghanistan, and the Afghani people were left in poverty and misery. Both the flourishing terrorist camps and the brutal oppression of women in Afghanistan indicated the breakdown of the social foundations of the country, but the world paid scant attention.

If we are going to prevent terrorism, we must try to understand why young men, many of them highly educated, are ready to give their lives in horrific missions of killing. Osama bin Laden said, "Our nation [the Islamic world] has been tasting this humiliation and this degradation for more than 80 years. Its sons are killed, its blood is shed, its

sanctuaries are attacked, and no one hears and no one heeds.”¹

His reference to more than 80 years is important because it identifies grievances that began with the end of the Ottoman Empire and the actions of Great Britain, France, Germany, and Russia—the Great Powers who carved up the Middle East to suit their interests. The US was not one of the key players until much later, but it is now bearing the brunt of burning anger that has a long history.

In preventing terror, we must be careful to count all the human costs of the actions taken by governments. Bombing, no matter how carefully targeted, inevitably leads to the deaths of innocent civilians along with enemy troops. By December 10th, more than 3,500 civilians had been killed in Afghanistan by US bombs according to a study by Marc W. Herold, Professor of Economics, International Relations, and Women’s Studies at the University of New Hampshire.² Unfortunately, the deaths of civilians will continue after the bombing stops because the infrastructure that is essential for public health has been blasted away through 20 years of war. Refugees who fled the bombing are now returning to a cold and unforgiving environment where they must rebuild their lives. The delivery of food and aid is greatly hampered by the condition of roads damaged by the recent bombing and by the previous devastation wrought by the Soviets. The effects of cold are felt throughout the society, but disproportionately affect the sick, the elderly, and the very young. When people seek refuge from the cold, they often crowd into inadequate spaces that enhance the spread of infectious diseases. In industrialized countries, even under the best of circumstances, the death rate increases by 20 to 35% in winter.

Although it may appear that bombing has freed Afghani women from oppression and made it possible for little girls to be educated, the long term outcome is far from clear. Women and girls need the protection of a functioning justice system that recognizes their rights and supports their participation as equal members of society. In public health terms, the basic survival needs of all Afghani people depend on the restoration of civil infrastructure. Safe water, sewage disposal, heat and fuel for cooking, and provision of a continuing food supply must be ensured. It is not enough to provide humanitarian aid in the form of food and tents; there must also be provision for the economic independence of the country. Otherwise, the same conditions that made Afghanistan a center for terrorist camps and extremism will flourish again. ☺

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Medicine and Terrorism

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It is difficult to write about the terrorist attack on the United States of America on September 11, 2001 without experiencing a profound feeling of sadness for the tremendous loss of human life and a great solidarity with the American people.

Every terrorist attack draws in its wake discussions and recriminations regarding faulty security measures and tragic errors in intelligence and control, and a search for better, more appropriate protective systems. Nonetheless, technical measures, no matter how sophisticated, cannot totally “immunize” us against such an insidious “epidemic.” To control it, we must first determine its underlying factors, evaluate them, and strike at the systems and cultures that support them. Any hesitation, any weakness, and the entire world will soon be subject to deadly, wide-scale terrorism using bacteriological, chemical, or even atomic warfare. Not only do we need to overtly combat terrorists such as bin Laden and terrorist groups such as Hamas or Islamic Jihad, we need also to educate the peoples and communities infected by the doctrine of religious, racial, or cultural fanaticism. The inevitable consequence of the sanctification of suicide bombers is chaos. Beyond identifying those personally responsible for the attacks on New York and Washington, we need to counter the terrorist message.

People who are desperate and hopeless, who feel they have nothing left to lose, serve as fertile ground for burgeoning terrorist groups and organizations. Western society cannot therefore remain indifferent to the

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unequal allocation of resources and the social and environmental costs this entails. The new wave of terrorism is directed not only against the United States, Europe, or Israel, but also against progress and democracy. History will not forgive us if we ignore the lessons of these traumatic attacks and fail to direct efforts to re-forming fanatic ideologies into free, responsible, peace-seeking ones before it is too late.

Terrorism as Power

In its 1992 report, the World Health Organization Commission on Health and Environment¹ strongly denounced political, social, and business communities for almost completely ignoring the issues of health and environment in development plans. It demanded the immediate formulation of new priorities, policies, and strategies. The condemnation voiced by the report echoed complaints by public health authorities going back some 30 years or more. Yet today, 10 years later, nothing has changed. While science is busily pursuing the secrets that govern life and nature, four million children die every year from totally preventable diseases, and more than one million die from malaria. More than one billion people continue to live in extreme poverty, with 40% of the world's population being denied access to basic education, health care, shelter, food and sanitation,¹ subject to constant violence and discrimination. Political

and economic power remains concentrated in the hands of the few who remain insensible to global needs.

Is this not a form of Machiavellian terrorism against the poor? I believe it is. These injustices are used by their victims as justification for their own acts of terrorism. Their leaders propagandize them to engender support for their dangerous schemes. Unfortunately, these schemes do not help the poor. They do not help anyone. They simply yield more terror, pain, and sorrow.

Injustice and Terrorism

To prevent, control, and even eradicate terrorism, we need to fight on two fronts. The fight against terrorism does not replace the fight against injustice. And the fight against injustice does not replace the fight against terrorism.

Past decades have been increasingly witness to political leaders who seek to

accommodate a campaign of justice toward suffering people with a desire to avoid criticism of groups or countries that do not respect life and democracy. This kind of attitude may be acceptable for politicians, but it cannot under any circumstances be condoned by health professionals. In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, for example, some individuals involved in international medical peace NGOs have avidly supported the concept of peace in the Middle East in return for total withdrawal of Israel from the occupied territories. At the same time, however, they totally disregard the Palestinian attitude to terrorism and fail to supply even mild contempt for it.

The attacks on New York and Washington may well have changed things. The killing of more than 3,000 innocent people in one hour will modify the coalitions for and against terrorism, and everyone will have to better define his or her position. This should also be the time to introduce significant changes in the distribution of rights, land, and other resources.

Medical Responsibility

The role of the medical community in the fight against terrorism is complex. If violence is a public health problem,² then terrorism, which uses violence often on a massive scale to coerce and intimidate,³ certainly comes under this heading. According to the Hippocratic Oath, physicians are obligated to care for all victims regardless of race, religion, or nationality. The moral duty to protect life and health is indivisible from the duty to prevent terrorism in all forms. Indeed, violence was one of the primary targets listed in 1998 in the WHO's Health for-All-Policy for the 21st Century.⁴ So what can the medical community do? The Preamble of the UNESCO Charter states that, "Wars begin in the minds of men. It is therefore in the minds of men that we must construct the defenses of peace."⁵ By analogy then, terrorism is first a conceptual problem which must be handled by health education—of the terrorists themselves, their potential adherents, and the public in general, and of physicians. This is a great challenge for modern medicine. Doctors have already assumed great responsibility for the prevention of a nuclear genocide.⁶ It is now time to take steps to prevent terrorism.

In the words of Bernard Lown,⁷ "The world today is in great danger. But greater still is the opportunity...Never before was it possible to feed all the hungry, to shelter all the homeless, to teach all the illiterate..." For the world to go forward, for its people to live in peace, we need to eradicate violence and be good neighbors on our planet Earth. This

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is a medical duty! As an Israeli doctor of the Israeli Association of Physicians for Peace and Preservation of the Environment, I call urgently on both parts of the Israel-Palestine conflict to find a formula for the co-existence of the two entities acceptable to both sides. I ask the Palestinians to combat terrorism and to accept the creation of an independent Palestinian country side by side to Israel and not instead of it. I request Israel to re-open the political negotiations and to be ready to withdraw from the territories occupied in 1967. By this we will make an important contribution against terrorism and for peace, health, and international security. ☺

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Walk Softly and Look Ahead in Nuclear South Asia

Zia Mian, PhD

Before September 11, South Asia's problems were legion: more than a billion people, most of them desperately poor; a history of war and violent conflicts; rising religious militancy; hard-line Hindu nationalists in power in India; the army in

charge in Pakistan; newly tested nuclear weapons and a get-tough mood. As of mid October 2001, it was also the frontline of the US war against Osama bin Laden and the Taliban. South Asia may not be able to take the strain. The US needs to ensure it does nothing to worsen the many crises in South Asia and that it thinks long term, not short term, about its policies in the region.

The US bombing campaign against Afghanistan in response to the terrible attacks of September 11 opened wide the door for Pakistan's Islamist groups, with their history of anti-Americanism and strong ties to the Taliban. Hoping to mobilize the widespread public resentment and anger at the hopelessness of everyday life in Pakistan, these groups have taken to the streets to challenge the military government of President Pervez Musharraf and his decision to support the US. The longer the US bombs Afghanistan and the more civilians get killed, the greater will be the humanitarian and refugee crisis and the more organized and dangerous the Islamists' challenge.

Pakistan is also trapped by its conflict with India. Reflecting the intensity and depth of this battle, India and Pakistan have each sought to take advantage of the situation after September 11. India immediately offered political and military support to the United States in its conflict with the Taliban and urged it to include Pakistani-supported Islamic militants fighting in Kashmir as targets of the US assault on terrorism. Pakistan, under enormous pressure from the US, eventually decided to turn a liability into an asset and sought to cash in on its location and its leverage over the Taliban.

Seeing Pakistan win the US over to its side, and with the militants continuing their attacks in Kashmir, India tried another more dangerous gambit. It threatened to follow the US example and attack militant training camps and bases in Pakistan. In an ominous development, India ended a 10-month long effective cease-fire and, in October, started shelling Pakistani forces across the border that divides Kashmir. As the new year began, the two nuclear-armed countries were once again on the verge of war over the disputed territory.

The US must press Pakistan to end its support for the militants, restrain India from actions that may trigger a South Asian war, and get serious in working with the international community to resolve the more than 50-year-old Kashmir dispute. For this effort to be taken seriously, the US must show by word and deed that unilateral military action is not the order of the day.

A longer term danger is that of nuclear weapons in South Asia. The May 1998 nuclear

tests by India and Pakistan put the world on watch. The US and the international community used sanctions to pressure both countries to exercise restraint and to signal a refusal to accept new nuclear weapon states. But in its search for support in the region, the Bush Administration has let go the already waning US hopes to reverse the nuclearization of South Asia. The US is lifting all its sanctions against India, most if not (yet) all sanctions against Pakistan, and is offering economic and military assistance to both.

India and Pakistan may return with renewed vigor to their conventional and nuclear arms race. India seeks US arms to add to its \$4 billion arms deal with Russia and \$2 billion deal with Israel. Pakistan's limited funds have stalled its military purchases. With the army in charge, any resources freed by a blanket lifting of sanctions may go to catching up with India. With political and economic pressures eased, both sides may speed deployment of their nuclear warheads. South Asia may escape the frying pan of terrorism only to fall into the nuclear fire.

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While military aid will make things worse, economic aid can play an important role. There is no doubt South Asia's poor need support. But this will be nearly useless if the money is simply handed over to the very governments which have for so long neglected their people. Resources must be directed at where the people are and in ways that they can usefully manage to improve the conditions of their daily lives. The US, the international community, and institutions such as the World Bank would do well to heed Mahatma Gandhi's advice: "recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny?"

Also long term is democracy. General Musharraf's new status as ally in the war against Afghanistan and the man most likely to hold Pakistan together may lead to the lifting of the US sanctions levied after his coup. But concern about Pakistan's stability should not translate into abandoning democracy, and Musharraf should not be allowed or encouraged to stay in power. The two previous Pakistani generals who seized power each kept it for the better part of a decade. Civil society withered both times.

Musharraf should hold to his promise of elections and restoring democracy by next October. Elections may be just what it takes

to mobilize the majority of Pakistanis in the battle against radical Islam. Whenever they have been allowed to choose who should govern them in the past, Pakistanis have decisively rejected Islamic political parties. They would do so again now. The small crowds on the streets supporting the Islamist groups are testament to that. Ten years without democracy may change their minds. ☪

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A Complex, Ill-Defined War on Terrorism

Arjun Makhijani, PhD

Since September 11, the United States has pursued the overthrow of the Taliban government in Afghanistan and the destruction of Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda sanctuaries there. It has done so with an almost exclusive focus that is reminiscent of the unconditional surrender policy of World War II. But threats are already building in other arenas, resulting directly or indirectly from such a strategy. Regardless of the fate of bin Laden and that of the leading figures in al Qaeda, which was unknown at the time of this writing, the risks of terrorism, as well as of turmoil in the region may continue to be severe, with potential global implications.

For starters, the US has declared a global war on terrorism, but has not yet provided a satisfactory definition of the term. The operative definition seems to be the one given in 1984 by then-Secretary of State George Schultz when he said that terrorism was "a threat to Western civilization."

Mahatma Gandhi, when asked in the context of the struggle of the Indian people for freedom from Western imperialism what he thought of Western civilization, is reported to have said, "it would be a good idea." Of course, Western culture has a great deal to offer, but in that it is not different from other cultures. The fact that Gandhi himself drew inspiration from East and West is testimony to that. But there is no civilization without a checkered history in the arena of violence

and oppression, areas in which the West surely does not lag behind. Can we say that the West has arrived in the present context, given that it keeps thousands of nuclear warheads on hair-trigger alert, insists on maintaining a prerogative of first use of nuclear weapons, creates regimes such as the military dictatorships in Guatemala, which murdered more than 200,000 people (with US complicity, as was acknowledged by President Clinton in 1999), and supports repressive governments for the sake of oil? Clearly, there must be a better definition of terrorism before there can be a coherent struggle against it.

The other term in the phrase “war on terrorism” is equally problematic. The US position is that this is a war rather than a police action to arrest suspects who have committed crimes against humanity. The latter job could have been carried out by a United Nations-constituted police task force, provided with a mandate to make arrests and authorized to use the necessary force for that specific, limited purpose. The US declaration of war has accorded al Qaeda, a terrorist network, the status of a state, which Osama bin Laden has long implicitly claimed. He has more than once referred to the US use of nuclear weapons on Japan, resulting in the deaths of 200,000 people and justified by the United States as part of wartime strategy, as providing a rationale for his own attacks on civilians in the United States. He repeated his nuclear threats after October 7, 2001, when the US-British air strikes began.

The crisis as it has emerged since the attacks of September 11 and the US bombing response starting October 7 has grown increasingly complex, despite the collapse of the Taliban regime.

- Russia has accommodated the United States during the Afghanistan war, including giving assent for the use of its airspace and for the stationing of US troops in Uzbekistan (which Russia considers as its backyard). This was a strategic decision by President Putin, taken in the face of considerable domestic opposition. The subsequent US decision to withdraw from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the new US long term military agreement with Uzbekistan hold the potential for giving a US-Russian nuclear dimension to the crisis, should interests diverge. Oil and natural gas may provide a flashpoint. For instance, a potential pipeline route through Afghanistan, a pre-1998 project, is being discussed again. The earlier project involved a US company, Unocal, which had negotiated with the Taliban regime for a pipeline via Afghanistan for transport of Central Asian gas. The proposed deal was not pursued further after the 1998 bombings of

the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. How Russia will react to new deals may depend on how its companies view their financial interests in the area.

- Pakistan is estimated to have materials for 30 to 50 nuclear weapons, with an undetermined amount actually having been fabricated into bombs. There are elements of the Pakistani government, including some nuclear scientists, known to have considerable sympathies with the Taliban regime and its Islamic fundamentalist ideology. That sympathy may be expected to continue, though it may no longer be safe to proclaim it.

- Pakistan’s nationalism is now strongly identified with its nuclear arsenal. The open speculation, including by leading US figures, that the United States might consider raiding or otherwise getting control of Pakistani nuclear weapons, materials, or facilities has created new insecurities in Pakistan. The disposition of Pakistan’s nuclear materials and nuclear scientists may become more uncertain as a result. For instance, two of Pakistan’s senior nuclear scientists were reportedly sent to Myanmar (Burma) just after September 11 on an unspecified mission. According to a report in the *New York Times*, President Musharraf himself asked the Myanmar government to provide “temporary asylum” to them. They were not made available to the US government for questioning.

- There have been two major terrorist attacks in India since September 11. The first on October 2 outside of Srinagar, Kashmir, occurred before the start of the US-British bombing campaign. The one on December 13, 2001 was at Parliament House, the seat of India’s national legislature, and was intended for leaders of India’s Parliament and seems to have been designed to precipitate a shift in Pakistani forces from the Afghan to the Indian border. The United States, having implicitly accepted both India and Pakistan as nuclear weapon states, is now closely allied with Pakistan’s military government. India alleges that Pakistan-based groups perpetrated those acts of terrorism. Pakistan has made some arrests but defines those carrying out attacks in Kashmir as “freedom-fighters.” India and Pakistan have moved closer to war, possibly including nuclear weapons, in a crisis that appears to

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have been precipitated by the US-British approach to combating terrorism in Afghanistan.

- Several governments in the world, including Israel, Russia, India, and China, are pointing to the US war and the bypassing of many democratic checks within the United States in the name of the war on terrorism as justification for their own actions. Dictatorships like that in Uzbekistan have also been given wider berth as long as they support the official US view. How the historic, unfinished struggles of the people of the world for justice, equity, and democracy will evolve under such circumstances is now a more complex question than it was before September 11 and October 7.

- The tattered peace process between Israel and the Palestinians has disappeared altogether. Besides the unfolding tragedies in that region, the complete US identification with one party in that conflict, with the other side having been condemned as terrorist, has potentially adverse implications for the stability of the oil supply from the Persian Gulf, including Saudi Arabia.

- Osama bin Laden did not manufacture the sentiment against the presence of US troops in Saudi Arabia. Rather the reverse is true—al Qaeda has derived much of its Saudi political support and sympathy from the fact of the US military presence there. Significantly, the Saudi government has been reluctant to allow the US government to investigate the crimes of September 11 in Saudi Arabia, which parallels earlier Saudi reluctance in the case of the bomb attack on the Khobar Towers, where US military personnel were killed. Oil is at the center of the US troop presence in the land where the two most holy shrines of Islam are located, where the United States supports a regime in Saudi Arabia that is, by all independent accounts, corrupt, enjoys little popular support, and tolerates no religion other than Islam.

- More than the flow of oil is at risk. The position of the US dollar as a global currency—with perhaps half or more of the US money supply held abroad—is partly dependent on the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). OPEC's decision to denominate the price of oil in dollars is anchored by the Saudi government which sits atop a quarter of the world's proven oil reserves, the largest in the world. The euro came into everyday use on January 1, 2002, creating a potential for competition with the US dollar, both economically and politically. Should OPEC follow Saddam Hussein's practice of demanding payment for oil in euros, or go farther by denominating the price of oil in euros, the effect on the US and world economies could be profoundly desta-

bilizing, with unpredictable economic, political, and military consequences. An expansion of the war on terrorism to Iraq would intensify this risk.

- The relief in Afghanistan and elsewhere at the downfall of the repressive and violent Taliban regime is great, but the process intensified the massive suffering of the Afghan people. The bombing precipitated an increase in refugees and caused civilian casualties. The new Afghan government, a Western creation, contains many groups with checkered histories and includes groups that fought on both sides of the US-Soviet proxy war. Future problems such as lack of economic progress, internal conflicts, and tensions with Pakistan over Pashtun nationalism or Taliban regime remnants, are likely to be attributed to the West, with unpredictable consequences.

The broader historical context of the complex crisis should also be kept in mind. The US, British, and Russian governments have had major roles in the crisis in the Central Asian, South Asian, and Middle Eastern regions that have spawned terrorist cells, going back well beyond the proxy war that the Soviet Union and the United States fought there in the 1980s.

For instance, the British military peace-keeping role may also inflame unpleasant memories, since the boundaries of countries in the Arabian Peninsula, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India, among other places, bear the marks of British imperial penmanship (literally). After the partition of South Asia in 1947, Pakistan, allied with the US, used Islam as an ideological counterweight to Pashtun nationalism on its side of the border. The various coups between 1973 and 1979 in Afghanistan cemented the drift of Afghanistan and Pakistan into opposite camps of the Cold War—a prelude to the 1980s proxy war.

For profound historical, legal, practical, and moral reasons, the use of military force by the United States and Britain, with the US being the arbiter of post-war arrangements as well, is fraught with danger, as the renewed India-Pakistan confrontation illustrates. It is essential that there be a generally acceptable and consistent definition of terrorism that includes the mass murder that took place on September 11 and also includes the fears of those who have been terrorized by Western-sponsored and Western-supported regimes and by Western techniques of warfare, notably by nuclear weapons and air warfare. It is also imperative that the people of the United States, Britain, and Russia become more keenly aware of the roles that their governments have played in the problems of the people of the South Asian, Central Asian, and Persian Gulf regions. Without that under-

standing, it will be difficult to create an outcome that will contribute to a stable and steady diminution of the risks of terrorism, not to speak of an increase in justice, democracy, and equity in the world. ♪

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The Rape of Afghanistan

Rasil Basu, MA, LLB, LLM

An unexpected fallout of the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon was the sudden concern of the American and other governments with the plight of Afghan women. ♪

America retaliated by declaring war on Afghanistan to bring down the Taliban regime, to end terrorism, and to capture Osama “dead or alive.” A further justification, added by George W. Bush in his address to the UN General Assembly, was the Taliban’s treatment of women. Laura Bush went further in her radio address to the nation, with the plight of Afghan women providing her an entree into political life. She was unequivocal in demanding that Afghan women be involved in rebuilding democracy in Afghanistan. It has taken 13 years for America to recognize the problem even though it contributed handsomely to the suffering of Afghan women, as it was less concerned with their situation and more with its own geopolitical interests during the period of Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

During the occupation, in fact, women made enormous strides: illiteracy declined from 98% to 75% and they were granted equal rights with men in civil law and in the Constitution. This is not to say that there was complete gender equality. Unjust patriarchal relations still prevailed in the workplace and in the family with women occupying lower level sex-typed jobs. But the strides they took in education and employment were very impressive.

I witnessed these gains first hand when the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) assigned me (1986-88) as senior advisor to the Afghan government for women’s development because of my long career with the United Nations working for women’s advancement. During this period, I had drafted the World Plan of Action for Women

and the draft Programme for the Women’s Decade, 1975-85, adopted at the Mexico City Conference (1975) and the Copenhagen Conference (1980). In Kabul I saw great advances in women’s education and employment. Women were in evidence in industry, factories, government offices, professions, and the media. With large numbers of men killed or disabled, women shouldered the responsibility of both family and country. I met a woman who specialized in war medicine, which dealt with trauma and reconstructive surgery for the war wounded. This represented empowerment to her. Another woman was a road engineer. Roads represented freedom—an escape from the oppressive patriarchal structures.

But as far back as 1988, I could see the early warning signals as well. Even before the first Soviet troop withdrawal, “shabanamas,” or handbills, warned of reprisals against women who left their homes. Followers of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar [the leader of Afghanistan’s Hizb-I-Islami (Islamic Party) and former Prime Minister of Afghanistan] started throwing acid on women who dared to venture into the streets of Kabul in trousers or skirts or short-sleeved shirts. Ironically, the US favored the three fundamentalist resistance groups of “freedom fighters” headed by Hekmatyar, Mawlawee Yunus Khalis, and Burhanuddin Rabbani [political head of the anti-Taliban United National and Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan (UNIFSA)] over the more moderate mujahideen groups. Saudi Arabian and American arms and ammunition gave the fundamentalists a vital edge over the moderates. Even more tragic is the fact that this military hardware was used, according to Amnesty International, to target unarmed civilians, most of them women and children.^{1,2}

In the fall of 1988, I submitted an article to the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and *Ms. magazine*, in which I pointed out that ascendant fundamentalism in Afghanistan had struck its first blow at women’s education and employment. Since the Najibullah regime, which was still in power, was anxious to accommodate the opposition under its National Reconciliation Policy, women’s rights were made the first offering.

It was no coincidence that the backlash started in the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, which began dismissing women on the pretext of abolition of posts. A strict code of dress was also imposed—a scarf to cover the head, the traditional full sleeved long tunic, and pants. Lunch breaks, which enabled women to meet, discuss problems, and protest against unfair practices, were stopped. So was co-education, which had

existed until sixth grade. With acute scarcity of resources it was obvious that girls' schools would receive low priority and standards would drop. I recommended a number of steps which the Western world, especially the US, could take to protect women's rights. In their aid programs they could insist on the integration of women in development projects. Women's colleges, vocational institutes, and NGOs could provide fellowships to women to study abroad. My recommendations were buried.

The events that followed were worse than the most dire predictions. The overthrow of the Najibullah government in 1992 led to fighting among warring fundamentalist groups for territorial control. Massive artillery attacks killed and wounded thousands of civilians, especially women and children.

Afghan women's rights were violated with impunity as the constitution was suspended by the mujahideen groups who seized power in Kabul. The ruling warlords ignored the legal system, dismantled the judicial structure, assumed judicial functions for themselves in several provinces, and for the Islamic clergy or local shuras (councils of elders) in others. Trials were arbitrary and punishments were barbaric, such as stoning to death and public lashings of everyone, including women. Amnesty International's report for the period April 1992-February 1995 lists horrendous crimes against women.¹

Rape by armed guards of the various warring factions was condoned by their leaders; it was viewed as a way of intimidating vanquished populations and of rewarding soldiers. Fear of rape drove women to suicide and fathers to kill their daughters to spare them the degradation. Scores of women were abducted and detained, sexually abused, and sold into prostitution. Most girls were victimized and tortured because they belonged to different religious and ethnic groups. In addition to physical abuse, women were stripped of their fundamental rights of association, freedom of speech, of employment, and movement. The Supreme Court of the Islamic State in 1994 issued an Ordinance on Women's Veil, which decreed that women should wear a veil to cover the whole body, forbidding them to leave their homes "not because they are women but for fear of sedition." This, in a nutshell, is the past record of the groups that

form the Northern Alliance. Their warlords looked upon women as spoils of war—the very same warlords who are now coming to power in Kabul with the support of the US-led coalition.

In February 1995, the Taliban (students of religion), a strong and popular political force, took control of nine out of 30 provinces and ushered in a new era. The Taliban established its own interpretation of the strict Islamic code of ordinances and conduct. The Ministry of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, also known as the moral police, was established. Its edicts banned women from working or going to school and forced them to wear the head-to-toe burqah. It ordered people to paint their first floor windows black so that passersby could not see the women inside. A Taliban representative speaking from the Attorney General's office in Kabul explained the edict to journalists: "The face of a woman is a source of corruption for men who are not related to them."

The UN Special Rapporteur for Violence against Women, Radhika Coomaraswamy of Sri Lanka, reported "official widespread, systematic violations of human rights of women in the Taliban areas of Afghanistan."³ In many rape cases, she added, women were punished publicly for adultery and beaten for violations of the ministry's edicts, and under Rabbani's government from 1992-96, some of the worst outrages against women were committed.

One exception to women's employment was made in the case of opium poppy cultivation—a labor-intensive task that men refused to undertake. The report of the UN Drug Control Programme quotes a woman: "Our major problem is that weeding poppy fields takes a lot of time. We have problems carrying the seeds to the field and often get sick while lancing and collecting poppy."⁴ With all the odds against them, Afghan women showed amazing bravery and heroism while resisting successive oppressive regimes. They often paid for it with their lives.

Foremost in the struggle was the Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), formed in 1977. RAWA organized women through successive regimes to resist their oppression by non-violent methods. It organized underground schools and health facilities for girls and women and support and succor for rape victims, even in the refugee camps in Peshawar and Quetta. RAWA's founder, Meena Kamal, continued to work despite being repeatedly threatened for her "anti-jihad activities" until her assassination in 1987 in her house in Quetta. Although she had informed the Pakistani authorities of threats to her life, she was not provided police protection.

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More recently (1993), the Afghan Women's Council (AWC) was formed by a number of professional Afghan women doctors, teachers, and university lecturers to provide schools and health clinics for Afghan children and women in Pakistan's camps. Though they worked towards raising awareness of women's rights within the framework of Afghanistan's religious and cultural tradition, they too were threatened by mujahideen groups.

The war in Afghanistan has come full circle. At this writing the Taliban appears to be defeated in all Afghan cities. Osama bin Laden has not been captured "dead or alive" nor is the terrorist network destroyed. No estimates exist of the toll war has taken on the lives of civilian men, women, and children, nor of those permanently disabled or seriously wounded. The Northern Alliance, which is a conglomerate of various opportunistic ethnic groups—mostly Tajiks, Hazaras, and Uzbeks minus the Pashtuns—will play an important role in the formation of the next government.

These are the same groups who were in power before the Taliban. Their treatment of women is well documented. The most recent indicator of the Northern Alliance's intent was the ban imposed by Interior Minister Younis Qanooni on a women's freedom march in Kabul, planned by Soraya Parluka of the newly formed Union of Women in Afghanistan, for November 28, 2001. The ban, according to Parluka, was said to be "for security, but that is just a pretext...they don't want women to improve."⁵ The UN Special Envoy, Frances Vendrell, has been holding meetings with the exclusively male Northern Alliance and other political leaders but has not met with any Afghan women. Is this a precursor of things to come?

Many of the countries that are the so-called victors of this "war" have their own agendas in Afghanistan and their own ideas about a future Afghan government. India is

in a unique position to take up this issue with the Northern Alliance, with whom it is on good terms. But will it? Is it at all interested in raising its voice on behalf of the scarred Afghan women? It is of the utmost importance that the UN-sponsored talks in Bonn and elsewhere take up these issues with the seriousness they deserve. US Secretary of State Colin Powell has underlined the need to involve women in the planning and implementation of the new government and as beneficiaries. Now is the time for him to stand up and be counted. RAWA must be invited to participate in the talks and the views of Afghan women implemented. Minimum humane standards as set out in the Geneva Conventions must be impressed on the future government.

Women's human rights should be safeguarded in any new Constitution and future legislation. Otherwise it will be yet another case of lip service to the cause of women. Just as it has been in the past. ♣

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