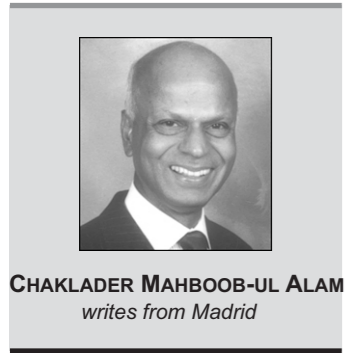


## Before starting a war why not ask yourself a few questions?



**CHAKLADER MAHBOOB-UL ALAM**  
writes from Madrid

A FEW days ago, I came back to Madrid from a long trip to the United States. This was not the first time that I visited this great country. I am now a retiree. My job as a professional business manager had previously taken me to various parts of the world including, of course, the United States, home to many large multinational corporations. Most of these business trips, specially the ones to the United States were made in haste and were tightly programmed. Upon arrival at the airport, inevitably someone would pick me up and deposit me at an international hotel. I would have meetings, conferences, cocktail parties, dinners, and visits to the factories lined up one after another. Then I would be chauffeured back to the airport and that would be the end of the trip. I have no complaints against an arrangement of this nature. One does not have to bother about buying an airline ticket or looking for a hotel room almost everything is taken care of by the company. It is a very comfortable way to travel. Actually, it is also nice to feel that one belongs to something akin to an international fraternity where everyone speaks the same language, dresses more or less in the same manner and professes the same business culture. In a way, it is often irrelevant whether the meetings are held in New York, Chicago, London or Brussels. The atmosphere is more or less the same everywhere. Unfortunately, one rarely gets an opportunity to meet with ordinary people outside the business circle and far less to have the feel of the place.

I have always been fascinated by this great nation (the US), by its ethnic complexity, its pluralistic culture, its literature (both canonical and non-canonical), its contribution to philosophy, architecture and science, its innovative spirit, its political stability, its economic power, its geographical diversity and above all by its tremendous vitality. So, on my retirement, my wife and I decided to visit this country or at least parts of it (for it is a vast country), to meet with people at the grassroots level and to have a feel of the country. We rented a car and drove several thousand kilometres (I should have said miles) across several states of the Union, slept at inns or motels (by the way, many of them were owned by South Asians from East Africa), did our own grocery shopping, spent hours at bookstores and museums, met with some highly knowledgeable intellectuals, visited university libraries, ate at typical American diners and talked to as many people as possible, who were almost always kind and helpful. Even the highway patrolmen did not seem as fierce as they are made out to be in the Hollywood movies.

I found most ordinary Americans as friendly but dangerously complacent about their lot. For them the United States was the most civilised, democratic, just and "Christian" country in the world. They felt completely secure in their military and economic power. American mindset was incapable of even imagining a scenario in which American mainland could come under attack from outside. For the ordinary

Americans their country was completely invulnerable. Whatever there was outside their country's borders was of little relevance and therefore, aroused scarce interest in them. I remember, during a conversation, I was shocked when one of my American acquaintances mentioned that Spain was a place "somewhere down there, in Mexico". Actually, for them the United States was the world. An inflated sense of patriotism, a comfortable living based on consumerism, a complacent attitude, a tendency to interpret the world in simplistic oppositional terms (good vs evil) and an insular media, have made the ordinary Americans uninterested in their government's foreign policy and strangely indifferent to the sufferings caused by their government to peoples outside America's borders.

During the trip, I also gathered enough material to write a series of articles on this fascinating and awe-inspiring imperial republic.

As I was arranging my thoughts

asked in the West to identify who or what did it. Much jingoistic language ("crusade", "civilisation against barbarism", "war between good and evil"), "I want Bin Laden dead or alive") has been used to identify and punish the perpetrators. But not many have asked the crucial question: Why did they do it? Time has come to break that taboo.

Have average Americans ever stopped to think why there is such a reservoir of hatred against their country in the Muslim world and elsewhere? Why well-educated healthy middle class young Muslims should sacrifice their lives in suicide attacks? What level of desperation must one reach to take an action of this nature? (The analysts would do well not to dismiss this phenomenon as mere fanaticism.) Do America and West realise that successive generations of Muslims in the Middle East and elsewhere have felt humiliated by their arrogant attitude, unilateral actions, hypocrisy, double talk and double standard?

East (euphemistically called as moderate Muslim countries), where individual liberties mean very little. Is it too much to ask America to practise what it preaches? Are the American people aware of this hypocrisy? Or is this moral obligation to defend democracy, freedom and rule of law limited by geography, ethnicity and expediency?

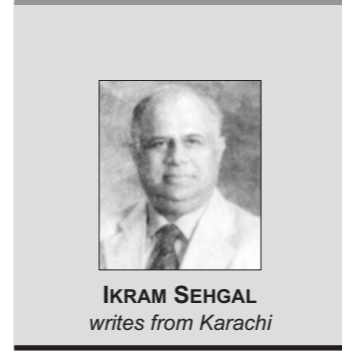
I am distressed like all Americans at the anguish of mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters looking for the remains of their loved ones in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I sympathise with their sorrow and understand their anger. But can they feel the pain and anguish of the friends and relatives of the masses of innocent victims of American bombings in Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Vietnam, other parts of South East Asia, Iraq (still continuing ten years after the war) and so many other places? Just because the American media does not give coverage to these atrocities and the consequent suffering of innocent victims, they do not disappear from the minds of the people. These atrocities only make the survivors more resolute in their determination to take revenge and the destructive spiral of violence continues.

Are the Americans aware of their country's insatiable desire for political, economic and military hegemony in the world? Are they aware of their overwhelming military presence all across the world, even in Saudi Arabia, where Islam's most important holy sites are located? Why is the American government so insensitive towards the feelings of other people? If anyone even dares to comment on its arrogant attitude and unilateral actions, he is automatically accused of starting a hate campaign against the US. Do the Americans know that their government sells and distributes arms and munitions worth billions of dollars to the rest of the world, stations thousands of secret service agents around the globe, overturns legally constituted governments and sustains tyrannical dictatorships in many countries? Why is the American public kept so ignorant about what their government does in the world? If it is a model of democracy why isn't there a free and fair debate in the American public opinion over American foreign policy? Why doesn't the American government realise that the more it wields its power and the more hegemonic it becomes, the more resentment it arouses among the ordinary people all across the world? I have not known many people who like to be constantly bullied by a foreign power, even though they are forced to put up with it. But that does not make them love the superpower bully.

Global capitalism, led by the United States has created enormous economic disparities with huge concentration of wealth in the West and abject misery in other parts of the world where hundreds of millions of people live on less than one dollar a day. This is one of the root causes of huge resentment against the United States. Do the US policy makers realise that there could be alternative methods of globalisation? Do they understand the need for a fairer distribution of the fruits of globalisation?

If the immediate American objectives are to redress its grievances and hurt pride by launching revenge attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq and by assassinating the suspected leaders of Bin Laden's group, I have no doubt that with so much economic and military power at its disposal, it will achieve its goal. But will it end terrorist attacks? No, I do not think so. I am afraid, until and unless the root causes of terrorism are addressed, it will persist.

## Which plan, martial or marshall?



**IKRAM SEHGAL**  
writes from Karachi

TO protect itself from both internal dissent and a foreign war, the then French Government imposed "Terror" as the order of the day on Sep 5, 1793. Targeting opponents within its own midst, almost 17,000 being executed in less than a year till July 27, 1794, courts across the country were given a rather stark choice, "Execution or Acquittal". Encyclopedia Britannica describes "terrorism" as the "systematic use of terror as a means of forcing some political objective. A government may use it to signal efforts for stifling dissent, insurrectionists or guerrillas may use terror as part of an overall effort to effect desired political change". Commercial passenger aircraft were employed as flying bombs to destroy the twin towers of the World Trade Centre (WTC), the terrorists denying benefit of a trial to the many innocent passengers on the flights or the many thousands of almost 80 nationalities making their living in the prime commercial square mile of the world. A sentence of death was carried out by a "kangaroo court" knowing well that those they were executing so brutally had nothing whatsoever to do with the crimes that the terrorists were fighting against. Supposedly for the glory of Islam, the terrorists struck Islam perhaps its most grievous blow in the many centuries of its existence. With such "good" Muslims in our midst, does Islam need enemies?

Nine days after the Sep 11 atrocities, the US formally declared war against terrorism. The rhetoric about retaliation or the overdrive in the planning of "Operation Infinite Justice" notwithstanding, the passage of time has brought their judgmental process to a better balance. Due sensitivity was shown to Islamic concerns, the US renaming the campaign as "Operation

Enduring Freedom". The US Commander-in-Chief, President Bush Jr, spelt out a difficult and long drawn out struggle against an elusive enemy, Islam being only a cloak for psychopaths having no compunction to murdering thousands simply to drive home their point. Referring to the history of recent terrorist acts, US Public Enemy No 1, Osama Bin Laden, was targeted as the first objective for bringing to justice, preferably alive, no tears being shed

the US for being gung-ho? Human and material damage notwithstanding, financial and psychological destruction has yet to be evaluated, alleviation will take some doing. Meantime the US has gone into a permanent state of internal siege. Not going after the perpetrators would be an open invitation to every other terrorist in the world to have a go at causing some grief to the US. Retribution has to be delivered with maximum impact for the world at

of communications. On the other hand merit and experience count for very much, their combat knowledge is of great plus point as is their flexibility in having no vital ground to defend, no real front lines. No building worth naming is left standing in the country, industry is almost non-existent, the country is breathing economically only because of humanitarian aid as well as the bazaar-type commerce that the Afghans have been famous for over centuries. The Northern Alliance and the Mujahideen factions that lost out to the Taliban hate the Taliban for different reasons, yet domestically there is still massive popular support that should not be under-estimated and that no amount of propaganda seems to dissipate. King Zahir Shah aspires to be installed in Kabul, a city (and a people) far different from which he left, how many days will he last after his arrival? Identifying themselves with the poor masses and visibly shunning the trappings of luxury inherent in government, the Taliban leaders live in simple, spartan surroundings. The masses seem to accept and tolerate this honesty and simplicity, helping in overcoming the more draconian measures of the Taliban rule. The majority Pashtun (about 78% of the population) support the Taliban against the Hazaras, Uzbeks and Tajiks (the balance 22%) who make up the Northern Alliance. Their most potent weapon, Ahmed Shah Masoud, was assassinated just before the September 11 New York atrocity. Mercenary warlord Rashid Dostum, who has switched sides often, remains their only known military leader, his nuisance value confined mainly to the Uzbeks around Mazar-i-Sharif. Dostum's one-time deputy Gen Malek invited the Taliban to Mazar-i-Sharif as allies, trapping and then executing in cold blood thousands of relatively inexperienced Taliban who surrendered. Regaining Mazar-i-Sharif the Taliban retaliated with an even worse massacre. The Pashtuns and Dostum can never stay together long in any coalition.

The threat of war has sent refugees in hundreds of thousands streaming to dozens of crossing points on the long Pak-Afghan border. Without water, food or shelter and with winter approaching very rapidly, a human catastrophe of immense proportion is already happening, on the borders and within Afghanistan internally. This represents both a challenge and an opportunity for the US-led coalition. With the Taliban resisting handing over Osama Bin Laden, Afghanistan will have to be separated from the Taliban. The challenge is to feed, clothe and shelter these new refugees, the opportunity is to separate the hearts and minds of the Afghan people from the Taliban. The diplomatic means being engaged for several years, war has to be both on military and economic fronts, a combination thereof of a "martial" as well as a "Marshall" Plan. Bombing the Afghan indiscriminately without an economic package to assuage their miseries will create more terrorism. On the contrary, smothering the Afghans with humanitarian aid via a Marshall Plan-style will weaken the resolve of even the most die-hard terrorist to wage terror.

War can be waged in a combination of economic and political means. Military means would aim to destroy the opponent's military potential to wage war, economic blockade will cripple his economic means to survive as a viable entity while political initiatives are meant to undermine the moral support available to one's enemies. In the classic sense, war is fought between nations, by its very concept modern terrorism generally has no geographical boundaries. The only worthwhile target would be a sovereign nation not only sponsoring, aiding and abetting terrorism but giving protection to its perpetrators. Other than Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria qualify alongwith North Korea, Yemen, etc. for "terrorist nation" status Osama bin Laden's refusal to face justice to prove his innocence has condemned Afghanistan to being probably the worst country target imaginable. Among the poorest nations on earth, the Taliban regime does not conform to any modern definition of government. Their standing army is not only bereft of uniforms, the organisation and method of the army is of fluid nature, adapted to each location, different for each city and different for different terrains. Command and control among the Taliban relies more on ideology and personality rather than training, and military education; there is very little

## AS I SEE IT

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if he should die in the process. Notice was given to those aiding and abetting terrorism in any form ie., protecting terrorists, for being as culpable as the perpetrators of the terrorist act itself. Sanctuary to Bin Laden made Taliban an accessory to murder, their innocence proven only by giving him up, not a subject for negotiation for the US. On Sep 28, 2001 the UN Security Council passed a comprehensive resolution calling on all member countries to take concrete steps against terrorism including seizure of bank accounts, assets, etc of known terrorists and organizations thereof.

The quick decision to go with the US in the war against terrorism was the tough part for Pakistan, tougher times may still lie ahead. Delay would have been fatal, even a positive answer later not having the positive impact the immediate decision did. Musharrarf's playing for time would have been seen through, having the same adverse consequences as a negative answer. One does not engage in debate with a wounded lion, one falls in line to give unqualified support and hopes that with the passage of time reason will return to its thinking process.

Retaliation will come as surely as night turns into day, can you blame

## LETTER FROM EUROPE

Global capitalism, led by the United States has created enormous economic disparities with huge concentration of wealth in the West and abject misery in other parts of the world where hundreds of millions of people live on less than one dollar a day. This is one of the root causes of huge resentment against the United States. Do the US policy makers realise that there could be alternative methods of globalisation?

and preparing outlines for these articles, on September 11, 2001, tragedy struck the United States, when several hijacked passenger planes were flown into the Twin Towers in Washington killing thousands of innocent civilians and smashing the symbols of American power. As the repercussions of this event reverberated all across the globe, everybody realised that the world would never be same again that America had lost its innocence. All of a sudden Americans woke up to the fact they too were vulnerable. All the political and economic realities changed in one single instant. President Bush and other Western leaders called it an act of war against "civilisation, democracy and liberty". The American government and the public, quite justifiably, swore revenge. But against whom? Who were the perpetrators of this attack?

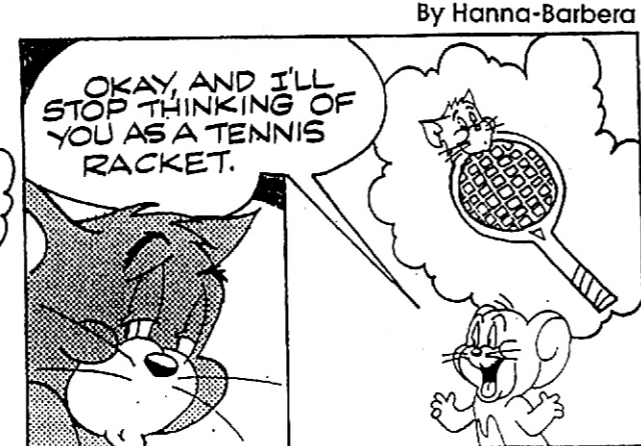
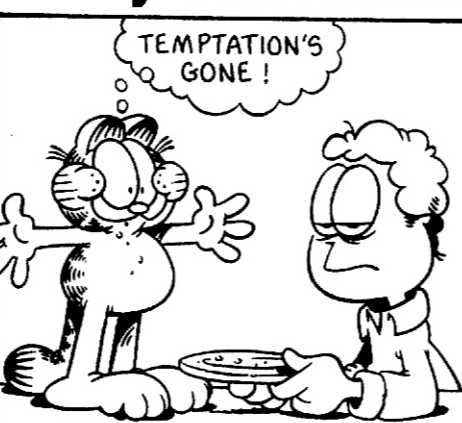
Although no concrete evidence has yet been advanced, the American government is pointing its fingers at Osama Bin Laden and his group. It is pressuring ("you are either with us or for terrorism") every nation and every institution on earth to form a grand coalition with a view to launching simultaneous attacks on Afghanistan and probably on Iraq with the nebulous objective of "rooting out international terrorism". Although we do not know its exact mission, Operation Infinite Justice is underway. The world is holding its breath for an impending humanitarian catastrophe.

If it is true that these attacks were perpetrated by Osama Bin Laden in the name of Islam, I think there is a need to stress that the vast majority of Muslims across the world condemn them because Islam condemns all acts of terrorism which destroy innocent human lives. But supposing that these suicide attacks were perpetrated by the Muslims, then the United States, instead of launching an indiscriminate attack on targets inside Muslim countries should pause for a moment and reflect on a number of issues. Many questions have been

President Bush has declared war against terrorism. But what does he understand by terrorism? If he understands terrorism as all acts of violence against innocent victims to achieve political goals, then I am sure that the vast majority of peace loving citizens all over the world side with the US to fight terrorism. But should we not condemn and eradicate state-sponsored terrorism as well? What do the Americans think of Israeli terrorism (using American-supplied jetfighters, helicopters, guns and tanks) against innocent Palestinian men, women and children? How many Americans know or care about the sufferings of hundreds of thousands of victims of state-sponsored terrorism in the countries of Central and South America? Do they know that many of the perpetrators of these crimes were not only financed but even trained by the Americans? Why were these crimes committed? Was it in defence of liberty? Then whose liberty are we talking about? What about the targeted assassinations which are being perpetrated by the Israeli government? If they are accepted and condoned, then why condemn suicide attacks to dislodge an occupying colonial power? Why does the US turn a blind eye to the massive acts of terrorism perpetrated against the civilian population in Chechnia by the Russian forces? Why does the western media so readily associate Islam with terrorism? Have there never been any Jewish or Christian terrorists? Is it too much to ask the western media to exercise some restraint or care in using vituperative language which vilify millions of innocent people across the world?

President Bush branded the attack as an act of war against "democracy and freedom". What democracy? Whose freedom? Is Israel with its apartheid system a democracy? Without going too far in history or too deep in its foreign policy, one can safely say that for economic reasons even now the US is propping up and sustaining some of the most undemocratic and corrupt regimes in the Middle

## Garfield®



by Jim Davis

By Hanna-Barbera

Ikram Sehgal, a former Major of Pakistan Army, is a political analyst and columnist.