

Shame on occupation army



MUSLEHUDDIN AHMAD

BUSH-BLAIR "special relationship" that led to the ugly invasion of Iraq has infected the military too and certainly has taken uglier form in the abuse of the Iraqi prisoners. BBC first said some of the pictures of the abuse could not even be broadcast; these were shown in the Arabic channels including Al-Jazeera. One could easily fathom how gravely these pictures have shocked the sentiments of the civilized people around the globe and how humiliating these were for the people of Iraq and those of the Arab world. These ghostly inhuman acts clearly show how savage these human beings could be while dealing with the people under occupation. These brutal acts indeed dwarfed the misdeeds of Saddam. The whole world must condemn such abuses of human beings, which were the results of unilateral invasion of Iraq and subsequent occupation of a sovereign country.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair, of course, condemned such acts committed by some members of his army. He said Britain "will not tolerate abuse of any kind." The Head of the British Army General Sir Mike Jackson also "condemned utterly" such abuses. But these utterances cannot take away or compensate for the disgrace that the Iraqis have suffered in the hands of the occupation forces.

The grave abuses of the Iraqi prisoners by the American army, claimed to have been done by a small number, and horrific prisoner abuses in the Guantanamo Bay (there was no charge against many of those prisoners and many were released and allowed to go

back to their native land) make Bush administration certainly accountable to the American people and also to world community as a whole. Already majority of the Americans have now understood that they were misled by the Bush administration and this is why they are now saying clearly that this war was 'not worth fighting'. More than 1350 Americans have been killed and over 10,000 badly injured. The question arose why this unnecessary sacrifice?

called election and the country would stand divided in ethnic and religious terms. This might also open up the possibility of a Shia regime having alignment with Iran. That would then be a good lesson for the Bush administration.

Indeed, in terms of security now the whole world appears upside down -- only terrorism and terrorism all over the world. Unfortunately Bush-Cheney-Rumsfeld axis has changed the security

camera completely thunderstruck and dumbfounded. Can any amount of apology and compensation from Bush administration bring any consolation to six small orphans? Is it the way Bush administration trying to liberate the Iraqi people and 'spread democracy' to the countries around the world?

It is America which produced great people like Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King and many other great leaders and has laudable system of education and

liberty, freedom and democracy. He said 'the survival of liberty in America depends on the success of liberty in other lands'. Not necessarily so. America's liberty continued despite dictatorship in other lands. Many dictators around the world had been and are still under the protection of American administration.

Indeed, there appears to be too much of individual liberty and freedom in America. Just see the examples of Prisoners abuses committed in Abu Ghraib by the American soldiers and particularly by Linda England and Charles Graner. They enjoyed "liberty" and "freedom". Linda became pregnant during her service period in Iraq. As it appeared from the reports, she was an unmarried woman. This was due to too much of liberty and freedom of individuals without any accountability and virtually in the absence of any effective military supervision or discipline. No civilised society should accept such behaviors under the garb of individual liberty and freedom. Indeed, if such offensive open sex continues unchecked in the name of individual freedom and liberty, any society would fall apart on moral grounds.

So it's no use giving some prison sentences to individual soldiers. The problem is with superpower arrogance leading to invasion, occupation and high handedness of the occupation army and also with overall faulty perception of democracy, liberty, freedom, culture and moral issues of a particular society. The "controversial" leader of a country where a considerable segment of society has this sort of flawed perceptions should not be entitled to preach all these social and moral values to other societies.

research and is the hub of medicine and high technologies. It is now facing an acute challenge to its glorious past because of the misdirected approaches by some of its ambitious leaders who have the support of some Christian fundamentalists having their faith apparently based on distorted version of the Gospel which appears much different from the original Gospel revealed by God to Jesus Christ -- the revealed Book that all people of Faith believe in (reportedly over 40 English versions of the Bible exist today).

What President Bush has achieved for this America in four years of his presidency is 'hate America' by the people around the world. As mentioned above, the Americans who were loved and welcomed by practically all and everywhere are now not only hated, they are indeed not even safe anywhere in the world. What an achievement by a president of a country! And most surprising is that he got reelected for another term!

In the inauguration celebration he avoided talking anything directly about the situation in Iraq. He knows this is his weakest point. He, however, continued to preach

Muslehuddin Ahmad, a former Secretary, Ambassador, and Founder VC of North South University and Presidency University, is Chairman, Civic Watch-Bangladesh and convener, Movement for Corruption-Free Society.

SPOTLIGHT ON MIDDLE EAST

The problem is with superpower arrogance leading to invasion, occupation and high handedness of the occupation army and also with overall faulty perception of democracy, liberty, freedom, culture and moral issues of a particular society. The "controversial" leader of a country where a considerable segment of society has this sort of flawed perceptions should not be entitled to preach all these social and moral values to other societies

Indeed, all these were added to the unfortunate 3000 of 9/11, even if you leave aside over 100,000 Iraqis killed in the war. Nobody asked President Bush to invade Iraq, establish democracy there and sacrifice Americans' and others' lives.

Just watch the present developments in Iraq. The killings of both Iraqis and occupation forces have been going on but Alawi, an American henchman, appears determined to have some form of election by hook or by crook and establish himself and the Shia regime in Iraq. This is no democracy. Democracy cannot be established by using military might. Even if some semblance of success is projected through concocted election data, it would not ultimately work. For a real success, full participation of Iraqi people in general is a must. The postponement of election by six months to have the other factions -- Sunnis and Kurds -- on board as demanded by those groups could have avoided this disaster. But that would probably have made Alawi's position somewhat unsure and hence his bid to complete the election. As it seems, the killings would continue even after the so-

situation of the world. The latest poll shows that out of 21 countries 19 have voted against Bush administration and viewed that 'Bush's reelection to the White House made the world more dangerous.'

There were considerable negative feelings about America in the Western Europe, Latin America and certainly in the Muslim countries. In other words, the whole world has been against Bush's reelection. Then what sort of second term inauguration celebration did he have on January 20? Was it not the celebration on invasion of Iraq, occupation, death of both Americans and Iraqis, dreadful human rights violations in the form of prison abuses including those in Guantanamo Bay etc?

Not only those! The world would remember with utter disgust and shock the horrific killing by American soldiers, just two days before Bush's inauguration, of both man and wife in a car in Iraq leaving six small children at the back seat of the car totally horror-struck. The TV footage by an expert photographer vividly showed the heart breaking scenes. The boy apparently of about three years age along with other crying kids came out of the car and stood before the

invasion of Iraq in 2003, Nobel Peace Prize winner South African Bishop Desmond Tutu said, even at the height of the white supremacist apartheid's oppression of the blacks, "we did not ask to west to bomb us into democracy!" That is exactly what is happening in Afghanistan and Iraq -- democracy

attacked three sovereign nations that did not attack them -- Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq; and the Israeli democracy was founded on the expulsion of the native Palestinians, stealing of their lands and currently thrives on stealing more Palestinian lands and building settlements on those. According to Israeli peace activist Uri Avnery, Israeli democ-

tinians and the Iraqis want to discuss what triggered their suffering. While you lecture them how they should bring up the illegitimate baby, they want to talk about the rape of Palestine and Iraq that resulted in the illegitimate babies! Only in nations that started World War II -- Japan and Germany -- democracy was imposed through defeat and occupation. When a democracy attacked another sovereign nation, such as Vietnam, democracy acquired such a bad reputation that the victim country preferred dictatorship. Because it is being imposed through bombings and bullets, American version of democracy is unlikely to take root in Afghanistan or Iraq.

As the winner of multiple Pulitzer prizes, you wield enormous clout in America, Tom. Those in power listens to you, as they do to the fraudulent Professor Emeritus

WORLD CONFERENCE ON DISASTER PREVENTION Bangladesh marks her presence

MONZURUL HUQ writes from Tokyo

AS delegates from 190 countries were busy until the last moment on hammering out their differences over an early tsunami warning system for the Indian Ocean nations, Bangladesh might feel to have every reason to be happy with the conference, whatever the eventual outcome it had produced. A country termed occasionally as disaster prone by the international media, the disaster prevention conference in Kobe provided ample of opportunities to Bangladesh to display her own ability in coping up with the outrages of nature that occasionally turns real furioses. And it wouldn't be premature to say that the four-member official delegation of the country along with the fleet of NGO representatives have utilised that opportunity to convey the message that not in every aspect Bangladesh has failed to meet the demands of time. As the message was also echoed in speeches and presentations of a number of other delegates including that of the Secretary General of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Markku Niskala, we have reasons to believe that our past experience in coping with the disaster has made a profound impact on those who are now thinking seriously to help Indian Ocean nations to avoid another widespread casualty and massive destruction in case the otherwise calm and beautiful ocean suddenly outpours its fury on mankind.

The five-day conference in the Japanese port city of Kobe has just concluded with the adoption of an action plan to make the world more resilient to calamities like the Indian Ocean tsunami in December. It wasn't easy for the participants to iron out their differences and agree on the Hyogo Framework for Action, which would serve as the guideline for disaster reduction over the next decade, as the United States was seen by many as trying to steal the show for focusing on a warning centre already set up in Hawaii. Countries like France, Germany and India had proposed various warning-system setups and each was eager to see its own proposal taken up as a model for the planned warning system.

Another point of disagreement centered on the identification of global climate change as a cause of disaster. Delegates and experts from

island nations insisted that rising sea levels increased the impact of disaster like the Indian Ocean tsunami. The compromised action plan eventually spelled out the need not only for creating early warning systems, but also for devising measures to improve societies' abilities to reduce risk and cope with the disaster.

A separate declaration was also adopted on the final day, which summarised the issues raised at the

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conference and stated the commitment of the international community to strengthen disaster reduction measures in the light of the tsunami disaster.

For Bangladesh the conference started a day earlier, as the head of the Bangladesh delegation, Minister for Food and Disaster Management Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, had the rare honour to be one of the two keynote speakers at the pre-conference international symposium entitled "Living with Risk: Disaster Reduction for Future Generations." The other keynote speaker being the former UNHCR chief and President of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Sadako Ogata, the symposium and the panel discussion that followed the symposium turned out to be a real high profile one drawing wide media attention.

In his keynote speech, Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf focused on initiatives being taken in Bangladesh to raise the awareness of the people about the importance of preparing for a disaster. As natural calamities are inseparable parts of life of the people in a country where cyclones and floods periodically cause widespread devastation, Bangladesh faces no other choice but to be ready for nature's sudden attack. The preparedness programme initiated by the government resulted in significant decrease in casualties since the big cyclone in 1991 that claimed more than 130,000 lives. Cyclone shelters built with the funding provided by major donors and international organisations as well as establishment of a network of volunteers and relief workers to warn people of an approaching cyclone has a signifi-

cant impact as there were no large casualties in Bangladesh since the 1991 cyclone. According to the minister, what the country now needs is to make people realise that depending on relief is not the solution to the problem of natural disaster. Natural Disaster Risk Reduction Programme was initiated precisely with that idea and the project is being implemented with the total amount of fund coming from country's own resources.

An interesting part of the speech was the power point display of a poor village lady, Halima Khatun, whose bamboo hut stands only a few inches higher from the ground level and thus making her home vulnerable even to a small scale flood. What Halima Khatun and plenty of others in Bangladesh are in need is not emergency relief supplies, but real help that would give them the opportunity to raise the levels of their small houses to make them less vulnerable to the approaching flood water.

The keynote speeches were followed by a symposium participated among others by Jan Egeland, Under Secretary General of the United Nations for Humanitarian Affairs, and the Secretary General of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The UN Under Secretary General pointed out that attention had always been given to the dramatic images of disasters, not to the preparedness to reduce the damages caused by such disasters, and hoped that the conference would help the world community to move from theoretical knowledge to action on the ground.

It was the Red Cross chief who lauded Bangladesh for making real progress in the preparedness aspect of natural disasters and called on other developing countries to follow the example of Bangladesh. The message of disaster preparedness, according to him, had been applied very effectively in Bangladesh and the local chapter of the Red Crescent Society was cooperating with the meteorological department of the government in raising the level of awareness of the people about the importance preparing for disaster. At the main conference too, the message of our modest success was echoed, as some other delegates also referred to the experiences of Bangladesh as a valuable lesson that needed careful consideration.

A letter to Thomas Friedman of *The New York Times*

DR. FAKHRUDDIN AHMED writes from Princeton

DEAR Tom: I have to respond to your January 16 Op-Ed column in *The New York Times* which began:

"In the wake of U.S. aid to help Muslim and other victims of the recent tsunami, Colin Powell suggested that maybe, now that the Muslim world has seen 'American generosity' and 'American values in action,' it wouldn't be so hostile to America."

"Don't hold your breath waiting for a thank-you card. If the fact that American soldiers have risked their lives to save the Muslims of Bosnia, the Muslims of Kuwait, the Muslims of Somalia, the Muslims of Afghanistan and the Muslims of Iraq has earned the U.S. only the false accusation of being 'anti-Muslim,' trust me, U.S. troops passing out bottled water and Pop-Tarts in Indonesia are not going to erase that lie. It is not an exaggeration to say that, if you throw in the Oslo peace process, U.S. foreign policy for the last 15 years has been dominated by an effort to save Muslims -- not from tsunamis, but from tyrannies, mostly their own theocratic or autocratic regimes."

Let me stop you right there, Tom, because the numerous fallacies you have perpetrated in the few lines above require several columns to refute. I was stunned by the outgoing Secretary of State Colin Powell's statement, echoed by you, that American aid to the Muslim victims of the Tsunami would reap public relations bonanza for the U.S. in the Islamic world! In Islam we have a saying that, charity, followed by repeated reminders of charity by the giver to the given, cancels charity! Like you, President Bush was dismayed by the lack of expression of gratitude by the victims, forgetting that their only purpose in life now is to grieve and survive. As for the magnitude of U.S. charity, please refer to the TIME magazine of January 17. Whereas Australia has pledged \$815 million, Germany \$674 million and Japan \$500 million in aid for the Tsunami victims, the world's largest economy, the U.S., has pledged \$350 million! As a percentage of GDP, Australia's contribution is 47-times greater than the US's.

I know that the individual Americans are the most generous people on earth. It was not a surprise, therefore, to read a letter in *The New York Times* on January 10, criticising the Bush administration's stinginess: "I am unconvinced by the argument that the United States is

generous with foreign aid once private giving is considered. Americans have a great and unique tradition of private philanthropy. But private giving simply pales in contrast with the resources of the federal government. We do not rely on the generosity of the private individuals for domestic disaster aid. Even though many Americans gave to relief funds when hurricanes struck Florida last year, President Bush signed a bill allocating \$2 billion in initial disaster relief. Of course, the United States government has a greater obligation to its own citizens than those abroad. But the devastation in Asia is so many orders of magnitude greater than in Florida that it seems absurd to me that our government's \$350 million commitment to Tsunami relief is anywhere near adequate, even when considering donations by the private sector."

If the Tsunami victims could vote in the US presidential elections, Mr. Bush would probably have given them over \$20 billion in U.S. aid!

Distraught after losing the presidential election of 1992 to Bill Clinton, the senior President Bush wanted to leave office in a blaze of glory, and initiated a clumsy and ill-defined humanitarian mission in Somalia, which unfortunately resulted in the death of several U.S. soldiers at the hands of the Somali warlords. The cynics say that Bush senior intervened in Somalia because he did not want to intervene in Bosnia. Do you know, Tom, that not a single U.S. soldier died as President Bill Clinton's America came to the rescue of Muslims in Bosnia and (you forgot to mention) Kosovo. Is it not amazing that when America's intentions were good, their casualties were nil? Critics also say that America waited too long to intervene in Bosnia and Kosovo, and the only reason they did was because the Bosnia-Kosovo ethnic cleansing, rape and murder of the Muslims were taking place in the heart of Europe under the full view of the world's print and electronic media, and America and Britain, which were bombing Saddam Hussein's Iraq every other day to enforce the "No-Fly Zone," they had lost all credibility if they would have lost everything against Saddam Hussein and nothing against Slobodan Milosevic. Nevertheless, President Bill Clinton is certainly not considered "anti-Muslim;" on the contrary, he is enormously popular and a hero in the Muslim world. One earns the respect of the Muslims through good deeds, Tom, not good propaganda.

Let us recapitulate the events that led to Gulf War I and the liberation of

Kuwait. Angered by Iran's taking of the US diplomats as hostages in 1979, America encouraged Iraq to attack Iran in 1980. America and its allies supplied Iraq with funds and weapons, including chemical weapons with which Saddam gassed the Kurds, with the U.S. looking the other way. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia were Iraq's main financiers. In 1990,

flouting OPEC's quota, Kuwait and United Arab Emirates flooded the market, depressing the price of oil to below \$11/barrel, making it impossible for Iraq to service its foreign debt. Sensing Iraq's vulnerability, Kuwait began pressuring Iraq to settle their border disputes and demanded the repayment of \$12-14 billion Iraq had borrowed from Kuwait during the Iran-Iraq war. Saddam accused Kuwait of waging "a kind of war against Iraq."

On July 25, 1990, the US Ambassador to Iraq, Ms. April Glaspie, who is Jewish, met with Saddam and told him: "We have no opinion on Arab-Arab conflicts, like your border disagreements with Kuwait," which Saddam interpreted as a green light to attack Kuwait. Muslim nations joined the rest of the world to expel Saddam from Kuwait. What the naive Muslim world did not realise is that the West had a hidden agenda -- destruction of Iraq, Israel's enemy. With crippling UN sanctions, and almost daily bombings, the West reduced prosperous Iraq into pauper Iraq. Most criminally, western-enacted UN sanctions killed at least one million Iraqi children, which the former U.S. Secretary of State Albright famously claimed was justified! Any Muslim gratitude for the liberation of Kuwait was obliterated by the sinister plot to destroy the Iraqi nation.

You have to explain to me, Tom, how "American soldiers risked their lives to save the Muslims of Afghanistan and the Muslims of Iraq." Granted, the Afghans and the Iraqis were under rotten regimes. But, as far as I remember, they did not want any foreign country to "save" them. You will be surprised to know, Tom, that there are people in the world who are not solely preoccupied with "running for office, studying anything they want or finding good jobs," as you state in your column. Even the western puppet, the United Nations Security Council, did not authorise the recent invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. During one of his speeches opposing the US-led

invasion of Iraq in 2003, Nobel Peace Prize winner South African Bishop Desmond Tutu said, even at the height of the white supremacist apartheid's oppression of the blacks, "we did not ask to west to bomb us into democracy!" That is exactly what is happening in Afghanistan and Iraq -- democracy

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is being imposed through bombing and killing, which so far has claimed the lives of over 100,000 Iraqi civilians. If democracy is a panacea that cures all ills, Tom, why does it have to be imposed through such savagery?

Even Americans are getting tired of your promotion of the Iraq war, Tom. A letter in *The New York Times* on January 9 blasted you: "Thomas L. Friedman argues that our nation-building experiment in Iraq, though botched by the Bush administration, can still be justified because the success or failure of the planned elections will tell us whether 'it is possible for the people of even one Arab state to voluntarily organise themselves around a social contract for democratic life.' It will prove no such thing. If we fail to establish a democratic government in Iraq, it will not prove that an Arab Muslim democracy is impossible, but merely that the United States was unable forcibly to impose western-style democracy on a vast religiously and ethnically heterogeneous state, without significant international support or adequate troop commitment, at a time when the Arab on the street loathes and distrusts our regime. That hardly needed proving in the first place."

Another letter read: "Friedman supports the overthrow of the Iraqi government and the coming election as an experiment in democracy. This experiment has so far meant more than 1500 coalition forces and contractors dead, more than 10,000 injured, hundreds of thousands in an environment of brutality, tens of thousands of Iraqis dead and millions of Iraqis seriously affected. Mr. Friedman may feel that such experiments can be justified, but how many Iraqis would agree? How many Americans?"

Since you are so gung-ho about democracy, let us remind ourselves that the British democracy was quite content to colonise and brutalise India; the Indian democracy to this day denies the Kashmiris self-determination which they were promised; the American democracy

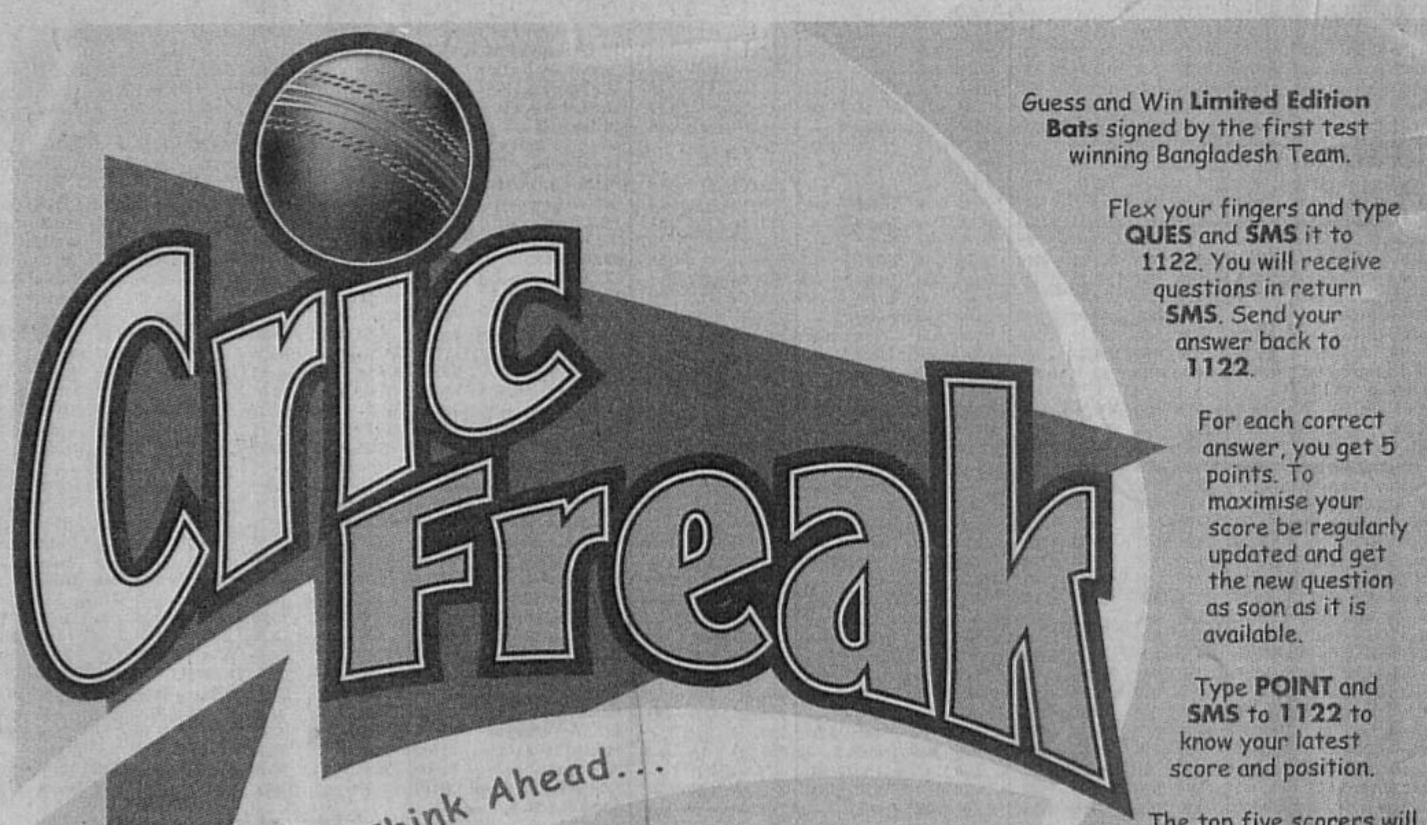
attacked three sovereign nations that did not attack them -- Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq; and the Israeli democracy was founded on the expulsion of the native Palestinians, stealing of their lands and currently thrives on stealing more Palestinian lands and building settlements on those. According to Israeli peace activist Uri Avnery, Israeli democ-

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ty kills 5 to 7 Palestinian civilians every day, and when the Palestinians kills 5 to 7 Israelis one day, the Israeli democracy severs all links with the Palestinian Authority until the Palestinian (not Israeli) violence ends! Tom, I notice that in your columns you are now referring to the Iraqi insurgents as "fascists." If the

The problem with you, Tom, is that you want to fast forward to step number seven without addressing step one. You lecture the Iraqis why it is in their interest to participate in the US-sponsored election. You lecture the Palestinians that the crumbs Sharon throws at them are their best hope for survival. Palest-

inians and the Iraqis want to discuss what triggered their suffering. While you lecture them how they should bring up the illegitimate baby, they want to talk about the rape of Palestine and Iraq that resulted in the illegitimate babies! Only in nations that started World War II -- Japan and Germany -- democracy was imposed through defeat and occupation. When a democracy attacked another sovereign nation, such as Vietnam, democracy acquired such a bad reputation that the victim country preferred dictatorship. Because it is being imposed through bombings and bullets, American version of democracy is unlikely to take root in Afghanistan or Iraq.



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