

France, Germany and China's 'no' to war

World in peril, needs decisive UN role

FRANCE, Germany and China have made it amply clear that they would oppose a military strike against Iraq under all circumstances. The United States is now left with the UK as the only country extending unconditional support to President Bush's interpretation of the latest situation in the Gulf.

The members of the Security Council and Germany have also made it known that their main concern is the primacy of the UN role in the matter. That is perhaps a different way of telling that no country should make an attempt to bypass the world body. The US is reported to have been irked by the Franco-German stand which is now bolstered as China decided to join the two European powers. But it can hardly ignore that France is the current president of the UNSC, and Germany, a non-permanent member, is going to replace it next. The two countries have very rightly pointed out that war is always an evidence of failure. It could only establish the unpleasant truth that the human race as a whole is yet to develop effective mechanisms for conflict resolution, despite making tremendous progress in various fields.

France and Germany have further committed themselves by elaborating how they will try to prevent war. Germany has said it will always vote against any resolution in favour of war, and France will veto any such resolution. Russia has also voiced its support for the Franco-German and Chinese position.

This newspaper has also advocated a robust UN role in solving the Iraqi crisis. We believe that war will mean a human, economic, political, and geo-political catastrophe. So the countries across the globe have to make sincere efforts for avoiding it. France and Germany deserve a round of plaudits for taking the lead in this respect and China for following suit so quickly.

The arms inspection process that is going on in Iraq, despite the US being skeptical about the validity of the findings, should lead to peace not war, and it must be allowed to go its full course. The inspectors led by Hans Blix will submit their report and the UNSC will act on that. That is how one has to look at the UN resolution and the fate of Iraq. Nobody would expect the process being derailed by any intervention.

However, there are developments which might not give arms inspection and the ultimate assessment of Iraq's position a smooth sailing. President Bush appears to be determined to wage a war. Nothing will be more unfortunate if he tries to prejudice the inspectors' findings and act on his own sweet will.

Of course, President Saddam also has to do his part in the peaceful resolution of the crisis. Iraq must give the arms inspectors full access to all the sites and installations. It must also cooperate with the inspection team, thus removing doubts regarding its purpose, and give a full inventory of its arms and ammunition.

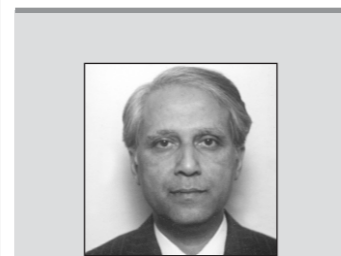
War will be an absolute non-winner and an unbearable load on some vital sectors of the recession-hit world economy. Aviation, tourism, banking and insurance are some of the vital sectors that will be affected badly.

US concern about the weapons of mass destruction ending up in wrong hands may have its point. But is there only one suspected potential source for it? Besides, one hardly needs saying that when war is thought to be needed to prevent the possibility of another war -- in the process, risking very thing that is sought to be avoided -- there must be something wrong with the perception as a whole.

The world at large has a lot of tricky issues and problems to deal with, before a just global order can emerge. It is time to replace the term weapons of mass destruction with 'weapons of mass salvation.' Poverty alleviation still remains an elusive goal. And the poorest countries have become the ideal breeding ground of terrorists and all such elements that pose a threat to us. The developed countries, which are now occupying the driver's seat of the world economy, cannot afford to be oblivious of this harsh reality. A brief study of the backgrounds of all the flash points will reveal that many things have gone wrong in those places.

So the only answer to terrorism, and the more recent phenomenon of even a whole country being included on the list of terrorists, lies in tackling poverty and other debilitating socio-economic factors, and putting an end to political discrimination between states and societies. The need is to identify and eliminate the root causes behind individuals, communities or even states not behaving according to the norms set in the charter of the United Nations.

Environmental technology for sustainable development



MUHAMMAD ZAMIR

ENVIRONMENTAL technologies offer a natural bridge between our economic, social and environmental goals. New and innovative environmental technologies have the potential to raise environmental standards while lowering costs, which would boost economic growth and allow the economy to grow faster without going beyond our environmental carrying capacity.

Efforts undertaken in this direction can add to economic growth in a number of ways. They allow us to get more environmental protection for less money and meet expected standards at a lower cost. This frees up resources for use elsewhere in the economy. This also helps to decouple environmental pollution and resource use from economic growth, allowing the economy more scope to grow in the long run while still remaining within our environmental limits. This is what we all agree is central to sustainable development.

An innovative environmental technology sector can help underpin growth if it is capable of tapping into rapidly growing export markets. By developing better and more cost-effective technologies we can also open up a wider range of options, facing the kind of environmental constraints that we do.

My discussion today on environmental technologies refers to far more than 'end-of-pipe' devices to clean up pollution. Environmental technologies in my mind include 'integrated' technologies that would prevent pollutants being generated through the production process, as well as new materials, energy and resource-efficient production processes, environmental know-how, and new ways of working. In short,

in my opinion, we need to take a broad view of environmental technologies, as from a policy perspective our concern should be the use and potential of environmental technologies throughout the economic system.

We must remember that environmental technologies are already a growing industry. Rising demand for a better environment has led to an expanding supply of environmentally friendly techniques, products and services in both the industrial-

and domestic growth.

Ensuring that future investment in Bangladesh is environmentally friendly will be critical. In this context, there has to be more investment in research and development. We have to move towards the concept of a knowledge-based industry. There has to be a substantial increase in both public and private research and development. This will then be seen as an important signal of our underlying desire for a sustainable future. If we look at

new materials, energy and resource efficient production processes as well as environmental know-how and new ways of working.

It could include intermediate products, machinery, equipment and vehicles used for environmental protection, and the environmental activity of all businesses. As such environmental technology will include both low and high-tech applications. It would be worthwhile to remember here that boosting the degree of technology inherent in

and soil, as well as problems related to waste, noise and ecosystems. This is the OECD concept and really appears to cover all factors.

The above definition apparently is meant to include three categories of activities: a) pollution management of both a preventive or remedial nature (such as reducing emissions, reducing environmental risks or clearing up environmental damage); b) cleaner (integrated) technologies and products which include any action that contin-

of jute and bamboo as potential for fine paper pulp.

France leads the way in water treatment services. They are already helping the people of Dhaka in this regard. We need to replicate these efforts elsewhere in the country. There is no reason why the private sector, given the opportunity, cannot step forward as they have done in creating a bottled mineral water industry. This can be an important step. It will ensure a proper utilisation of surface water in arsenic contaminated areas and save lives.

In this context, it would be worthwhile to refer here also to waste management practices. Technologies in this field are relatively simple and cover a broad spectrum of treatment methods -- better collecting devices and vehicles for a more effective recycling of materials like paper, metals and glass; better mechanical separating devices and new large scale technologies for treating organic waste. Together, these simple changes can provide a good basis towards the utilisation of generated waste in an optimal way.

However, one must remember that while embarking on this road, the best way would be the private entrepreneur initiative with cheap credit extension facility. Initially, this will make things cost effective and encourage participation. It is good to seriously face this issue on a bipartisan basis. There should not be any politics associated in the saving of the environment and the introduction and association of environment friendly technology in our future development efforts.

While absorbing fresh ideas from abroad, we should also try to engage our limited resources in finding appropriate technology which we can introduce in our country. China and Brazil have both made great advances in this regard. They have carefully studied the results in wind powered turbine technology in Denmark. So should we, with regard to our energy needs in the coastal areas. Finland makes excellent eco-industry products related to pulp and paper making technologies. We should progress in our efforts to find alternative uses

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POST BREAKFAST

In Bangladesh, as in any other developing country, faced with the scourge of environmental degradation, we have a lot to learn. We have to seriously face this issue on a bi-partisan basis. There should not be any politics associated in the saving of the environment and the introduction and association of environment friendly technology in our future development efforts...While absorbing fresh ideas from abroad, we should also try to engage our limited resources in finding appropriate technology which we can introduce in our country.

and the developing countries. However, unfortunately, in countries like Bangladesh, we do not have data that captures the whole range of innovative technologies in use. The data that we possess captures only a narrow range of such technologies, and includes only those that are driven purely by environmental protection requirements. However, one thing is realised clearly. This sector has great potential. It is also understood that it is diverse and dynamic and is well placed to perform in growing market conditions.

It is universally accepted that sustainable development strategy is based on the principle that economic growth, environmental protection and social inclusion should go hand in hand. In this respect, environmental technologies that lower the costs of environmental protection can play a dual role. On the one hand they help us to meet increased demands for a cleaner environment by reducing the environmental impact of economic growth, while on the other they reduce any impact of higher environmental standards on GDP growth itself. In other words, they play an important role in decoupling environmental impacts from eco-

what is happening near at hand, we should understand the importance that is being attached to this factor. Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore have already embarked on this course. We should not lag behind.

However, while I stress on this, I also take this opportunity to point out that there needs to be right incentives for this new wave of technological progress. We must work out a proper strategy where the overall thrust should include aspects such as the completion of the internal market in the financial sector and the simplification of the regulatory frameworks. Only this will help in the emergence of innovative solutions and forward-looking enterprise in the field of environmental technologies. We also have to address ourselves in resolving some of the existing problems like lack of venture capital, risk aversion and red tape.

One must remember that environmental technologies include both integrated technologies that prevent pollutants being generated during the production process, and end-of-pipe technologies that reduce the release into the environment of any pollutants that are produced. They can also include

low-tech applications will be just as important as boosting it in applications that are high-tech. It is the potential that we must target within the system.

Another aspect should draw our attention. We have to appreciate that some environmental technologies need to be driven by environmental considerations only, including legislation, rather than profitability. Recent steps taken by the present Administration and also by the past government have contributed to signals that this country is trying to organise production and consumption in a sustainable way, and is producing less pollution that needed cleaning up. The decision of banning the use of plastic bags has indeed been a welcome step. So has been the decision to clean the pollution in the air by outlawing certain forms of transport. In the short term there will be difficulties, but in the long term we will gain from such measures.

The question that now arises is what constitutes an eco-industry. Well, broadly, one could define it as all activities which produce goods and services that help to measure, prevent, limit, minimise or correct environmental damage to water, air

usually improves, reduces or eliminates the environmental impact of general technologies and c) resource management, such as renewable energy and water supply.

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'My country right or wrong'

MEGASTHENS

RECENTLY in a newspaper column, that I read with interest whenever I am able to, there was a passing mention of the late President Iskander Mirza of Pakistan and his penchant for the phrase "My country right or wrong". It took me back many years in time, to the decade of the 1950s, when we were in High School and Iskander Mirza successfully held high political office.

In our English language examination, 20 marks out of 100 would be for an essay on some topic or other. The topic, of course, was not known ahead of time but there were always likely subjects on which students would bone up, in a manner. One of these was "Patriotism". To lend gravitas to an essay or to underscore a point, one would slip in an apposite quote. The preferred quote for "Patriotism" was from Sir Walter Scott: "Breathes there the man with soul so dead, Who never to himself hath said, This is my own, my native land!" Among others, Iskander Mirza's "My country right or wrong" was also used but our language teachers, American catholic missionaries, were a little ambivalent about it. The phrase we were told was not without connotations that could be polemical. It was not coined by Mirza but by an American naval hero more than a century earlier; more on this later.

What manner of man was the late Iskander Mirza? I do not know how or if he is remembered in Pakistan. Certainly his use of the phrase quoted, would suggest an individual with an intense, almost consuming, love for his country and, by extension and inference, people. A somewhat different image, however, emerges from the memoirs or diaries of someone, who wrote from a vantage point that afforded a

unique perspective.

The late Qudratullah Shahab was a distinguished and respected civil servant, who held many important assignments in Pakistan. He was also a writer of considerable merit and maintained a diary from 1938 or so till the time of his death in 1986. This was published posthumously as *Shahabnama*. Shahab's assignments included a nine-year stint, from 1954, as Secretary to two Governors-General, Ghulam Mohammad and Iskander Mirza,

Ruth did depart not long after for Britain.

The Mirzas liked to entertain and frequently enough there were parties -- with liquid refreshments flowing freely -- that went on till late hours. At one such party, Mirza felt the hem of an attractive lady's sari and complimented her choice of clothes. Mrs Mirza emerged out of nowhere and admonished her startled guest not to "monkey around" with her husband. The thoroughly nonplussed lady pro-

posed to be a friend of the Mirzas and general elections could lead to a change in the Office of President and so elections had to be deferred under some pretext or other. Eventually on October 7, 1958, he abrogated the constitution and declared Martial Law. Once the deed was done he realized that he had forfeited political legitimacy himself. Less than three weeks into Martial Law he was ushered out of the Presidential Palace, first to Quetta and then to exile in London. He thus precipitated his departure from the

favourite of ultra nationalists everywhere. Decatur had said: "Our country! In her intercourse with foreign nations may she always be in the right; but our country right or wrong". In response John Quincy Adams, who was soon to become one of America's most cerebral and outstanding Secretaries of State and later President, wrote to his father -- a former President -- as follows: "I cannot ask of heaven success, even for my country, in a cause where she should be in the

tional dimensions as these sought to accept and embrace national differences. And yet we have also seen -- only recently in the Balkans -- what a malevolent force ultra or acute nationalism can be.

Is nationalism synonymous with patriotism? These are surely cognate concepts but not quite identical. Both relate to territory but nationalism more so than patriotism would seem to be linked to a particular people or group, united by some common affiliation; religious, ethnic, cultural or linguistic. Patriotism is perhaps more inclusive in scope and application, especially so in a world that is becoming increasingly globalised. Comments or reflections on patriotism in more recent times are far less solemn or earnest than those like Sir Walter Scott's of old; more subtle and complex in concept. George Nathaniel (Testament of a Critic, 1931) had this to say of patriotism: "Patriotism, as I see it, is often an arbitrary veneration of real estate above principles". And Professor Galbraith wrote with a touch of levity (*A Life in Our Times*, 1981): "I have never understood why one's affections must be confined, as once with women, to a single country".

Whether or not there exists a shade of difference between patriotism and nationalism, one would tend to believe that the ultimate objectives of both enlightened nationalism and true patriotism cannot be too different. Somehow these must reflect certain universal values and instincts. In the words of an eminent international civil servant and savant, the common goal of humankind can only be "a new comradeship, a universal fellowship, a world communion, a deeper understanding and....the peace that passeth all understanding".

LIGHTEN UP

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and two Presidents, Iskander Mirza and Ayub Khan. He was thus a privileged and dispassionate observer and also recorder of events, official and not so official, in high places. His account provides many fascinating insights.

When Mirza succeeded the ailing Ghulam Mohammad as Governor-General, he was married to his second wife, Mrs Nahid Mirza, an Iranian lady. Coincidentally he was her second husband. Nahid Mirza, in one of her early chats with Shahab, suggested that he dispense with the services of the comely and competent Miss Ruth, the Governor-General's personal secretary. No reasons were given. Miss Ruth was an expatriate Britisher, who had been serving from the time of Ghulam Mohammad, who, Shahab noted, was not oblivious to female pulchritude. Miss

tested feebly that she had done nothing unseemly and that Mirza had merely complimented her taste in clothes. There were reasons, however, for Mrs Mirza's abruptness. Apparently an innocuous compliment about her sense of clothes was the opening line Mirza had used when they had first met. He was at that time the country's Defence Secretary and she, the wife of the Military Attache of Iran in Pakistan.

Shahab recounts a very revealing episode about Mirza's view of the constitution of 1956, under which he had become President. Holding the constitution in his hand, he once asked if Shahab had ever read the "trashy book." Mirza's efforts and energies, as Shahab relates, were geared to one principal purpose, his continuation in office. Mirza was apprehensive that

Office of President rather than prolong his tenure.

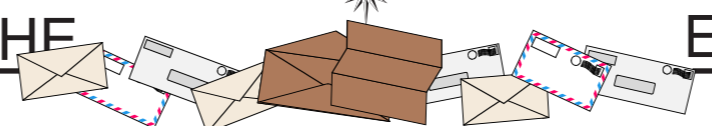
A senior colleague, who possesses a remarkable gift of being able to relate to people, often across generations, related to me an anecdote about Mirza's last hours in the Presidential Palace. He had heard this from Shahab. Almost in a daze Mirza had mumbled to no one in particular "*Woh jamadar ka beta hi jith gaya*" (that son of an NCO has won). A compliment of sorts, I suppose, to his successor as President. Mirza, above all else, perhaps exemplified the Peter Principle; a man rising to the level of his incompetence.

As mentioned earlier, the phrase "my country right or wrong" did not originate with Mirza. In 1816, an American naval hero, Stephen Decatur, had proposed a toast, which has over years become a

wrong... My toast would be, may our country be always successful, but whether successful or otherwise, always right". A most mellow and acceptable form of nationalism surely. In 1899, Carl Schurz, an immigrant, who had attained high political and diplomatic office in his adopted country, the US, afforded an even more mature and hospitable face of nationalism to which none can be averse. Addressing a conference in Chicago, Schurz said: "Our country right or wrong. When right, to be kept right; when wrong, to be put right".

A nation is the unity of a people, as Coleridge put it. Assuredly nationalism can be a most constructive and potent force for development and nation-building. It is one of the pillars of our constitution. In the 18th and early 19th centuries, nationalistic movements even had interna-

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR



Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

"Well done Sheikh Hasina"

I have seen a few letters here where the writers expressed their astonishment why some people are blaming Sheikh Hasina for the inclusion of Bangladesh in the INS list.

Well, she deserves most of the blame if not all. It may be that the US was going to include us on INS list anyway but we were not on the list until after Hasina and her party men/women both in the country and abroad started and continued with their propaganda against Bangladesh.

Sheikh Hasina and her party needs to understand where the country starts and "party" ends.
Saidullah Jaffrey
Boston, USA

Of late, several opinions appeared in your esteemed daily in the wake of Bangladesh on the INS list. While we sympathise with the sentiments and concerns, we cannot condone charges and blames on Sheikh Hasina as expressed by some of our valued

readership. We must analyse the developments objectively.

Firstly, the US obsession and concern for homeland security is of paramount importance to the US administration. Any government would try to take all possible measures to beef up security for their own citizens. In the process, the US administration also listed Bangladesh on the INS list. The US administration gathered enough evidence to put Bangladesh on the INS list, as stated by one of their high officials. A country like US would never be influenced by individual remarks, such as Sheikh Hasina's, to make a decision that has direct impact on the bilateral issues. US decision is based on findings of their intelligence network. Even if Sheikh Hasina made a reversed statement, the US would still go ahead with the INS requirements as per their intelligence reports. So, it is immature to blame Hasina for the debacle.

Secondly, although majority of the people of Bangladesh are peace loving, yet there is no denying the fact, there are growing elements of extremism. In the like manner, majority of the people of Pakistan, India, Indonesia, Kuwait, Bahrain, etc.

(countries on the list) are peace loving, but their names have been on the INS list, just for a handful number of people espousing extremism.

Thirdly, the onus lies with our polity to put our own house in order. Show to the world that we are really a moderate Muslim country; tolerant to all sects, religion and opinion; we govern on the lofty ideals of progressive and secular philosophy. We do not shoot, kill or hurl bombs at our fellow people. The poignant question, therefore, is: have we been able to that? On the contrary, the recent past saw a pathetic story. Urfat Hussain
Mirpur Road, Dhaka

Bangladesh on INS list

The news of Bangladesh being blacklisted under the new US immigration rule is like a bolt out of the blue sky. We are deeply shocked, outraged and we, very much, resent this decision.

Nur Jahan
Chittagong

I am a Bangladeshi living in the US on working visa. I have been working in the IT sector. I am also a Certified Public Accountant (CPA). I have been recently granted immigrant status from the INS as a skilled worker. Because I have not received my "green card" yet due to the backlog, I too have to register with the INS within the prescribed time frame. I am framed as a citizen of a terror-list country despite all the goodwill that have surrounded me.

The US administration would not have brought up this infamous INS registration law had the September 11, 2001 not happened. It would have been rejected outright by the majority of the Americans. Prior to September 11, President Bush and the members of the Congress were considering to declare amnesty for all illegal alien. However, those 19 visitors from the Arab countries changed American attitudes forever. Now, they perceive all foreigners including Muslims with suspicion. The US had opened the door of opportunities for many people of the world including the Muslims. I think we have squandered the opportunities. Now, we don't have any friends here.

Bangladesh students: come to Canada

It can be comfortably guessed that from now on coming to the US on student visas will be increasingly difficult for students from Bangladesh. The probability of getting student visas has already been declining steadily for the last couple of years, and with this new terrorism identity Bangladesh has got recently, the US visa officials in Dhaka will be highly encouraged to impose even tighter control over issuing visas. The top tier students of BUET, DU and NSU must be visibly disturbed and worried, as many of them have long cherished

dreams to pursue higher studies in the US. Their frustration is understandable knowing Bangladesh does not offer opportunities to earn a graduate degree in most of the advanced and technological fields.

Canada now happens to be the most suitable alternative option for Bangladeshi students. It is a country that has been helping Bangladesh in its socio-economic reforms for a long time with the least dictatorial attitude to manipulate Bangladesh policy-makers to serve Canadian interests. It has accepted a lot of Bangladeshi immigrants in recent years. There had been no incidences since 9/11 in Canada where the Muslims living here perceived any unfavourable words/behaviour /attitudes toward them from any other quarters.

The main issue of concern for Bangladeshi students is availability of odd jobs upon which most of the students thrive; in Canada these are scarce, whereas in the US, these are abundant. But Canadian universities do encourage scholarly graduate students who have the potential to be good researchers. The universities here have substantial funding sources, parts of which

remain unspent every year. If a student writes a good research proposal, has high undergraduate GPA, a high TOEFL and GRE score, he/she can get admission with secured funding.

I would suggest the students in Bangladesh to focus more on preparations to score very high in the qualifying tests. A score of 2000 in GRE, 625 in GMAT and 650 in TOEFL will almost ensure admission with funding and consequently, when they have funding and high scores, the visa official in Dhaka will have to struggle to find a reason to refuse visa. Coming to study in Canada in a low tier university and/or without funding will only increase the agony of students and their parents.

Hasanat Alamgir
Vancouver, Canada

Regarding CNG gas crisis

As a Dhakaite, I am observing with great concern that an acute CNG gas crisis is prevailing in our metropolitan city. Comparing to the CNG-run vehicles there are very few gas stations and it is creating heavy load

to the gas station and increasing distress to the commuters and vehicle drivers. I earnestly request the relevant authority to take necessary steps to solve this problem and thus save us from this predicament.

Mohammed Sohel Hara
Dhaka

Water canon on AL activists

Not in the political but at least in the humanitarian outlook the law preservers of the country should once again think about jetting out dirty and cold water on the women activists of Awami League. This is not only an insult but also inhuman to splash water at the women in this bone biting winters.

At least women should be treated with more respect as it is done world wide. I am sure that there is better ways to prevent rallies brought out by the opposition.

Khalid Rahman, Dhaka