

The American camel noses itself into the Middle East tent

NURUDDIN MAHMUD KAMAL

FOR over a century the Americans have been creating abundance for themselves by setting and continually breaking world's record in the development and use of energy. This has been their special genius pioneering modern, industrial society. Not only they have shown the rest of the world how to develop nature's energy resources, but also to satisfy their own needs, they have spread out over the planet with their know-how and capital and developed other nations' resources. Their history books prate much about political, social and cultural events, foreign policies and wars. But it is what they have done about energy that has changed their history, improved their lives and raised their expectations. In his unrestrained exuberance and pursuit of many goals, the US president George Bush has suddenly created a new energy ego for himself to acquire new oil and gas reserves, outside the United States, in Iraq.

In fact Iraq has long been a sore point for the Americans. In the history of oil exploration one would find Great Britain, France and Holland realised the importance of oil and were determined to keep American oil explorers out of Middle East and Far East. Iran, for instance, under concession to the British-Anglo-Iranian Oil Company was the only major oil producing country in the eastern hemisphere. However, Iraq which had been part of Turkey was known to have great oil prospects. Under an agreement in the League of Nations, to which the US did not belong, all the oil rights to the former Ottoman empire were given to Iraq Petroleum Company, jointly owned by the British, French and Dutch. Americans were inflamed by this closed door policy, and an international diplomatic war began. In 1921, a joint American company received about a quarter of interest of Iraq, which soon became one of the most lucrative oil areas in the world.

From 1930 onwards the international oil game turned into a horse race between British-Dutch oil companies and American majors such as Standard Oil of California (Socal), Gulf, Texaco and Mobil. Later, these five US majors, and Shell and British Petroleum (BP) came to be known as Seven Sisters in the oil parley of the world. Socal discovered oil in Bahrain in 1932. Its success influenced King Ibn Saud of neighbouring Saudi Arabia to give the company an exclusive oil concession on all the Saudi Arabia for 66 years. Meanwhile, the Gulf Oil Co. obtained an option to acquire a prospective property on a

so-called civilized world that the first American geologist arrived wearing beards and Arab dress (like Laurence of Arabia) in order to avoid attracting attention. Socal discovered oil in neighbouring Bahrain, but it was five years before Socal and its new partner, Texaco, discovered oil in Saudi Arabia. The US government sent a group of experts to the Middle East to establish proven and probable oil reserves. The mission was headed by E. L. De Golyer, world famous geologist and appraiser of oil reserves, and Dr W E Wrather, another geologist of the United States Geological Survey (USGS).

people know that the coup that toppled the government of Iran was led by a CIA agent who was grandson of President Theodore Roosevelt. Kermit Kim Roosevelt, also a cousin of President Franklin D Roosevelt, is still known as Mr Iran around the CIA for his spectacular operation in Tehran, accomplished more than fifty years ago. He later left the CIA and joined the Gulf Oil Corporation. Gulf named him a vice president in 1960. Another key player involved in the operation was Fazollah. General Fazollah Zahedi, the man the CIA chose to replace Mossadegh, was also a character worth of spy fic-

themselves. But the Americans staged two consecutive coups in which President Arif was shot dead and President Kassem was hanged. Thus began the longest, strangest deadlock in oil history, lasting until Iraq nationalised the company. This time the Americans played a new game. A rift was created between Iran and Iraq which ultimately turned into a long drawn war between them. Now both Iran and Iraq distrust the Americans.

Still underlying all the economic uncertainties of the international oil scene are the dangerous petropolitical hazards that exist. The oil dagger as a political weapon has never been sheathed. Now that the danger man Aerial Sharon has been reelected, his mentor President George W Bush is doubly enthused to do the worst. Failing to produce new evidence against Iraq in a bid to convince wary allies that Baghdad is flouting UN demands to disarm, George Bush has decided to even go alone and strike Baghdad any time. But to US's misfortune antiwar protestors came out in their millions in London, Rome and Paris...
The majors already had suffered a severe setback in Iraq, the second largest oil producing Middle East country. Meanwhile, a military dictator, General Abdul Karim Kassem, had chosen a pro-nationalist policy. He wanted the Iraq Petroleum Company, with its British, French and American ownership, to relinquish the majority of the area of its monopoly oil concession which had been converted to a fifty-fifty profit sharing basis. The whole thing was not to General Kassem's taste. He created the Iraq National Oil Company to develop the country by

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British concession in Kuwait, which adjoins Saudi Arabia and was outside Iraq Petroleum Company's restricted area. The US State Department intervened. Slowly, the American camel nosed all of itself into the Middle East tent.

An interesting episode would reveal how the Americans influenced the Saudis or shall I say how the Saudis gave up themselves to the Americans. In 1932, when Socal first approached King Ibn Saud for a petroleum concession, he called the Royal Council of the ruling family to consider the proposal. The Council opposed permitting the Americans to enter the country on the grounds that its offer of four shillings gold or its equivalent in dollar or sterling per ton royalty was too little. The king overruled their objections saying, "The Koran says on fertile land a tithe of one-tenth, on unfertile land, one-half as much. The Americans are offering about one-fourth. Are you unsatisfied with one-fourth when Allah is satisfied with one-tenth?" The deal was made. Saudi Arabia, at that time, was so isolated from the

They reported the startling and sobering fact that "The centre of gravity of world oil production is shifting from the Gulf-Caribbean areas to the Middle East, to the Persian Gulf area, and is likely to continue to shift until it is firmly established in that area." At that time such a conclusion was as momentous as Columbus' proclaiming the world was round, not flat. The Americans knew the game well.

Profit sharing in Iran became a pawn in a political struggle, involving riots, bloodshed, international intrigue, CIA's direct participation (Ref: *The Invisible Government*, David Wise and Thomas B Ross, February, 1974, New York) bankrupted the country. The wrestle between CIA and Dr Mohammad Mossadegh, Prime Minister of Iran, ended in a fiasco. It is said that guerrilla raids are small actions compared to an operation that changes a government. It clearly indicated that there is no doubt at all that the CIA organised and directed the 1953 coup that overthrew Premier Mossadegh. But few

He fought the Bolsheviks, was captured by the Kurds, and in 1942, was kidnapped by the British, who suspected him of Nazi intrigues. During World War II, the British and Russians jointly occupied Iran. After the war Zahedi rapidly moved back into public life. He became minister of Interior when Mossadegh became premier in 1951. It was against this background that the CIA moved to oust Mossadegh and install Zahedi.

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Nuruddin Mahmud Kamal is a former Additional Secretary.

Global governance facing 'serious consequences'

AZIZ RAHMAN

THE UN is rightly considered the most effective and universally accepted tool for dispute resolution and prevention of armed conflict and of arms control and disarmament. However, its effectiveness largely depends on two factors -- collective will of the world community and attitude of the superpowers. National interests of the powers concerned, of course, shape the latter. Thus, before the Gulf War (should we say the First Gulf War) the UN was rather unable to function with the desired effectiveness because the erstwhile superpowers used or threatened to use veto at their own interests. Here, the USA was able to utilise the UN to successfully liberate Kuwait and make Iraq accept Security Council resolutions by virtue of consensus. While this manifested the efficacy of the UN as a means of world governance, it equally ushered in a paradigm shift wherein the USA almost took it for granted that it would similarly prevail under all circumstances. There are, on the other hand, clear illustrations where failure of international will or lack of it -- Kashmir and Palestine, for instance -- constrained the UN from enforcing its own decisions towards successful resolution of long outstanding conflicts. The major concern of the dominant powers remained confined only to preventing parties concerned from engaging in all-out war or disengaging them from war after its actual outbreak. Implementation of UN resolutions depended on the persistent and coinciding interests of the dominant powers. Now, it seems, it hangs on the wishes of only one power irrespective of different views within Security Council and against world opinion.

The world is at the brink of war. The brinkmanship is centering on Iraq. Chances are there that as soon as hostilities break into physical attack to chastise that country -- one of the three countries in the "axis of evil" -- "in one way or another," it is not only that particular country but also the world as a whole will be engulfed in one way or another. The stakes are high, too high to ignore. One reassuring factor has emerged, however. The saner people of the world are awake, rather widely awake. The conscience of the world has not so far betrayed itself, as evident from the world-wide opposition to war manifested through unprecedented huge protest rallies across the globe, while US-led aggression on Iraq seemed only a matter of weeks, even days, as declared by the leader of the most powerful country in the present unipolar world.

Why USA is bent upon waging a war against Iraq? Unilaterally and at this stage? To clear the world of

weapons of mass destruction! To liberate the people of Iraq! To sever the alleged link with Al-Qaida! Or, to satisfy its growing thirst for oil and establish its hegemony in the region on a firmer ground while further marginalising Islamic fundamentalism, considered the main cause of international terrorism and clash of civilizations that inspired the perpetrators of the attack on the twin towers in New York and other targets in USA on 11 September 2001! Whatever is the reason, questions agitate the minds of the people all over the world as to whether a war waged by USA unilaterally, or in coalition with a few other like-minded countries, within the purview of UNSC resolution 1441 or even a new resolution, will be a just war, and whether it will be in line with the principles enshrined in the charter of the United Nations and whether

extent of cooperation of Iraq in disarmament process.

To recall Security Council warnings to Iraq about "serious consequences" in case of violations of its obligations can under no circumstances be construed to be "authorisation for use of military force" to be exercised unilaterally by any one country or a group of countries, as interpreted and insisted upon by USA and the like-minded allies who constitute but only a thin minority in the Security Council. Unprecedented build up of military strength around Iraq began well before presentation of the report by UNMOVIC and IAEA chiefs to the Security Council on 14 February 2003. In addition to establishing no-fly zones in large areas of Iraq without any valid UN decision to that effect in the wake of the last Gulf war, according to some media reports US troops

luckier! One need not wonder.

Divergence of views also surfaced in NATO when Turkey invoked the provision of defence against possible Iraqi retaliation if attacked by the coalition forces using Turkish ground facilities. Three out of the nineteen members, namely Belgium, France and Germany could not agree to the timing of a defence planning for Turkey at a time when hostilities have not actually started. After weeklong stand-off, NATO came to a compromise settlement in its summit on 17 February, when the dissenting parties agreed to go along a consensus formula.

It spelled out that (i) war is not inevitable, (ii) inspection cannot be allowed to go on for unlimited time, and (iii) force may be the ultimate way in case Iraq continues to violate UNSC resolutions. However, due to the stand-off at the

through its institutions and in accordance with its decisions. Any deviation or indulgence for misinterpretation or misguidance will be disastrous.

(2) Being the strongest power, USA backed by its allies, is expected to exercise greater restraint in its attitude, expression and preparation for war, as the last resort to be taken under the aegis of the world body within the mechanism evolved for conducting such action.

(3) Iraq must extend full, unconditional and proactive cooperation for elimination of weapons of mass destruction and chemical and biological agents in accordance with UNSC resolutions in this regard. It must understand that cat and mouse game is unnecessary and will not ultimately benefit Iraq. It should also realise that it must avoid any situation that is likely to bring about more suffering for its people.

World public opinion has been reflected adequately when Robert Byrd, US Democrat Senator observed that: "To contemplate war is to think about the most horrible of human experiences. And war must always be the last resort, not the first choice", and Dominique de Villepin, Foreign Minister of France in his address to the Security Council on 14 February 2003 remarked that: "No one can assert today that the path of war will be shorter than that of the inspections. No one can claim either that it might lead to a safer, more just and more stable world. For, war is always the sanction of the failure." World public opinion has been reflected adequately when Robert Byrd, US Democrat Senator observed that: "To contemplate war is to think about the most horrible of human experiences. And war must always be the last resort, not the first choice", and Dominique de Villepin, Foreign Minister of France in his address to the Security Council on 14 February 2003 remarked that: "No one can assert today that the path of war will be shorter than that of the inspections. No one can claim either that it might lead to a safer, more just and more stable world. For, war is always the sanction of the failure." To resolve the disputes peacefully, Iraq must comply or made to comply by peaceful means. Let the inspection regime continue to the last to be fully effective. However, this cannot be allowed to be dragged for unlimited time to the advantage of the delinquent. It would not be a very difficult task to work out a definite and realistic time-frame. In case war becomes the last resort to completely disarm Iraq, it has to be planned and executed by the United Nations. Otherwise, it would be difficult to save it from really becoming an irrelevant and ineffective debating society waiting for a disgraceful fate. Time is not yet over for the UN to prevent the Gulf war becoming "mother of all wars" and UNSC Resolution 661 becoming "mother of all resolutions". No further war nor any second or subsequent resolutions may be needed. UN has to recall, recognise and reaffirm that it is required not only to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, but to employ its machinery for the economic and social advancement of all peoples.

Aziz Rahman, a former Additional Secretary, is Executive Director of Centre for Governance Studies, University of Dhaka.

Lest we forget

AL Khatib and Shahidul Huq

Two celebrated newsmen

ZAGLUL AHMED CHOWDHURY

A nation has to remember its worthy sons who make contributions in different fields. Failure to which is construed as a dereliction of obligation although it is not often possible to pay fitting tributes to such sons of the soil. But nothing should hold us back from remembering them once in a while. Persons known for their lasting impression in various aspects of national life must be remembered so that the future generations know about them and are encouraged in many ways. A nation proves its worth when it fondly pays respects to its illustrious sons no matter how big or small is the scale of the remembrance. At least what is desirable is to send the signal that people, (living or dead) who are seen as successfully contributed to the nation in different areas of life must not slip into oblivion. The minimum that we can do is to remember them on certain occasions like their birth and death anniversaries, let alone other occasions. We do remember many of them but many others are little heard, at times they are not even mentioned. This is least expected. For, only a sense of gratitude and respect is enough to pay some homage to them. Indeed, the personalities of different professions and areas of national life do deserve some tributes from their country and people as nobody is immortal but their deeds is.

The death anniversaries of two celebrated newsmen went almost unnoticed recently. They like many other senior journalists and writers spared no efforts to invigorate and embellish the journalistic arena of this country through their long and unremitting endeavour to bring further flourishing to the profession. Both died in the eighties and both contributed immensely to English journalism of this country. It appears that their memory is slowly becoming a matter of sheer past and so much so that as if they hardly figured as notable names at certain stages of their career in the profession of journalism. Many of the present-day newsmen may not be that familiar with AL Khatib and Shahidul Huq but both were doyens of journalism during their days as much as were some others.

Abdul Latif Khatib, the scholarly, soft-spoken and erudite poet-journalist was a respected figure in the realm of Dhaka journalism in the sixties. A senior newsmen of the English daily "Morning News", paradoxically, he did not exactly belong to this soil but he loved this country much more than many others. Grey and black haired lanky Khatib, invariably with a cigarette in his hand and a bag hung through his shoulder, slowly walking by the footpath leading to the Press Club from Morning News office was a familiar spectacle for many here till 1973. Born in Maharashtra state of India, his long traverse in the orbit of journalism took him to such places of this region as Colombo, Karachi and Dhaka. In the later days of life, he chose to go back to India and finally to his village home in Ratnigiri district in Maharashtra. But in his own feeling, Khatib spent his most lovely and precious days in Dhaka.

This non-Bengalee philosopher-like elderly newsmen came here at one stage of his career but rather surprisingly fell in love with Dhaka, its people and environment. He went back to his native India but his mind would often revert to the enchanting days in Dhaka, where he had so much of fond memories. He wanted to come back here at least for once before death. But it never happened. He came to Kolkata and died in the house of his friend Sanjiv Dutta, another wellknown journalist. Curtain was rung down on the eventful but chequered life of a poet-journalist whose long stay in this country and association with journalism greatly enriched the profession. He was closely linked with literary and cultural life of this soil. He died on February 4, 1984.

Shahidul Huq, a brilliant student of political science of Dhaka university, also rose of the zenith of the profession. He joined as a reporter and adorned the position of an editor. He was away from journalism for sometime and returned to the profession which he admired so doggedly. During the interregnum, he was a diplomat and also Director General of the PIB but again returned as the editor of the now-defunct Bangladesh Times. Diminutive but exuberant in respect is enough to pay some homage to them. Indeed, the personalities of different professions and areas of national life do deserve some tributes from their country and people as nobody is immortal but their deeds is.

By a co-incidence, these two outstanding newsmen of English journalism had many things in common like they were mostly associated with the Morning News where much elder Khatib was a kind of teacher for Shahid, who would always unhesitatingly acknowledge what he learnt from versatile Khatib, whose knowledge and skills were wellknown in different countries of the region. Then after a long gap, they were united in New Delhi, where Khatib lived after going back from Dhaka and Shahidul Huq joined there as the press minister at the Bangladesh high commission. Once again the two found solace in each other's company and they would often used to get lost in their earlier professional days. Shahidul Huq wept like a child when he heard the news of Khatib's death.

My closeness with both was also somewhat incidental. As a university reporter of an English daily in the late sixties, I had the occasion of meeting Shahid Bhai but never had a chance of getting near to him. In the days immediately after our independence, we would see Khatib Bhai and give him "salam" but he would not know us much. The differences in age and professional positions seldom allowed me to enjoy their proximity as I was young and just a newcomer in journalism. Later, my posting in New Delhi as south Asia correspondent of the BSS in the beginning of the eighties propelled me into close relationship with both. We spent months and years there in togetherness. We used to have endless talks on different issues. As much younger to both, I was a constant son-like companion to

Khatib and younger brother-like friend to Shahidul Huq. Bashful Khatib Bhai, a person known for his strict integrity, would at times shake off some of his characteristic aplomb and become too lively. Shahidul Huq would appear mostly as childlike in his sweet and innocuous approach. They were both extraordinary in some manner. My tiny reservoir of knowledge was developed through association with them. I owe too much to them for whatever negligible worth I am today.

Khatib loved Dhaka more than his native land. Many years that he spent here left an indelible imprint in his mind. He would always remain engrossed in good lovely days he spent here. In the Indian capital, an elderly poet-newsmen-writer in a diplomatic party would be spontaneously narrating all the good things of Bangladesh like cascading falls in the Chittagong hill tracts, the scenic beauty of the tea gardens of Sylhet or the fascinating confluence of the Padma and the Megna in Chandpur! In the international trade fair in the Pragati Maidan in New Delhi, an unmindful looking elderly person would suddenly stop near the small Bangladesh pavilion and listen with rapt attention to the patriotic songs "Ei Padma - Ei Meghna - Ei Jamuna Suruma Nadi Thate -- Amar Rakhal Mon Gan Geye Jai...". He would look for persons coming from Bangladesh and would like to hear from them. He had mingled inextricably with many circles in Dhaka. Khatib's favourite food was rice and fish and would recall the gourmet fishes he used to have in the houses of friends like Zahur Hossain Chowdhury, Syed Nuruddin, Ahmedul Kabir, AKM Ahsan or Zahirul Huq. A non-Bengalee but he was an ardent supporter of Bangladesh's nationhood. He was more than keen to come again in Dhaka for a short trip. But this place remained distant for him. He was buried in Kolkata besides the grave of rebel poet Kazi Nazrul Islam.

Shahidul Huq was in his best when he died but he could still contribute much to journalism as he left us not much in ripe age. Little unassuming in attitude, his powerful pen was too strong to describe certain things or points pungently and adequately without being abrasive or hurting. Personally, he was too soft a person, who was hurt in many ways but himself hardly hurt anyone. He would welcome even blemish smilingly. I was in close touch with him here too after we both returned from New Delhi. When he died, I was away to Habiganj and missed the last sight. Later many of us travelled to his village home in Narsingdhi district to pay respect at his graveyard. Khatib Bhai and Shahid Bhai are dead for many years but English journalism of this country would remain indebted to them for their mastery and excellence and professionalism. We must not let the anniversaries of such persons go totally unnoticed. They deserve some mention if not glowing tributes.

Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury is a senior journalist.