between Egypt and Israel. But the

Americans continued their sup-

LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA SUNDAY MARCH 23, 2003

US request without a precedent

Another violation of international norm

HE US government's inability to comprehend that the war on Iraq has been a needless, senseless and avoidable humanitarian disaster stunned the world at large. As if that was not enough, Washington has now come up with some dictating terms to others -- it has requested the countries across the world to shut down Iraqi embassies until a new administration takes over in Baghdad. The war itself has been waged in blatant violation of the UN Charter, and proving its legitimacy will ever remain a moral burden on the US government; but now comes this!

By making the request, Washington has not only violated diplomatic norms and principles guiding international relations but has also shown a poor understanding of history. Even in the thick of the Second World War, the embassies of Germany, Italy and Japan were not closed down in the allied countries. Even Pearl Harbour did not lead to closure of Japanese

The US request, if taken seriously, will undermine other countries' sovereign right to decision-making about how they will conduct their international affairs -- a point driven home by France and Germany which have expressed their outright rejection of the US suggestion. We reject the idea and urge the global commu-

It seems the Bush administration has lost its sense of proportions, and allowed itself to be oblivious of the fact that it is dealing with independent sovereign nations. In its desperation to isolate Iraq it tends to forget that the war without international sanction itself is not legal. So, the question of any follow-up measure being legitimate does not arise.

The much-maligned aphorism 'Might is right' has been proven disquietingly by the US military action against an impoverished, weak nation. It has also shown how the American mind is working in a world, which does not have the much-needed balance of power. The war and US desire of making everyone accept its decisions without demur are a clear indication of how Americans are looking at other countries and peoples today. The US appears completely insensitive to the feelings of others. Such wielding of power in total disregard of world public opinion and sensibilities indeed marks a 'black chapter' in the history of interna-

City without breathing space

An urban hell

E can see an alarming trend of gradually filling up all empty spaces in the city in the name of providing housing facilities to the inhabitants. There are two kinds of empty spaces; one is at the micro-level within a locality, which has almost disappeared from the scene; and the other is common breathing space between larger areas, such as, Osmani Udyan, Ramna Park etc. The latter kind has, too, come under onslaught but public outcry has often saved them. However, empty space like the playing-ground in a locality has been under serious threat of extinction from building contractors. They, along with some corrupt officials and of course with influence in the government, have been continuing with their mission unhindered.

Tree cutting is going on in the city without any control or supervision by the concerned authorities. The latest example is a playground at the Asad Gate area where 20 trees were axed by contractors of a housing project who according to newspaper reports have close relations with a minister. We salute all those people who had gathered to protest the cutting of trees thereby taking a stand on an issue of vital importance to city dwellers -namely environmental degradation.

Basically, we would like to appeal to the concerned ministries, corporations and departments which have empty plots to adhere to certain environmental norms and retain those breathing spaces at any cost. While they must be obliged to do so by their own manual, the department of environment's writ should extend to

We want to emphasise that every inch of empty space in the city must be preserved like life itself. Some of the lands may look small; but together they have tremendous impact on our environment, our health, our welfare. We can't allow anyone to turn our city into an urban hell. It is the responsibility of the authorities to ensure that our children move around freely and breathe fresh air in the city. We demand immediate suspension of the tree-felling activity in Asad Gate area.

Is Iraq only the beginning?

KAZI ANWARUL MASUD

NGLO-AMERICAN attack on Iraq with the support of thirty countries consisting of the "coalition of the willing" has fractured the world. Whether the chasm thus created in the global system is irreparable remains to be seen. But if 19th March Security Council meeting and the reactions expressed by various governments of the world are indications of void, then the fault lines have indeed become sharp and the subterranean plates on which the global system had been standing for the last fifty years, cold war notwithstanding, have shifted dangerously apart from one another. The list of the thirty countries announced by State Department spokesman Richard Boncher is an amalgamation of countries some of which till recently were considered by the Western powers as failed or failing states; haven for drug lords; client states at former Soviet Union and now aspirants for NATO membership. While Britain, Denmark, Spain, Holland, and Italy are Europeans; Australia (despite twothirds of its population opposing military participation in the war) feels curiously vulnerable to terrorism after Bali incident. Japan, South Korea and Turkey already host American troops / bases in their territories. It is well-known that popular discontent has already been expressed in many of these countries against their governments' associations with this war. It is truly reflective of tragic desperation of the sole superpower of the world that the net cast far and wide could catch only those who do not see in this venture an immaculately conceived sense of moral values but a life-line thrown by the US to fish them out of theirs economic fragility, uncaring of possible cataclysmic consequences and future convoluted expressions of global personality.

If anything President Bush has remained consistent in his conviction in the justness of his cause though President Carter and millions of people throughout the world think otherwise. In his 48hour ultimatum speech he predicated the war against Iraq on the grounds that a) the Iraqi regime

time and advantage; b) Iraq possessed and concealed some of the most lethal weapons ever devised; c) Iraqi regime has a history of reckless aggression in the Middle East; d) there is clear danger of WMD falling into the hands of terrorists; e) Iraq would not disarm so long Saddam Hossian held power; f) US must act now "because the risk of inaction would be far greater". In his 19th March address to the Americans people (and the world) announcing the early stages of military operation or "decapitation" of the Iraqi leadership President Bush took pains to make it clear that the war was not

and suggested Washington had little interest in peaceful disarmament from the outset. He made no complaints about Iraqi non -cooperation. On the contrary, he said, Iraqis gave prompt access to the inspectors and they went to a great many places all over Iraq. In the UNSC meeting (of 19th March) Germany fully supported Dr. Blix approach; emphatically rejected the impending war; referred to Franco-German-Russian joint statement at Paris of 5th March in which the three countries expressed their conviction of effective Iraqi disarmament

ple. He warned that use of force to eradicate terrorism could be selfdefeating and an outbreak of force in such an unstable area could exacerbate the tensions and fractures on which the terrorists fed. Igor Ivanov of Russia emphasized that resolutions 1284(1999) and 1441 (2002) did not authorize the right to use force against Iraq outside the UN Charter and neither of the resolutions authorized the violent overthrow of the leadership of a sovereign state. President Vladimir Putin termed the US-led military action as completely unjustified and urged US to halt the attack on Iraq. "If we install the rule through peaceful means through of force in place of international

and therefore commanding wider support, than is the case now'

The way the war started -- taking advantage of the opportunity of decapitation" of Iraqi leadership -- smacks of assassination of political leaders. It was reported that President Gerald Ford had signed an executive order barring any US government agency to conspire to assassinate foreign leaders. Apparently, the inherent ingredients of the assassination concept have changed. In this case it has been argued that in times of war if foreign leader is an integral part of the Command and Central Structures - all Presidents are Commandersin-Chief of their defense forces-

then he / she is fair game and can

be "taken out" to shorten the war

and minimize the losses. If the

definitions are stretched then

Chile's Allende assassination and

installation of Pinochet (now being

sought by the western powers);

attempts on the life of Fidel Castro

and possible attempt on the life of

North Korea's Kim Jung IL should

also be legitimate. Through out

John Kennedy, Indira Gandhi,

Mahatma Gandhi, Bangabandhu

Sheik Mujibur Rahman were assas-

sinated. But they were murdered

not by foreigners but by their own

compatriots. One does not recall

attempts on the life of Milasouvich

during the Kosovo conflict though

history leaders like Julius Caesar.

port for Saddam Hussein throughout the Iran -- Iraq War. Or is Iraq only the beginning and other countries will follow? Theresa Hitchens of Center for Defense Information (US nuclear policy and counter-proliferation 26.02.2003) argues that changes being made by the Bush administration in the US nuclear strategy and counter-proliferation policy represent negative trend for non proliferation by pushing the US closer to the first strike in a conflict with less at stake than national survival; possibility of preemptive or even preventive nuclear war against an attacker or even a potential attacker, whether a state or non-state player, whether armed with nuclear weapons or not. The 2002 National Security Strategy States "Our enemies ... are seeking weapons of mass destruction .. America will act against such emerging threats before they are fully formed". It further states that deterrence is unlikely to work against 'terrorists or rogue states' and that the United States "can not let enemies strike first". Bush administration's thinking, asserts Theresa Hitchens, inter-alia that the United States would be justified in using nuclear weapons against a non-nuclear threat i.e. against chemical and biological weapons is a significant departure from the past four decades of US nuclear policy. By lowering the threshold, Bush administration risks encouraging rather than dissuading others from pursuing or possibly using WMD.

Regardless of the abnormal nature of Saddam regime, waging the Iraq War against world opinion is a tragic mistake of Herculean proportions. One does not have to e prescient to foresee an unstable Middle East and indeed a fractured world order an as excrescent of this perfidious misadventure. One only opes that the people of Iraq who have been traumatised for decades would finally be able to live a life they so richly deserve.

Or is Iraq only the beginning and other countries will follow? Theresa Hitchens of Center for Defense Information (US nuclear policy and counter-proliferation 26.02.2003) argues that changes being made by the Bush administration in the US nuclear strategy and counter-proliferation policy represent negative trend for non proliferation by pushing the US closer to the first strike in a conflict with less at stake than national survival; possibility of preemptive or even preventive nuclear war against an attacker or even a potential attacker, whether a state or non-state player, whether armed with nuclear weapons or not.

against Iraq nor its people but against "an outlaw regime that threatens peace with weapons of mass murder". He told the Iraqis of his respect "for their great civilization and for the religious faith they practice. We have no ambition in Iraq except to remove a threat and restore control of the country to its own people". To the Americans he said that war was needed to face the "threat now ... so that we do not have to meet it later with armies at the fire fighters, and police and doctors on the streets of our cities". a clear reference to events of nine

That most of the members of the UNSC including the head of UMMOVIC remained unconvinced became clear during the deliberations of the UNSC on the 19th March and there after. Dr. Hans Blix told the council of his sadness that no more time was "available for our inspectors and that armed action now seemed imminent." Immediately thereafter he told BBC Today Programme (20th March) of his regret over US Blix el Baradci inspection regime and their refusal to endorse Anglo-US second resolution authorizing use of force. Joschka Fisher totally disclaimed the Council's responsibility for what was happening outside the UN and categorically said that the policy of military intervention had no credibility. He was convinced of the centrality of

the UN and UNSC in Iraqi conflict. France spoke of two visions of the world -- those who chose to use force and thought they could resolve the world's complexity through swift preventive action, and those (including France) who believed in resolute action over time, through dialogue and respect for others, without exigency and abiding by principles, ignoring which would run the risk of creating misunderstanding, radicalization and spiraling violence. According to Dominique de Villepin the Iraqi crisis allowed the international community to craft an instrument, through the inspection regime, which was unpreceexpressed regret over the Iraq war without UN backing. China called the military actions as violations of the UN Charter and principles of the international law: Kofi Anan reluctantly reigned to the fait accompli said that under international law the responsibility for protecting civilians in conflict fell on the belligerents; in any area under military occupation, responsibility for the welfare of the population fell on occupying power. In his statement on the 20th March, Kofi Anan again urged all parties "to scrupulously observe the requirements of international humanitarian law and (to) do everything in their power to shield the civilian population from the grim consequences of the war". But n the main said he, "Perhaps if we had persevered a little longer, Iraq could yet have been disarmed peacefully, or if not the world could have taken action to solve this problem by a collective decision endowing it with greater legitimacy

security structures", he said, " no

country in the world would feel

secure". President Jacques Chirac

is he now facing the Hague War What is it about Saddam Hussein that angers Bush and Blair so much? Slogan of his Baath Party (resurrection or renaissance) is Arab unity, freedom from colonialism, and socialism (not Marxism). True he led the Arab opposition to the 1979 Camp David Accords

Kazi Anwarul Masud is a retired secretary to the Bangladesh government and former ambassador.

Marching forward

None of these undercurrents is likely to transform American politics any time soon. But elected leaders should understand that the direction of American foreign policy and the fate of Iraq are not the only things protesters are concerned about. They are also worried about the fate of America and if history is any guide, their voices will only get

DAVID CALLAHAN

ODAY there will be another rally for peace in Manhattan. In the last few months, the United States has seen the emergence of the largest antiwar movement since the days of Vietnam. Yet the protests had no evident impact on the Bush administration's plans for war in Iraq, which began Wednes

The movement could still influence the direction of United States foreign policy by signaling the profound unease that many Americans feel about a militarized, unilateral approach to the world. It may be, however, that the greater significance of the protests lies in what they portend for politics here at home. While antiwar movements are rarely successful in their immediate goal, they are often prescient indicators of the national mood.

Historically, antiwar movements have nearly always put forth larger critiques of how American society is organized, and have often been entwined with powerful social movements focused on domestic problems. Protesters against the Mexican-American War of 1846, worried that it would add more slave holding states to the Union, energized the abolitionist movement. At the turn of the century, many critics of the imperialistic Spanish-American War were also leaders in a growing push to curb the power of corpo-

Likewise, the intense opposition among many Progressive leaders to America's entry into World War I was wrapped up in domestic considerations. These leaders the predecessors of New Deal liberals argued that initiatives to create greater social and economic equity should take precedence over involvement in a European war. In the 1960's, the movement against the Vietnam War was linked to a range of national reform efforts, including demands for more civil rights and less poverty. The protests also helped create a counterculture of nonconformity that reshaped American

What might today's antiwar movement say about

domestic politics? Two undercurrents of the protests hint at larger critiques of United States society that sumption, the other to democracy

Recent years have seen mounting public uneasiness with the relentless consumption and waste in America. This uneasiness fuels new and different kinds of environmental activism, like campaigns against suburban sprawl or S.U.V.'s. It also underlies the growing move-ment of "downshifting," which emphasizes simplicity and authenticity over earning and spending.

So when antiwar protesters chant about oil, it should come as no surprise. They are questioning not just the huge United States military presence in the Persian Gulf; they are also criticizing a wasteful American way of life. This critique of our society existed before the war against Iraq, and it will become only more pronounced afterward

A larger message about the health of American democracy can also be heard amid the din of disparate antiwar arguments. Many protesters are unhappy that their arguments are being ignored not so much by the news media, although coverage has been sporadic at best, but by their elected leaders. Of course, a disconnect between the will of ordinary people and elites in Washington has been obvious for more than a decade. It has spurred many third-party candidacies and led to campaign-finance reform. Now, after the manipulation of public opinion by a president intent on war, and the failure of Congress to offer real dissent to his policy, voters' concerns about the health of American democracy will only deepen.

None of these undercurrents is likely to transform American politics any time soon. But elected leaders should understand that the direction of American foreign policy and the fate of Iraq are not the only things protesters are concerned about. They are also worried about the fate of America and if history is any guide, their voices will only get louder.

David Callahan is director of research at Demos, a public policy organisation.

I weep for my country

Senate remarks by Robert C. Byrd, March 19, 2003

'What is happening to this country? When did we become a nation which ignores and berates our friends? When did we decide to risk undermining international order by adopting a radical and doctrinaire approach to using our awesome military might? How can we abandon diplomatic efforts when the turmoil in the world cries out for diplomacy? Why can this President not seem to see that America's true power lies not in its will to intimidate, but in its ability to inspire?"

believe in this beautiful country. I have studied its roots and gloried in the wisdom of its magnificent Constitution. I have marveled at the wisdom of its founders and framers. Generation after generation of Americans has understood the lofty ideals that underlie our great Republic. I have been inspired by the story of their sacrifice and their

"But, today I weep for my country. I have watched the events of recent months with a heavy, heavy heart. No more is the image of America one of strong, yet benevolent peacekeeper. The image of America has changed. Around the globe, our friends mistrust us, our word is disputed, our intentions are gues-

"Instead of reasoning with those with whom we disagree, we demand obedience or threaten recrimination. Instead of isolating Saddam Hussein, we seem to have isolated ourselves. We proclaim a new doctrine of preemption which is understood by few and feared by many. We say that the United States has the right to turn its firepower on any corner of the globe which might be suspect in the war on terrorism. We assert that right without the sanction of any international body. As a result, the world has become a much more dangerous place.

"We flaunt our superpower status with arrogance We treat UN Security Council members like ingrates who offend our princely dignity by lifting their heads from the carpet. Valuable alliances are split. After war has ended, the United States will have to rebuild much more than the country of Iraq. We will have to rebuild America's image around the globe.

"There is no credible information to connect

Saddam Hussein to 9/11. The twin towers fell because a world-wide terrorist group, Al Qaeda, with cells in over 60 nations, struck at our wealth and our influence by turning our own planes into missiles, one of which would likely have slammed into the dome of this beautiful Capitol except for the brave sacrifice of the passengers on board. The brutality seen on September 11th and in other terrorist attacks we have witnessed around the globe are the violent and desperate efforts by extremists to stop the daily encroachment of western values upon their cultures. That is what we fight. It is a force not confined to borders. It is a shadowy entity with many faces, many names, and many addresses. But, this Administration has directed all of the anger, fear, and grief which emerged from the ashes of the twin towers and the twisted metal of the Pentagon towards a tangible villain, one we can see and hate and attack. And villain he is. But, he is the wrong villain. "What is happening to this country? When did we

become a nation which ignores and berates our friends? When did we decide to risk undermining international order by adopting a radical and doctrinaire approach to using our awesome military might? How can we abandon diplomatic efforts when the turmoil in the world cries out for diplomacy? Why can this President not seem to see that America's true power lies not in its will to intimidate, but in its ability

"The case this Administration tries to make to justify its fixation with war is tainted by charges of falsified documents and circumstantial evidence. We cannot convince the world of the necessity of this war for one simple reason. This is a war of choice."

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDI

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.

America vs. Iraq

I think that some citizens of Bangladesh are being misled about the reasons that America has taken on war against Iraq. In one of your columns in your paper about the war between Iraq and America, you said that President Bush "assumes" that Saddam has weapons capable of "mass destruction."

Actually, President Bush does not assume that he has weapons capable of mass destruction. It is a proven fact. Bush has tried all necessary means to negotiate with Saddam, but Saddam refuses. The Iraqi government harbours terrorists, and terrorists have one main cause for all of the terrorism that they commit. The main reason for their terrorism is that they believe that their way of life and their beliefs are the ONLY right way of

life and beliefs. That is wrong. No way of life/culture, belief, or religion is better than another. They are all equal. It is called freedom of speech, which we Americans all elieve that others should have, and I'm sure The Republic of Bangladesh and other nations of the world agree also. I am aware that in some countries, citizens have no rights at all. That is not right.

If Iraq harbours terrorists, then they are harbouring the weapons that terrorists possess. These weapons that they possess are weapons of mass destruction that are capable of wiping out the entire countries and cities. We are taking on war against Iraq's government because the September 11th attacks killed over 6,000 innocent civilians. Osama Bin Laden is one of the main terrorists that were involved in September 11th, and

we are not going to let him walk away from 9/11 like it never happened. Saddam has been proven to be linked to Al Qaeda...a terrorist organisation. America does not want Iraq's oil supply. We want the people of Iraq to have a better life. We want them to have a life where they are free to live any way that they wish.

Saddam does not care about his people. He does not deserve to be the leader of Iraq. That is just my opinion. America has no hatred against Muslims or Arabs. Al Qaeda was linked to the 9/11 attacks, and we are not going to let the terrorists that were involved in 9/11 get away with what they did. We WILL put an end to the fighting in the Middle East, and we WILL win this war. God Bless America!

A proud American citizen, USA

An appeal to the belligerent

Despite all the pleas and protests by literally millions of people around the world, the first major war of the 21st century is finally unfolding with casualties on both sides. Nobody or nothing could waver President Bush's determina tion to start vet another war.

The belligerent are out there baying for blood and actually shedding it. Understandingly, for men (and these days women also) in uniform ' there's not to reason why'. After all, soldiers have to be either on the offensive or on the civilians of Iraq. These helpless men, women and children have

nothing to do either with Saddam's intransigence or Mr. Bush's ambitions. Too sad for them, they are now trapped in their own land. For Iraqi civilians, existence has almost always been suffering. During the '80s of the last century they had to weather an 8-year war with Iran. Then they had to go through the first Gulf War, followed by wrenching UN sanctions. And now, they are bracing themselves for the fallout of Mr. Bush's war.

Although leaders of the attacking side always promises to spare the civilians, unfortunately, in any given war, the ordinary people suffer most

With no immediate end in sight to this present conflict, we have got a fervent appeal to make to the combatants. And it is: ' Leave the Mohammad Khaled Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka

UN Peacekeeping Operations

I'd like to thank Manzoor H. Ashraf for his response and wish to make a clarification to my comments in the hope that he, and other readers, better understand my suggestion.

During UN Peacekeeping operations, Bangladesh is not allowed to purchase weapons and hence must take whatever armaments it has. Air support during any UN mission is a priority to ensure that the UN ensures that military superiority will deter any future outbreak of violence. During the Bosnian conflict, UN troops from Serbian-Croat forces and yet the

NATO aircraft, who had the mandate from the UN to retaliate, did nothing. Suffice to say, this is but one example of how 'allied' forces will only do what they have to in order to protect their own interest. As everyone will know, it takes money to make money and the procurement, rather investment, of a small Russian aircraft carrier with a contingent of 30 Su-27 (ship borne) aircraft and accommodation for land forces will afford Bangladesh the opportunity to extend its role in UN operations abroad, and not just with ground troops but also with air support. The Mig-29 and ROK F-25 Frigate, in my humble opinion, were just very bad 'business' decisions since these vehicles cannot assist with supportive roles during UN opera-

EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR

Of course, one will have to calcu-

Abdul M. Ismail, Liverpool, UK

late the return on investment since

this initial expenditure will cost a

small fortune. Perhaps the UN will

be able to assist since its deploy

ment will be for the UN's benefit. I

am in full agreement that better

healthcare and education is a

requirement but 'proper' invest-

ment in this field should not be

half-hearted which it would be at

this point in time. It can only come

once Bangladesh has a self-

sustaining income and since UN

Peacekeeping operations has become one of the largest sources

of foreign currency earnings (close

to that of export of textiles, I

believe), then the best possible

approach would be to capitalise on

potential sources of growth for