

Priority option for a war: Iraq or pneumonia bug?

DR. SYED KAMALUDDIN AHMED

IT happened at last, Mr. Bush and Mr. Blair, a recently developed war cousins, are locked in a war, the reason only best known to them. Gossipmongers and jealous followers of the events say that it's a war for dominance over oil supremacy of unworthy Saddam compatriots, a war for ensuring ever-increasing security needs of Israel and essentially a war for accomplishing the need to establish a guardianship over Middle-Eastern riches. The last one definitely needs semi-permanent military bases in the vicinity to save the rest of the oil rich countries from 'Saddam monsters'. The ongoing war is therefore a priority of today's world and a noble gesture indeed!

There are protests world over, no matter the country's government supports the cause of the war or not, and the streets of UK and US are not an exempt. It appears as if the people in masses have gone 'crazy' and sent their 'conscience' to an exile. 'Imbecility' and 'moronic' psyche overpowered 'logical' thinking putting them in a trance, it appears. Only hope is that their frenzied act of 'nonsense' would soon disappear and they will come back to 'senses'. Two very powerful governments, their 'magnanimous' and 'charismatic' leaders and their younger and weaker cousins like Spain, Australia and Denmark, and also Asian 'good friend' Japan all showed an unmalleanable solidarity and voiced in a high pitched singular tympani for an universal unity to fight against an 'inadvertently created' Frankenstein. They came as a 'savior' of moribund humanity where the world body (the United Nations) failed to perform, and is proved impotent. The UN, however, showed an 'admirable' gesture by sending inspection teams to Iraq and thereby allowing sufficient time for an efficient battle preparation. Leaders of today's 'free world' think and anticipate well ahead of rest of the world. The rest of the world even fails to conceive what they are heading for and are

unable to visualize their immediate and long-term good, and eventually misinterpret things. Leaders however always feel pity for these unworthy creatures and never hesitate to ignore their cheap and often irrational sentiments. Bravo the war leaders! Cheers for you!

Ever since Republicans came into power in US we often hear 'howling' from their leader about democracy, social justice and a world free of exploitation, poverty and human rights violation. Labour party Prime Minister

derstood and the half-fed Iraqi population always stands behind their monstrous leader when an invasion by US forces comes as a matter. They are always living in a 'fool's paradise', it seems. Media reports suggest that thousands of children even in the suburb of Baghdad died of poor nutrition and infection since the 'sanction' was imposed on the country. Mr. Bush finds establishment of democracy and people's rights are the only two wayouts to rescue the people of Iraq from this wretched condition and that

and diseases. War is a personal tragedy too and nothing can measure the sufferings caused by war. In developing countries, particularly those with very low human development index, many pressing problems compete for overtly scarce resources. In this year, nutritional and childhood diseases are expected to kill more than two million children in developing countries. Tuberculosis is expected to cost more than another two million lives and malaria about 750,000. Annual deaths from smoking worldwide are expected

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of UK somehow echoes 'his master's voice' in the guise of a circus clown. No wonder he was called a 'annoying entertainer' without any 'charm or sense of humour'. Osama-bin-Laden, a business magnet of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in exile, was made a hero overnight after the 11th September Twin Tower disaster, and he hopefully enjoyed it in fullest extent. Poor and already war trodden innocent Afghan people became the victim of another war with very little known harm done to that US-made hero, Mr. Bin Laden. Only God knows how many men, women and children died in that war and how many are still in the row as its consequences. People of United States must have forgotten how miserably the multiple high-profile security agencies of their country failed to protect their country, its property and dignity. Security agencies indeed survive on taxpayers' money. This is how social justice is done and human right is protected!

Mr. Bush, a trusted friend of 'sanctioned' people of Iraq, is always misun-

is what Coalition Forces are going to achieve after a 'confident' victory in this current onslaught. People of Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and even Pakistan for that reason should feel jealous of Iraq in that case. Democracy is really a far cry for those countries, but yet they do not have a monster ruler like Saddam Hossain! They are indeed good friends of US government. Therefore, they may wait for some more time, at least till their good friend lose confidence on them.

A relevant argument erupted world over, why such a big protest everywhere when the purpose of the war is to 'free the world' from 'weapons of mass destruction' and make a regimented country member of the free world? History and global data shows that wars at different times and in different forms have clearly been taking an immensely growing human toll. It is catastrophic for the millions who become direct victims or its consequences. It is also a tragedy for surviving generations because of impoverishment, orphanhood, poor nutrition

to increase from three million in 1990 to 8.4 million in 2020, and all of these annual increases are expected to occur in developing countries.

However, health problems mentioned above are only a few of many problems governments of these countries are facing to improve the welfare of their citizens. About a billion lack access to clean water, and about 40 per cent women and more than one-quarter of men in the developing countries are illiterate. Inadequate transportation and communications hinder the effort of billions of people to improve their lives throughout the world. Given these and many other vital problems, how much time, effort and resources should governments devote to prepare themselves for an unnecessary war and its consequences? Views in this regard differ widely, but the bottom line is that, in most of the situations, governments of developing world are found powerless in decision making but to comply with the wits and wills of the 'most powerful'.

Recently, there is a World Health Organization alert against a deadly organism that causes pneumonia not responding to any conventional treatment. There are reports of death and panic all over. In all our optimism we may hope something would be done so that it won't take the shape of an epidemic. If such an epidemic ever breaks out, who does not know that the developing world would be its worst victim. The most obvious impact of similar epidemic would obviously on life expectancy and health. Measuring and predicting the actual impacts are difficult because of lack of quality data and because of dependence of this impact on many cross cutting issues. However, it may be safely mentioned that any irreversible epidemic accounts for an increased share of infectious disease burden and reverses the overall development by years. For example, AIDS has slowed and, in some places, reversed the trend of increase in life expectancy pushing it back by around ten years in hard-hit countries. The disease accounted for about 1 per cent of all deaths worldwide in 1990 and this proportion is likely to rise to 2 per cent in 2020. No body wants another addition to the already overburdened mortality threat.

Everybody knows and so do I that we have our priorities. Common mass of Iraq has an irony of fate to have poverty in the midst of plenty. They also have their priorities. Wants are many but choices are few, and then comes the mockery of a war. The world has the misfortune of seeing helplessly the well-anticipated twist and turn to carry forward the cause of a war, an epidemic of 'mass destruction' in the name of saving the nations from 'weapons of mass destruction'. And then comes the WHO alert, alert for an untreatable pneumonia. A real raillery to suffering humanity! You have to choose between the two priorities, all for a war, against an epidemic or against Iraq! It is indeed choosing between the options of living for a purpose or dying for a whim.

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When a war is just?

MOHAMMAD A MABUD

IN speaking about war, we often raise the question of its justness. There are always a number of issues to be considered before launching a war to let 'good' prevail over 'evil'. Hence, there must be some common ground for concurrence on issues involved in making the decision for a war. It may, however, be noted that even if the war is apparently just, all conceivable means should be utilised and exhausted before declaring it as a last resort.

A number of criteria need to be considered for judging a particular war as 'just'. These are:

* A war is just when it is intended for defence against an aggressor. A defensive war is, therefore, a just war.

* A war will be just, if all the means of conciliations and negotiations are explored and utilised; and willingness for negotiation is not spurned on either side. As long as a country is willing to negotiate, cooperate and shows some evidence of compliance, declaring war on it is 'unjust'.

* A war is not justified, if it is intended to achieve a hidden motive of the aggressor say, territorial gain or extracting resources.

* The participation of a third country alongside the defending country is less immoral, provided it is based on the principle of request and that the third country also perceives that the aggressor may be a threat to its own security later on.

* A war is totally unjust, if it is initiated on the request of a handful of people within the defending country.

* A war is unjust, if it is initiated with sheer arrogance to demonstrate one's military might, or experiment its weapons upon a country which is disproportionate in size, resources and power.

* A war is unjust, if the aggressor uses public resources for which it does not have prior mandate at the time of election or approval of parliament.

Sometimes, parliamentary approval for war also becomes unjust if, overtly or covertly, unholy objectives of government are disclosed to the members.

* A war is unjust, if it is launched with various pretext and without sufficient notice to the defending country.

If we look at the ongoing American led war on Iraq in the light of the above, one will only find it as highly 'unjust'. Iraq was no longer proved to be a threat to the security of US and UK which are thousands of miles away from it. Iraq was their former ally, but differences accrued over its occupation of Kuwait in 1991 -- a problem which was settled long ago. Iraq's immediate neighbours also have acknowledged that they no longer thought Iraq was a threat. Besides, American led war on Iraq failed to get support of the UN Security Council, because UN-sponsored Inspection Team failed to detect any weapon of mass destruction. Government of Iraq had already agreed to the UN Inspector's proposal to (1) destroy Skud missiles, (2) allow its scientists to be interviewed and (3) free inspection any time and anywhere in Iraq. Such a cooperation on the part of the Iraqi government was unprecedented and upto the best satisfaction of UN-Inspection Team and UN Atomic Energy Commission.

It some more time could be granted, more progress towards disarmament of Iraq could be achieved. Overwhelming majority of the Security Council members including China, France and Russia were in favour of giving more time. But in complete disregard the UN charter and worldwide protest against war on Iraq, America and Britain declared it unilaterally. It is simply outrageous and totally unjust.

The arguments for war to change regime and destroy "weapons of mass destruction" are mere propaganda for public consumption, but hidden

agenda might be something different. It is evident that America and Britain had long planned for war on Iraq as their preparation for it in terms of massive military build-up in the Gulf area started almost 5-6 months before declaring the war.

An unjust war is a crime against humanity. In fact, those who are responsible for initiating an unjust war on a disproportionately weak country, commit crime. In war, combatant forces kill innocent people,

even women and children are also not spared. Thus, they commit crimes which are punishable under law.

According to the Holy Quran, if one kills an innocent person, irrespective of his religious affiliation, he is killing, as if, the entire mankind. Neither Christianity nor Judaism or for that matter, any religion permits unjust war. It is no wonder why a celebrated personality like the Pope himself warned USA and UK not to wage war against Iraq. Apart from the United

Nations, world leaders like Nelson Mandela of South Africa, Jacques Chirac of France, Jimmy Carter of USA and Prime Minister Mohamad Mahathir of Malaysia voiced their concern against war. But in defiance of world opinion and also in disregard the canons of civilization, America and Britain have launched an unjust war on Iraq. The sooner this war is stopped the better for them and the humanity.

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An ambition misfired

ABM S ZAHUR

IRAQ, a medium sized (434,924 sq km) Islamic state since 635 AD has a population of around 23 million. Muslims constitute 97 per cent of the population and the rest (3%) are Christian and others. Among the Muslims 67 per cent are Shia and remaining 33 per cent are Sunni. Though predominantly a Muslim country it was developed by the British and the American enterprises. In fact it was modernised through huge royalty from British and American oil companies. Thus nationalisation of its oil industries resulted in great losses to the British and American companies.

The country is now ruled by one of the 'most ruthless dictators' in history through his Baath Party and few thousands of faithful Republican guards and paramilitary formation, Fidayeen. The major part of the revenue is spent on maintaining armed forces and inner circle of the ruler. Though resource wise the country is one of the richest in the world, majority of its people live in misery.

In the early sixties its government was highly pro-western. Thus both America and Britain made it the strongest military power among the Arab states. Strong western support made Saddam (ruling the country from early 70s) very ambitious. His quest for power, influence and prestige dragged him to war with Iran (control of Sat-Al-Arab river). His quest for aggrandizing Iraq led him to conquer Kuwait. Naturally enough such of his behaviour created fear among his smaller and less powerful Arab states, even Israel felt uneasy.

Adventurism of Saddam resulted in Gulf War of 1991. This war enabled US to make its presence in the Middle East more pronounced. At that time the UN could have, with the support from majority of states brought Iraq under UN supervision and it could have been converted into a trust territory, if necessary. At that stage even the majority of the Iraqis (particularly the Shia community) were, perhaps, in favour of such an arrangement.

President Clinton attempted to bring peace in the Middle East through developing better understanding between Yasser Arafat and Israel, a state created by Britain as per earlier commitment after the second World War in the heart of the Arab world. As Arab-Jews conflict is about 1300 years old creation of the state brought tension in the Middle East. It may be pointed out in this regard that

relationship between the Christians and the Muslims was also not that close. In the past they fought crusades also. The Serbs never forgot about the atrocities of the Turks. Thus it is no surprise that both Christians and Jews may be suspicious and concerned about the growing strength of Muslim states, particularly the states like Iraq and Iran.

The tragedy of Twin Tower in New York on 9 September 2001 allegedly by Al Qaeda group was not only shocking for the US it was also condemned by all saner elements across the world. We do not know whether Osama Bin Laden is still alive. It appears US has lost much of its interest directly in Laden. But so far US has failed to show any connection between Saddam and Al Qaeda or Laden.

The Jew-Muslim conflict and the Muslim-Christian growing mistrust have resulted in developing closer relation between western states and Israel. USA, as the only superpower, needs direct or indirect control over critical resources of the world. Fortunately or unfortunately oil is one of the critical resources. As such the US is desperate to have her control over the Middle East. Israel, on the other hand, has to depend on strong US support for its existence and act for US when necessary. Thus closer relationship between the US and Israel is based mainly on mutual interest.

UK's present support to USA is also purely business. The British oil companies and the construction companies see Iraq crisis as an opportunity for entering into Iraqi oil industry and to participate in the lucrative post-war reconstruction programme in Iraq. However, Tony Blair could neither effectively convince his party nor majority of his EU counterparts about supporting US invasion of Iraq.

Bush administration through unilateral interpretation of UN resolution 1441 has invaded Iraq. Mr Bush has been able, as it appears, to convince the majority of the American people that Saddam is a security threat to the US and he has direct or indirect link with al Qaeda terrorist group, who are regarded as responsible for the Twin Tower tragedy.

Within a week of starting the invasion Mr Bush stated that destruction of Saddam regime would take much more time than anticipated because of unanticipated stiff resistance from the most "most desperate elements of doomed regime". However, he has assured the Americans of the ultimate victory of US-led attack on Iraq. He has tactfully

placed his proposal for an additional sum of US\$74.7bn before the Congress for prolongation of war due to resistance.

At Camp David Tony Blair has discussed various matters about the crisis with Bush. He has also presented a peace plan for an independent Palestine state. He has also met the UN Secretary General to discuss about humanitarian aid for the Iraqis after the conflict is over. During his discussion with Bush it seemed that he was a multilateralist while Mr Bush more a unilateralist.

The war for the last few days has revealed a number of things rather clearly. They are:

a. France has emerged as the most acceptable to Arabs. Participation of France would be essential in any UN deliberation on reconstruction of post-conflict Iraq.

b. Mere depending on hi-tech arms and ammunition a conventional war cannot be won. Adequate number of forces is needed.

c. Iraq has learnt a lot about American way of warfare since 1991.

d. Common Arabs have become anti-American. Even the non-Arab or non-Muslim countries are showing disapproval of war increasingly.

e. It is urgently needed to reform UN. The world is being divided more into pro-US and anti-US. The differences among members of EU and NATO have become pronounced.

It is stated by US-UK alliance that one of their aims is to establish democracy in Iraq. It is a common knowledge that without proper atmosphere democracy, the most sophisticated form of governance, cannot be introduced. Truth is that Arabs are basically not politically conscious. This may be due to their long tradition of tribal culture and indifference to the concept of democracy. The US' desire of making Israel a regional power through acquiring absolute control on Arab states cannot be successful because it has become abundantly clear that the Muslim states are becoming more suspicious about US motive. They are realising the necessity of an Arab or Islamic solidarity.

Bush administration speaks of bringing peace in the Middle-East. So far we have not deciphered from US activities any indication about the reduction of suffering, conflict, denial and double standards. Instead we see the opposite. War can never bring peace. Only a reformed UN may perhaps bring peace.

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McCarthy's ghost

Democracy under threat in the US

Anyone who objects to the conflict in Iraq is not allowed to say so

GARY YOUNGE

IT'S drive time with WABC's rightwing talkshow host, Curtis Sliwa, and Bill is on the line from the Poconos in Pennsylvania with a tale so funny he can hardly share it for giggling.

He was carrying an American flag and yelling support for the troops in a delayed St Patrick's Day parade over the weekend when he saw one woman carrying a sign saying: "No blood for oil".

"She was wearing black and she was an older lady," says Bill. "And then our sheriff saw her and she didn't have a permit. So they put her in the back of the truck car and hauled her away."

On its own, Bill's story would be aberrant - the tale of an overzealous legal official and an unfortunate woman in smalltown America. Increasingly though it is becoming consistent. The harassment, arrest, detention and frustration of those who are against the war is becoming routine. Relatives of victims who died on September 11, who are opposed to the war, have been prevented from speaking in schools. Last month Stephen Downs was handcuffed and arrested after refusing to take off a Give Peace a Chance T-shirt in a mall in Albany. He was told he would have been found guilty of trespass if the mall had not dropped the case because of the bad publicity.

As Iraqi civilians and American, British and Iraqi soldiers perish in the Gulf, this war is fast claiming another casualty - democracy in the US. This process is not exclusive to America. Civil liberties have suffered in Britain because of the war in Northern Ireland, and are undergoing further erosion because of the conflict.

But it has a particular resonance here because of the McCarthyite era during the 1950s when those suspected of supporting communism were forced to testify before the Senate to recant their views and divulge names of progressives. Comparisons with McCarthyism are valid but must be qualified. These popular and sporadic displays of intolerance may be gathering pace, but no federal edict has been issued to support them and many who support the war are opposed to them.

Bush has not launched a campaign to derail the Dixie Chicks, the all-American girl band whose CDs were crushed by a mob and whose latest release fell from the top of the charts after one of its singers made an anti-war remark in London. Downs says the officer who arrested him spent an hour-and-a-half trying to persuade his superiors that the case was not worth pursuing. Even Curtis Sliwa told Bill he should "ignore the protesters and get out the flags".

While these popular expressions of intolerance appear sporadic, not all are spontaneous. The rally to smash the Dixie Chicks' CDs and much of the impetus for the boycott of their single came from radio stations owned by Clear Channel Communications of Texas, which has close ties with Bush. The company's stations also called for the pro-war rallies that have cropped up in the past week.

And while they have not received the state's imprimatur, Bush's administration has certainly created the climate in which they can thrive.

Under Big Brother monikers like the Patriot Act and Operation Liberty Shield, the state has stepped up the scope of its surveillance and the wiretapping of American citizens and will authorise the indefinite detention of asylum seekers from certain countries. Last year, surveillance requests by the federal government under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act - originally intended to hunt down foreign spies - outnumbered all of those under domestic law for the first time in US history.

Under a proposed new bill, entitled the Domestic Security Enhancement Act, the government could withhold the identity of anyone detained in connection with a terror investigation and their names would be exempt from the Freedom of Information act, according to the Centre for Public Integrity, a Washington-based advocacy group.

Barry Steinhardt, director of the American civil liberties union programme on technology and liberty, told the *New York Times* that authorities have been demanding records from internet providers and libraries about what books people are taking out and which websites they're looking at.

The result is a symbiotic relationship between the mob and the legislature, whereby official repression provides the framework for public scapegoating with each gaining momentum from the other.

Most vulnerable are those who are most vulnerable anyway - Arab immigrants and non-white Americans. Men from countries regarded as potential sources of terrorism and who do not have a green card, are now required to be registered, fingerprinted and photographed by the immigration service. Many who have committed no crime but simply have their applications for a work permit pending are routinely arrested. "Basically, what this has become is an immigration sweep," said Juliette Kayam, a terrorism expert at Harvard. "The idea that this has anything to do with security, or is something the government can do to stop terrorism, is absurd," she told the *Washington Post*.

The growing surveillance compounded by discrimination adversely affects black Americans too. "It places those of us of colour under increased scrutiny and we get caught up in the web of racial profiling," says Jean Bond, of the Radical Black Congress.

The fact that all the incidents mentioned above happened to white, American-born natives is an indication of just how deep the rot has set in. Downs is the chief lawyer in the Commission on Judicial Conduct. Such are the targets of the war on terror.

From the outset Bush has insisted that: "Those who are not for us are against us," and so it follows that anyone opposed to his way of dealing with the terrorist threat becomes the enemy, at home or abroad. Terrorism is the new communism. Even before the first body bags have arrived, the war has already reached the home front.

Courtesy: The Guardian