

## We envision a three-tier UN role

*Anything short its primacy will be unacceptable*

BAGHDAD, the citadel of Saddam's power, has fallen before an overwhelming military campaign of the coalition forces. But the war is not over yet. In the version of the US central command, the cities earlier taken are yet to be fully secured. More important, there is fight left in the north of Baghdad such as Tikrit, Mosul and a couple of other townships.

It will be skin-deep to regard the scene of jubilation in a Shia district of Baghdad or snap-shot thumbs-up signs as being representative of the majority Iraqi sentiment. The pervasive inner feeling of the Iraqis is likely to be one of humiliation on being invaded rather than liberation, even though there could be a lessening of stress thinking that the bloodiest phase of war might have been left behind. As for the detractors of Saddam's iron-clad rule they have an understandable sense of relief, even perhaps vindication, what if this has happened courtesy coalition forces' blatantly invasive intervention.

The Arab pride is badly hurt. The momentary sight of Saddam's face being draped by the US flag and his statue pulled down by a crane mounted on a coalition force tank was viewed in the neighbouring countries as humiliation for the Arabs. Although some Arab governments may be somewhat relieved at the collapse of the Baath Party, the Arab sensibilities have been profoundly hurt, all the more because Israeli ego will pluck a stimulus from this. There is no doubt, the Arab world is viscerally affected by the spectre of an invasion raring to reach hegemonic proportions with Tel Aviv as its potential beneficiary.

The immediate problem facing Iraq is two-fold: first and foremost, the crumbling old order leaving a power vacuum, the Iraqi cities have plunged into anarchy, disorder and plunder of public and private property. This void has to be filled in by a UN-mandated legitimate interim authority evidently shorn of any 'occupation' stigma. Secondly, Iraq is caught up in a massive humanitarian disaster: hospitals are awash with the blood of the dead and the wounded. Yet, these are severely handicapped in treating the critically injured owing to shortage of water, electricity and medicine. The city utilities have completely broken down; the basic infrastructure needs to be brought into a functional state without any loss of time. The ICRC has stopped working saying it is too chaotic to function. The UN has specialised agencies to deal with these problems. So, the world body has to come into the scene at the soonest if we are to save human lives.

The coalition forces' victory has one big missing element, which is legitimacy. Let's not forget, the war was waged without UN sanction. So the lack of legitimacy will stalk the victory as well as reconstruction work so long as the UN is not allowed to play its due role with a multilateral authority right from this point in time onwards.

The first task before the UN is to establish an interim authority in Iraq. That done, its specialised agencies will be in a position to rebuild the lives of the Iraqis. Then, the UN takes on a role to maintain peace and security, something which we believe has been ignored in the case of Afghanistan. There was a much more overwhelming victory in Afghanistan but the undermining of UN's peace-keeping role has proved counter-productive since the US troops are having to fight in some parts of the country even today. Repeating the mistake in Iraq where the situation is infinitely more complex will boomerang on the US exacting a heavy price on the super power.

The vision of the ultimate political set-up for Iraq will have to come from the UN Security Council, not from the conquerors making a war entirely of their own volition.

No international solution to the Iraq question can be credible, acceptable and durable unless the UN becomes the sole guarantor for a government by the Iraqis, of the Iraqis and for the Iraqis. It will be an act of perfidy on international law if the Iraqis are not given charge of their destiny.

## Embedded in Belfast



HASNAT ABDUL HYE

TO use the currently fashionable jargon, even at the risk of being risqué, Tony Blair was 'embedded' with George Bush this week in Belfast. This is the third time he has had similar trysts with his Atlantic soul mate, a relationship that never ceases to puzzle observers. He has been variously called Bush's poodle, the Foreign Minister of America and worse to embarrass him for his obsequiousness of and subservience to America. But he has an armour plated skin, thicker than the Abram tanks rolling into Baghdad, that is hard to penetrate. No wonder, George Bush is all praise for his buddy and calls him Tony, with adrenaline rushing visibly on his face.

The summit in Belfast was different from the preceding two held after the start of the Iraq invasion. It was meant to review the progress and to fine-tune the post-war scenario that was scripted long before the war started. But Bush and Blair, the B duo in Belfast, also tried to pull off a diplomatic offensive alongside the military one. They might be having a sudden seizure of qualms of conscience for forsaking the diplomatic route and want to make amends for the deliberate lapses on their part. But more accurately, it is a public relations ploy to win the hearts and minds of anti-war people across the world and those in the Arab streets. To placate Arab sentiments once again mention was made of the mythical

'road map' for Middle East peace process, an euphemism for Palestinian-Israeli conflict resolution that envisions two states living in peace, side by side, and living happily ever after. But the problem is, very few, except the Americans and the Israelis, believe in this fairy tale ending any more. On top of this cynicism, not many knows much about the road map. It has been kept on hold at the request of the Israelis for months

is the Israelis who have derailed the peace process set on course under Oslo accord. But for that provocative visit to Temple Mount by Sharon before he become Prime Minister, there would have been no sudden aggravation of Intifada and more progress, perhaps final settlement of the conflict, would have been achieved by now. There is no criticism heard of Israelis' systematic obliteration of the Palestinian infrastructures built step by step under Oslo

But this plan, the road map, needs to be shown in the light of urgency if not of fairness. Bush and Blair, met in Belfast to assure the world that their minds are pre-occupied with more than Iraq. Their agenda for nation building is sweeping and nothing less than global. They want to give a taste of freedom and democracy to Palestinians just as they are about to offers this to Iraqis after 'liberation'. There is a long list of other countries in need of their mid-

they care a whit about public opinion. The public relations overtures made at Belfast did not come with kid gloves. Tactfully, but very sternly the anxious allies outside the 'coalition' were told that the UN will have a vital role in post-war Iraq and they can participate through it, if they desire. But there will be a leading role of America during the first phase when the civilian government will be installed, reconstruction will be under-

"not a day longer"? Cliches have this advantage of obfuscation in spite of being shop-soiled.

America has already humiliated the UN when it bypassed it before attacking Iraq. Its disdain for the world body is no secret. If the UN is to restore its lost dignity it must insist on a leading role in post war Iraq right from the start, as is being asked by France, Russia, Germany and others. If America does not agree to this demand on the ground that its forces shed blood in Iraq and for the promotion of its long-term interests, so be it. To play second fiddle to America in such a plan will not only legitimise its original aggression but also connive with its sinister designs. No country, not to speak of the UN, should give America the satisfaction of lining up support on its own terms. It will be a betrayal of the world community who rallied against the unjust war and are dead against new imperialism. The Secretary General must not get involved in any post war activity in Iraq without a Security Council resolution. If it is done he will let down the world body and will be seen as being squeamishly obedient to America. Being a Nobel Prize winner for peace and a two time Secretary General he has no reason to stoop so slow. He does not have to cap his brilliant career as the errand boy of America.

As for member countries and civil society, adopting a similar attitude in support of multi-lateralism will drive home the point to America that it may have won the war but not the hearts and minds of peace loving people. The more unilateralist America becomes, greater will be its isolation. Its harvest of hatred will keep on multiplying for each day of its illegal occupation in Iraq. That will be the sweet revenge of history. It is a pity that Blair, 'embedded' with Bush in Belfast, could not persuade his mate to avoid this fate.

Hasnat Abdul Hye is a former secretary, novelist and economist.

## IN MY VIEW

**As for member countries and civil society, adopting a similar attitude in support of multi-lateralism will drive home the point to America that it may have won the war but not the hearts and minds of peace loving people. The more unilateralist America becomes, greater will be its isolation. Its harvest of hatred will keep on multiplying for each day of its illegal occupation in Iraq. That will be the sweet revenge of history. It is a pity that Blair, 'embedded' with Bush in Belfast, could not persuade his mate to avoid this fate.**

though the three other members of the Quartet insisted on its publication long ago. It is reported that already more than one hundred corrections have been made at the suggestion of the Israelis. By the time it is made public it will look so favourable to Israelis that Palestinians will find it difficult to use as a guide for the punishing slog towards statehood. But even this one sided and biased road map will come attached with many caveats for Palestinians.

For instance, as a starter, they must appoint a Prime Minister powerful enough to send Arafat into oblivion. Secondly, there has to be thoroughgoing reforms in Palestinian institutions. And most crucial of all, there must be cessation of all acts of terrorism. Looking at these and other conditionalities it would appear as if the present aggravation of the conflict is because of Arafat's obduracy, inadequacy of Palestinian institutions for governance and wanton acts of Palestinian terrorism. There is no recognition at all that it

accord which would have led to ultimate independence for Palestinians. In the name of democratic reform, Israelis and Americans want Arafat to be sidelined so that a more pliant leader can take his place. When powerful participants in negotiation dictate who their counterparts should be across the table, the intention becomes all too obvious.

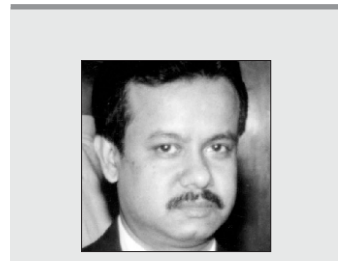
Palestinians, with or without Arafat, will have little choice now about what is being offered. After the invasion and occupation of Iraq everything in the Middle East will be according to the grand design of Anglo-American and Israeli axis. They will redraw the map of Middle East and redesign its politics in such a way that no Arab country ever dares to challenge or question their authority and 'manifest destiny'. For this they will coax and cajole and ultimately use brute force for acquiescence of the recalcitrant. Iraq invasion has made them contemptuous of diplomatic niceties, though lip services might be proffered from time to time.

wifery service. But they have the prerogative of being selective.

As they have made it plain, selection of Belfast as the venue is not accidental. After all there is an unfinished business here, the Good Friday accord reached between Irish Republicans and Northern Ireland now being in a limbo. America wants to kick-start this not only because it initiated the accord through Senator Mitchell (another case of America's Good Samaritanism!), but also because it looks upon the simmering problem as another of its obligation to bring order and democracy in the world. So there should be no mistaking about America's intentions and goals. It is nothing short of global and Iraq is just one among the many tasks that America has set for its strategic restructuring mission. This is the whole point about the Belfast summit where Blair was 'embedded' with Bush so amiably and dutifully. Having forced their way into invading Iraq, they need to shore up the sullied image somewhat to win the hearts and minds of critics. Not that

taken and other pressing matters will be sorted out to introduce 'democracy'. Obviously, such measures will include, among others, taking control of oil wells, punishing Iraqis for 'war crimes', and finding weapons of mass destruction, by hook or by crook, and last but not the least, to have a permanent arrangement for control over Middle East. These are of vital interests to America, if not to Britain. The latter will be happy if a few contracts are given to her in recognition of services rendered. Bush prevailed over Blair regarding multilateralism, disabusing him of the notion and remained firm about having monopoly authority in the first phase with American Generals in charge. They are no novice at this, Bush must have told. The UN will not be ignored this time. It will be given a 'vital role' to carry on with humanitarian activities. How long will this phase be? Well, not a day longer than is needed, declared Blair triumphantly. The catch is after now many months or years will the count down start for that

## The irony of Iraq



MOHAMMAD BADRUL AHSAN

WHAT has to happen has happened, and the Americans have taken Iraq. A photograph in the Internet version of *The Washington Post* showed an U.S. Army Sergeant relaxing in a sofa in one of the many palaces of Saddam Hussein. Perfidious powers don't last forever, and palaces have been gutted before. The Versailles of Louis XIV, the Winter Palace of the Tsars, the Malaanang palace of Ferdinand Marcos and the Niavaran palace of the Pahlavis have been deserted and defiled. Nothing symbolizes the defeat of a ruler more than the loss of his lifestyle.

Saddam has lost his lifestyle for sure since all of his palaces on the ground are either taken or no longer safe for use. He will, if still alive, not be seen holding his court on Iraqi television, and have to hide, unless fleeing the country, in underground bunkers, which might have all the amenities, luxuries and safety of a palace. He will not be seen on the streets of Baghdad, thronged by his people who would get

hysterical to touch him or at least to have a glimpse of their leader. Saddam Hussein, the man who has lost his country, will go on living like the pirated copy of an original. He will look like one, talk like one, but will perhaps not be a ruler again.

The wheels of history turn on victories and defeats. Kingdoms change hands, while scepters, palaces, treasures, and armies pass from regime to regime. What comes up, goes

his gorgeous palaces, everything has come under scrutiny. Saddam Hussein has been reduced into a goddamned lumpen, his rise to power, his dictatorship and his dynastic ambitions diminished into ruins of a lost world.

But this is not a defeat, which the people of Iraq have inflicted on their potentate. This is not a defeat as a result of an uprise or revolution, likes of which ransacked the Versailles, Winter Palace, Malaanang or

world, and every brand of ideology, which preferred peace to war, have lost their cause.

So when the U.S. soldier relaxed in Saddam's palace, he also relaxed on the debris of many convictions. The super-duper victory of a mighty nation that hissed its bullets, mortars, missiles and bombs into a country it was hell bent to liberate, has also crumbled the edifice of conscience, which had separate living quarters for right and

taken, but not to give up, a true hero who predicates life upon honour.

Defeat is victory's nemesis, which is also true other way around. By the time this column appears, the coalition forces might take the rest of Baghdad and complete their occupation of Iraq. Saddam Hussein or some of his many doubles still might be alive, watching the fate of Iraq from the fringe of its affairs. How are the Iraqis going to grapple with what happened? The

other. The Peloponnesian War began because the Corinthians sought revenge on the Corcyraeans.

Needless to say, the war on Iraq is the American hatred for the Muslims, veiled in the hatred for Saddam. And that hatred resounded in the rage with which American bombs, missiles and mortars pounded on Iraq. Terrorism was linked with Muslims, and Saddam was linked with terrorism. America killed all three birds with one war. It removed Saddam, terrorized terrorism and created grounds to discriminate Muslims.

In the days of ancient Rome, competitions in Latin prose held in the amphitheatre at Lyons required the losing contestants to erase their writing with their tongues. Authors too slow to make the correction were decapitated and flung into the Rhone. The Iraqis in occupied Iraq will be expected to erase Saddam from their hearts, and anyone failing to make that correction will face the consequences.

The newfound democracy in Iraq will be to rule by the dissent of its people. And the American rule will merely replace a local dictator with foreign despots. Saddam's palaces will be there, perhaps as museums or residences of future rulers of Iraq. But next time Americans enter one of these palaces, they might not want to relax. Because the irony of Iraq will be that while the Americans tried to rouse its people against their dictator, they will eventually rise against their invaders.

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## CROSS TALK

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down and history weaves the fate of mankind through its rises and falls. As the coalition forces entered his palaces and bulldozed his statues and images on the streets, the destruction of Saddam Hussein appeared to have closed a circle. Those who lifted him also came to topple him, the friends turned foes and the keepers turned usurpers. These are the signs of a man, who has run out of luck.

So the truth is that the dictator of Baghdad has been defeated. The invading armies, he called infidels, have entered his palaces and examined his secrets. His lavish lifestyle, the gold-plated showers and soap-trays in his bathrooms, the ornate ceilings of

Niavaran. The western media occasionally interview anti-Saddam Iraqis to show popular support for the US-led attack. That is like judging George Bush by the words of anti-war protesters in New York or Washington.

The real defeat came elsewhere. It has dropped like a cluster bomb, releasing bomblets of many defeats on the rest of the world. Everyone, who opposed the US-led invasion of Iraq, has been defeated. The antiwar protestors, the Muslim fundamentalists, the Saddam sympathizers, the European countries, the United Nations, the Iraqi people, the moralists, the Muslim sentiments, the US-haters, the conscientious people of the

wrong. If anyone ever cares to send the dust of Iraq for lab test, it will be found laden with gunpowder, ground metal and droplets of blood. Never before in history have the invaders come to liberate the invaded on such a grand scale.

If the Americans promise to bring democracy, funnily they have already brought it in Iraq. Saddam's defeat will be greeted by his people and also by the people all over the world. He has been victorious in his defeat, his shattered palaces re-assembled and multiplied in the hearts of millions who adore him now. He fights to the end in a lost battle, not because he is mad to think he will win the war. He wants to be

small crowds, which cheered the American soldiers or danced atop the statue of Saddam lowered by an American engineering tractor, represent only a small section of their countrymen. Might be the Kurds or the Iraqis with special vengeance.

If anything, they only reminded what the Americans forgot. Hatred like wine gets fermented over time and war is about hatred. The First World War was rooted in the Austrian-Hungarian hatred for the Serbians. The Second World War started with Hitler's hatred for the Jews and the Hundred Years' War was sparked by the mutual hatred of the English and the French for each

## OPINION

## In defence of Iraqis

SYED M QUADER

LOOK at the present map of the Middle East will reveal one important fact. Countries are bordered and separated from each other for very long distances by long straight lines. These lines in actuality represent many hundreds of miles. Take for example Iraq, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. These neighbouring countries share a common past in every aspect of human endeavour. Their lands have been the land of the prophets, great kings and great civilizations. Many learned historians and thinkers have called this area the Cradle of Human Civilization. For a very long time in history, for all practical purposes, they have had one common language and one common religion although not necessarily one single religion. 'A very long time in history' means at least three thousands years which might even be stretched to ten thousand years. They have loved each other and hated each other for a very long period in history in consonance with the very essence

of the human predicament. But today they are separated from each other by these imaginary straight lines that run through hundreds of miles of pure desert.

To the budding student of history or political science the question that will naturally spring to mind is, 'What do these imaginary straight lines mean?' and, 'How do thousands of years of meandering history become transfixed by the geometry of long straight lines?' 'How can the shifting sands of Arabia give meaning to imaginary straight lines that in all likelihood sprang up from the convoluted imagination of human beings?' To a more senior student of these subjects, the answer is not far away. As we all know it, these imaginary borders were instituted mainly by retreating British, allied and axis forces who crumbled only a few decades ago mostly due to their own avarice and hunger for power culminating in the two World Wars fought between themselves. Their plant for future profit was to make full utilization of

ignorance, selfishness and mutual recriminations of a people caught in the low tide of history. And they succeeded in this with pernicious precision. These straight lines remain, wars are fought, production of oil goes up, its price go down. All in the last sixty years or so.

But, the tide of history has started to change in the last sixty years. The Arabs have learnt self respect which started to manifest itself as Arab nationalism. Old histories and old glories started to be rekindled. And effort was made to reclaim the Shatt al Arab waterway and to reinforce Shia-Sunni solidarity that appeared to be slipping away in the wake of the Iranian Islamic revolution of the seventies. Kuwait was attacked to reclaim an old and lost heritage and to re-unite with cousins and friends. But the world led by some Western nations did not look upon this desire to claim old glory kindly. Rather they started to see in its threats to their plans for future growth and power, as

also opportunities to thwart potential adversaries in the world stage that have ominously started to raise their heads, namely the EU and China among a few others. If Vietnam was the ground for staging a pre-emptive strike against the growth of Communism, Iraq could very well be the ground for a pre-emptive strike against a resurgent Islam but more persuasively against a power hungry EU and China. Such are the rules of the game. The fortunes of history belong to the strong, and 'might is right'!

And so Iraq has been subjected to cluster bombs that are designed to annihilate 'personnel' with no regard to 'collateral damage'. And cluster bombs cannot be called 'WMD' (Weapons of Mass Destruction) because the omniscient Western media has pre-conditioned the mind not to accept this terminology for cluster bombs aimed 'unfortunately' at unarmed women and children of Iraq. And helicopter gunships

unloaded their lethal cargo while obsolete Scud missiles are perhaps considered WMD. And so, Iraq with its ancient glory shall perish and the Bedouins shall remain straddling their camels in the desert.

But wait. It is this verdict of philosophy, and all the other disciplines of knowledge that sublime men of understanding are so much in awe of? Ask them in a Silent corner and they will tell you with a smile on their face that from a sense of man's primeval presence in the mystery of creation comes his pride and his sense of awe, that from this sense of awe comes his awakening of love, that from this love comes his feeling of what is good, that from this comes his moral values, that from this comes his social values, that from this comes his commercial values, that from this comes his military values. The people of Iraq and all who are with them have started to feel this special kind of awe in their hearts. They cannot be defeated.

## Things never be the same again

ERSHAD KHANDKER

IN medieval times one kingdom was hardly ever secured. The fear of being attacked and run over by another state was constant. The one way a ruler could feel safe was to eliminate all other nearby states by conquering and turning them to vassals. We have read of the conquests of the Moguls, of Charlemagne and Alexander of wars and conquests that happened so many hundreds of years back.

We could not imagine that the world would ever see medieval times again. An army has moved in and laid waste another nation simply because the leader of conquering army decided to wage war.

The world expressed a desire, after the world wars and millions of casualties, to try to put an end to wars. This utopian dream was the basis of the League of Nations and its successor the United Nations. Unfortunately, many conflicts have taken place after that desire was expressed. But in all instances of conflict in the era of the birth of the United Nations, the world saw a need to go to war, only because a greater disaster was looming if preventive measures were not taken.

The human race, with all its shortcomings was trying and succeeding to show a humane and just face. If there was injustice, then there was a crying desire to make amends and try to help the needy by going after the bad guys, collectively. In came someone, already well known for a lack of proper judgment and knowledge of the world, and changed everything.

The biggest casualty in this war is the loss of the anguished but justified sentiment. We could always say that, we are just humans, and prone to make mistakes. Whenever the dust settled, the human race showed a commitment to change and make the world a better and safer place. That was what set us apart and gave us hope.

The worst casualty in this war in Iraq has been the loss of that collective conscience that the world and humanity held dear. We have heard different other nations and people asking, who's next? Meaning, who would be the next conqueror and the conquered?

The war will end and the reconstruction of Iraq would be started. We have already come to know that USAID has been given the over all charge of rebuilding Iraq. American companies will now make money by doing busi-

ness on Iraq. Contracts could be awarded to American companies to rebuild the same cities that their own army destroyed. If this is not medieval in its shamelessness, than what is?

It is hard to believe that George W Bush does not know the very real threat that this conquest of his would bring to the US citizens all over the world and potentially, within the United States. It is conceivable that someone may decide that something has to be done to cause America harm and avenge the deaths of the Iraqis. The world knows that, and the Americans themselves have said so as much. If that is true, then one fails to see how George W Bush has made his own country safer, much less the world.

The conquest of Iraq, with all its blood and tears, leaves a scar in the history of this great nation that would never be healed. An Iraqi would always know that, his people died because two nations decided to invade his nation. That irrevocable loss of pride has to have a price, and George W. Bush may very well have made his own nation hostage to that costly loss.