

Worried Arab nations

The US should feel their pulse

IRAQ'S neighbours are clearly worried not only about the way the United States has taken control of Iraq, but also about the likely future plans of the Pentagon regarding the region as a whole. The security concerns of the Middle Eastern states must have increased following the US threats against Syria which could be a precursor to further violence in the region. This outlook has both strategic and tactical implications, and Arabs are feeling, for understandable reasons, rather uncomfortable -- a point articulated at the Riyadh meet of foreign ministers from seven countries on Friday.

Not surprisingly, the message from Riyadh is clear: the Arabs are not ready to acquiesce in a prolonged US military presence in Iraq. However, their response should not be interpreted as an expression of anti-Americanism, as none of them had warm relations with Saddam Hussein, and at least five of the seven countries, except Iran and Syria, are known to be close allies of the US. They have also rejected the threats that Syria is now facing from the US -- an indication of Arab countries realising, after the fall of Iraq, that the US had dealt a lethal blow to the cause of Arab unity and solidarity by overrunning a country whose people they have an affinity with. Finally, they have reasons to feel that the balance of power in the region has been upset and Israel could be the sole beneficiary of all that has happened.

The US administration would do itself some good if it were to appreciate the genuine sentiments of Arabs. It should also take stock of the situation that is prevailing in Iraq since the US troops captured Baghdad on April 9. The troops are far from 'winning the minds and hearts of Iraqi people.' The basic US premise that opposition to Saddam would naturally be transformed into support for the Americans has turned out to be flawed, even a figment of imagination.

Overall, there is a palpable consensus in the Arab world, including very much among the Iraqis who matter most that the territorial unity, integrity and sovereignty of Iraq should be maintained at all costs. Therefore, the US would do well to heed the good counsel of the Arab nations and leave the task of shaping the political future of Iraq to its people for protecting its long-term interests and avoiding a long-drawn turmoil.

Prospect for Indo-Pak dialogue

Let it materialise sooner than later

WE welcome Indian PM Atal Behari Vajpayee's gesture of flexibility towards Pakistan reflected through an offer he has made for talks with Islamabad on which he had previously maintained a rather rigid stance. We note that it is from Kashmir that he has signalled his readiness to resume the dialogue that had ceased a long time back. It definitely augurs well for the chilled relationship between the two South Asian neighbours. Pakistan's quick and positive response to the offer is appreciated.

It is good to see that both the countries have taken positions that could benefit not only themselves, but also the region. The two countries have been in a state of endless war, so to speak; it is time they changed gears for the better. It may sound as a cliché, but it definitely is time for peace to prevail.

In fact, they should now be desperate for peace for a change, because until their differences are mended they cannot grow to their potential and SAARC cannot graduate into an effective instrument for regional cooperation.

But obviously peace can't be achieved through a manner where allegations and counter allegations are traded for internal, regional and international consumption. It would be futile to embark on an aim to bring peace in the region with a suspicious mind on both sides. In fact, this very trait had brought both the countries on to the brink of another war last year.

We hope the latest show of friendly attitude would be instrumental in bringing the two countries on the same podium soon. Similar attempts in the past like the Agra summit may have failed, but in the current global political scenario, all efforts must be made to seize the opportunity of a fresh dialogue in a fool-proof manner. There is a premium on the urgency because both India and Pakistan have gone nuclear. Thus we hope both the countries would be able to reach a common ground on the potential threat to each other that Kashmir poses and have a fruitful dialogue on the issue.

Can Indo-Pak relations be mended?

KAZI ANWARUL MASUD

COLIN Powell and Jack Straw considered the recent massacre of innocent civilians by terrorists in Kashmir serious enough, despite almost total preoccupation with the Iraq war, to jointly condemn (on March 27th) "such a viscous and cowardly act". Warning that violence would not solve the Kashmir problem they called for strict respect for the Line of Control (LOC) and on Pakistan to fulfil its "commitment to stop infiltration" along the LOC and do its utmost to discourage any acts of violence in Kashmir. On 10th April Colin Powell in an interview with the Pakistan Television viewed as having a difficult and dangerous situation with respect to actions across the LOC and assured that the US looked at the relations with India and Pakistan separately and promised "to help both countries to begin a dialogue with each other on outstanding issues".

Colin Powell's earlier statement that the US would take up Indo Pak issue after Iraq was not well received at Delhi. Foreign Minister Yaswant Sinha (6th April) dismissed Powell's statement as indicative of US' desire to become an uninvited guest in the South Asian fracas. He reiterated India's traditional emphasis on bilateralism in the resolution of Indo-Pak disputes. Yaswant Sinha went further in drawing a parallel between Iraq and Pakistan which, according to him had WMD, lacked democracy and sheltered international terrorists (Osama bin Laden reportedly lives in Baluchistan) and felt Pakistan would be a fit case for Iraq-like military intervention. He recalled that India had time and again informed the international community that dialogue with and cross border terrorism from Pakistan both cannot coexist. He argued that war against

terrorism being an international effort international coalition had the responsibility for ending India's victimisation of terrorist activities. "If they carry out those responsibilities" he warned "then we will be satisfied. If not then we will have to fight it ourselves".

Colin Powell, however, did not see any parallel between Iraq and Indo-Pak situation. Nor did Pakistan Prime Minister Jafar Ali Khan Jamali who remained unfazed. He warned that

avoiding conflict between India and Pakistan would perhaps be the most daunting task for the US administration in South Asia.

US would also need Pakistani help in stemming the tide of anti-Americanism now flowing throughout the Muslim world as a result of Iraq war as Pakistan remains a respected member of the Islamic ummah, which largely remains unconvinced of the Indian allegation of Pak terrorism in

Baluchistan may not be an easy task. Pakistan also can not be a dependable ally for the US in the long run simply because the India-Pakistan conflict is a direct consequence of the huge imbalance of power between the two states and Pakistan's consequent insecurity complex due to this imbalance and her efforts to correct it (Neorealist theory and India-Pakistan Conflict Rajesh Rajagopalan, IDSA).

The overwhelming Indian advan-

be able to realise her immense potentials on the global stage until its relationship with Pakistan was normalised, essential for India's emergence "as the major world actor it ought to be". He further argued that the festering conflict with Pakistan distracted India from its larger ambitions and helped create the environment that scared capital and absorbed valuable resources, which could have been utilised for better purposes.

Pakistan's inherent suspicion of American preference of India over Pakistan is not ill founded though US relationship with one does not have to be conducted at the exclusion of the other. Indeed Bush administration would not like to conduct bilateral relationship with India through the prism of Indo-Pak relations. To the US India is the largest democracy in the world with which the US has deepening partnership on issues ranging from regional stability, nonproliferation and combating terror to science and technology, economic reforms, human rights and global issues. President Bush is committed to developing a fundamentally different relationship with India without being weighted down by cold war baggage. Prime Minister Vajpayee sees both countries as natural allies presumably because both have suffered at the hands of international terrorism.

In short Indo-US relations are multi-dimensional in which Pakistan's compulsive hostility towards India is not sustainable. Pakistan, therefore, has little option other than to accept this structural imbalance of power existing with India and pursue a meaningful rather than confrontational policy towards her immediate neighbour. In the absence of a democratic global society where people despite conviction to the contrary have to become monothestic of the imperium, it could be unwise for Pakistan to continue its invariant policy of hostility towards India. Pakistan, indeed the whole of South Asia, could rejuvenate the Gujral Doctrine (somewhat defaced by the BJP government) as the anchor for building the foundation of a prosperous South Asia.

Kazi Anwarul Masud is a retired Secretary to the Bangladesh government and former Ambassador.

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Pakistan would go to any extent to defend itself "especially in the situation as Sinha says of preemptive attack". He also characterised Indo-Pak tension as "quite dangerous because both are nuclear powers".

In the short term US-Pakistan relations are likely to remain strong regardless of Indian discomfiture. As Assistant Secretary of State Christiana Rocca informed the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee (on March 26th) that US had a solid partnership with Pakistan in the war on terror, US has reestablished and expanded USAID programme; restored military ties etc. She praised Pakistan's efforts in apprehending about five hundred Al Qaida operatives and for coordination with military and law enforcement agencies along the Afghanistan border. She was appreciative of the parliamentary elections, "although flawed", which restored civilian government in Pakistan. According to Christiana Rocca

Kashmir. US would be hesitant to paint Pakistan into a corner for cross border terrorism and would likely work for the emergence of a moderate Islamic state with a modern economy despite observation by Arnold de Borchgrave of UPI (Clash of Civilisation or New World Order) that the general elections produced pro-Talibans, pro-Al Qaida, anti-American governments in the two provinces bordering Afghanistan facilitating the return of Taliban into Afghanistan.

If one were to accept the argument that tribal loyalties in Baluchistan and NWFP take precedence over national laws and that it is not physically possible given the size and ethnic composition of the police and the defence forces to impose central government writ in these provinces, more so due to the gun culture as a determinant of manhood in the tribal areas, then the pursuit and capture of Osama bin Laden from his reported safe haven in

tage over Pakistan has dictated Pakistan's policies, often aberrant, of internal balancing (through increasing own capabilities) and external balancing (joining like minded countries harbouring anti-Indian feelings) to correct the imbalance. The 1954 US-Pakistan Mutual Defence Assistance Treaty angered both the Soviet Union and China. While the Soviet Union remained unconvinced of the rationale of the behind this external balancing, China was more readily mollified.

Indo-Pak power imbalance being structural India has a larger margin of error while Pakistan has none. So it has been argued that unilateral Indian concessions e.g. Gujral Doctrine or even a resolution of the Kashmir dispute in whatever form may not necessarily remove Pakistan's insecurity complex vis-a-vis India. But as Richard Haas of the US State Department told his audience at Hyderabad (January 7, 2003) that India would not

Pakistan also cannot be a dependable ally for the US in the long term if China sometimes in the mid or late this century becomes the second largest economy in the world with more powerful military capability intent upon implementing its designs on Taiwan which would axiomatically put it on a collision course with the US. In that scenario Pakistan is more likely to side with China than the USA. Pak-US interest may also collide in the Middle East if Syria and Iran (after Iraq) become targets of American hit list because it would be difficult for any Pakistani government, regardless of its democracy deficit, to remain in power in the face of public wrath opposing US expansionism and also because of Pakistan's own position as the possessor of the Islamic bomb. Pakistan would always be reminded that in the courtship contest US would always prefer India as the bride and Pakistan as the bridesmaid.

When the leader does not lead by example

SYED MAQSUD JAMIL

SADDAM has fallen. His 'brutal' regime is finished. The world has seen the victory of the inflexible resolve of President G.W. Bush. He can have his way whenever HE WILLS. The world may not endorse his action, but it has deferred to the outcome in Iraq. It, in a way, represents the capitulation of those that differed with him. The critics may call it a pyrrhic victory. That in fact depends on how long it is going to take Mr. Bush to complete his mission. The simplicity of his logic, the single-mindedness of his actions leaves no doubt about his resolve. But his mission is not over, and as the days go, it will face greater scrutiny.

This time the mission is disarmament of Iraq. In Afghanistan, it was war on terrorism. I tend to think, the leader of the world is not leading by example, rather by the mightiness of its reactions. What we have seen in Afghanistan is not the execution of a policy but the fury of the might of an injured superpower. However what has happened in Iraq also does not speak of a lofty and pious mission of building a just world. The agenda that Bush administration vigorously pursued is the destruction of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) that Saddam stealthily(?) kept away from the weapons inspectors. If WMDs were of any use, a remorseless leader of Saddam's nature would certainly have used these, had he possessed such lethal weapons. The other view is that he had the WMDs, but did not use it. It is unacceptable that a brutal dictator of Saddam's record would suffer from timidity or moral trepidation not to use the WMDs in his possession. This would have been the natural thing for him because the coalition campaign was focusing to cut him down. What can be a dear thing than one's life? Operation "Decapitation Strike" left no doubt that they are out to get him. Should we then believe that America did not know that Saddam had no WMDs or very little of it to threaten America? That is very strange consid-

ering the fact America has such sophisticated information collection devices in satellite data collection, spy plane, telecommunication eavesdropping and espionage agents.

Now that America is victorious, it can come up with a 'smoking gun'. That would rather be a hollow discovery. If America really did know that Iraq no longer possesses WMDs, one may want to know what Mr. Bush was aiming at. The fall of Saddam, or the

deterrent by any definition. It is more a symbolic presence.

For that matter, Pakistan is in a perilous position. Pakistan has been historically obliging of USA, from the days of 1962 U-2 spy plane disaster. The plane flew from Badaber air base near Peshawar for reconnaissance flight over USSR territory. After 40 years, America still has air bases in Pakistan. Currently, US forces are using the one in Jacobabad. Pakistan's

standing in the world. The Arab world in particular has been effectively subdued. Israel's security is firmly embedded as never before. It can now condescend to approve a nominally independent state of Palestine. The degree of independence of such a state will be calibrated against the conduct of the terrorist groups and the success of Arafat and other PLO leaders in curbing them.

I am concerned the consequence of

perennially culpable Islamic countries. In fact, Islamic world has little possibility of developing political clout because of the fractious character of its composition. Bush administration apparently does not feel the necessity of paying attention to the fact that it too has friends in the Islamic world. This callousness may have serious effect in radicalising the Islamic world. Should we then think that America as the world leader has all along been

What has happened in Iraq has done more harm to America's primacy as the world leader than toppling the bronze statue of a tinpot dictator. Iraq does not have an image to build; the country is in ruins. But America has an image to take care of, unless of course it wants to return to the pre-Wilsonian era of being happy as an insular state... It is for the Americans to decide whether to sever its link with its rich past or to arrogantly march into a fate of brazen belligerence.

end of his regime? That makes the whole thing morally errant and takes away the mantle of righteousness from coalition campaign against Iraq. Regime change was the principal motive. But sadly, the resolution 1441 offers no latitude for such political objective. They knew it was attainable and they went for it.

Castro's Cuba by its proximity is a thorn in the flesh of such great longevity. It should be among the top places in Bush administration's doctrine of regime change. By that I mean the doctrine has been simplified to the extent of dividing the governments of the world into 'obliging' and 'disobedient' ones. Castro would have been long gone had it not been for his strong patrons in Russia and China. For Saddam, they may perfunctorily sneeze a little, but for Castro, they would draw the sword. Sadly, for Noriega and Grenada, they did not have any patron. As far as nuclear threat is concerned, Kim Jong Il's North Korea is of real concern for its stance of belligerency. It disdainfully shuns diplomatic dialogue, menacingly flexes its military muscle. Without the sobering influence of China on North Korea, South Korea would fall like a domino. The 37,000 soldiers that America maintains is not a credible

nuclear capability is credible and potent. The concern of export of nuclear technology from Pakistan to Middle Eastern countries is definitely under the close observation of USA. Musharraf is diligently obliging. America is watchful of the threat. It knows when to apply the brake on Pakistan and the levers are with them. Syria for that matter is an irritant, because of its common border with Israel and for its dogged stand on Golan Height.

Iran on the other hand is a hornet's nest, at the same time much discreet and tactful. A continuing moderation of the clerical regime in Iran appears to be the most appropriate containment policy America can pursue. To sum up the coalition action in Iraq, America did not find it expedient to encumber its actions by following the demands of leading by example. Regime change looks befittingly plausible ground for coalition action in Iraq. It has taken the sting out of Iraq, no matter which regime takes over. Saddam's terror and tyranny kept the spitefully bellicose ethnic fabric of Iraq together. After Saddam, there is a remote possibility that Iraq would again be a monolithic state. On a broader perspective, Saddam's departure has irreversibly reduced Arab and Middle Eastern

the aberration and delinquency of the world leader can seriously affect the world order. It may dilute the code of conduct and loosen the fabric of association among the nations of the world. Globalisation, which is seen as the prime prospect of the 21st century will falter. Trust and goodwill among nations will take time to repair. The larger powers will feel lesser restraint of shared responsibility in attending the regional and world issues. The fissures of divergence of will widen while consensus will depend on accords of convenience. United Nations as a world forum has already been compromised. It could not have been otherwise, when the world's most powerful leader itself has derided its effectiveness. The trust and eminence it enjoys will decline. Bilateralism and multilateralism will take precedence over the labours of affirmative action in the world body. Other organs of UN will also become enfeebled due to the erosion of enthusiasm among its members. The vision of an integrated world facilitating free flow of goods and men across the world will also recede into background for a while. It may, more and more, become a tripolar world. America and its coalition of obliging nations, nationally resurgent Euro supporters and the

arrogantly negligent in its responsibilities of leading by example? Certainly not. It can rightly take pride in its contemporary example of successful campaigns against murderous Milosevic and the blood bath in Bosnia. Sadly though, the humanitarian campaign in Somalia has not been successful. President Clinton wanted to set an example in Somalia by saving the hungry malnourished battle scarred and famine affected people of the country. It is a pity that the world did not rise to honour the loss of American marines and Pakistani soldiers by hunting down the warlords. Even in Vietnam America wanted to lead by example by protecting the ASEAN nations from falling to communism. America could not save South Vietnam for long because the country lacked the resolve and unity for the purpose. But its unwavering espousal of a plural political system and individual endeavour has stabilised the nations of ASEAN region and in bringing back Vietnam to the path of free market economy. The world also remembers the courageous statement of President Kennedy against Soviet blockade of West Berlin. The world regards Marshall doctrine as the greatest support given by a country in rebuilding the war ravaged economies of Europe,

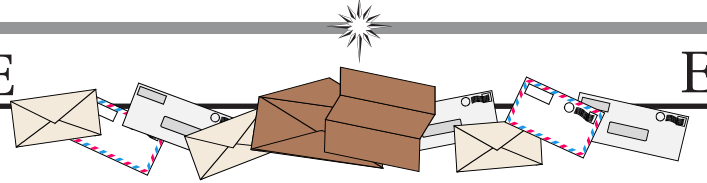
Germany in particular.

The world triumphed against communism because the world leader led by example. What has happened in Iraq has done more harm to America's primacy as the world leader than toppling the bronze statue of a tinpot dictator. Iraq does not have an image to build; the country is in ruins. But America has an image to take care of, unless of course it wants to return to the pre-Wilsonian era of being happy as an insular state. It cannot. America has worldwide obligations. The obligations do not end and begin with the state of Israel. Foremost among her obligations is to integrate the nations of the world into a shared activity of common well being built on trust and justice among the big and the small, the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor, and among the leader and the led. For that goal to be achieved, every nation has to be treated as equal, no foe is permanent to deserve unremitting hostility, and no ally is too important or too hallowed to be indulged to a fault. America as a nation does not deserve to live permanently under the spectre of 9/11 carnage.

Let America be what America is resting on the principles drawn by their freedom loving and valiant founding fathers that tells, "We hold these Truths to be self-evident that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are, Life, Liberty and Pursuit of Happiness". This means America would give unto the Palestinians what it gives to the Israelis. The world is waiting to see whether America is following the path it was born to travel. It is for the Americans to decide whether to sever its link with its rich past or to arrogantly march into a fate of brazen belligerence.

Syed Maqsud Jamil is General Manager, Summit Group.

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



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

To the OIC

It is really unfortunate that the Muslims all over the world are being tortured, humiliated and becoming the victims of arrogant display of power. But what is more frustrating is that the Muslims themselves becoming divided more and more and are unable to get united on a common ground for the greater interest of the Muslim Ummah.

We don't even hesitate to help our enemies who are involved in killing our brothers, destroying our heritage and culture and occupying our sacred land. And our so-called religious custodian of Arab countries' nonchalant attitude is most frustrating. The puppet rulers of Arab countries are enjoying the blessings of some big power sacrificing their national interest as well as common interest of the Muslims. They are leading a

luxurious life at the cost of their own people and neighbours. It is high time to ponder over the matter especially by the members of the OIC and do something concrete to save Muslim Ummah as a whole.

M. H. Bari
Khulna

"Cantonment restriction"

This is in response to Jamil's letter (April 17) where he says "our army is doing what they are supposed to do. So please help them in doing so even at the cost of our comfort."

What exactly is the army doing that they are supposed to do? I personally do not see any justification for having an army who pretty much does the job of the police force once in a while, participates in parades to honour high officials (like the PM), and

operates as UN peace-keeping forces in conflict countries where no one else wants to go. Do you think these are the roles of the army?

Moreover, why should we sacrifice our comfort? As self-interested individuals we would like to use the Cantonment Road if it benefits us in anyway.

NM

Wisconsin, USA

CLIP service at BTB

BTB is providing CLIP (Caller Line Identification Protocol) services to its subscribers, as reported in *The Daily Star* and other national dailies. It has already facilitated one lac fixed phone lines with the service. However, other lines will be upgraded in phases and with a payment of taka 500/= or 1000/= service charge. I would like to suggest that the charge be fixed at taka 300/= and that there be no issuance of

any demand note; a bank draft of that amount in favour of BTB being the requirement instead. Demand notes are dubious things!

I congratulate BTB for taking the initiative. I would like to have the CLIP service at the earliest possible time. **Kazi Saifuddin Hossain (Lincoln)**
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

President Chirac: a loser or a gainer?

The veteran pacifist President Jacques Chirac gave a good fight against the recent extra judicial activities of the US in the Middle East. Among the Western leaders who opposed this war, Gerhard Schroeder, Vladimir Putin and Jacques Chirac, the French President came out to be the most outspoken. Though it is not very clear what was the underlying reason for his sudden political outburst against

this invasion; whether it was his show for singling out french nationalism and pride, or his commitment to establish the UN as the sole discretionary body in the world, or an exhibition of his effort to consolidate stronger European influence in the region President Chirac indeed played a very visible role this time.

It is true that the French are feeling uncomfortable seeing an easy win of the US, polls are not yet showing that they have moved back from their unequivocal support for their president's handling of the whole issue. Certainly Mr. Chirac is well aware how revengeful the present US administration is. This war spilt friendship between many trusted friends: England and France, Australia and New Zealand, USA and Canada.

Mr. Chirac may have lost trust to

his trans-atlantic ally, but his actions have glorified the role of France in the East. The distressed Muslim world has found one empathetic Western leader to whom they can go in needs. From the pacifists' world, Mr. Chirac does deserve a warm felicitation! **Hasanat Alamgir**
University of British Columbia, Vancouver

US policy

The US broke several international laws by invading Grenada and Panama and by bombing Tripoli. The US is not the best example of a peace advocate. The UN asked Israel to leave Arab territories it has occupied since 1967. Israel has been denying these resolutions decades after decades due to US support.

Now America invades Iraq in the name of liberating the Iraqis and accusing the Saddam's regime of

gathering weapons of mass destruction.

If the US really wants to find a solution to the Middle East crisis, it should maintain a balance of power between Israel and Iraq and not by destroying the strongest Arab military power (Iraq). Let us not forget the Palestinian issue. The US as a superpower, must show impartiality in its policy regarding the Middle East crisis by forcing Israel to recognise the Palestinian's legitimate rights. **Karim Chowdhury**
Florida, USA

"The UN needs reform"

Mr. Mahmood Elahi is right in his letter (April 18) that United Nations need to be reformed. It should be empowered to attack regimes which

are torturing and killing its own citizens. And the prime candidate on the list is the State of Israel which falls under the category of regimes Mr. Elahi has described. USA should be authorised to attack Israel with full might. Then the next target should be India where thousands of innocents Kashmiris, and Gujrati Muslims, have been killed, besides the massacre of Sikhs not long ago. Then Iran can be invaded and Shah can be brought back. Though Shah is dead, his son is alive and living in the USA. The list is pretty long. But the USA has enough resources and moral right to attack anyone.

But please Mr. Elahi don't make fun of our intelligence by blaming the UN for not intervening on time in Bosnia and Kosovo. **Jamil Ahmed**
Houston, Texas, USA