

# From Kabul to Baghdad

## Bush must have misread the war road-map

AMM SHAHABUDDIN

THE physical distance between the two capitals, Kabul and Baghdad, both heavily rampaged and devastated by the mighty American forces, may not be very long, but the psyche of the two countries, in the post-war period, have taken two almost opposite directions: on one case, it appeared to be total submission to the invading forces, without any vocal popular resentment against the presence of the US forces on their soil. In the other, the scenario emerging in cities like Baghdad, Mosul, Najaf and Karbala, carries a different, rather frightening message for Iraq's 'liberation forces'. Bush wanted to have the cake and eat it too in Baghdad, as he had done it successfully earlier in Kabul. But a lot of water has flown down the river Tigris and Euphrates during the last two years. The American warlord, and the hawks around him, had a wrong dream, or rather a will-o-the-wisp. The Iraqis didn't line up the roads to welcome their 'liberators' with garlands and bouquet. Of course, there were some outbursts at the beginning as a corollary to the end of 23-year old Saddam regime which was a great relief for the Shi'ite community which constitutes 60 per cent of total population as against Sunnis making only 25 per cent. But they were not swept away emotionally to run after the US forces. The apple cart has fallen.

Soon the most unexpected change in the behaviour and attitude of the people towards the presence of foreign forces on their soil was noticed with the increase day-by-day in the tempo of people's demonstration against US forces. First they were quite enthusiastic about US forces when the US marines volunteered to cover the head of Saddam's statue at the Paradise square with US flag, then helped people to pull down the statue. But the same people were shocked and took a U-turn when they found that the looters were carting away most valuable and precious commodities from museums, national library, office buildings, educational institutions and shopping centres and even hospitals in the presence of the same US forces. They took it as pre-planned what was happening under the very nose of mighty US marines standing on guard to maintain law and order, making the whole thing a mockery.

### In search of interim leadership

However, to put up a brave and bright face and to please the increasingly agitated Iraqi people, the US has started taking measures. In search of an interim civil administration, headed by an interim leadership to run the country for at least next two years, recently a sort of 'tent confer-

ence' in a desert was held, attended by representatives of groups and sects, but mostly Shi'ites. The conference is reported to have selected Ahmed Chalabi as the interim leader, said to be a Pentagon man, and a controversial Shi'ite leader who was accused of embezzling millions of dollars of a Jordan Bank out of the 'food for oil' money for Iraq. This has naturally

with the arms industry, the oil business and the hawks of warlord George Bush". It may be mentioned here that one of such controversial figures, Gen. (Retd) Jay Garner, had already arrived in Baghdad to take over as chief of the administration to look after reconstruction work. Gen. Garner, who is now on a sort of familiarisation tour of Iraq, received

authorised by the UN and they succeeded when America withdrew its resolution apprehending no requisite support even from the non-permanent members. But the very next-day, American forces jumped in the war field to let loose hell for the people of Iraq. At this most critical period of UN history, the most needed person was the UN Secretary-

1991. But no signs of such UN activities and enthusiasm could be seen when Iraq became the victim of a naked aggression by the only superpower of the world. President Bush behaved more like an international autocrat.

### Iraqi appeal to UN fell on deaf ears

It cannot be denied that the ousted

because of his 'wrong' stand on US-created "no-fly zones" in Iraq, which angered Washington. So it became a sort of "England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity" for Kofi Annan to ride to the most prestigious post, beginning his first term from January 2002 with the blessings of Washington. When Annan announced his intention to run for the second term, he rushed to Washington for their support. Colin Powell, Secretary of State, then eulogised Annan as saying that Annan had been "a very effective Secretary-General." And US Ambassador to UN Hallbrook, going one step ahead, said that Annan was "the right man, at the right time". That Kofi Annan was "a right man at right time" for the Americans has been proved literally by Annan himself during the four weeks of devastation and destruction carried on the innocent people of Iraq by the ruthless US-led forces in the name of searching for WMD.

### UN must not legitimise Iraq war

After keeping mum and almost hiding behind the screen during the most cruel US-led war against Iraq, Kofi Annan has suddenly reappeared on the stage demanding a 'central role' for UN in the post-war reconstruction and humanitarian work. What a shame for the Secretary-General to claim such a 'war-booty' for the UN after the widespread massacre, carnage and wholesale destruction of a UN member state was over, when the world body was lying paralysed, immobile and emasculated. The most pertinent question now is: How UN can enter into post-war reconstruction when the war itself was illegally waged by a member state, without authorisation by the UN? It is not only contradictory but also sarcastic. Will not it tantamount to legitimising the illegitimate? Will Kofi Annan, and for that matter, the Security Council, venture to legitimise an illegal war and then take up the job for its reconstruction?

The Russian delegate to the Security Council had recently very clearly warned that the "post-conflict involvement in Iraq by the UN must not legitimise the war." The last shot for the UN. A word to the wise is enough, as they say. Of course, if any wise guy is listening at all.

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caused a big stir among the rank and file. There is another snag that has overshadowed this conference for selection of leadership. The Shi'ites are divided into three distinct groups. Of these, the most hardened and influential Shi'ite group had earlier announced their decision to boycott the conference. Therefore, the US Administration seems to be, from the beginning, running into troubles. In Kabul, however, there was no such snag visible at all. Hamid Karzai was brought in, displayed for sometime, then was accepted as the new leader of Afghanistan for at least two years. He seems to be well-established.

Another posture shown by the US government is the withdrawal of US Marines and deployment of US Army to assist in the maintenance of law and order and reconstruction work to be undertaken to rebuild the demolished cities. Apparently, this appears to be close to the growing Iraqi demand for withdrawal of US forces. But it is perhaps another hoodwink. Some Arab leaders may be happy with such a gesture. But the Iraqis in general would consider it as a change of guard, a mere eye-wash. Technically, whatever may be the inherent difference between the US Marines and US Army, the man on the street will take it as two sides of the same coin. Because, they see nothing other than the American forces guarding their country. So how far this change of guard would cut ice with the Iraqi people, is difficult to predict, particularly when, with every passing day, the anti-American stance is gaining momentum.

### Distribution of war booties

American Administration has also started issuing contracts to their near and dear ones to take up immediately the reconstruction work to rebuild Iraq. Commenting on this, a Belgian newspaper had editorially said that "it remains to be seen whether it is a good idea to confine the reconstruction of Iraq to retired American generals, who have close relations

tremendous standing ovation when he visited the Kurdish territory in northern Iraq, sadly speaking, a fraction of which he didn't find in Baghdad or elsewhere. Kurdish people of northern Iraq has a special obligation towards Gen. Garner who visited them in 1991, following the Gulf War when he helped administer aid for the Kurds, facing counter-assault by Saddam's forces. That is why he said that his visit to the Kurds was like returning home.

### Role of Kofi Annan



It has been the most shameful role played by the UN Security Council and the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Kofi Annan's role was the most humiliating during the most stormy days in world history.

It is true that the three permanent members, France, Russia and China, fought their last ditch battle in the Security Council to thwart a sinister American move to get their impending invasion of Iraq to disarm Saddam and bring about a 'regime change'

General, whose presence on the scene, however, was missing all the time. No follow-up action was taken by the Security Council to stop the illegal war.

From the very beginning whatever was happening to Iraq, Annan seemed to have followed all through a time-honoured saying: "Hear all, see all, say nothing". His silent role during the most destructive period of US action can very comfortably be compared with the 'silent role' of the on-duty US Marines when the looters were having their hey-day in Baghdad

Iraqi regime had every right to appeal to the UN to save Iraq from impending US-led aggression because it was an invasion by a UN member state against another member state which has not been declared by the UN as a "threat to international peace." The Iraqi Foreign Minister appealed to the Security Council President saying, that "the United Nations should ...condemn this invasion as aggression and act immediately to stop it unconditionally." But this appeal fell on deaf ears of the UN, although, according to the Iraqi Foreign Minis-

and other cities.

The UN Secretary-General is considered as the 'eyes and ears' of the world body. Whenever, there is a move by a member state against another member state which is considered as a threat to peace and security, he is supposed to bring it to the attentions of the Security Council for necessary action as it happened when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990 and the US-led forces, authorised by UN, drove out the invading Iraqi forces, in

ter, it was "a flagrant material breach of international law and the UN Charter". Similarly, the Iraqi Ambassador to UN was within his right when he accused directly Kofi Annan of not condemning or even deploring the aggression that was committed against Iraq without UN authorisation, adding that Annan "was doing at the bidding of the United States". He reiterated that Annan should have "at least, submitted a letter to the council alerting that the attack threatens international peace and security... and threatens the fate and future of the United Nations."

### How Annan became Secretary General

Kofi Annan was working as more 'tool' in the hands of his 'friends' who had brought him as the Secretary-General in 1997, when his Egyptian predecessor Butros Butros-Ghali missed the bus for running for the second term

## In memoriam

# Tragic end of a gentle soul

M.M. Rezaul Karim

I shall join you after the Jumma prayer tomorrow and may be late by a few minutes. But don't wait for me; you carry on with the game." It was 10:40 p.m. when the late A.K.M. Musa told my wife, Salma, less than an hour before his death. Unfortunately, Musa Bhai's wish for attending the Jumma prayer remained unfulfilled; the tomorrow he talked about never dawned on him again, and he could no longer participate in the bridge game we used to play together more than once a week. Yet, he went to the same mosque and on the same day, but not to pray, only to be prayed for, wrapped up in a coffin.



dumbfounded and unable to accept the cruel reality. The other daughter, Tani, could not reach home from America in time to have the last glimpse of her father.

A distinguished civil servant of the oldest vintage, a member of the first caretaker government, a gentleman par excellence and an ever-helping hand to many, AKM Musa breathed his last around midnight of April 25 under the most tragic circumstances one could conceive. He lost his life in the hands of his schizophrenic son. Whatever may have been the reason, no crime could match the misfortune, ignominy and distress of the diabolic act of patricide. Not only father and son but wife and daughters also became victims of the merciless fate.

It was about 1 a.m. Someone called us at home to say that Mr. AKM Musa was dead and narrated the gruelling circumstances under which it occurred. It was too horrid and incredible to be true. We dismissed it for a cruel joke of a crank call.

Moments later, the lurking mind-boggling anxiety made us call his home which unravelled the stark, horrifying truth. A common friend and good neighbour drove us immediately to the Medical College Hospital. The handsome Musa Bhai, who was found impeccably dressed at all times, was lying on the bare floor of the morgue, all wrapped up in blood-stained shreds, his face drained of blood like a white sheet. I could not face Lucky Boo, his wife, another specimen of the noblest human soul, nor had any words of solace for Mita, his daughter. With other relatives and friends we stood utterly shocked,

The first time I came to know Musa Bhai was in 1964 when he went to Harvard to attend a course in Public Administration. The family used to visit us often in New York where I was stationed as a junior diplomat. The acquaintance grew into friendship and over the time generated a great sense of admiration for him. In almost seven decades of my life, like others, I had the opportunity of knowing many people of diverse nature and characteristics. I must admit I hardly had known a person like him, who was genuine in friendship, amiable in disposition and eagerly solicited as a pleasant and desirable company. He never spoke ill of anyone nor we ever heard him raise his voice in anger. But it was strange and most unfortunate that a man, who had no enemy, had his life ended by someone, who was so near and dear to him.

Musa Bhai never missed his prayer and was on time. Every Friday he was found occupying his favourite place on the southern veranda of the big Gulshan mosque. He was an epitome of virtue and possessed all the good qualities a man could aspire. He will be missed not only by his relatives and friends but all those, who had the privilege of coming in contact with him. But Musa Bhai is not gone, he will remain always in our heart. May the Almighty bless his tormented soul. And we know for certain He has destined a place in Paradise for His beloved creation.

M.M. Rezaul Karim is a former Ambassador.

# Archaeologists fear cultural genocide

BILLY I AHMED

THE cultural heritage is of a great value to any country; it provides vital information regarding its roots of civilization, a source of enduring pride for archaeological sites, ancient structures and priceless artefacts. Iraq is no exception, its archaeological sites are of scientific and historical importance to archaeologists and throughout the world. Iraq is the land of the ancient Mesopotamia, where peoples in the fertile ground between the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers domesticated animals, began agriculture, and gave rise to the earliest cities some 6,000 years ago. Iraq is the birth place of Western writing, mathematics, astronomy and with Hammurabi's

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code of law these are few of the facts of the cultural legacy.

In Iraq, sites of tremendous scientific and historic importance are part and parcel of the landscape. Babylon and Ur were traditional tourist favourites of pre-war days. The UNESCO World Heritage site of Hatra, located

in the northern city of Mosul, is a large fortified settlement that was the capital of the first Arab kingdom. It survived Roman invasions in A.D. 116 and 198, and its remains echo a faded greatness that once blended Hellenistic and Roman influences with enduring Eastern traditions. Civilizations

like the Sumerian, Babylonian, and Assyrian thrived within this nation's borders. The biblical patriarch Abraham and Babylonian King Hammurabi lived in what is today Iraq, while Imam Ali, the founder of Shiite Islam, died there. Other notable rulers include Nebuchadnezzar, Gilgamesh and Alexander the Great.

Baghdad's National Museum is a treasure trove of irreplaceable artefacts, including most of the discoveries made in Iraq since the country's creation in 1921. The museum houses libraries of cuneiform documents, including ancient written archives from Uruk and Sumerian literary texts, from Mesopotamian schools that date back to 2500 B.C.

With present war on Iraq led by US and UK, the spectre of smart bombs hitting thousands of archaeological troves is of a serious concern. There are many archaeological sites in Iraq that haven't been explored. There is a real likelihood of massive destruction of thousand-year-old treasures from the cradle of the world's civilizations. Iraq's rich heritage has been under stress since the Gulf War of 1991, when the destruction of ancient sites and buildings by bombs could not be checked, and now Pentagon's new strategy of "Shock and Awe" bombing wrought random destruction of fragile artefacts in nearly 100,000 sites and potential sites in Iraq, many of which are in and near Baghdad. The preemptive war led by the coalition forces has further aggravated the already stressed heritage. The archaeologists, scholars' groups and individuals within Iraq and outside are anxious to preserve them from the destruction of war. They fear it has been a cultural genocide, rather. There should not have been so much of carelessness.

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