

UN finds itself in double jeopardy

After the body-blow from Iraq war, pressure to rewrite rules felt

THE UNGA session has seen world leaders debating the future of UN system seemingly caught in a whirlpool of an unprecedented value degeneracy. The world's only hyper-power US stuck to its guns rather unrepentant about the Iraq war despite its aftermath going awry and Washington's step-by-step time-table for transfer of sovereignty to the Iraqi people. The UN's fate hangs in a precarious balance for the first time since the failed League of Nations had metamorphosed into United Nations back in 1945.

The US had gone to Iraq war without authorisation from the United Nations Security Council. This she did on the back of an ultimatum issued to the UNSC that if it failed to give green light to a hell-bent US attack on Baghdad, she would go it alone. The idiom was unheard of in the realm of international relations.

The UN charter allows for military action for the purpose of self-defence. Only on being attacked can a country exercise the option, and rightly so, because otherwise it would mean commission of open aggression against and a blatant invasion of another state. In the extraordinary event that a state or two decided to use force to preempt broader threats to international peace and security it would be of paramount importance that the UN authorisation was sought and received. The legitimacy for such a course of action could only be provided by the UN; under no circumstances, could it be self-arrogated. And, this should apply all the more in case of a leading power as a safeguard against arbitrary use of force by a strong nation against a weaker one.

George Bush and Tony Blair waged a war against Iraq on the sole plea that if they had not done so, the latter would have launched 'an armed attack with weapons of mass destruction' on whom is anybody's guess. The myth of Iraq's possession of WMD has been roundly demolished by the latest series of disclosures from authoritative sources and independent studies. This is live electoral ammo in the hands of opposition to both Bush and Blair. So, there is a post-facto de-legitimation of the war on top of its having been launched without UN approval in the first place.

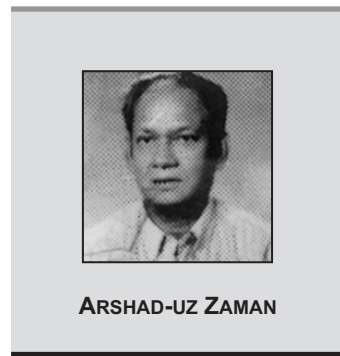
All these pose a serious challenge to the fundamentals of the UN system as its secretary general Kofi Annan has emphatically stated.

Whereas the rifts between global powers caused by the Iraq war are yet to be healed, the cleavage has widened all the more following Bush's latest overture in the UNGA to have other countries commit troops to keep peace in Iraq and funds to help its reconstruction process. Even some allies of the US-British entente have linked the issue of troops deployment to a consensual UN resolution on the subject. They insisted on such UN cover to placate their home constituencies where American actions have been unpopular, to say the least. France has demanded that sovereignty be restored to the Iraqi people in nine to ten months' time before she can take part in the reconstruction process. Germany may be less caustic in words but has a similar response to the issue.

Two issues are involved here: first one is of principles; and the second relates to how we make the UN functionally effective. Both are basically intertwined. The US took unilateral and pre-emptive action against Iraq on a perceived threat. All the three words -- unilateral, pre-emptive and perceived -- are antithetical and repugnant to rule of law which binds the comity of nations under a civilised framework of conduct and relationships.

If the doctrine of pre-emptive strike is allowed to rule the roost then all countries with inimical inter-relationships or having some reservations or misgivings against each other could invoke the option in a free-for-all thereby upsetting the regional or international equilibrium beyond redemption. In theory, China and India or India and Pakistan could be candidates for such an absurd recourse to force against each other. Sometime ago, Australia alleged intrusion of terrorists from Malaysia and Singapore. Does it mean she would take 'a pre-emptive action'? There is absolutely no rationale for such an awkward and highly reprehensible prospect for unilateral action against any country.

Arafat's fate depends on fate of his people



ARSHAD-UZ ZAMAN

FATE of Palestine and Yasser Arafat have become so intertwined that it is impossible to separate the two.

Yasser Arafat is seventy plus. Physically inspite of amazing trials and tribulations he seems to flourish. He has been under undecleared house arrest in Ramallah in Palestine for nearly three months. His compound has been pounded by heavy Israeli artillery and the better part of the building presents a picture of utter destruction. He keeps on living in those quarters and carry on the struggle in front of TV cameras. In fact this is what he does best. When the going gets really tough Arafat gets hold of his gun and threatens to shoot an unnamed enemy and if nobody else shoot himself.

In the meantime his adversary Ariel Sharon declares to the wide world his Government's decision to physically eliminate Yasser

Arafat. He is no longer satisfied to physically expel Arafat from the destroyed Ramallah home. The Security Council and even the United Nations General Assembly meet in extraordinary session to discuss Arafat's Fate. Urgent call is addressed to the Israelis by the UN not to push the matter beyond the limit and eliminate Arafat from this world.

Ariel Sharon gives the impression to be listening. He better does. For there is only one Arafat that Sharon can hound around the world. True Sharon has lot of blood on his hands, the latest being what his powerful armed forces have been doing daily to the defenseless Palestinians for nearly a year and a half. He has been nicknamed the butcher of Shabra and Shatilla and had hounded Arafat out of Lebanon

THE HORIZON THIS WEEK

Yasser Arafat (Abu Amar) has achieved his life's mission. He has instilled in his people the indomitable desire to fight for their independence. Like Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur with his famous speech of 7 March 1971 (the fight this time is the fight for emancipation, the fight this time is the fight for Independence), so has Yasser Arafat has galvanized his people to fight for freedom... Arafat or no Arafat Palestine is a reality. Sooner the Israeli leadership accepts this truth, better for the world. Yet Sharon and Arafat thrive on continuous conflict and holding world attention. Are they ready to throw in the towel and let more pragmatic leaders take over?

into Tunisia. That was early eighties. In the seventies Arafat had risen from the ashes and made an appearance before the UN General Assembly as a visiting Head of State. Yasser Arafat had every right to do so. For more states around the world recognize Palestine as a sovereign Independent State than Israel and Yasser Arafat as its President. States around the world maintain full diplomatic relations with Palestine.

There is one notable exception. That is the USA, the creator and protector of Israel. It will not be far fetched to imagine that behind President George W. Bush's misadventure in Iraq is his friend and mentor Ariel Sharon. Sharon dreams of making his Israel the dominant power in the Middle East and the US policeman of the

region. Prodded by Sharon President Bush in all likelihood launched into Iraq, whose catastrophic consequences are daily unfolding.

Mercifully there are signs that good sense is dawning on President Bush. He will claim victory because he has removed from scene the tyrant Saddam Hussein. The human loss suffered by his forces in continuing guerilla attacks, he will speak sotto voce. That the daily mounting casualty figure is becoming intolerable for him, he will not say. The truth is that he has to return to his much-maligned UN, who has valiantly borne the attacks.

And what is happening between the US, the most powerful country of the world and France, Permanent member of the Security Council and remotely

not so powerful as the US. The truth is that in his obstinacy to remove dictator Saddam, President Bush with the willing collaboration of his friend and ally Great Britain of Prime Minister Tony Blair, paid scant heed to world opinion and following an acrimonious debate within the Security Council decided to bypass the Security Council and plunged headlong into an attack against Iraq. France valiantly stood her ground and opposed every move. The signs are telltale that the relations between the US and longtime ally France are mending. After all the Statue of Liberty, which welcomes every visitor to the shore of the New World is a gift from Revolutionary France.

And what about the fate of Arafat? He has been on the stage

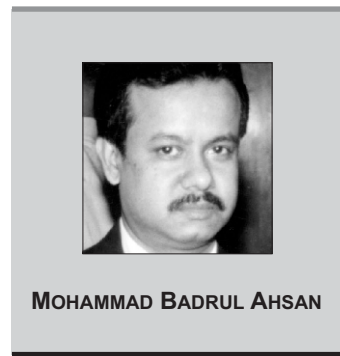
for close to four decades. A whole generation of Palestinian leadership has emerged. Indeed Palestine has provided quality manpower to many Arab countries and beyond. There is a proverb 'revolution eats its own children first'. We in Bangladesh are well aware of this. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who gave unparalleled leadership to his Bangalee nation to face enemy and wrest freedom, was he not gunned down with his family and associates in a brutal massacre comparable to the massacre of the tsarist family of Russia.

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Arshad-Uz-Zaman is a former Ambassador.

Viewing corruption as a crisis



MOHAMMAD BADRUL AHSAN

If you agree that corruption is the number one problem facing us today, then a close second would be how it is condoned. Together corruption and condoning form the vicious circle of venality. Men and women, who are trapped in this circle, convulse in the perpetual motion of moral depravity. Corruption and condoning are partners in a crime when conscience is subjugated by opportunity.

Transparency International defines corruption as misuse of entrusted power for private gain. Capt. Samuel Argall, the notorious deputy governor of Virginia from 1617 to 1619, explained the working definition of corruption when he openly boasted to "make hay while the sun shines, however it may fare with the general-ity." The corrupt people are desperately focused. They use the end to justify the means.

Corruption has many names. Bribe, graft, kickbacks, extortion, electoral frauds, nepotism, favoritism, commission, discount, payoff, cut, margin, so forth and so on. There are so many ways to play this game. Benjamin Fletcher, who was the Governor of New York from 1692 to 1698, was

many forms of corruption in one man. He took protection money from pirates, shook down Indian traders, bilked the customs, padded military payrolls, and stole funds raised to pay the provincial debt.

The history of corruption is long and universal. About the same time when the American continent seethed with seedy sources of income, the picture wasn't different in faraway India. Muiz-ul-Mulk had to pay some three lakh

tian Pharaoh declared that a bribe received in a performance of duties by a Priest or official was subject to the death penalty. Harsh penalties were meted out for corruption in ancient times.

As a matter of fact corruption is as old and original as the human soul. From time to time, it not only came in primary colors, but also in many shades and nuances. If the student, who copies in the examination, pays the teacher to look the other way and his parents give

by someone through misuse of power entrusted in him.

That is where condoning comes into the picture as a necessary conclusion. If you build a house with ill-gotten money, which nobody wants to visit; if you raise your children with illicit wealth whom nobody befriends; and if you amass illegitimate fortune that doesn't buy you any respect, why would you do it? Condoning comes when corruption reaches an equilibrium with

ters of men and women and then creates the ecology of aggressive decadence. Democracy assumes that every citizen has an equal say, regardless of social, political, or economic status. But corruption, in effect, undermines that political precept by giving money more access to the political system.

Shortly before his death, Abraham Lincoln stated that "An era of corruption in high places will follow and the money power will

taken over the voice of money. How can a society have higher moral standard than those who control it?

So, if corruption is a crisis, condoning turns it into a culture. If corruption is the candidate, condoning is the campaign for it. If corruption is a function, condoning turns it into a faith. In the end, condoning becomes the air in which corruption breathes. Look around if you must verify the truth. Corruption and condoning are close cousins.

For two years in a row, Transparency International has rated Bangladesh as the most corrupt country in the world. If you ask me, it's not only because we have the highest level of corruption in the world, but because we also have the highest level of condoning. We misuse entrusted power and we entrust power in that misuse, turning selective abuse into a collective passion, which becomes pervasive.

Nothing exceeds like excess and nothing corrupts like corruption. But condoning corrupts even more, because it amplifies the effect. But then it also multiplies corruption and stokes its appetite. Corruption deviates from misuse of entrusted power, looking for other options. If people are being kidnapped for ransom today, it's because corruption has opened new frontiers. It's the power of corruption, which has begun to misuse our trust in family, friends, neighbors and countrymen.

Corruption is a close call on corruption, which has started to make house calls.

Mohammad Badrul Ahsan is a banker.

CROSS TALK

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mahmudis (about £15000) and a bribe of some £10000 to secure his post at Surat. Wazir Khan, a noble at Shahjahan's court, took huge bribes sometimes as much as Rs 30,000 a day. Itmad-ud-Daula, the father of Empress Nurjahan, was notorious for taking bribes and resorting to corrupt practices. Daulat Khan, entitled Nazur-ud-daula, the head eunuch in Akbar's time, had no equal in taking bribes. The state appropriated 10 crores of ashrafis and jewels worth Rs 3 crore after he died.

Further back in time, the code of Hammurabi (the first code of laws created over 4,000 years ago) mandated that a man, who gave false witness against another, would receive the punishment of the case. One Egyptian

him money for it, corruption comes in many strokes. If the police officer who pays to get his posting and then takes bribe to buy gifts and property for his mother, wife and children, corruption is spread out over many people at many levels.

Thus, corruption, like any other industry, has its forward and backward linkages. The politicians spend money to win elections and then take bribes to recover that spending in manifolds. Corruption needs its own constituency, people who support the system, the victims and the beneficiaries, the supply and the demand chains, which make it happen and keep it going. Corruption also needs its audience, people who would enjoy and applaud the private gains made

the conscience of man, creating the moral equinox where to be or not to be is no longer the question.

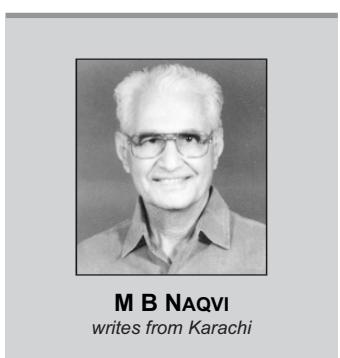
Hence, condoning is corruption done in reverse. In other words, if corruption is violation of honesty, condoning is the honesty of violation. In other words, if corruption is misuse of entrusted power, condoning is power entrusted in that misuse. The motivation for corruption is always there, but condoning affects its modulation. Condoning loosens up the moral constipation of corruption, and creates the confusion that clouds the soul.

If you look at it, corruption is more than a moral problem. It is rather the mother of all problems. It destroys the gravitational force of judgement that holds all things in balance. It messes up charac-

endeavor to prolong its reign ... until wealth is aggregated in a few hands ... and the republic is destroyed." Dick Grasso, chairman of the New York Stock Exchange, who never graduated from college, has recently created a great deal of controversy in that republic over his \$140 million compensation package. The question many people asked: how was this man going to have a higher moral level than those who were regulated by him?

Give a spin to that question, it will put you in perspective. You cannot stop corruption, unless first you have stopped condoning, for the same reason a cheering crowd rushes a performer's adrenaline. If you look at the reality, money has taken over the voice of people, and people have

US must defuse Indo-Pak nuclear fear



M B NAQVI

writes from Karachi

THE US appears to have made a breakthrough with regard to India. A strategic partnership is developing between them and a third dimension to it is the inclusion of the 'natural ally': Israel. Brajesh Mishra had called it a natural axis, which seems to have been all but formalized by the Israeli PM Ariel Sharon's recent India visit. In the current US visit of the Indian Premier AB Vajpayee, he is expected to sign a major agreement with the US, probably over the "trinity of issues" --- high tech trade, civilian nuclear energy and cooperation in space programme --- that may be expected to give substance to the growing "strategic partnership" between the two.

The US role in the Subcontinent cannot be understood without reference to the old US-Pak relationship. It has seen many ups and downs. What is its current status? Probably an international commis-

sion of inquiry would be needed to do justice to the subject. For one's part, one takes Ambassador Nicholas Platt's, the Chief of New York's Asia Society's, recent enunciation of the major US concerns vis-à-vis Pakistan as the text. These are four: (a) Taliban remnants trying to undermine Afghanistan's reconstruction; (b) the possibility of Indo-Pak nuclear conflict; (c) the danger of Pakistan succumbing on political and economic fronts; and (d) the rising tide of Islamic extremism.

Platt's is a succinct summing up of the US view of this country. Many would agree with the prognosis, though not necessarily with what the Bush Administration proposes to do. The question arises that in view of the long sorry story of Pak-India relations, with many quasi and full wars and a year-long military eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation, with frequent exchange of threats of the use of nuclear weapons, what does the US propose to do in the region? Apart from persuading both sides not to go to war and advising them to talk --- a sort of fire fighting --- what are the concrete US actions?

It can be briefly summed up, if we ignore the currently urgent US worries about al-Qaeda, Afghanistan and Iraq, as the effort to firm up a strategic alliance among itself, Israel and India --- and to help India 'arrive', both economically and militarily. The expected major agreement between the US and India --- mainly to permit Israel sell some of the high tech military equip-

PLAIN WORDS

How will the US goal of preventing an atomic war in South Asia be served by its plan to intensify Indo-Pak cold war and arms races? If it is true that civilian nuclear power generation is vitally linked to the country's plans for military uses of nuclear technology, if any, how then the American-Indian cooperation on that "trinity of issues" make the two countries move toward nuclear disengagement?

ment and its own policy regarding sales of dual use technology --- gives enough indication of the US desire to see India emerge as a major power in the region.

Vis-à-vis Pakistan, the recent US munificence --- a package of \$ 3 billion in military and military-related economic assistance programmes, permission to help Pakistan spend \$ 9 billion of its own money in American arms Bazaar and the declaration that the US intends to help maintain a balance of power between Pakistan and India --- is noteworthy. Doubtless the US values Pakistan's cooperation in catching the major al-Qaeda and Taliban fugitives. It probably expects that Pakistan would, out of gratitude, find a way of sending troops to Iraq, if not recognize Israel.

Let's relate the major US worries regarding Pakistan with the action it promises. Would the latter promote the achievement of what the US desires with reference to the four

factors that constitute Pakistan's vulnerabilities? India does not need money from the US; it only needs US technology. The Bush Administration looks like obliging India very substantially. As for Pakistan, it needs American money as well as a resumption of old military relationship with the US. The latter involved permissions to buy military hardware, purchase of spares, training of personnel and American help in the maintenance of US-given equipment. The US, in pursuit of its balance of power design, is again giving Pakistan some money and US permission to buy military equipment --- so long as India does not cry foul i.e. that it will disturb the balance of power.

The really serious concerns of the US are that Pakistan should not collapse for political or economic reasons; there should be no nuclear exchange on the Subcontinent; and of course the more imprecise and difficult task of saving Pakistan from

Islamic extremism. Take the first: Why is Pakistan so brittle, unstable and politically divided? A few reasons are: its elites adopted a militarist view of Kashmir, thought it necessary and feasible to wrest it from India by military means. That led to the rise of the military and eventually it inherited the Pakistan state as a whole. That in turn caused multiple polarizations. The military elites reliance on Islamic rhetoric and alliance with the religious bigots led successively to ideological confusion, identity crisis, collapse of democracy, adoption of a militarist course of action and of course Islamic extremism flourished, a manifestation of which was the Taliban regime and the general fascination with terrorism by segments of society.

The question is would Pakistan's buying military equipment and training worth \$ 10.8 billion help counter any of the foregoing tendencies? Remember that India in any

case is embarked on a programme of military greatness and the signs are that it will now go for the cutting edge of technology. The Indian reaction to what the US is doing for Pakistan will be to render it ineffective by a greater and speedier build up. Which in turn will force Pakistan military to push for even greater acquisitions. Would its possible implosion not come nearer?

In plain words, the US permission to Pakistan to buy military goodies worth \$ 9 billion in addition to \$ 1.8 billion military aid is, in conjunction with what it is going to do for India, is the surest way to intensify the various arms races between these two states. It is optional to regard the American friendliness to Pakistan as a two-in-one strategy: while buying gratitude of Pakistani generals, Pakistan's unusual Monetary Reserves at \$ 11 billion can be recycled to the profit of American arms manufacturers. One can be sure that if Pakistan were to spend \$

10 to 11 billion on arms, India will devote \$ 50 or more to offset Pakistan's perceived gain --- all to the benefit of American arms Bazaar.

Let's ignore India. After noting that fires of the arms races are being stoked strongly and deliberately, there is the proposition: how this balance of power strategy will affect the likelihood or otherwise of Pakistan's going belly up for political or economic reasons? If militarism and arms build up, along with empty Islamic sloganeering, has brought Pakistan to the present pass, how can such a heavy military build up and support to the Musharraf regime can normalize, democratize and strengthen Pakistan? Pakistan economy's health is not robust enough; the present praises for its supposed stabilization hide an ugly reality: shorn of western largesse and if debt payment reschedulings do not remain available, Islamabad will be back to 1998 conditions. The possibility of default and worse may come closer.

How will the US goal of preventing an atomic war in South Asia be served by its plan to intensify Indo-Pak cold war and arms races? If it is true that civilian nuclear power generation is vitally linked to the country's plans for military uses of nuclear technology, if any, how then the American-Indian cooperation on that "trinity of issues" make the two countries move toward nuclear disengagement? Indeed, ordinary citizens are more likely to suspect that the US is moving toward filling

the gaps in India's nuclear programmes with new dual use technology without directly assisting it in its purely military programmes. The US may end up giving impetus to nuclear arms races, as Pakistan will beg, borrow or steal to get similar technology.

Insofar as countering Islamic extremism is concerned, the course the US has adopted in South Asia can only worsen the situation. The short-term purpose of the Americans is to elicit stronger cooperation from Musharraf government in both fighting the Taliban remnants in Afghanistan, arresting the fugitive Taliban and al-Qaeda notables and to get him to adopt a more secular approach. The political course that Musharraf may be forced to adopt in sending troops to Iraq and possibly recognizing Israel will almost be like a lighted match near a powder dump. The Islamic extremists will cry 'sell out' and there will be echoes of these denunciations. Pakistan's greater integration into American schemes is sure to backfire and intensify its many divisive and debilitating trends. The US cannot do a greater disservice than to intensify the arms races between India and Pakistan.

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