

Israeli bombing in Syria

A new turn in the Middle East conflict!



M. M. REZAUL KARIM

ISRAELI warplanes bombed a site in Syria about 20 kilometres from its capital, Damascus, on the 5th instant. The target was alleged to have been a training camp of the Islamic Jihad of the Arab suicidal bomb attackers and also of the Al-Qaida network. It took place a day after a car-bomb suicidal attack in Haifa which caused death to 19 people and injury to many more. The attack within the territory of Syria introduced a new dimension to the ever-volatile and ever-troubled war-torn Middle East. It was not a pre-emptive attack. It was carried out on the basis of Israeli intelligence about existence of certain terrorist centres in Syria. Syria vehemently denied the allegation and raised the issue at the Security Council asking the latter pass a resolution condemning the Israeli action and demanding no repetition of such aggression. But later, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon reiterated his policy to continue attacking terrorism in whatever

place and time he so found. This implied that Israel kept its option open to launch similar attacks on Syria again.

The resolution tabled at the Security Council received universal support in condemning Israel, except from the United States. President Bush, who had launched a pre-emptive invasion of Iraq earlier this year, practically condoned Israeli action, stating that Israel had the right of self-defence. The American President, however, expressed a note of caution by asking

Israel not to act, which might cause escalation of violence. Does it imply, in his opinion, the Israeli attack did not already escalate violence or had not the potentiality of doing so in the region? The statement, therefore, had an inherent contradiction. Syrian President came out with scathing criticism against Israel and did not also spare the United States. He said Israel was dragging Syria into a war, engulfing also other countries in the region. The US Congress recommended sanction against Syria. Some observers think it to be a prelude to further action against Syria. The Arab League debated the issue and took a relatively strong stand. Some quarters think this attack had been a ploy to divert attention of the international community from the development of events in Palestine following Israeli declaration of expelling President Arafat from his homeland.

another sovereign, independent nation blatantly violates international law and directly counters principles of the UN Charter. It cannot be acceptable to the international community, though history is replete with similar instances committed by arrogant states. But in most such cases, the invading states were subjected to severe ignominy.

International chastisement and ultimate defeat of its purpose. The last Israeli attack on Syrian territory

The increasing complexities, violence and conflicts in the Middle East have arisen largely due to the fact that both in USA and Israel hard line rightist Parties are at the helm of affairs. President Bush Jr. has been known to be a staunch Republican and Prime Minister Sharon is an extremist. Then again, a person, who may be described as a terrorist by some can be regarded as a patriot by others. The present Israeli regime rules with a thin margin of majority in the Parliament and

hair-breadth margin, it is quite possible that continued efforts for peace will at one time or other be crowned with success. That is, however, the views of an optimist. But how should one go about in restoring peace and establishing a lasting peace in the Middle East? A 60 million dollar question. But solution is not altogether impossible. The two

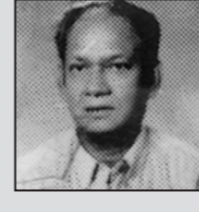
sides must be sincere in their desire for bringing about permanent peace and shun the policy of horse-

lands in the West Bank. This is not acceptable. If one accepts, one does not get peace. Because, the Palestinians regard this encroachment as a violation of the agreement and forcible occupation of their land. In protest, they retaliate by all possible means, including resorting to terrorism. One must realise that a young woman strapping herself with dynamite must be seriously motivated to sacrifice her most cherished possession, her life itself. There can be no greater sacrifice, and consequently the cause must have been too big, too endearing and too pervasive.

The peace-loving people of the world, therefore, earnestly want peace in that region. Otherwise, peace in other regions will be jeopardised. If that be the case, the regimes and peoples of both Israel and Palestine must work towards an agreement to the effect that there would be no more Jewish settlement on Arab lands in the West Bank. Also, those already settled must vacate their lands within a reasonable period of time and with the active cooperation and material support from the Israeli government. On the part of the Palestine authorities, they must ensure no violence takes place during this process and that eventually the two states and their peoples, of the same ethnic origin, live side by side in peace, harmony and cooperation. Such measures had indeed been tried before and failed. But why should one failure daunt the people's desire and determination to do what is best for them? There is nothing to lose in trying again than the loss itself.

M.M.Rezaul Karim, a former Ambassador, is a member of BNP's Advisory Council.

Turkish troops heading for Iraq!



ARSHAD-UZ ZAMAN

IN a landmark vote on 7 October the Grand National Assembly of Turkey voted overwhelmingly for sending troops to Iraq. The vote was 385 in favour, 183 against while two abstained. The Government of Turkey has thus won the long battle in favour of sending troops to Iraq.

The favourable vote has not been easy. On March 1 last the Parliament had voted against such a proposal thus creating crisis in Turkey's relations with her half-century old ally, the United States of America. The USA has exerted maximum pressure behind the scenes on Turkey. Turkey has been faced with a very difficult choice, which has divided the administration. The President of the Republic Ahmed Necdet Sezer has stuck to his guns and insisted on international legal sanction. In the end the Turkish troops are getting ready to move although there is no UN resolution sanctioning such a move.

What finally won the day was the argument that Iraq is a very near neighbour and Turkey has relations with her which stretches back to centuries. In the heyday of the Ottoman Empire Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent conquered Iraq in the 16th century and Iraq was a part of the Empire until the end of the First World War in 1917 when the Ottoman Empire was dismembered. Thus Turkish troops, according to a banner headline of the largest circulation Turkish daily *Hurriyet*, are returning to Iraq after 86 years. This time, according to the Turkish media, the reason is 'establishment of peace'.

Repeatedly Turkey has argued that when the house of a neighbour is burning she cannot remain indifferent. There is also the argument that for long Turkey has maintained

THE HORIZON THIS WEEK

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strict control on her south, the Kurdish inhabited area of Iraq. This is also the oil rich region of Iraq like Keruk and Mosul. Besides the Kurds, the area is inhabited by Turkmen. For long Turkey has played as the guardian of the area. The British in the days of their Empire tried repeatedly to set up a Kurdish state and are now hand in glove with the Americans. There has been difficult relations between Turkey and the US in the Kurdish region. Now that Turkish troops are arriving in the area a *modus vivendi* will have to be worked out.

There is a continuous dialogue between the military of the two sides on a host of details. Among them the most important are the number of troops, the area where the Turkish troops will operate and the question of command. The truth is that the Turkish presence will be as important as that of the British.

If the US troops are not wanted in Iraq and face continuous attacks and are losing men daily, the Iraqis have repeatedly insisted that they do not want any foreign troops on their soil. There have been warnings from the Iraqi side. Turkish convoy of trucks are regularly fired upon and when the vote was in progress within the Assembly Tuesday news came from the Iraqi council that Turkish troops were not wanted in Iraq.

Turkey has a long love-hate relationship with her Arab neighbours. The Ottoman Empire stretched throughout the Arab world for centuries and the Sultan in Istanbul was the defender of the holiest Shrine of Islam -- the Holy Kaaba. Leaving the Empire was a painful experience and it left deep scar. The sight of the Turkish troops will bring back painful memories to

the Iraqis. More to the point Turkey is the first Muslim country to send troops to Iraq.

The real danger is that in the eyes of the general public the Turkish troops will be seen as trying to help the US forces, who have entered a total quagmire. Since the fall of President Saddam Hussein, a real guerilla warfare has started between the US forces and the Iraqi fighters. That action gives no sign of abating. Anyone seen as helping the US in her pacification effort in Iraq is bound to face the wrath of the Iraqi public. Whereas the US has accepted the position that there cannot be any love lost between her and the Iraqi population, Turkey has no such option open to her. To state it bluntly Turkish forces do not have the option to return home.

The government of Recep Tayyip Erdogan has taken a gamble on deciding to send troops to Iraq. In my half a century experience of this country and her foreign relations, this is the first time that I find there is no unity in the projection of her foreign policy. The opposition People's Republican Party voted en bloc against the government sponsored resolution. I also notice a deep seated malaise among the Turks on the question of sending troops outside the county's borders. The aim of this move is not very clear.

Nothing succeeds like failure. Time will show if Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who took over the reins of the Government only a few months ago, sees his gamble pay off. Ends.

Arshad-uz-Zaman is a former Ambassador.

CURRENTS AND CROSSCURRENTS

The peace-loving people of the world earnestly want peace in that region. Otherwise, peace in other regions will be jeopardised. If that be the case, the regimes and peoples of both Israel and Palestine must work towards an agreement to the effect that there would be no more Jewish settlement on Arab lands in the West Bank... On the part of the Palestine authorities, they must ensure no violence takes place during this process...

took place 20 years ago and before that Israel had annexed the Syrian Golan Heights by force on the pretext of Israeli security.

The fate of the resolution, as it stands, appears to be one subjected to American veto. Another veto by its mentor will, no doubt, encourage Israeli regime further, with the concomitant risk of bringing war to other states in the region. The Israeli atrocities had already intensified and expanded because of the backing of the present American Administration. It is a well-known fact that the influence of the Jewish lobby, controlling the finance, media and industry, is enormous on American government. The American Republican Party is, however, more prone to be influenced by the Jewish lobby than the Democratic Party. It is not the American people as such taking an unreasonably pro-Israeli stance. It is a section of the American public who succumb more easily to Jewish pressure and media propaganda that tends to bend the policy of the Administration in favour of Israel's malevolent policy and daring aggression. One must not forget that it was President Carter, a Democrat, who was the architect of the historic Camp David Peace Accord between Israel and Egypt in 1978. Again, it was President Clinton, another Democrat, who made Israel and Palestine sign the celebrated Declaration of Principles at the White House in 1993. It is universally acclaimed so much so that the co-signatories, President Yasser Arafat and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin with his Foreign Minister, Simon Peres, were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. And it was also clear that in doing so the US Presidents had the backing of the American people for the former's successful endeavours for peace.

Out of the adversaries in the then theatre of conflict, one, Prime Minister Rabin, a victim of assassin's bullets, is dead. But why did not his successors, especially the present incumbent, fall in line for peace? On the contrary, they made a *volte-face*.

President Bush's thumping popularity is now drastically on the wane. That is to say that almost half of the population in America and Israel do not support their rulers and await more moderate leadership. Does this mean that the elusive peace in the Middle East must

await a change of regime, in favour of a liberal one in Israel and also, perhaps, in the United States? One wonders.

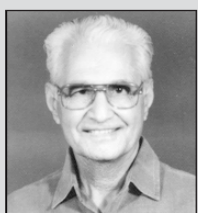
Despite the grandiose policy of the Middle East "Road Map", Israeli attacks and aggression accentuated. This time these went beyond the territorial limits of Palestine and are fraught with greater danger than before. One may ask, if peace in the Middle East was about to be clinched but ultimately failed with a

trading to get an extra ounce in negotiation. They must also realise that violence begets violence and can never attain the objective of peace.

A negotiated peace can be achieved only on the basis of the principle of give and take. No one side can take all the advantages and give the other party nothing. It will not work, and if it does, it will be transitory. The theme of the solution on which all concerned agreed was an exchange of land for peace. Palestine will have its land in the West Bank and Gaza, and Israel will live in peace. While Gaza and some land in the West Bank were later returned to the Palestinians, the subsequent Israeli regimes defiantly allowed the Jews to settle on



Back to the barricades?



M B NAQVI writes from Karachi

FOREIGN Minister Kasuri has said that an armed clash with India is still possible -- and one says it may even be likely. Trend of official comment in both the countries points to this conclusion. The peace initiative of the Indian Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee of last April appears to have run into sand. If the normalisation process started by it can still be regarded as alive, its pulse is extraordinarily slow. Not even rail and air services could be restored. The two bureaucracies by their visa policies have choked all chances of the common people on both sides contributing to the normalisation that matters most. Besides, what President Pervez Musharraf and Premier Vajpayee said last month in the UN General Assembly was standard cold war rhetoric to which the world has long been accustomed. There is no doubt, the official normalisation processes remain subordinated to the vigorous pursuit of competitive national security (i.e. arms race) -- with India inducting missiles in its armed forces and Pakistan test firing more missiles. Hearty verbal denunciations of each other create growing bitterness.

Indeed, the war Kasuri talked about is constantly being postponed since 1980's Brassstacks exercise by international effort, mainly American. That American policies have more than one dimension of peace-making is perhaps not fully realised in either Pakistan or India. They aim at managing both Pakistan and India through a policy of balance of power. While many would thank the US for trying to keep peace on the Subcontinent, its design of appear-

ing to be close to India in one context and favouring Pakistan in another is unmistakable. That intensifies an arms race between the two South Asian powers -- directly as a result of that US design -- to the ultimate benefit of not only the war industrialists but also to the US strategic purposes.

The question is why are India and Pakistan perpetually on the very brink of a clash of arms for all these decades? The fundamental reason, accepted on all sides, is the Kashmir dispute. However, the Kashmir policies of both countries are actually an enigma. It is hard to comprehend Pakistan's Kashmir policy: It began by being actually aimed at making Kashmir a part of Pakistan since 1947. But its current stance is that the Kashmiri people have risen in revolt against India and are carrying on an armed resistance on their own. Pakistan merely gives them moral and political support and no more. As for the consequences of India's Kashmir policy, it had better be left to the good sense of the Indians.

But India's current stance has to be noted. The Indian government, for its part, refuses to accept the existence of any international problem about Kashmir, except one: Pakistan-supported terrorism in their controlled Kashmir Valley and parts of Jammu. India considers Kashmir to be a part of India. For the rest, India intends to retain all parts of Kashmir it controls by doing whatever it takes. Its response to the emergent situation is to suppress the uprising and seek a solution through the recently-elected state government for whatever internal problems there may be in Kashmir.

There is no meeting point between the two stances. Both have repeated their stances many times in innumerable conferences and have reached nowhere. Unless one or both sides change their line, there is no hope of peace in future also. One hopes there are Indians out

there who take a different tack. One can only focus on a possible change in Pakistan because the maintenance of peace overrides everything, especially face.

What are the nut and bolts of Pakistan's Kashmir policy in terms of its consequences? Pakistani establishment is happy that the Indians are forced to bleed by insurgents in Kashmir. The operational part of the policy is encouragement and support to these insurgents that can scarcely remain confined to words only. But nobody takes its claim of not facilitating the

arms race and such a big military establishment that Pakistan economy cannot bear its true cost? What's the point? And why should Kashmiris go on fighting with guns a hopelessly unequal war? Isn't a change of strategy indicated?

The recent events -- Americans have promised an aid of \$ 600 million a year and permission to buy military equipment up to \$ 9 billion -- have raised the morale of Pakistan's ruling establishment and it would merrily spend \$ 11 billion in the next few years. That is, actually most of the much boasted Monetary

despite knowing that it takes us nowhere.

If the Pakistan establishment is prepared to let Kashmiri youth go on being killed on an escalating scale by letting the so-called Jihad go on with no realistic hope of a solution, it is being grossly unfair to the Kashmiris. Is it fighting India to the last Kashmiri? Pakistan state has to see facts as they are. It has to engage India peaceably and conditions of trust have to be created for that. That the Indians are not talking today is due to Pakistan's own political immobility and perhaps also a political ploy for other reasons. Should Pakistan be ready to seek an amicable and workable solution of the Kashmir problem, without one-upmanship, the Indians will be only too ready to talk.

Pakistan establishment has great influence with Kashmiri insurgents. Pakistan's main purpose should not simply be to go on acquiring arms to reach the elusive goal of bettering the power balance with India and keeping the military tensions high. It had better advise the Kashmiri youth to adopt a more appropriate political strategy. They can and should conduct a local version of Palestinians' original Intefada, the non-violent one. That will cause some problems. But that will be a small price to pay which can be recompensed by a new Kashmiri *satyagraha* with more promise. That would be a genuine effort to create conditions of trust and real friendship with India with no mischief in Kashmir -- combined with appropriate trade and cooperation policies -- so that negotiations on Kashmir can be held and the problem, hopefully, resolved over time. That will take a lot of doing. But the Kashmiri young men's choice of non-violent agitation would greatly help both the chances of the negotiations and a possible eventual resolution of the Kashmir problem.

MB Naqvi is a leading columnist in Pakistan.

PLAIN WORDS

insurgency seriously. The policy in place has two main prongs: Pakistan is enabled to carry on propaganda round the globe for gross abuses of the Kashmiris' human rights by India's soldiery and secondly it has kept up for 55 years an arms race with India to be able to tackle the latter, if it turned around and started fighting. What is the net result of this policy?

The Indians have proved by consistent action that they would retain their possessions in the old Jammu and Kashmir State at all costs. India is said to have 700,000 armed men in Kashmir to cope with the insurgency. An armed revolt by a small unarmed populace against such a huge force does not promise victory of the Kashmiris, aided or unaided by Pakistan. Already a lot of Kashmiri youths -- a good proportion of a whole generation in the Valley -- have been killed. Still, the insurgent side is not an inch closer to their objective. Can Pakistan really help them secure victory? Not very likely. The experiences of the year 2002 and the alarm they caused in the rest of the world combines to ensure that Kashmir problem has now no military solution whatever. Pakistani leadership has acknowledged it in so many words.

If no reliance is to be placed on Pakistan's serious military involvement for getting Kashmir Valley added to Pakistan, why then all this

Reserves. Everyone can be sure that the Indians would, in their turn, ratchet up their defence spending by 4 to 10 times this figure. If this is true, there can be no war between the two nuclear-armed rivals, thanks to the nature of nuclear weapons and international diplomacy. What, then, is the point of all these build ups if they only result in the enrichment of the few, including the merchants of death -- and penury of most of the Indians and Pakistanis. It looks uncommonly like not so much a foreign policy as a folly.

Kashmir problem cannot be left in the air, however. Something has got to be done. If it has no solution by military means, it has to be sought through other means: i.e. through amicable negotiations. But you cannot have amicable negotiations when a furious arms race is going on. It simply means that when and if there is to be any serious solution-seeking of the Kashmir problem, it has to come through negotiations with India in which both sides will have to engage in some give and some take. For that genuine friendship, based on grassroots rapprochement, is needed. It so happens that the Indians, being a satisfied status quo power, are not pushed about the Kashmir solution and are willing to let the problem drag on. Can Pakistan go on with its old attitudes, stances and actions without care? Factually, it has continued the old policy orientation

Bush's misguided foreign policy imperils America

DR FAKHRUDDIN AHMED writes from Princeton

LETTER FROM AMERICA

JUST when one thought that President Bush could not do anything dumber, he surprised the world, yet again! As if vetoing the UN Security Council resolution asking Israel not to murder the democratically elected leader of the Palestinians, Yasser Arafat, was not dumb enough, he now says that Israeli attack on a sovereign nation, Syria, in absolute violation of all international laws, was justified, and is further speeding up efforts to slap American and UN sanctions on Syria! If the warmonger Sharon is to attack Iran next, which he might do, Bush is certain to put all blame on Iran!

In an editorial expressing exasperation, *The New York Times* wrote on October 7: "President Bush has unwisely chosen to encourage the most hawkish impulses of Israel's prime minister after a reckless Israeli military reprisal (against Syria)." (Reprisal? What did Syria do to Israel?)

What President Bush does not seem to understand is that every American action has consequences for America. By vetoing the very reasonable resolution not to harm Arafat physically, America earned the ill-will of the world's silent majority of nations (the resolution passed 133-4 in the General Assembly), and made it easier for anti-American terrorists to recruit. Nations always fight proxy wars. Just as Israel had originally funded Hamas and Islamic Jihad as a counter balance against the secular PLO, in an effort to recover the Syrian territory of the Golan Heights, which Israel annexed in 1981, Syria too had been covertly aiding groups hostile to Israel. Now, by crossing the internationally recognised border and attacking Syrian territory, Israel has made it possible for Syria to retaliate against Israel in self-defence, in any way it chooses, overtly. And by siding with Israeli aggression so openly and so unnecessarily, Bush risks making America a target for retaliation as well.

Instead of reining in Israel, a policy which all US administrations since Israel's founding in 1948 followed, a Jewish neoconservative-controlled President Bush has decided to follow the Israeli example. Israel invented the doctrine of preemption. In a pre-emptive strike, without declaring war, Israel destroyed all of Egypt's Air Force, in the Six-Day War of 1967. In 1981, Israeli planes bombed and destroyed Iraq's nuclear facility in a preemptive attack, without declaring war, violating Jordan's air space in the process. And in 1982, Israel preemptively attacked a third Arab nation, Lebanon, without declaring war. "Bush neither knew nor cared whether Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction or close connection to al-Qaeda; mere

lack of evidence was not going to stop" him from emulating Israel and attacking Iraq, while summarily dismissing the objection of the whole world, thus earning the world's disdain. Adds *The New York Times* Tom Friedman: "I know a vast majority of Israelis want a decent, normal society, but their ideologically driven leaders are lost in space, squandering their people's great strength rather than channeling it into creative options. And the Bush team, which should be acting as a reality check, has fallen so deep into the pocket of Ariel Sharon you can't even find it anymore."

When Gerald Ford became the President of the United States after Richard Nixon resigned in August 1974, at every opportunity a humble Ford would remind Americans that he was acutely aware that the American people had not elected him President. George W. Bush acts as though he was elected in a landslide and has the popular mandate for all his extreme domestic and foreign policies. As *TIME* magazine's Michael Kinsley observes: "... he (Bush) stole the election. What rankles especially is Bush's almost total lack of grace about the extraordinary way he took office. Theft aside, he indisputably got fewer votes than the other guy (Al Gore received over half a million more popular votes than Bush did in the 2000 Presidential election). We also thought that Bush's apparent affability, and his lack of knowledge or strong views or even great interest in policy issues, would make him temperate on the ideological thermometer. It turns out, though, Bush's unreflectiveness shores up his ideological backbone. An advisor who persuades Bush to adopt Policy X does not have to be worried that our President will keep turning it over in his mind, monitoring its progress, reading and thinking about complaints of its critics, perhaps even reexamining it on the basis of subsequent developments, and announce one day that he prefers Policy Y. This does not happen. He knows what he thinks, and has to be told it only once." And the Zionist neocons told Bush, "Israel is good; Palestinians, Arafat, Iraqis, Syrians, Arabs, Iranians and the Muslims are bad." That's all Bush needed to hear, and hear it only once to believe. Since September 11, Bush has operated within those parameters, those beliefs.

Zionist neocons told Bush that Arabs only understand force, and that once America defeated Saddam, the Arab dictators will be so petrified that democracy will flourish everywhere in the Arab

world. The fact that Iraqi occupation has been a disaster, costing one billion dollars per week and the life of one US soldier per day, has not made Bush reassess the neocon advice. Instead, he is listening to Jewish neocons like William Kristol and Dick Morris who are urging him to attack Syria and Iran next! Bush never figured out that the neocons want America to destroy Israel's enemies in the region -- Iraq, Syria and Iran -- and make Israel's enemies America's own. What the neocons did not tell Bush is that Arabs can dish out punishment too. More Israelis have died under Ariel Sharon's get-tough policy against the Palestinians in three years, than all the previous Israeli prime ministers combined. Sharon now seems to believe that by escalating the conflict into Syria and then perhaps to Iran, thus taking on more enemies, Israeli citizens will be safer! True friends of Israel know how Israelis can be safe: by dismantling the illegal Jewish settlements in, and withdrawing from the West Bank and Gaza. Of course, neither Sharon nor Bush will ever entertain that option; they believe that blaming and asking the Palestinians exclusively for concessions should solve the problem. Unable to handle one enemy -- Palestinians for Israel and Iraqis for the US -- Bush, like Sharon now believes that his chances will improve if he takes on more enemies (Syria and Iran)! Pugnacious Sharon is a pathological mass murderer; to the detriment of Israel he is probably incapable of transforming himself into a peacemaker. To the detriment of the US, it is probably equally unrealistic to expect someone who is generally obtuse to suddenly become intelligent.

The Washington Post's Richard Cohen warns fellow Americans: "Bush, though, was always viewed as slight, particularly unshooled in foreign affairs, where, above all, he was incurious, unquestioning and -- as we have learned -- unprepared. Always, though, he was certain. For Bush, the danger is that this sorry record will revive the cartoon persona of a dummy -- not the steady custodian of our national security, as he seemed in the aftermath of Sept. 11, but a man without judgment, a naïf who was manipulated by a cadre of hawks. For the rest of us, the danger is that the caricature was spot on, so obvious it was disregarded." The surest way to imperil America is to act as though America and Israel are above international law. The only way to befriend the world is to be fair to all: fair to the Palestinians, Arabs, Muslims, and the world and not blindly play favourites to the Israelis!