State action, civil society and human security



MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

HE concept of security, especially human security, is relevant for regions like South Asia where states like Bangladesh are still grappling with issues like nation-state formation. The inevitable march of the market into our developing region has also presented new challenges to human security. While there is a persisting demand for more people-centred approach to security, the debate on human security has remained at the rhetoric level and has not been translated into policymaking in the region. The preeminence of military centred security is, however, not a phenomenon peculiar to South Asia.

The state is the primary actor in international relations and territorial security of the state is privileged over the security of the individual. As such, genuine concerns of human development and human rights have often been cast aside to accommodate the interests of the military in the formulation of national security policies.

Conceptual notions

Human security concepts identifies and considers environmental pollution hunger, poverty, violent social and political conflict, economic imbalances, drugs, organised crime, discrimination on grounds of gender, religion, race as threats to human security. Such approach does not always consider state as the sole provider of security. At times, the state has been identified as an adversary. The human security approach prescribes conflict resolution with inbuilt guarantees for freedom of expression, representation and

between the political and economic aspects of human security. Coherence in conceptualising human security will help in channelising research and action in related areas. Consequently, this would help in devising effective strategies for achieving human security. The Human Development Index and the Humane Governance Index formulated by Mahbub-ul-Haq enables an identification of problem areas for each country and is thus a valuable tool in addressing problems of human

the problems will be addressed There is a need to seek a balance with the result that the phenomenon of gender discrimination will remain a grave concern despite exhortation of gender equality in state policy. Similarly, the problems of human security and personal security have a dimension that can be effectively dealt with only through a combination of social reform and state action.

Human security and state

Since there are differing priorities of human security in different regions, the debate on state security versus human security There is perhaps a need to make becomes pertinent. While else-

such a scenario, the state itself major areas of concern for gover- employment of forces to prevent becomes a threat to human security perpetrating crimes against its citizens. Here, the state is unable and often unwilling to cope with the market forces. The incidence of increasing rural poverty and the income gap between urban and rural areas is a problem. Such a position has given rise to a human security debate that demonises the state and makes an argument for moving away from the state.

State and civil society movement

The anti-state and pro-civil society debate originates from the lack of

nance are provision of basic civic amenities, public distribution system, health, communications and transportation, housing, education. People must feel and see government and not just hear of it. This is where political will and governance are seen by the com-

The main concern should be to established the credibility and legitimacy of the state and its institutions. This may be achieved by a pragmatic and implementable policy, institutionalised approach implementation by credible peo-

and a sincere and transparent

In the absence of an alternative arrangement, the argument to move away from state capacity can actually be counter productive as it may result in the breakdown of existing structures of representation and governance. While these structures and their processes may be flawed they do afford the citizens a voice, however marginalised, and rule of law, however, compromised. The preferred strategy in this case would be to strengthen the existing structures of governance by introducing greater accountability and transparency. This would empower people with the tools to demand better use of state capacity and also to monitor the progress of the

transborder terrorism and for

confronting the insurgent-

Our strategy in tackling internal

security has been purely of crisis

management. Structural changes

are required in decision making

process to ensure independent

functioning of law enforcement

agencies and a holistic policy

incorporating political, economic

and law and law and order aspects.

The desired course

smugglers nexus.

State sovereignty is a reality of the contemporary international order and strategies to achieve human security must contend with this reality. Debates that ask for distancing away from the state do not contribute much either to the concept or strategies of human security as they predicate the achievement of human security on the marginalisation of the state. Simultaneously, governments have to recognise that the individual is the prime referent of security, and strategies and policies that endanger human security ultimately endanger the state. State security and human security can actually be mutually reinforcing if the strategies of achieving security are cooperative and non-violent.

RETURN OF MORTAL REMAINS OF BIR SHRESTHA FL. LT. SHAHEED MOTIUR RAHMAN

An appeal

Let this occasion be a turning point

KHORSHED ALAM

FTER a lapse of long 35 years the mortal remains of Bir Shrestha Ft. Lt. Shaheed Matiur Rahman are about to come L to the soil of his dear Bangladesh. The government and Honourable Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia have taken the initiative of repatriating the mortal remains of the Bir Shrestha from Pakistan to Bangladesh. They are due to reach the country on the night of the 24th June 2006.

The Ministry of the War of Liberation Affairs, its State Minister Md Rezaul Karim, MP, and his team of officials have made all preparations for smooth repatriation of the remains of Bir Shrestha Ft. Lt Shaheed Matiur Rahman. As I understand the officers of three armed forces, the Air Force in particular, have made elaborate arrangements for the reception of the remains and their eventual burial at the Muktijoddha graveyard at Mirpur.

A delegation of six members is already in Pakistan to bring back the remains. Let their mission be a success. The conclusion of the real burial of the Bir Shrestha Ft. Lt. Shaheed Matiur Rahman with proper religious rites in the soil of his own land will be a great achievement. I have been included as a member of the official delegation as a representative of the family.

Can this great occasion of home-coming of the mortal remains of Bir Shrestha Ft. Lt. Matiur Rahman not be a turning point for the nation at this critical juncture? It is hoped that the Honourable Prime Minister will personally receive the mortal remains at Zia International Airport. Many dignitaries will perhaps be invited to attend the reception ceremony. Cannot some top leader of the government ring up his counterpart of the opposition party to invite him and his party leader to attend all the ceremonies? That will be great and may lead to melting of the ice that currently divides the two

I am suggesting this to bring the two main political parties closer which may bring national understanding. Let the leaders of the government rise up to the occasion without having any vanity, or a sense of defeatism at this moment. The nation is passing through a critical time, is on a precipice and a deepening crisis is looming large. The two major political parties then can sit for negotiations to resolve their differences and come to some sort of understanding in the greater interest of and for the sake of the nation. The two parties can always consult their respective allies in the course of the negotiations. Again for God's sake let not any sense of conceding inhibit this process. The soul of Bir Shrestha Ft. Lt. Shaheed Matiur Rahman will then have his eternal rest in greater peace.

The nation deserves masterly handling of the present critical situation in order to ensure smooth holding of the upcoming election with participation of all political parties for stability and national prosperity. I would consider it a great privilege if there is any service I can render at this ripe old age of 72.

May Allah bless us all and rest the soul of Bir Shrestha Ft. Lt. Shaheed Matiur Rahman in eternal peace

The author is former Finance Secretary and former Governor of Bangladesh Bank.

STRAIGHT LINE

In the absence of an alternative arrangement, the argument to move away from state capacity can actually be counter productive as it may result in the breakdown of existing structures of representation and governance. While these structures and their processes may be flawed they do afford the citizens a voice, however marginalised, and rule of law, however, compromised. The preferred strategy in this case would be to strengthen the existing structures of governance by introducing greater accountability and transparency.

distinction between issues that where there is a stress on mechalend themselves to state action and those that fall within the realm of social reform. This is not to establish that state action and social reform are mutually exclusive but that they must play a mutually strengthening role in the achievement of human security.

In Bangladesh, gender discrimination is a major threat to human security as it results into economic and sexual exploitation, political exclusion and social marginalisation of half the population. In solving the problem, in addition to legislation, there is a requirement of an interface between social reform and state action for effectively addressing the issue. The state can legislate laws for equal employment opportunities for women but if there is social resistance to girls being educated, the legislation will not translate into economic equality for women. Without integrated approach only specific aspects of nisms of managing political and economic issues through cooperative approach, in Bangladesh the issues of territorial sovereignty still predominate. Unfortunately, the processes of nation building are still in progress in our situation. However, human security is entwined with state security and each becomes an aspect of the

The strategies for ensuring human security and state capacity are interlinked. There is a direct link between good governance and achievement of human security. The Human Development Report for South Asia, 1999 identified misgovernance and lack of governance as major threats to human security in South Asia. Especially, in Bangladesh, the politiciancriminal-bureaucracy nexus has hijacked processes of governance with the result that the common people's access to resources and

of the state to ensure the security of the individual. While the anti-state discourse expresses the popular discontent with the state of affairs in the country, the accompanying argument or posture of moving away from state needs closer examination. Those in favour of moving away from the state, however, do not offer any alternative structure to replace the essential functions performed by the state. The proposal for a vigilant civil society constituted by non-governmental organisation in the areas of best electoral practices, development, health etc and people's groups is too diffuse an entity with no specific sense of purpose.

Economic development and security management are essential ingredients of governance and while good governance is a prime requirement everywhere, it is a key element in a volatile environment. Since the ultimate battle is for the hearts and minds of the people and deprivation is the core, therefore,

There is no denying that politics have eroded the law and order machinery, law enforcement capacity and the legal framework to deal with security situation. The state needs to arm itself adequately to confront organised crime, subversion, terrorism and threat posed by narcotics. At the same time, political parties must not permit a state of anarchy under the garb of political propriety and democracy.

Management of security situation

Our response to every internal security situation must not be an escalation in the type or number of security forces. The point to be understood is that increase in numbers or types of forces is no substitute for efficiency. Diverse forces with varying capability, ethos and charter handling internal security situations may cost cohesiveness and enhanced capability. There is a need for long term professional assessment on the

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Is the country heading towards a disaster?



MD. ASADULLAH KHAN

HE unilateral appointment of Justice M.A. Aziz as CEC and two other commissioners of the EC, one belonging to the commission itself in some capacity and whose unflinching lovalty to some power blocks has always been an epic story and the other, a retired judge of the High Court, who after retirement, people allege, had become too much aligned to the ruling alliance's activities, had, to certain extent, shattered the hope of a free and fair parliamentary election in the country. Soon after appointment, Justice Aziz went ahead with preparing a fresh voter list defying existing electoral ordinance as well as the verdict of the High Court on a writ petition filed by the Awami League. Ironically, himself a judge, M. A. Aziz is pre-eminently famous for his attitude to ride roughshod with the rule of law. His latest decision not to send enumerators from door to door to update the voter list on the basis of the data prepared in 2001 has raised questions about his intention and sincerity in conducting a free and fair election. But with meticulously planned strategies from the day Justice Aziz took over as CEC, he could have transformed the moribund EC organisation into a dynamic institution that could deliver and outwit the rigging devices that would have sprung up later in the polls days, but he has lost that rare chance to hold any promise for the electorates. As CEC and as a sitting judge of the Supreme Court, he was to provide a level playing field for all the parties without fear or favour. Our softspoken and articulate law minister has absolved the CEC Justice M.A. Aziz of any wrong doing viz. his gamble with public money to the extent of more than 35 crore taka in a country that is sliding into depths of misery and economic slowdown. his haughty manners in dealing with the press, his feigned illness and absence from the office in a

defence these high-ups in the its present form and set up fly thick government have are very poten- and fast, the last thing people could Court for abuse of his position now. without making any uproar in the

this is a signal clear and open to all seems hardly possible that elec-

tial in the sense that his is a consti- expect is not a fair election. With tutional position and the govern- election due in January, 2007 after ment has hardly anything to do the tenure of the alliance governunless he resigns himself, appar- ment expires in October next, voter ently meaning that he should list, as experts opine, must be ready resign. This time the Law Minister by November which seems to be a advised the opposition law makers Herculean job for the present EC to to file case against him in the High complete in just five months from Nevertheless with dialogue on reforms of the EC and Caretaker People are inclined to think that Government grinding to a halt, it

except CEC Aziz himself. Appall tions could be held in January, 2007 The country has burst into protest rallies demanding a credible election with all the political parties participating in it in a spirit of accommodation. Before

the protest degenerates into a vicious game of violence, good sense must prevail. With an attitude of ignoring people's feelings the administration stands as the country's most unyielding democratic regime. In a democratic atmosphere the political leaders, most often treated as repositories of trust and hope, must have the backbone, stamina and courage to hear the harsh truth and to endure the blow, if it comes from their

see is the oxygen of his existence. Most officials of his age and status would retreat as soon as possible, if they smelt public fury. CEC Aziz's response has been merely a step harder on the accelerator. What is most pathetic, he does not understand that he is earning only rebuke from the citizenry. If the incumbent government has thought it proper to garner votes by implanting an EC or a caretaker government chief of its choice, then it is plainly mistaken. Every government tries to use the state machinery to its advantage, but no government has been able to change the course of a tide. If the alliance government has left a bright track record during the past five years, people would definitely vote them to power again like the voters in the West Bengal Assembly elections did, notwithstanding the anti-incumbency feeling that was

With the EC again violating the Supreme Court verdict relating to preparation of voter list, it is courting public wrath that might erupt in a violent storm engulfing the whole country .As arguments and crisis situation. The argument or analysis of the activities of the EC in

ingly, confrontation, as people now as per the constitutional obligations. The constitution further mandates that the parliament shall stand dissolved after expiry of five years, completed on October 28 and unless the country gets involved in a war or faces natural disaster for which holding of elections become impossible, then elections must be held in just 90 days from the day the caretaker government takes charge of the administration. With all these issues left unresolved and the LGRD minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan reminding the opposition block that elections will be held as per the existing provision of the constitution, people can only apprehend the country heading towards a constitutional deadlock and a grave disaster.

What people further apprehend is that with elections held in such messy situation through gagging public opinion and with rigging devices that would inevitably follow, efforts to meet constitutional obligations will be a plain farce repeating the sad drama the nation witnessed in Justice Sadeque brand election in February 2001 and Magura Brand election conducted by Justice Rout

in 1996. Rather than soothing the festering malaise, psychic wounds and resentment flowing over the country on party levels, it will trigger violence may be in a scale that people fear to comprehend. Bangladeshis would once again be bracing for another struggle, this time for emancipation from the clutches of power hungry politicians. One wonders if our heroic people that won the battle for democracy, once in 1971 and then in 1990 are going to give in.

The British High Commissioner in Bangladesh Mr. Anwar Chaudhury in his recent meeting with the Reporters Unity has stressed the need for a credible election and a government brought to power in a transparent way that could only spur development and progress, eradicate corruption and oot out the seeds of extremist ideas and militancy. Today Bangladesh is steeped in political uncertainties, begging for a resolution, not the kind the alliance government wants to achieve but the kind people want that can only be attained through an unfettered, free and fair election. Not unusual in democratic

parlance as the cynics in the administration continue to defy all prognosis, the country has burst into protest rallies demanding a credible election with all the political parties participating in it in a spirit of accommodation. Before the protest degenerates into a vicious game of violence, good sense must prevail. With an attitude of ignoring people's feelings the administration stands as the country's most unyielding democratic regime. In a democratic atmosphere the political leaders, most often treated as repositories of trust and hope, must have the backbone, stamina and courage to hear the harsh truth and to endure the blow, if it comes from their wrongdoing. Noticeably, BNP's tryst with power marked a shift in political culture of the country after liberation. A little more than four years in power this time the party looks more tired and tiring in spite of the much hyped facelift. Rather it has a face deformed by power. With allegations of sleaze and corruption, patronage and misgovernance the image of the

pledges it held out to the country. Md. Asadullah Khan is a retired teacher of physics

Terrorism and its glorification SAAD S. KHAN

PROMINENT terrorist Abu Musaab Zargawi was killed recently in Iraq and the provincial legislature in Pakistani province of Punjab held prayers for him. Is that tantamount to glorifying terrorism? Not sure! Pakistan is not a part of the British empire and the legislators have no reason to fear from the bill banning the glorification of terrorism that Kingdom, this Spring. Recently, Israeli "self defence" forces murdered ten Palestinian civilians who were enjoying a picnic on the Gaza beach. Palestinian government decried it as terrorism while the Israelis denied responsibility. A few weeks ago, a Palestinian suicide bomber succeeded in penetrating into Israel and blew up a dozen restaurant goers after a lull in such attacks. The Israeli government was quick to decry the "terrorist" attack while the Palestinian government had called it a "selfdefence" attack and refused to

The question is which of the attacks was terrorism and which one was an act in self-defence, or is it that both the sides were committing terrorism. In that case, calling terrorism as self-defence would constitute, if not "glorifying terrorism", then at least "abetting and condoning terrorism" --- all of them now "criminal offences" in the United Kingdom, at least, under Tony Blair's new anti-terror codes. Israelis are so afraid of terrorism that their "self defence Foreign Ministry" barred this writer, as member of Cambridge University delegation, to visit Jerusalem and Palestine recently, because of the fear of exposure of their self-defence.

True, neither the Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert nor his Palestinian counterpart Ismael Hanieh, are British nationals, but the immunity of heads of state from crimes against humanity is a story of the yore now. In not too distant past, Chile's ex-despot and a known criminal, General Pinochet got arrested in UK. although he was released on health grounds, but many others were not so lucky, Saddam of Iraq, Milosevic of Serbia and lately, Charles Taylor of Sierra Leone are among those criminals who could not hide behind "head-of-state" impunity to evade the due process of law. The new law in Britain, however,

BNP-Jamaat alliance in power is a seminal landmark in humantoday is remote from the idea and ity's quest for peace and justice. The acrimonious debate in the months between the introduction of this bill in the House of

jeopardised the fate of this bill but it is a positive omen that it saw the light of the day as a law. If the notion of glorifying and abetting terrorism gets accepted as terrorism in itself, many a liars will face the music. That Tony Blair's self assertions that he did not lie to the nation and to the world on Iraq are now taken no more than a joke even here in the UK. His blind following of the United States sometimes hypothetical policy of fighting against some terrorists and financing the others has led some US websites and blogs to yell that calling "Blair as Bush's poodle

this face of some Western statesis an insult to poodles" As for glorifying terrorism and terrorists, one may argue, that the statements of Bush and Blair in support of known tyrants and criminals --- like calling Islam Karimov a "champion of freedom", Tunisia's Benali as "island of stability" and Egypt's Mubarak as "our friend" --- fall in the scope of "glorifying", and thus at least Mr Blair has, by criminalising this glorification, unwittingly put his own post-retirement liberty at risk. True, this glorifying

rorismlaw came into force, a damn- Gandhi was compelled, when ing evidence came against Blair's personal role in financing terrorism--- No, nothing related to Palestine, Iraq or Guantanamo Bay. It is about Uzbekistan where Blair financed terrorism. This evidence is actually a testimony of former British Ambassador and career civil servant, Craig Murray, who was sacked from service by Blair for raising his voice against British abetment of serious abuses in Uzbekistan, before a committee of the European Parliament in

Craig Murray had been direct witness of many mock trials in-Uzbekistan, had seen first hand evidence of torture including acid baths, electric shocks, and the boiling of people to death. His conscience failed to represent a government which was colluding in this savagery. He wrote several memos to his government informing them that Uzbekistan's Islam Karimov regime was involved in human rights violations, rampant torture and unexplained disappearances at an industrial scale and suggesting a strong diplomatic pressure to stop the abuse. He was pressurized, sacked and harassed and ultimately had a nervous

breakdown. There is no big deal when a government sacks a public servant public money has been channelled

clause can be applied selectively in his own country. Only shortly after this new ter- men of his time, that Mahatama asked what he thought of Western civilization and values, to remark that "it would be a good idea to

What happened in the tiny town

does otherwise. Can a civilised

government stoop too low in van-

dalising the life and career of its

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human rights? It was after seeing

of Andijan in Uzbekistan last year, when 745 unarmed civilians, most of them women and children, were massacred for protesting against mock trials of 21 local youths for having traded with their counterparts in Kyrgyzstan? It was a crime against humanity. And so was the silence over it in the year since, that the so-called civilized world has observed. Islam Karimov is known to be the most ruthless dictator in this world where the slightest dissent is responded to by endemic torture. Al Qaeda and all its likes are no match for Karimov's security forces, and in fact, the latter are turning ordinary secular dissenters of Karimov into Al Qaeda sympathizers. Yet, the United States gave \$120 million aid to Uzbek military forces and another \$82 million worth of equipment and training to civilian security forces.

This means that the United States and its allies are not only condoning terrorism and crimes against humanity but actively supporting and financing it. As for the UK, \$500 million worth of

Commons to its reluctant approval for speaking his mind: many a into such ruthless apparatus in at the House of Lords, sometimes government has streaks of fascist Uzbekistan--- which is more than tendencies! What is scandalous for the total British aid to Sub Saharan Blair is that, according to Mr Murray, he was called to the in the ranks of West-haters. The US Foreign Office where he was and the British taxpayer is thus offered a "comfortable posting" as subsidizing Al Qaeda. The West is Ambassador to Coopenhagen, if he dismantling Saddam Hussain's withdrew his notes, and was threat- torture networks in Iraq, creating ened with a charge sheet for "hav- their own in Cuba, and subsidizing ing issued British visas in return for the ones of Islam Karimov in

sexual favours in his office", if he Uzbekistan. As for glorifying terrorism and terrorists, one may argue, that the statements of Bush and Blair in support of known tyrants and criminals--- like calling Islam Karimov a "champion of freedom", Tunisia's Benali as "island of stability" and Egypt's Mubarak as "our friend" --- fall in the scope of "glorifying", and thus at least Mr Blair has, by criminalising this glorification, unwittingly put his own postretirement liberty at risk.

True, this glorifying clause can

be applied selectively in his own country, when Imam of Finsbury Park Mosque of London, Abu Hamza, gets seven years imprisonment for inciting hatred in his speeches, and Nick Griffin, the head of the nationalist and white supremacist BNP party, is set free for lack of evidence on more or less the same charges of inciting racial hatred. But given that courts in Spain and Belgium have acquired universal jurisdiction to try terrorism related offences, which includes -- one would presume--glorifying it, a time may come that the democratic leaders in the world may find themselves in the docks for having knowingly supported tyrants. As the weekly ECONOMIST wrote recently that it was "not just an ethical point, coddling tyrants has strategic costs too". One must add that in the years to come the strategic costs may come to individuals also as to The Chancellor of Exchequer

and probably and potentially the next Prime Minister of Britain, Gordon Brown believes that "Britishness is not about common blood or culture, about dreaming spires and changing of guards, but is based on a sober set of shared values". If the new bill defends these values and takes to task any citizen, be he a Prime Minister (like Blair) or a common man, rather than being used for bullying certain sections of ethnic minorities alone, then this terrorism bill will go a long way in making the world a safer place to live.

The writer is the Middle East Editor of Cambridge Review of International Affairs and a widely read analyst on politics, governance and human rights in the Muslim world.