

# Management of national defence

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YEARS ago, I met a Swiss corporate boss preparing to visit his home country to attend compulsory military training. With friendly France, Germany, Italy and Austria surrounding the landlocked Switzerland whom were they preparing to fight, I asked. "We do not fight friends on our borders, but intruders into our homeland," was the polite reply. Switzerland has not fought a single war for more than a century; Swiss people are best known as financial managers. If they do not need, surely they will not waste time and money on defence preparation. With no standing army and only seven ministers in the federal cabinet, Samuel Schmid is the defence minister of Switzerland.

The highest level of the government determines defence needs and the armed forces provide technical assistance and advice. Like education, health or human resource development, development of defence forces is also a continuous process. If there is no defence policy in Bangladesh, all governments - present and past - are guilty of it. A defence policy is not a document that can be thrown into the wastepaper basket on expiry of a government, nor can it be discussed in public. Yearly defence budget is, however, not a confidential matter, and should be regularly debated in the parliament. The defence policy



comes under scrutiny and is updated on a regular basis, but in a smaller circle, may be in the defence committee. Acquisition and counter acquisition is the pastime of politicians. Late Rajib Gandhi lost his job because of the Bofors gun scandal. The case was haunting his family for a decade after his premature death. This is one of the reasons why Sonia Gandhi refused to be the prime minister, to stay away from the shadow of the scandal. Mud slinging is not a part of the culture of the uniform and tolerance level of muted soldiers is low.

Military is the hardest profession demanding lives, and forces have stringent laws and enforcement ability to maintain discipline. For that, the government appoints the

leaders of the armed forces, as their discipline is also a part of the political responsibility. The armed forces are not above law and are very much accountable to the government. So, they should remain above unnecessary political bickering.

If a political appointee had turned out to be a reprobate, usurping the government authority, then the politicians had failed to choose the right leader. The usual mistake is preference of tall wagers over the proud professionals. Military regimes are mostly the result of faulty political decisions in third world countries. Following the killing of Bangabandhu on August 15, 1975, the then CAS did not stand up to the challenge of the crisis to uphold



the constitution but succumbed to the pressure that subsequently encouraged many coups and indiscipline in the armed forces. The country suffered one crisis after another.

I have a lot of regards for General Shafiullah, a nice gentleman, but history cannot be distorted. In April '81, the then leader of the army took firm stand and backed the constitution of the country. Unfortunately, when General Ershad himself became greedy in '82, the weak president succumbed to the wish of the general. We have witnessed how the Army enforced discipline from within when direct order came from the president Abdur Rahman Biswas in '96, at a very difficult time when there was no elected

government to fall back upon. If presidents and leaders had shown courage during crises, history of Bangladesh would have been different. Many professional officers boldly sacrificed their careers to keep away from Ershad's illegal regime.

The Supreme Court cannot be blamed for the alleged wrongdoings of some judges, nor our fine bureaucracy for the corrupt practices of some secretaries. It is in the interest of the country and democracy that culprits should have been booked before law without blaming the institutions. When General Ershad still remains the most sought after political ally, it is unkind to accuse the armed forces for his wrongdoings.



Personal greed aside, there must be some reason why the leaders of the smaller part of British Indian army, which went to Pakistan, grabbed state power within few years while the larger part in India remained obedient and never broke the professional line. Incidentally, not Field Marshal Ayub Khan, but a civil bureaucrat Iskandar Mirza was the first martial law administrator of Pakistan. At home, Justice Sayem was the first chief martial law administrator of Bangladesh. If power grabbing remains the culture of politics, bigger muscles will of course elbow out weaker ones. If law has no ethics, the very law becomes outlaw, inviting other outlaws along the way. There is nothing called martial law in

civilised definition. It is a law of force that takes over when normal law of the land is pushed aside with ulterior motive, or when normal administration has collapsed due to civil disorder and war.

Blaming institutions for the fault or greed of individuals is counter-productive. It strips away the pride of the soldiers who are always ready to make sacrifices for the defence of the country. Ask the wife and daughter of Bir Shreshtho Shaheed Matiur Rahman what price they paid all these thirty-five years for the sacrifice of the hero. Birth of Bangladesh armed forces was in revolutionary circumstances and efforts to bring the forces on conventional barracks culture was difficult during post liberation days. Many came into clash with

the authority and started leaving the armed forces prematurely. These were ominous signs the politicians failed to read. Many countries, born through bloody civil wars, faced such difficulties and we have to accept it as the price of freedom.

The post liberation generation has taken over the leadership of the army; they are a capable lot and need encouragement to turn back from the legacies of the past. Political control of the armed forces must be placed in the hand of a full-time minister to gradually remove the misgivings about the armed forces. Hopefully, the new government, following the election will give a serious thought to such a pressing need.

Once a full-time minister is available, he will be responsible for defence policies that include weapons and manpower policies, reorganisation, procurement and replenishment policies, location and housing policies, and all those policies that need continuous addressing. In all probability, the minister will have a truckload of important work awaiting him. Suspicion, hatred, uncalled for affection, political adventurism have made it a complex paradox. Democracy will have to put in many years of hard work to remove the legacies. Nevertheless, we have to start somewhere. So the next government has the best time and opportunity to give it a start.

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## New Middle East

MUSLEHUDDIN AHMAD

Where does the US stand in the "New Middle-East (ME)?"

The US Administration because of its dreadful unilateral foreign policies resulting in military actions in Iraq and blind support to Israel stands to lose considerable grounds in ME. Israel's devastating war against Lebanon and Gaza has given new status to these two Resistance Groups- Hezbollah and Hamas. Indeed, Mahmud Abbas's Fatah has agreed to form a coalition government to govern Palestinian Territory. This is new development in the aftermath of Lebanon war to lend support to earlier Hamas led government. All parties in the ME have found a new hope in Hezbollah's win meaning Israel is no more invincible.

Iran is pushing its nuclear policy despite the UN threat of sanction and it seems to have come out with a new policy on Israel. Iranian President reportedly said Iran is not a threat to any body not even to "enemy" Israel. In other words, no more wiping out Israel from the map of the world. Hezbollah apparently has some link with Iran. This would be a New ME for the United States. This is something that the US never wanted but the present administration is solely responsible for this outcome. Iraq invasion by the US and Israel's mindless war with support of the US against Lebanon and Gaza have changed the dynamics and thereby political and strategic situations have undergone radical changes.

Hopeful words on Foreign Policy matters in the US

However, there appears some hope within the US as many Americans, whether Republican or Democrats have started to realize the mistakes this administration has been committing. This has been reflected in the disastrous low poll rating for President Bush. The world also notes with some hope the statements made by some important leaders like Chuck Hagel among Republicans on Lebanon war and many others like former President Bill Clinton, Al-Gore, John Kerry, Edward Kennedy among Democrats on Iraq.

The letter of Mrs. Romi Elnagar on Israeli onslaught against Arabs and particularly Palestinians is particularly important. In her reply to letter of Congressman Baker who showed complete support for the State of Israel, she said, "The hatred and contempt that Israelis feel for Arabs is extreme, and it is the root of all violence in the Middle East....Further more, throughout the world, condemnation of the genocidal policies of Israel is widespread.... Even amongst European friends, there are many who are appalled at the vicious murders of Arabs in Palestine, Lebanon and other countries by Israelis, but more importantly because Israel's invasion, as its brutal repression of Gaza, is cruel and immoral and GOD WILL PUNISH THEM" On providing weapons during war by the US to Israel she said, "Ireland refused permission for a plane-load of these weapons to land at Shannon on its way from the US to Israel....Why are we giving these evil weapons to Israel? These 'evil' things and other misleading information given by the present administration are gradually becoming clear to the political leaders and the people of the US. This new trend in American politics should continue to move ahead and gather strength so that this can bring good effect on the American population in general as well as on others. This is extremely important as the world has changed greatly under the misguided policies of Bush Blair.

**A Divided & Restive World!**  
Today the world is too restive. Starting

In BBC's Hard Talk Stephen Sucker

"Willing to kill for a cause" has turned out to be "determined to kill for a cause" because of Israeli onslaught on the Arabs and particularly on the Palestinians. Unfortunately, the US got involved for the reason that it has been giving unqualified and blind support to Israel which was established in the land of Palestine (old Land of Canaan) through largely controversial and dubious means.

from the most unfortunate 9/11, today, the world security situation has deteriorated sharply. The reasons are known. The leaders of the world must realize that imperialism and neo-imperialism are no longer acceptable to the people. The most people of the world, in general, have suffered too much under the imperial despots and they are determined to bring about major changes even if it means "violence".

"Since the French revolution, violence has come to be seen as the midwife of history. The French Revolution gave us the terror, and it gave us a citizens' army...not made up of mercenaries but patriots, who killed for a cause, inspired by national sentiments...." [Ref. Good Muslim, Bad Muslim by Mahmood Mamdani] While returning from a refugee camp at Syria, a Lebanese guy with his 70 year old mother and a child "walked the last 5 miles in the dusty road under the blazing sun", told CNN's Jim Clancy that he is happy to return to his neighborhood his country. Even if he had to walk for a month to reach home, he would not care. This is the nationalistic feeling for which one could die or kill. One may term this as nationalistic "terrorism". "Reflecting on the French revolution, Hagel wrote that man was willing to die for a cause of greater value to him than life itself. May be Hagel should have added: man is also willing to kill for such a cause...." [ref. Good Muslim, Bad Muslim Mahmood Mamdani].

"Willing to kill for a cause" has turned out to be "determined to kill for a cause" because of Israeli onslaught on the Arabs and particularly on the Palestinians. Unfortunately, the US got involved for the reason that it has been giving unqualified and blind support to Israel which was established in the land of Palestine (old Land of Canaan) through largely controversial and dubious means on the pretext of self styled "Promised Land" by the Zionists, which appears to be a myth.. It's a long story of displacement, deprivation, destruction and death to the people who belonged to the land. This was nothing but terrorism against Arab Palestinians.

History is very clear. These people of Jewish faith were thrown out by the Europeans, apart from Hitler's "Final Solution" of the Jewish problem, where Arabs had played no part. This was also the view of the present Bishop of Jerusalem. But unfortunately the Arab Palestinians became the ultimate victims in the hands of the Jewish people who established a religious Jewish state, meant exclusively for the Jews, in the midst of Arabs. The Palestinians, the people of the land of Canaan (Palestine), became stateless and they have to fight to regain their right to a state. What an unjust world!

Indeed, these Arab Palestinians have been fighting for about half a century to get back their legitimate right to a state their right of self determination and their right to get back to their homes. The present conflict violence of highest proportion is all about this. President Bush's words like "Crusade", "Islamic terrorists" and "Islamic fascists" make things still worse. These thoughtless comments and unilateral military actions have indeed divided the world on religious lines and even put off people who are totally against any form of violence.

questioned the Bishop of Jerusalem some days ago whether he was concerned about Islamic terrorism. The Bishop said he was more concerned about Christian terrorism. (I do not have the exact words). One could see what the Bishop meant. As he is a Christian and above all the Bishop of Jerusalem (Church) from where Christianity's Bishop/Papal system developed, his words are to be taken very seriously.

**New Order of Peace & Reconciliation Negotiations only way out**

As ME is mainly beset with the problem of "terrorism", one may talk about a "New Middle East" which may 'mean different things to different people'. However, there is a serious and urgent need for removing the causes of so called terrorism which can be done only under a New World Order the Order of Peace and Reconciliation - as the present World Order of Unilateralism is totally obsolete to deal with menace of such terrorism. Indeed, unilateralism itself is a kind of imperialistic terrorism as opposed to nationalistic terrorism.

An acceptable way has to be found to get over these devastating problems the problems of "terrorism" regardless of who started it and who are pursuing it. Only negotiations, not military actions, and removal of the root causes can solve the problems. It is absolutely the high time for the UN to set up a Special Committee for the purpose. Let the UN Secretary General come up with a proposal immediately

**New Middle-East needs new Leadership - Europe steps in**

Europe can make a real difference under the present situation as it has taken a leadership position in the ruins of Lebanon ruins inflicted by Israel with US support and military help. The world would see this as a very positive role of Europe in New ME under peacekeeping leadership of France - this role should be extended to Palestinian territory too. This new leadership is necessary as the US has made its own position too vulnerable and controversial through open support to Israel in Lebanon war.

**Follow Road Map or One State Solution!**

The present war inflicted on Lebanon has its roots in about half a century old Israeli occupation of Arab land by Israel and the unresolved issue of the Palestinians' right to their statehood. The solution lies in strictly following the Road Map of the Quartet for a two state solution Palestine and Israel living side by side in peace. This can be achieved only by ending occupation. If Israel is interested to live in peace with its neighbors, which most Israelis want, let it vacate occupation and cross over to the other side of 1967 border, with small adjustments of some pieces of land, (details given in earlier comments) with East Jerusalem as its capital; peace would come down nearly automatically. The alternative would be too dangerous and may ultimately lead to a One State solution.

## Israeli war crimes in Lebanon: Chilling account of death and destruction

BILLY I AHMED

AN Amnesty International (AI) report entitled "Deliberate destruction or 'collateral damage'" published on 21 August provides a chilling account of the death and destruction inflicted on the civilian population of Lebanon by the Israeli military during its month-long, US-backed offensive. The document demonstrates that the Israeli government is directly responsible for numerous war crimes against the Lebanese people.

Kate Gilmore, AI executive deputy secretary general dismissed as "manifestly wrong" Israel's claims that its attacks were legitimate and legal. Gilmore told the press "Many of the violations identified in our report are war crimes, including indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks. The evidence strongly suggests that the extensive destruction of power and water plants, as well as the transport infrastructure vital for food and other humanitarian relief, was deliberate and an integral part of a military strategy. The pattern, scope and scale of the attacks makes Israel's claim that this was 'collateral damage' simply not credible."

The report was based on first-hand information gathered by a field mission to Lebanon, interviews with dozens of victims and discussions with UN, Lebanese and Israeli officials and non-government organisations, as well as official statements and media accounts.

Between July 12 and August 14, the Israeli air force conducted more than 7,000 air attacks in Lebanon, supplemented by 2,500 naval bombardments and an unknown number of artillery barrages. An estimated 1,183 people were killed, about one third of who were children, 4,054 were injured and 970,000 people, or 25 percent of the total population, were displaced. Half a million people sought shelter in Beirut, many in parks and public spaces without basic facilities.

"The Lebanese government estimates that 31 'vital points' (such as airports, ports, water and sewage treatment plants, electrical facilities) have been completely or partially destroyed, as have around 80 bridges and 94 roads. More than 25 fuel stations and around 900 commercial enterprises were hit. The number of residential properties, offices and shops completely destroyed exceeds 30,000. Two government hospitals in Bint Jbeil and in Meis al-Jebel were completely destroyed in Israeli attacks and three others were seriously damaged," the report stated.

Fadi Shalak, the head of Lebanon's Council for Development and Reconstruction estimated on August 16 that the damage amounted to at least \$US3.5 billion/\$US2 billion for buildings and \$US1.5 billion for infrastructure such as bridges, roads and power plants. Other government surveys indicate that the extent and cost of the destruction could be higher.

The report pointed out that international law governing the conduct of war prohibits any direct attack on civilian objects, as well as indiscriminate attacks that fail to distinguish between military and civilian targets. It also disputed Israeli claims that civilian facilities were legitimate military targets, because of their potential use by Hezbollah. AI pointed out that international law also bans disproportionate attacks that is, those in which the "collateral damage"

is excessive compared to direct military advantage to be gained.

The destruction of infrastructure was a deliberate policy designed to drive hundreds of thousands of civilians out of the south of the country and terrorise the Lebanese population as a whole. The aim was to make the entire southern region uninhabitable. The AI report explained: "With the electricity cut off and food and other supplies not coming into the villages, the destruction of supermarkets and petrol

rise buildings, which were home to tens of thousands of people most of whom left apparently encouraged by Hezbollah for their own safety, was reduced to rubble by repeated air strikes.

"According to the United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon (UNIFIL), on 15 August, 80 percent of the civilian houses had been destroyed in the village of Tayyabah, 50 percent in the villages of Markaba and Qantarab, 30 percent in Mais al-Jebel, 20 percent in

ceasefire, the south of the country had no electricity. The bombing of Lebanon's largest power station at Jiyeh not only cut power supplies but produced an environmental disaster when 15,000 tonnes of heavy fuel oil leaked into the sea creating a massive oil slick and polluting 150 kilometres of coastline.

AI report mentions, the Israeli military deliberately targeted businesses, including the country's few large factories.



stations played a crucial role in forcing local residents to leave. The lack of fuel also stopped residents from getting water, as water pumps require electricity or fuel-fed generators," the report stated.

The Israeli sea and air blockade, along with the extensive destruction of roads and bridges, compounded the humanitarian disaster by obstructing relief efforts. Ships carrying vital emergency supplies were held up for days, seeking guarantees of safe passage from the Israeli navy. On August 4, the Israeli air force severed the last significant road link to Syria, blocking an aid convoy bringing in 150 tonnes of relief supplies. The Lebanese health ministry estimated that 60 percent of the country's hospitals had ceased to function by August 12 due to fuel shortages.

According to a UN fact sheet issued on August 16, at least 15,000 civilian homes and apartments have been destroyed. AI noted that this figure was almost certainly an underestimate. AI personnel in Lebanon graphically described the extent of the damage:

"Amnesty International delegates visiting towns and villages in south Lebanon found that in village after village houses had been subject to heavy artillery shelling as well as having been destroyed by precision-guided, air-delivered munitions. The accuracy of these munitions and their trajectory were such that they struck one or more of the main support systems causing the building to collapse or partially collapse under its own weight. In Beirut a vast area of densely populated high-

Hula, and 15 percent in Talusha. The following day, UNIFIL reported that in the village of Ghanduriyah 80 percent of the civilian houses had been destroyed, 60 percent in the village of Zibqin, 50 percent in Jabal al-Butm and Bayyadah, 30 percent in Bayt Leif, and 25 percent in Kafra.

"When Amnesty International delegates visited the town of Bint Jbeil, in the far south of the country, the centre of the city, where there had been a market and busy commercial streets leading from it, was devastated. Every building on the streets was destroyed, extensively damaged or beyond repair. The streets were strewn with the rubble and in that rubble was clear evidence of the cause of the damage, unexploded munitions, shrapnel and craters. The Israeli army seemed to have used every type of munition in its arsenal, with air-delivered munitions, artillery shelling and cluster bomb damage in evidence."

Roads, bridges, water and electricity supplies, sewerage plants and infrastructure, port facilities and the Beirut international airports have been damaged or destroyed. Throughout southern Lebanon, wells, water mains, storage tanks, pumping stations and water treatment works have been destroyed. Elsewhere in the country, water supplies have been severely disrupted as the bombing of roads has ruptured pipes. The report concluded that many of the attacks had been deliberate and served no obvious military purpose.

At least 25 fuel depots were destroyed and 25 petrol stations destroyed or severely damaged. By the time of the

"Privately owned factories and businesses across the country economic entities whose destruction could not be seen to offer a military advantage outweighing the damage to civilians have also been subjected to a series of debilitating air strikes, dealing a further crippling blow to the shattered economy. The Lebanese government estimated that unemployment in the country has now reached an approximate figure of 75 percent.

"The production facilities of companies in key industrial sectors, including Liban Lait in Baalbek, the country's largest dairy farm; the Maliban glass works in Ta'neil, Zahleh; the Sada al-Din plastics factory in Tyre; the Fine tissue paper mill in Kafra Jara, Sidon; the Tabara pharmaceutical plant in Showeifat, Aailyah; the Transmed shipping warehouse on the outskirts of Beirut; and the Snow lumbermill in Showeifat, Aailyah, have been disabled or completely destroyed. Industry minister Pierre Gemayel said that nearly two thirds of the industrial sector had been damaged, and at least 23 large factories and dozens of small and medium-sized factories had been bombed."

The devastation wrought by the Israeli offensive in Lebanon is clearly a terrible war crime. In concluding its report, Amnesty International called for the formation of an international tribunal into violations of international humanitarian law.

The author is a columnist and researcher.