

A Plea to Our Leaders

We may take some time to recover from the shock caused by the deaths of photo journalist Khairul Alam Khair and constable Saleh Ahmed, killed on Tuesday when a speeding train rammed over them and several others who were severely injured at a level crossing near Kawran Bazar.

In the process, we may fail to realise that the real underlying cause of the tragedy was something more deep-rooted, more fundamental than a speeding train or a wrong decision by the police. The cause lies in the most volatile, most explosive and, indeed, the most frightening political climate that has developed in the metropolis.

The fact is, the country has reached a dangerous impasse. What is worse, even if politicians realise the need to tackle the situation and to put the country on the road to peace and stability, they seem either unable or unwilling to make any move that inspires confidence among our people.

We must call a halt to this drift. There is just no other alternative. Here, we have no intention of passing judgements on various demands or, for that matter, on failed promises. All we want, just what we have said in this paper again and again, is that national leaders or their deputies should get together and go over all the divisive issues, make concessions to each other and evolve a working arrangement to let the government devote its fullest attention to development, while the opposition performs its role as a watch-dog within the framework of parliamentary democracy.

One Canada No More!

The clear rejection by Canadian voters of the reform proposals negotiated by Brian Mulroney and other politicians and put to vote is a strong indication — if not the finality in itself — of the shape Canada is going to take. Canada's destiny seems to be hanging on the balance. It could well be a point of no return, but for a final round of voting to be held to decide the future of the country on the question whether French-speaking Quebec becomes completely independent.

Time is however running out fast for the country to retain its integrity. The separatists read in the outcome of the referendum a popular option for Quebec's separation. They cannot be held blamable for the exuberance expressed over the results of the referendum. Indeed, Quebec has long been left to suffer discrimination against it, so far as the political power sharing is concerned.

Now that the package of amendments has failed to match the aspiration of the population of Quebec, Canada's 125-year confederation is at the risk of falling apart. The fact that the package offered the province "guarantees for the survival of its language, culture and share of political power" along with more clout for western provinces in Ottawa and even the right to self-rule for native Indians and Eskimos is a pointer that the offer has come too late, if not too little.

With or even without the expected disintegration, therefore, Canada will leave a lesson for countries in similar plight, specially for the countries in this region. If Canada remains one country at last, well and good not only for it but also for others with similar problems watching developments there very closely. If the country falls apart — indications are in favour of it — the course of history may be amply influenced by it too.

THE press — and television in particular — has played a major role in shaping United States presidential campaigns for the last 40 years. In the latest three-way race for the White House, TV has emerged as the single most important element in each of the candidates' strategies.

Reliance on television has now reached the point where one of the contenders, Texas billionaire Ross Perot, was communicating with voters almost exclusively through this medium.

After returning to the fray in early October, Perot spent virtually no time on the traditional campaign trail. Instead of giving speeches and shaking hands across the country, the independent candidate moved from TV studio to TV studio, appearing daily on widely watched chat shows, rehearsing for the broadcast debates, and videotaping a barrage of paid advertisements.

One veteran political reporter, Jack Germond of the Baltimore Sun, says that this year, for the first time, the journalist could glean sharper insights into the campaign by watching the television coverage than by accompanying the candidates.

As another indication of TV's power, for a period this summer a fictional character on a popular programme became the major issue in the presidential race. Vice-President Dan Quayle attacked the moral behaviour of "Murphy Brown," a career woman played by actress Candace Bergen, after she decided on one show to give birth without forming a relationship with the baby's father.

The media's dominant role in US presidential politics has raised questions about possible

In the American presidential election television became the single most important element. Ross Perot gave few speeches and shook few hands. His campaign was conducted almost entirely by television. Clinton and Bush tailored their campaigns to television. As the United States goes to the polls, Gemini News Service reports on the changing pattern of US electioneering.

Kevin J Kelley writes from Washington

biases on the part of reporters and editors. Has Clinton's lead been a reflection, at least in part, of a liberal outlook among journalists?

Some commentators are convinced that the campaign press corps has been trying to help Clinton and hurt Bush. In a few instances journalists have admitted to feeling a generational attachment to the 46-year-old Clinton, who, unlike the 68-year-old Bush, is a member of the "baby boom" set that became politically active during the 1960s.

Nearly half of all newspaper

reporters in the US are between 31 and 40, according to a survey by the American Society of Newspaper Editors. For the Washington-based media elite, the figure jumps to 61 per cent.

Many of these comparatively young journalists view a change in administrations as potentially a turning point in their careers. Reporters assigned to cover a challenger — Clinton, in this case — often calculate that his victory may result in their own professional advancement. In the world of television news, a reporter

who covered a successful insurgent is traditionally promoted to the rank of White House correspondent.

A few influential journalists were clearly enamoured of Clinton from the outset of the race almost one year ago. Long before a single vote had been cast in the Democratic primary elections, the Arkansas Governor was anointed as the front-runner in a field of half-a-dozen contenders.

This designation was made by a small circle of pundits and political reporters who singled out Clinton for favourable attention. To Howell Raines, Washington bureau chief of the New York Times, the early enthusiasm for the then-obscure Governor seemed "the most dramatic example of infatuation among some reporters since (John) Kennedy."

The Washington Post, the country's second most important daily, has already declared its support for him in a leader. But most papers in the US could once again endorse the Republican candidate for president, just as they have done in most recent elections.

Some observers believe the racial and economic characteristics of the mainstream press predispose it to favour those who already hold power. Newspaper publishers are overwhelmingly white and wealthy, which may explain why most usually endorse the conservative candidate for president.

TV news directors are generally of the same class, and that may account, in part, for the preponderance of time devoted to the Republican ticket on the nightly newscasts of the three major television net-

works.

The Centre for Media and Public Affairs reports that during September, Bush and Quayle received a total of 163 minutes of air time on these shows, compared to 92 minutes for Clinton and his running-mate, Senator Albert Gore. But for both the Republican and Democratic candidates, much of the coverage had a negative tone, the Centre found.

Clinton-Gore were given positive treatment 34 per cent of the time, while Bush-Quayle enjoyed favourable commentary only 28 per cent of the time.

The imbalance of the total amount of coverage may be due to the media's habit of focussing more on an incumbent president than on a challenger, speculates Richard Noyes, the Centre's election project director.

Clinton would normally be expected to receive an increasing share of air time because of his front-runner status, Noyes adds, but that expectation may be confounded by Perot's re-entry into the race.

The income and educational background of journalists may also affect their coverage of the candidates. The editor of a mid-size daily newspaper earns an average annual salary of \$150,000, according to the Newspaper Association of America.

By contrast, a typical full-time worker in the US makes about \$30,000 a year. Similarly, a 1989 survey found that 85 per cent of all newspaper reporters in the US are graduates. But only about one-quarter of adults in the country

hold university degrees. Other studies have cited similar statistics in regard to TV journalists.

National political correspondent William Greider writes in a recent book: "As an institution the media have gravitated toward elite institutions and converged with those powerful few who actively dominate politics."

Partly because of this perceived coziness between the media and the US elite, many Americans express hostility toward the press. More than half the respondents in a recent poll said the press exerts too much influence on electoral campaigns. And nearly half complained that reporters exhibit bias in their coverage.

Stung by such criticisms many TV news producers decided after the 1988 campaign that they would take a different approach in covering the 1992 race. The candidates' claims in paid advertisements are now subjected to much sharper scrutiny by TV analysts.

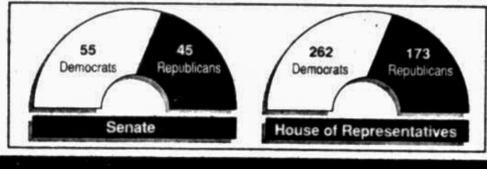
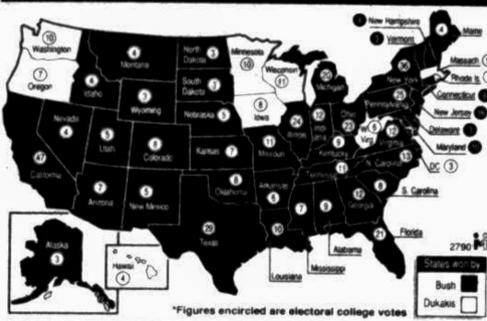
And the networks no longer show extended excerpts from staged campaign events, nor do they so readily allow the candidates to speak to viewers in pithy, pre-packaged "sound bites."

But some TV news editors have found that their new emphasis on issue analysis produces boredom in their audience. And the three networks, already hard-pressed by cable television competition, cannot afford to lose any more viewers.

The nightly news broadcasts have thus begun, in some instances, to return to their earlier formulas. And some commentators suggest that the networks, in the interest of generating excitement and thus expanding their audiences, would try in the last days to make the race closer than the polls now indicate it is.

KEVIN J. KELLEY is Editor of International Affairs, Journal Toward Freedom.

How they voted in 1988



Redefining NATO in the Changing Perspective

by Faisal Rahman

ALLIANCES never die, they merely become anachronisms. Such a fate seems to await NATO. Since 1989 the World War II system of international relations has changed greatly.

Soviet-American relations have improved greatly and have been engineered by Mikhail Gorbachev. In the rigid Bipolar system of Balance of Power, superpower relations determined European security. Since the Berlin airlift of 1948, there had always been the possibility of an East-West conflict in Europe, where USA and USSR had divergent and conflicting interests.

The superpowers formed bilateral and multilateral security arrangements with European countries and had supporting global networks of economic, political and military alliances. However since 1989, all this has changed greatly. The fall of the Berlin Wall, dissolution of Warsaw Pact, withdrawal of Soviet forces from Germany and Eastern Europe have contributed greatly towards reducing East-West tensions.

The Soviet Union has agreed to withdraw troops from Eastern Europe by 1994. There are still however formidable obstacles to troop withdrawals. Former satellite countries are demanding to be "compensated". Poland wants the USSR to pay tariffs for use of railway facilities which will be used for troop withdrawals from Germany. The former Soviet Union is also demand-

ing to be paid "Compensation" for occupation costs. Back in the Soviet Union, troops would face an uncertain future. Disbanding troops would aggravate unemployment, housing, food and other social problems which could lead to economic anarchy.

The Soviet Union has collapsed. In its place have emerged clashing Republics, many of them torn by ethnic strife. The image is not only one of civil war, but virtual chaos which is threatening to engulf eastern Europe. This could lead to a tide of refugees to western Europe. The clashing Republics still possess the 30,000 nuclear warheads of the former Soviet Union which could be fired at the West. There could also be a re-emergence of an authoritarian regime in Moscow which would be dependent on the KGB and military. The situation could also be aggravated by economic hardships. This could lead to armed belligerence against the West and recapturing of their empire.

Soviet and Warsaw Pact troops are being withdrawn. These troops suppressed nationalist and ethnic movements in eastern Europe. However once these troops are withdrawn, the "liberated" governments of eastern Europe will face strong nationalist and ethnic pressures to redraw national boundaries which could lead to civil wars. This has been in the case of Yugoslavia. A weak Federal government and presidency have failed to quell nationalist and ethnic disputes. Serbian nationalism is being opposed by Slovenians, Croats and Slav Muslims, which has caused a civil war in Yugoslavia. Nationalistic and Ethnic issues could result in political conflicts in Hungary, Rumania and Poland. In Pomerania East Prussia and Silesia, there are hundreds of

thousands of Germans who may wish to reunite with the Fatherland. The area, East of the Oder-Neisse were formally parts of Germany that were handed over to Poland by the Yalta and Potsdam agreements. Such ethnic pressures could also spread to Hungary, Poland and Rumania where many ethnic Germans still live. These nations fear that Germany could slip into past patterns of behaviour.

Persian Gulf

The Persian Gulf region is another area which is beyond the geographical area defined by the NATO charter. But the region is just as important to the security and prosperity of the western nations especially western Europe. Saddam Hussain's invasion of Kuwait exemplifies the kind of security threats the international system will face in future from leaders like Saddam Hussain who feel unrestrained by the "rules", which existed during the cold war.

Western nations cannot simply ignore "out of area" regions, since they do not fall within the geographical parameters of a treaty which was drafted 50 years ago when security threats were of a different nature. The perennial problem of burdensharing rose once again during the Gulf crisis. Although Britain and France contributed significantly in respect of forces and finances, the burden was overwhelmingly borne by the US. Germany, and Japan but that too because they faced enormous diplomatic pressure from the US. The contribution of other West European nations were shamefully inadequate considering they are more dependent on the Persian Gulf for energy sources.

To meet these new prob-

lems which are being faced by NATO it must be restructured to give it greater flexibility and European nations must be willing to contribute more significantly. Changes must be made if the west is to face new security which are emerging in the international system.

Competitive Security Models

Competitive security models have emerged since the fall of the Berlin Wall. These security models would establish institutions which would be formed and assume all defence responsibilities of Europe. One such organization is the conference on security and cooperation in Europe (CSCE), established in 1975 at Helsinki. The CSCE tries to adopt a European approach to security problems in the continent and tries to solve problems peacefully. The US has however insisted that it will only be a consultative body and would not assume any NATO functions. The CSCE however has proved to be an effective but cumbersome institution. It has failed to deal with the ethno-nationalist conflicts which are threatening European Peace, security and stability. Another concept which has emerged is a European defence Pillar within a NATO framework. This concept has been adopted by the west European Union (WEU). The WEU consists of nine European nations which have global interests and are not restricted by their constitutions to deploy military forces in areas outside restricted geographical parameters. WEU would provide forces for "out of area" conflicts as well as serve as a bridge for an Economic community defence pillar. The France-German Brigade was formed under this

concept. This enables France to rejoin in the mainstream of European defence which she had left in 1969, when it withdrew from NATO protesting against American policies in Europe. It is hoped that this force will be expanded to a corps level, such as the British 1st Armoured Division. This would enable France to rejoin the European defence mainstream as well as oppose American defence policies in Europe. In November 1990, the treaty of Paris was signed by USA and USSR. Both sides agreed to reduce their Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE). Under this agreement, Soviet would be withdrawn from eastern Europe and US combat forces would be reduced significantly in Europe. By 1995 US force would be reduced from 3,06,000 to 1,50,000. The 7th corps would be withdrawn leaving only the fifth corps to carry on with a mission of deterrence. US naval and air forces, would be reduced significantly also. By 1995 there would be only three fighter airwings left in Europe. Soviet naval and air units would be withdrawn entirely.

NATO had been created with the sole purpose of deterring a Soviet invasion of western Europe. However, in a scenario of rapidly changing international politics, there is less likely to be a superpower conflict in Europe. One cannot however entirely rule out the possibility of an armed conflict between Soviet and allied forces. To meet such a threat a reduced, in theatre and multi-lateral allied force of 2,25,000 men would be sufficient. The US would contribute an armoured corps of 75,000 men, while the rest would be contributed by the western Nations. NATO forces would be reduced and restructured. Key NATO members like Germany, Italy, France and United Kingdom would have to contribute more significantly in forces and finances. NATO must expand its geographic scope and establish institutions to deal with an out of area crisis. To deal with in theatre conflicts, a reduced, restructured NATO forces would be sufficient. Such a corps would consist of 16 divisions in 8 national corps.

One German corps would be stationed permanently in the former German Democratic Republic. Each corps would have two divisions instead of the current three divisions. These forces would be divided into reaction, augmentation and main forces.

Rapid Reaction Force

To deal with an out of area crisis a rapid reaction force would be set up. Such an allied contingency force would be similar to the NATO ACC mobile force (AMF). Elements of the AMF were deployed in Turkey during the Gulf crisis. The force would consist of about three Brigades (8-10 thousand troops) and could be supplemented by another 8-10 thousand troops during a cri-

sis. If a crisis worsens to such an extent, where a full scale allied intervention would be necessary an additional British Infantry division, two British armoured divisions, a Dutch Brigade, a Belgian Brigade, an additional British Brigade and two German Brigades could also be deployed. Forces would be constituted by nations which have interest outside Europe and are not restricted by constitutions on troop deployments. The planning staff for such a unit would be based at SHAPE. During a crisis a decision on which formations would be used would be made by members of the alliance which contribute military forces under the direction of SACEUR. This force could be supplemented by US forces. For example a US battalion which would be based in Greece, Turkey or Italy could be transported to the area during a crisis. The Unit could be expanded into a regiment supported by artillery, tank and air defence units. Such a unit could be ultimately be formed into a division (15,000 men). This would reduce the initial vulnerability which light insertion forces face. Equipment for these troops could be made readily available by a number of methods. Equipment for these troops could be stockpiled in Southern Flank countries like Italy, Greece and Turkey or on prepositioned R/O/O ships (Roll on/Off ships). Air support for their troops could be made available by basing more air units in the Southern Flank countries. By 1995 then left only be three fighter wings left in Europe. A greater proportion of the American air units could be in these areas.

Unless a serious effort is made to establish a long term non-NATO approach to non-European security threats, the alliance will repeatedly find themselves in situations where they would react to a situation after it has occurred, instead of anticipating them. One can conclude that an alliance of Western nations can continue to exist only if there are compelling reasons for its existence and if member nations are willing to contribute proportionately to its costs of maintenance. There is nothing magical about NATO's current size or structure. There are however alternative sizes and strategies to those that have served NATO well for decades. It would be difficult to determine exactly what would be the challenges which will be faced by the west in the future from third world countries. However they will be serious security which would require the west to maintain strong military forces, with a reduced American component while the allies would contribute more significantly to new frameworks to meet new security challenges. It is time that the western nations would adopt a non-European approach to global security problems which are rapidly changing.

To the Editor...

Barapukuria coal: A prospect

Sir, Recently a news item in the BBC domestic news disclosed that a coalfield of the British Coal Board was due to be closed down for being uneconomic; 1400 employees and relevant equipment would be unemployed and free for use elsewhere, respectively.

Britain is an important friend of Bangladesh which provides substantial aid for our development. Facilities spareable in that country, for reasons techno-economically relevant there, may be useful in our country.

We heard earlier that development of the Barapukuria coal deposit is hampered for lack of foreign assistance, financial and technological. Whereas the deposit, proven beyond any doubt, can help in the fields of energy and environment.

M A Haq Green Road, Dhaka

BTC factory

Sir, Bangladesh Tobacco Company has its cigarette factory in DOHS area of Mohakhali. All around the cigarette factory there are residential areas, shops and business establishments. On its north and west lies DOHS, on the south Shahinbag, on the east Banani and Mohakhali. The road between Zia International Airport and the city also passes by the side of the factory and lakhs of people travel through this road everyday.

Smoke emitting from the factory is obviously polluting the air of the area and causing health hazard. Children are the worst victims of such menace. But the authorities of BTC seem to be completely unconcerned about this human problem. They were requested a number of times by the local elite to shift the factory to a safe place outside the city. But all prodding and persuasions

seem to be falling on deaf ears. Their own interest seems to be supreme over all other considerations. There are plenty of places in Savar, Gazipur etc. where the factory can be easily shifted. The relevant authorities may allot them alternative land in those areas and ask them to move out from the heart of the city. It seems that unless the authorities are tough with them, they will not pay heed to any request and exhortation.

Saleh Ahmed Chowdhury Dhaka Cantonment

Radhakrishna

Sir, A news item published recently in a section of the press pertaining to the Hindu community's concern over screening of a feature film "Radhakrishna" has drawn my attention.

The Hindu community has urged the government to withdraw the film's censorship certificate and stop its public viewing on the ground that it

has hurt their religious sentiments.

If the Hindu community's claim against "Radhakrishna" is true, then we would strongly call upon the authority to issue necessary directives suspending any further screening of the movie, for the sake of preserving communal peace and harmony.

M Zahidul Haque Assistant Professor Bangladesh, Agricultural Institute, Dhaka.

Push-back

Sir, It was very shocking to experience the recent "Operation Push Back" by Indian BSF men. This unfriendly behaviour by India with her neighbouring country, specially Bangladesh, is really unfortunate.

We appreciate India's help for us to get independence, but now what the game she is up to?

A concerned citizen