Kosovo Conflict: Precursor to a South Balkan War?

N my earlier paper on the present on-going Kosovo-conflict (Daily Star, 11 June) I pointed out that Kosovo's "ethnic cleansing" by Yugoslav regime is almost a repeat of what had happened in Bosnia (1992-1995) and it is imperative that political settlement is to be negotiated by the Yugoslav leadership and military solution is an exercise in futility. The purpose of this paper is to highlight the latent danger engulfing other countries in South Balkan in a regional war if President Milosevic of Yugoslavia fails to withdraw the heavy armoured vehicles and troops from Kosovo as desired

by the NATO. The Kosovo conflict is not merely a conflict between the central authority and the people of its province. It has a deeprooted history which goes back at least 600 years. The conflict arises from deep mistrust and suspicion between the Kosovars (non-Slav Albanian Muslims) and Serbs (Slav by race and Orthodox Christians). The animosity was implanted when the Turkish Ottoman empire defeated the Serbs in Kosovo on 28 June in 1389. The Muslim Ottoman rule in the Balkan was never liked by the Serbs who conspired at various times with other European powers to expel the Turks from Europe which they succeeded in doing so only at the beginning of this century.

Distrust between Serbs and Albanians

Out of the two million population in Kosovo, one in nine is a Serb and the rest are Albanian Muslims. It is interesting to note that 40 per cent of the population in the southern neighbouring country Macedonia are Albanians as well. The Albanian population in the region - Kosovars, the Albanians in Albania and the Albanians of Macedonia are grouped as one in the present conflict against the Serbs. Many of the refugees from Kosovo went to Albania and Macedonia. There is extreme tension among all the Albanians in the region because of the violence perpetrated by the Serb-dominated armed forces of President Milosevic on the Albanian-Kosovars.

In Kosovo, although Serbs and Albanians live together side by side they do not mix with each other. They may share flats in a condominium but they do not speak to each other. As one journalist said: They occupy the space and not

the place". The ethnic Albanians do not like the Serbs because of their "arrogance and nationalism". The Serbs on the other hand consider Albanians as "usurpers" of Serbian territory in the Balkan. Their children go to separate schools set up by the Albanians and Serbs where the children learn distorted version of history from Serbian and Albanian teachers. For example, Serbs teach their children that during the Turkish rule, they were oppressed and their churches were demolished and the Albanian Muslims are 'foreigners and uncivilised". Albanians on the other hand teach their children the opposite version emphasis-ing that the Serbs believe in myths and not in truths. Kosovo is their ancient land and it was forcibly occupied by Serbia who are "aggressors" The deep hatred between them could be compared to the one between Israelis and the Pales-

In the past, Marshall Tito was able to contain the ethnic differences and distrust by giving autonomy to the constituent states of the Federation of Yugoslavia. He created two autonomous provinces within Serbia — one in the South — Kosovo, and the other in the north: Vovodenia, giving the majority ethnic groups the right of self-management without the domination of the Serbs. It suited the ethnic groups well during that time. However, the Serbs were not happy with this arrangement.

Serbian Nationalism After the death of Marshall Tito, the then Serbian Community Party leader Slobodan Milosevic (now the President of truncated Yugoslavia) whipped up the fervour of Serbian nationalism to the extent that all other ethnic communities within the Federation knew that this rise of Serbian nationalism would destruct the Federation of Yugoslavia so well managed and crafted by Marshall Tito. Mr. Milosevic instilled in the Serbian community the past "glory" days of Serbian ruler Duke Lazar who was defeated in Kosovo by the Turks in the 14th century. The Serbs built a mausoleum at the very site where Duke Lazar was killed and the Serbs every year come to this place to pay homage to their departed leader and affirm their determination to avenge their defeat. To them. "Serbia is a temple and Kosovo is the alter of the temple." The rabid rage of Serbian nationalby Barrister Harun ur Rashid

So long the armed forces are engaged in military operations in Kosovo against what the Serbs call "the Kosovar-terrorists", the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) will continue to fight and the peaceful Albanian-Kosovars are becoming more and more militant day by day towards Serbs.

ism has gone unchecked under Mr. Milosevic. The Albanians in Kosovo were threatened and intimidated by the rise of Serbian nationalism with xenophobic overtones against them.

In late 1980s Mr. Milosevic encouraged the Serbian community in Kosovo to defy the Kosovo-Albanian autonomous authorities including police and pushed their demands of merging Kosovo with Serbia. This was nasty politics by Mr. Milosevic who dreamed of a Serbian empire in the Balkan. In 1989, the most controversial action by Mr. Milosevic as the President of Serbia was to abolish the autonomy of Kosovo and integrate it with Serbia by force. The Albanians

in Kosovo in one stroke were not only denied the status of autonomy in Kosovo but also their cherished wish of turning Kosovo a state within the Federation of Yugoslavia, having the same status with other states — Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Harzegovina and Montenegro - within the Federation. This action left the Kosovar-Albanians frustrated and created more resentment and anger against the Serbs.

Albanian-Kosovars in **Fighting Mood**

The Albanian-Kosovars were faced with forced assimilation with the Serbs after Kosovo was merged with Serbia in 1989. Their language was not

taught in the schools and they were compelled to learn Serbian language (in not too distant past Pakistani leaders attempted to impose Urdu on us in erstwhile East Pakistan ignoring our mother tongue — Bangla). The Kosovars detested this policy of forced assimilation with the Serbs with whom they have nothing in common either in race or religion. They demanded that Kosovo be restored to its status as an autonomous province within Serbia which existed prior to 1989. The Serbian President Milosevic did not pay any heed to their demands. When their peaceful demands were ignored. the Albanians in Kosovo were

dejected with the result that the

and it resulted in 350 Albanian-Kosovars dead, 200 missing and about 50,000 refugees fleeing to the neighbouring countries. (13,000 are in Albania alone). The average Albanian-Kosovars are alienated by this brutal policy that even peaceful elderly Albanian-Kosovars now support KLA's guerrilla action. At present 40 per cent of the Kosovo territory is in KLA's hands, although 50,000 Serbian police and army are deployed in Kosovo to fight against them.

Despite the threat of NATO's military action. President Milosevic is firm in his policy with Russia's support and he has not agreed to withdraw from Kosovo his armed forces

fight and the peaceful Albanian-Kosovars are becoming more and more militant day by day towards Serbs. The role of the Albanian majority leader Dr. Ibrahim Rugova has become irrelevant in the present situation as he supported initially autonomy for Kosovo. The effect of the military offensive against the Kosovar-Albanians is that they want nothing short of independence and Dr. Rugova changed his position as well to keep in tune with his community. The danger is now that the fight is not only being gradually spread to neighbouring families of Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo but the civilian Serbs in Kosovo had joined with the Serbian armed forces to attack the Kosovar-Albanians. It may soon turn out to an ugly inter-communal war in Kosovo which may soon involve the Serbs living in Serbia and Albanians living in Albania

and Macedonia. Possibility of a South Balkan War

It may be noted that the newly independent country-Macedonia is not secure. If 40 per cent of its Albanian popula-tion get involved with the Albanian-Kosovars in their fight against Serbs, the stability and security of Macedonia will be at a stake. In that case, Bulgaria might grab the eastern portion of Macedonia on the basis of "historic claims and ties". If it occurs, it will encourage Greece to extend its northern frontier to include southern areas of Macedonia (birthplace of Alexander the Great). In response to Greece, its arch-rival Turkey will not keep quiet and is likely to support Macedonia. embracing the whole of South Balkan into a regional war. The NATO and Russia are likely to be involved as well. This could be the likely scenario if the present ethnic conflict in Kosovo is not stopped.

NATO's Role

The NATO does not support the independence of Kosovo as it is not perceived by them to be a viable independent country. Furthermore, at a time when Eastern European countries are being integrated into a larger Europe, the NATO and the Western countries would not support the fragmentation of Europe at the beginning of 21st century. Therefore . Albanian-Kosovars' desire for independence is non-starter for European countries. Russia would not support it because it will reinforce the Chechens and other ethnic groups to demand independence from within the Russian Federation.

The NATO's military threat appears to be replete with dangers. First, the military inter-vention in Kosovo would be a bad precedent because it is an internal matter of Yugoslavia. Secondly, any military inter-vention would have to be pre-ceded by an all-out bombardment aimed at Yugoslavia's 60 surface-to-air missile sites and its 241 combat aircraft. Unless this is done the lives of NATO pilots would be put at risk. Thirdly, the intervention may cost the lives of NATO pilots which would be heavily criticised in their home constituencies. Fourthly, there could be heavy loss of life among both civilian Serbs and Kosovars.

Furthermore, NATO's proposed intervention is being opposed by Russia and China without the approval of the Se-curity Council and they would most likely to veto any action by the Security Council. However, the US asserts that NATO could act without UN authorisation but this is opposed not only by the Chinese and Russians but by French.

The US realises that NATO's military action may not be pos-sible in the present circumstances and has changed its strategy. It has opened talks directly with KLA so that KLA ceases military action first to enable the Yugoslav's forces to withdraw from Kosovo. The US is not pressing any more its ear-lier demand from President Milosevic to withdraw his troops. Regrettably the European powers appear to have no independent strategy to resolve this conflict in the European region.

Conclusion

Kosovo is in a nightmare scenario. The NATO is in a major dilemma. If President Milosevic continues to conduct military operations with heavy armed equipment in Kosovo. the NATO appears to be a silent spectator. If the NATO keeps silent now, it may eventually be involved with forces on the ground in the event of a regional war in the Balkan area.

In my view, the best solution appears to be : the heavy artillery and tanks together with Serb-dominated Yugoslavian armed forces should be withdrawn from Kosovo with an understanding that KLA ceases their armed action against the Serbian forces. Once such steps are taken, political dialogue can commence to enable the parties to arrive at an amicable and realistic solution. Time is running out for the NATO. They must not equivocate and should act quickly and decisively to prevent a South Balkan war in which everyone will be a loser.

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Political System Losses

Fleeing the fire of fighting.

by A Husnain

All our politicians are not experts sitting at the computer keyboard, but most can conjure up colourful images of virtual reality, or real virtual situations, which will disappear when not wanted!

O politician speaks meekly. One of his tools is thundering oratory to sway the listeners to his point of view. The latter is a very vague term, as there are dozen of options on the angle projected. Accuracy and precision are not the objective in the formation of public opinion — the others must be persuaded to think his (or her) way; right or wrong, left or

The political objective in local style is not the straight path ahead, nor the crooked path ultimately leading to the common objective projected ahead, but to support this vocal leader. looking through his eyes. All our politicians are not experts sitting at the computer keyboard, but most can conjure up colourful images of virtual reality, or real virtual situations, which will disappear when not

wanted! What makes a politician tick? This is not a tricky question, but the answer can be comprehended through the standard method of analysis. This analysis of the political system has three main components: the input, the processing, and the output. All the three sets of specifications have universal standards, with a certain band of tolerance factor,

or flexibility. Anything outside these two yardsticks is suspect, adulterated, undesirable, unsporting or unethical. The game has to be played within certain unspoken rules, otherwise it is not considered sporting. What is the difference between athletic and

sporting?

Let us have a peep at the local styles of gamesmanship. If it is the right way, it need not be pointed out or discussed here. We live in a world of aberrations and distortions; and language was given to the politicians to conceal their thoughts (for diplomatic use or abuse). This premise also applies to the good politicians and to other professionals like the diplomats and the legal experts.

Decades ago, newspaper reports alleged that the proposed site for the Jamuna bridge (new a reality, thanks to the people) had to be shifted more than once due to political pressure. as the costing goes up as the site goes southwards. It means that the political pressure overrides the technical feasibility. This is not an unusual phenomenon: there are innumerable examples throughout the world of

political manipulations. During our elections, pressure of violence is a part of the voting process in a large number of cases, leading to vote-rigging and other abuses. That is the reason why it was agreed to have non-political, neutral.

caretaker interim government to conduct the general elections. It means that the politicians do not believe in the 'other' politicians: but all politicians of all shades expect all the citi-

zens or voters to believe in their particular party and vote for them. Looks like there is a caste system in this belief theory. The corollary is that there are several kinds of truth: neutral, subjective, objective, political, non-political, ethical, moral! If that be the case, then the permutation and combination of falsehood would run

> have to be mesmerised and remembered for years for defence when charged. Take one case of processing: the award of big contracts worth millions of dollars or taka. There are two mainstreams: to whom to award the contract, and what is written in small print. The same game is played even at lower levels with small local contracts. That is why we have violence near the

> into thousands; remembering

that one lie has to be supported

with ten additional lies, and all

Toll collection has become a part of the political nepotism. The political workers have to be rewarded in cash, kind, favours, or long-term pensions', coffee money or com-

Tender Boxes, and non-trans-

parency at the post-tender

missions; assuming that no service in the world is available free of charge; and every thing has a price attached to it. large or small ('for service rendered').

Courtesy: The Economist

All outputs should be in national or public interest. The visible outputs certainly are so. otherwise the game cannot be played. The invisible or the back-door part is known only to the insiders. Take the case of bank loan defaulters in Japan. Korea, the Tiger and Asean countries, and in Bangladesh. The culture is similar, with difference in degree or kind. The outlook is different, depending on the observer, a millionaire, or a poor farmer.

The politicians have not been singled out exclusively for the dose, as they form a part of the society, and are not isolated from it. But as they rule the country, run the administration, and take care of the good governance, their acts of virtue cannot be hidden from the limelight. They noble efforts can do and undo a nation; hence their responsibility is much greater than all the rest combined: because mega mistakes take mega time to recover from: and the purged exercise has to

start once again from zero. The hero is not far from zero. Zero is above 1 (one); and shunnota is a mystical symbol of the Infinite. Infinite cannot be anything than divine.

Albanian youth formed the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA)

to challenge the Serbs. President Milosevic's heavyhanded military operation began in Kosovo last February

the heavy artillery and tanks. So long the armed forces are engaged in military operations in Kosovo against what the Serbs call "the Kosovar-terrorists", the KLA will continue to

Achieving Police Effectiveness

T Ananthachari writes from New Delhi

A variety of measures have to be initiated to bring back the State Police Forces to an acceptable level of performance, efficiency and competence.

There can be no serious objection to the Home Minister continuing to send Central Forces to help out states like the Jammu & Kashmir and the insurgency-ridden North-Eastern states but there should be parallel initiatives by him to implement a plan for reinvigorating the State Police machinery with a view to making it capable of and willing to discharge responsibilities.

lot of people have given a lot of suggestions to make The police in India effective in the performance of its professional tasks. But the most valuable observation in this regard has come from no less a person then the present Union Home Minister. He has said what every right thinking policeman would like to hear that it is important that the State Police pronouncement of the Home Minister, which is a timely remainder, would be given appropriate shape in the immediate future. Right moves in this regard can and will lead to not only efficiency and effectiveness of the police but it is bound to have a significant impact on the overall law and order scenario itself. There are

reasons for saying so. Over the last couple of decades almost all the States, with very few exceptions, have become so addicted to depending upon a variety of Central Forces to handle what would be the legitimate responsibility of the State Police, that a stage has been reached when failures of the State Government in the field of law and order are increasingly attributed to making available inadequate Central Forces. Look at the indignant outburst of the J&K Chief Minister. He has in no uncertain terms laid the blame for the recent killing of the minorities in his State by the militants, at the door of the Central Government. He was the CM of J&K when militancy in that State took roots and acquired a ghastly face. Militancy in that State grew right under the nose of the State Police. I cannot recall any decisive measures adopted at that time to enable the State Police to squarely face and effectively deal with the various facets of law and order then prevailing in the State. In this game, the Central Government has been a willing partner. Since then and till now, there is undue dependency on the Central Forces. The result is there for all to see. This is by no means as a crit-

icism of the J&K Administration to the exclusion of various other States. Similar things could be said of the Police in States like Bihar. UP most of the North-Eastern States. The same thing was true of Punjab also for a major period of terrorists activities in that State. In fact, in the initial stages of terrorism and even for quite a long period thereafter, the local Police Stations had no clue as to what was happening and who

were behind the terrorists activities. This was primarily because there was utter neglect of the manner in which policing was done and how the Police Stations were functioning. Ultimately, it is only when the Punjab Police rose to meet the challenges before them that terrorists activities were effectively curbed. The reference to Punjab and J&K should not tempt one to think that this particular aspect of policing problem surfaces only in the face of terrorism or militancy. Far from it. One could easily cite examples from all over the country, not merely from Bihar and UP to substantiate this point.

I had an opportunity to study

this matter in some detail recently. My findings merely confirmed what was otherwise well known in the official circles all along. By now everyone in the country is familiar with the sad saga of the Veerappan chase, which was joined in by the redoubtable BSF. The story of dealing with the extremists of Andhara Pradesh is no different. In fact, at one point of time a contingent of the ITBPF (which is a specialist Force for guarding the high altitude Indo-Tibetan borders) had been stationed in AP for the above purpose but was actually utilised for traffic control duties for some time. There are at least two dustructs ub UP where CRPF has been continuously deployed for the last few years to perform chores which rightly belonged to the State Police. There was an instance of land dispute in Bihar when a Platoon of BSF, which was going to some other place, was diverted to handle the same. There are numerous such gross misuse of costly Central Force but let there be no mistake the Union Home Ministry is most of the time a willing and obliging partner and sometimes even the originator of such wrong use of precious resources. It is in this context that the views of the present Home Minister assume significance and raise hopes.

A variety of measures have to be initiated to bring back the State Police Forces to an acceptable level of performance, efficiency and competence. Most of such measures have been dealt with at length by the long neglected national Police Commission in its eight-volume reports. But the issue of manpower and its optimal utilisation needs priority attention. as a starting point for toning up effectiveness and efficiency, be-

sides the need to pay attention to cost effectiveness. All these years there has been considerable addition to the total man power of the various Police Departments but not always necessarily and objectively correlated to long term goals of policing. The most glaring failure in this regard is that measures have been adopted overlooking the urgent need for toning up of the working at the Police Station level. New units and structures have been added to the Special Branch, Crime Branch and the Armed Wing of the State Police Organisations. However, at the same time and unmost unfortunately though, adequate attention has not at all been paid to the police structure at the district level and even less, at the Police Station level. The result has been disastrous what should be handled by the Police Station is often done by the district level units and consequentially what should be done by the district level is passed on to be handled by the State level units. This has further led to constant dependence on Central Forces to bail out the States.

In the case of the police, such a development has brought with it some basic maladies in the overall policing methods and efficiency. It has also eroded accountability and elan in the members of the police. The strength of the police, it is said, lies in the fact that they are close to the origins of social and cultural developments in the society. By the nature of the jobs that the police do, they have necessarily to be very close to the local people. Then only will they come to know the various developments as well as the people behind such developments, which would ultimately have a bearing on order. harmony and peace in that locality. Any policing arrangement which ignores this underlying compulsion will naturally lead to ineffectiveness. By substituting the grass root level police personnel with those drawn from the district headquarters, state head-quarters as well as from the Centre, an avoidable handicap has been built into the natural police processes. So when the Union Home Minister says that it is necessary to strengthen the State police, it is hoped he would pay particular attention to reversing the above trend.

The second important aspect is to ensure that all State police forces are capable of performing to a minimum common standard of efficiency and com-

petence all over the country. Even though law and order is a State subject, we have reached a stage when differences and distortions in the level of performance among the various police forces, will have serious repercussions on not only on internal peace and order but also and more importantly, on national security itself. The spread of fundamentalism, extremism and growth of pockets of organised crime are but a few examples of this kind. Therefore, as an integral part of the efforts to make the State Police effective, it is necessary for the Home Ministry to lay down norms and yardsticks for adherence by all the States. It would also automatically imply that under the aegis of the Centre, all the States should finalise their plan of action. The Centre has to take on the role of not guiding and lending financial support, but also a formally monitoring the action taken for time-bound implementation of the agreed plan of action. As part of this exercise, the third essential step is to under-

take a close scrutiny of manpower utilisation at various levels in all the police organisations, both at the State as well as the Central levels. At present there is considerable misuse of valuable and extremely costly man power at all level. A detailed man power audit will bring out the extent of wasteful usage and unauthorised use of man power vividly. Without an impartial look at this matter, there can never be any semblance of cost-effectiveness, nor will there be the desired improvement in effectiveness. In this regard the police leadership at all levels has to recognise its own role and responsibility to internally take remedial measures.

There can be no serious objection to the HM continuing to send Central Forces to help out states like the J & K and the insurgency-ridden North-Eastern states but there should be parallel initiatives by him to implement a plan for reinvigorating the State Police machinery with a view to making it capable of and willing to discharge their responsibilities in such a manner which would be befitting the faith placed in them by the Constitution by putting 'law and order in the State List. -

The author is a retired Director General of Indian Border Security Force.

Mandira

Drought, Flood and Uncertainty

TEARLY 37 countries are facing food emergencies as against 31 countries that had faced food shortages towards the end of last year. The food shortages are mainly due to the effects of El Nino.

Reports suggest that eastern Africa has suffered severe losses of crops and livestock due to droughts and floods. Somalia experienced a sharp decline in the production of crops during 1997-98. Excessive rains reduced the recently harvested 1997 second season crops in Uganda. According to estimates. food supplies in Eritrea during 1998 is expected to be tight following two successive reduced cereal harvests. Southern Africa has also experienced a major crop loss due to excessive rains and prolonged dry

North Korea and the CIS countries are already facing a grave food crisis and mainly relying on food aid to survive. El

Nino-related droughts have affected cereal production in Indonesia, China, the Philippines Thailand and Papua New Guinea

Disturbances caused by El Nino this year threatened food supplies in Latin America. In the Caribbean, a majority part of food requirements of Haiti is being met by external aid while in Cuba heavy rains and flooding have affected sugar cane production.

Bleak Future

OST of Iraq's farms are in a bad state, says the LV LUnited Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). The famous fertile fields of Mesopotamia's have been ruined due to international sanctions and government

A FAO's survey shows that harvests of vegetables and cereals have shrunk by over a third since 1990. Nearly 300,000 ha of land has simply been abandoned because of the collapse of the irrigation system and the lack of pesticides. Number of livestock have fallen by 40 per cent, partly due to an epidemic of screw worm that had spread to two-thirds of Iraq's provinces by the end of last vear

Iraq had been importing nearly two-thirds of its food before the Gulf War. However, after the war, it cannot pay for importing food items due to lack of oil revenue. Following several sanctions, the country cannot import spare parts, chemicals for fertilisers and pesticides, and all manner of machinery to increase its agricultural growth. Despite them, the Iraqis have proved incapable of maintaining food production, say the United Nations officials.

Digging for Destruction

HE oil industry should switch investment from A new oil exploration to renewable energy to avoid dangerous climate change, said the Greenpeace spokesperson Kalle Hesstvedt. A Greenpeace technical analysis, based on the

conclusions of the United Nations Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change, has found that only a quarter of global economic reserves of fossil fuels — coal, oil and gas can be burned before dangerous rates of temperature increase and climate change occur, to which many species of plants and animals will not be able to

Hesstvedt attacked the Norway's government-owned oil company Statoil for failing to switch its investment from new oil exploration into renewable energy despite the scientific warnings of catastrophic climate changes if the industry continues business-as-usual. Norway is the world's second largest exporter of oil, after Saudi-Arabia.

its exploration for new oil is indefensible when evidence of climate changes is getting more and more obvious," Hesstvedt said. Statoil invests annually more than US \$ 699 million in oil exploration. However, the company only invests US \$4,05,000 in renewables, such as solar and wind power, or less than 0.06 per cent of its fossil fuel investment. CSE/Down To Earth Features

"Statoil must realises that