

NATO's Bombing on Chinese Embassy A Wrong Attack at a Wrong Time

by Barrister Harun ur Rashid

The incident will have grave unpalatable implications for NATO and many NATO leaders wished that it had not come at this juncture when NATO had been engaged in discussion with Russian leaders to end the conflict through a diplomatic solution.

On the night of Friday (6 May), NATO admitted that its missiles hit the Chinese Embassy in the new Belgrade district, where the media reported that four were dead and 21 wounded. NATO regretted immediately to the Chinese authorities for the tragic accident. NATO has not yet made it clear whether it was a mistake on the part of the pilot or a NATO planning error where pilot hit the target as was advised. NATO's enquiry is proceeding on this grave error.

This incident will have grave unpalatable implications for NATO and many NATO leaders wished that it had not come at this juncture when NATO had been engaged in discussion with Russian leaders to end the conflict through a diplomatic solution. It is a horribly wrong attack at a wrong time.

People all over the world would have the right to question seriously NATO's claim on hitting the targets with precision by its sophisticated weapons without any collateral damage to the civilians. Furthermore nothing has changed the situation in Kosovo despite its six weeks bombing on Yugoslavia. At the time of writing, horror stories continue to be told by the Kosovar refugees of their brutal experience with the Serbian armed forces and there is no end to the exodus of refugees from Kosovo. People now wonder the effectiveness of the air raids.

The attack on civilian targets, such as a bus or train on a bridge or hospital or the Chinese Embassy have generated a negative opinion all over the world on NATO's air strikes. Some say NATO is committing war crimes under 1949 Geneva Conventions on Armed Conflicts and the affected parties condemned the civilian attacks on targets as "barbaric". Obviously in the past NATO was easily getting away from the tragic casualties because they related to personal loss. But now with the attack on Chinese Embassy NATO is not able to brush aside the incident because it could complicate NATO's exit game. That is the reason why President Clinton expressed regrets over the attack and the British Prime Minister Blair wrote a letter expressing similar sentiments to his counterpart in China.

What are the possible implications on the attack on China?

Chinese Premier's Recent Visit to the US

by A S M Nurunnabi

telecommunication companies can now control Chinese cellular telephone firms and Internet companies. The two sides vowed to try and resolve all outstanding issues by the end of the year.

But those issues that do remain-like allowing US brokerages to operate freely on the Mainland and Hollywood to distribute its movies are not the only or perhaps even the largest obstacles to an agreement. "In my view, the gap between the two sides is really already not very significant," said Zhu at a joint White House press conference with Clinton. "If you want to hear some honest words, the problem does not lie with some big gap, but with the political atmosphere. Of course, Zhu knew that before he arrived at the US. In a previous newspaper interview, he acknowledged that there were some Americans "who do not welcome me to their country," and even some Chinese "who may not be very happy to see me visit the US." Cadres in China had become increasingly resentful of what they saw as an unwarranted tide of China-bashing in the US. That anger, intensified by outrage over NATO's intervention in Kosovo, nearly kept Zhu at home. He said he took something of risk by coming at all, as the Chinese President Jiang Zemin gave the final go-ahead for the trip.

Nor did Zhu expect much sympathy in the US. As usual, human rights groups planned protests for each stop on Zhu's six-city itinerary; hundreds gathered across the street from White House during his visit. This time, their voices were joined by a broad range of political heavyweights—from Republican legislators and presidential candidates to Clinton himself—none of whom could afford to be accused of being "soft" on Beijing.

Clinton struggled awkwardly to temper the rising frenzy against China's policy. "We cannot allow argument to lead us towards a campaign-driven cold war with China," he warned shortly before Zhu's arrival. "No one could possibly

have been Embassy? China is understandably furious over the attack. The Chinese people including the students spontaneously protested against the attack and it is reported that they had stoned the US Embassy in Beijing. The US Consulates in other places were under attack by the enraged Chinese people. In Beijing the US Ambassador was summoned "urgently" to receive an official protest over the bombing of the Embassy in Belgrade. China has been consistently opposing NATO's air strikes from the beginning as it constitutes a violation of the Yugoslavia's sovereignty and the UN Charter. They maintain that Kosovo is an integral part of Yugoslavia and outside intervention is permissible only under the cover of the UN.

NATO has no unilateral right to take armed action against Yugoslavia. However, the critics say that although China takes a stand on international law and practice, its view on NATO's action on Yugoslavia is clouded by its own perception on the right to integrate forcibly its rebel province, Taiwan, within Beijing administration. There appears to be a lurking fear that if China decides to do so in future, the US will come to the aid of Taiwan under the security pact between the US and Taiwan. To the Chinese leadership, this is not acceptable as Taiwan is a part of China.

It could be argued that the attack on its Chinese Embassy will further harden China's stand on NATO's air strikes. It could have deleterious effects on NATO's attempt to involve the Security Council to end the conflict. After all, China is not an ordinary member of the UN. It is one of the five permanent members of the Security Council of the UN with its "veto" power. China is able to kill any substantive resolution of the Council in any matter, whether it relates to Iraq or Yugoslavia. The UN Charter provides China a great leverage to influence any international situation before the Council and the other four permanent members, the US, Britain, France and Russia, must take account of this reality.

The glimmer of hope which elicited from the agreed principles by the G-8 countries including Russia on May 5 in Bonn for a diplomatic solution on

Kosovo could evaporate if China does not agree. It was conceived that China would accept the agreed Bonn formula as Yugoslavia's traditionally ally Russia came on board with the NATO countries. But the senseless attack on the Chinese Embassy may change the whole equation.

Following this attack on the Chinese Embassy, it is not unlikely that a crack in the unity of NATO alliance of 19 countries may emerge. This senseless accidental incident could be fanned, fed and directed to arouse the resentment among the public for NATO's ongoing military action. As a result some of its member-governments under the pressure of public opinion may perceive that NATO's military adventurism has not been able to protect the civilian targets nor were they able to prevent a humanitarian crisis in Kosovo. If this perception is maintained, a few of them may not support NATO's military action against Yugoslavia and NATO will be in big trouble.

Yugoslavia's leaders must be lauging at the monumental error of the attack on the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade. They must derive delight at the discomfort of NATO leaders. A view prevails that Yugoslavia's leaders will now make their best efforts to convince China that some of the principles agreed in Bonn by the NATO leaders and Russia were not acceptable to them. Yugoslavia may seize this opportunity to dilute the agreed framework with the support of China in its favour. Whatever principles were agreed upon, they are merely the bare bones and need to be fleshed out with the approval of the UN Security Council.

Here in the Security Council I would argue that China could come in a big way if it wants to support Yugoslavia. China could very well maintain that the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty of Yugoslavia are likely to be compromised if the Serbian forces in Kosovo are replaced into by the international troops with heavy arms. NATO maintains that it will form the core of the international military presence in Kosovo to which Yugoslavia has strong reservations and China may be persuaded to support this position.

The writer is former Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN in Europe, Geneva.

Further the autonomy in Kosovo could be minimal if

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Zhu tried to calm fears that the trade deficit with China had grown too large. "Don't make such a big deal out of this trade deficit," he said. "This is not such a serious problem." The US government pegs the deficit at about dls 57 billion but Zhu said official Chinese estimates place it at about dls 21 billion. He also described independent analyses that found the deficit to be about dls 35 billion. Zhu said the size of the deficit is exaggerated by the fact many of the products China exports are made of imported raw materials. Zhu urged the United States to lower restrictions on high technology exports to China, pointing out that Japan and European countries send far more high technology products to China than the United States.

Zhu came to the United States in hopes of gaining US support from admittance to the World Trade Organisation. Negotiations early in the visit failed but at a later stage he spoke to the US president by telephone and administration officials said they hoped to reach a deal this year.

Despite Zhu's craving for a deal, the important question is whether Beijing is in the mood for much more compromise, particularly on the human rights issue. On the day the Chinese Premier left for America, officials in Beijing announced the postponement of the trial of a former mid-level cadre detained last July after calling for political reform. But observers felt that the goodwill gesture was limited. It was also felt by observers that the social tensions that were fuelled by Zhu's own reforms only promised to make authorities even more edgy and intolerant.

On the other hand, no one yet knows whether the evident camaraderie between Clinton and Zhu will mellow attitudes on either side of the Pacific. But as both leaders were quick to reiterate, at least they could manage a frank and cordial airing of views—that has been in short supply in recent months.

"We believe that maybe the friends that are able to say 'No' to you are the best for you," Zhu told the White House.

by Jim Davis

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Has Democratic Governance Failed?

by Justice A Hasib

FROM 1971 upto 1975 we had a parliamentary system of Government with the Prime Minister exercising all executive powers. By the 4th Amendment, Presidential system was introduced wherein the President, vested with all the executive powers, started governing the country by one party known as BAKSAL, that is, Bangladesh Krishi Sriram Awami League. After the change in 1975, the Presidential system of Government continued with multi-party arrangement both under the BNP and JP till the reintroduction of Parliamentary system in 1991.

China does not agree to it. (China will view the Kosovo situation in the light of its relationship with Taiwan). Therefore, the effect of the attack on the Chinese Embassy could be felt in China's attitude towards Kosovo in the Security Council and NATO stands on an uncertain ground irrespective of the agreed Bonn principles with Russia.

If there is no resolution of the Security Council, the armed conflict, according to NATO, continues and in such situation NATO is bogged down in Yugoslavia. There is no exit route for NATO other than stationing its ground troops to fight with the Serbian forces to expel them from Kosovo.

The other view is that if there is an agreement between NATO and Russia on Kosovo conflict in the Security Council, China may not oppose for the sake of international peace and security. China is a responsible member of the Council and will ensure that the sooner a diplomatic solution is found, the better it is for the Balkans. China does not want to see the war engulfing other countries in the Balkans and Turkey and Russia.

The question is: what is the quid pro quo for China after the attack? There is a view that China may extract concessions from the US on its bilateral issues, such as the membership of China to the World Trade Organisation, human rights issue and the spy scandal involving China. After the attack of the Chinese Embassy, it is likely that the Clinton administration is expected to placate China taking a softer stand on these issues to get China on board for adopting a resolution in the Security Council.

So long Russia was perceived by NATO to be the holder of the key to the solution of the Kosovo conflict. After this attack one could argue that China holds the other key. Whatever may happen, the bottom line appears to be that the attack on the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade will have a bearing in China's attitude in the Security Council on Kosovo conflict. NATO's action is not only irresponsible but also appears to have put a few spanners in the engine soon.

The writer is former Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN in Europe, Geneva.
