Alternatives

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When the Global Comes to the Town...

From the *Alternatives* Desk

I always enjoy treating friends and known ones when they come from abroad, East or West. But treating them outside in the all too many exotic restaurants of Dhaka is what I enjoy the most. In recent times, that is in the past year or so, I have encountered a familiar tone, particularly amongst my expatriate friends from the West, and that again, if I take them to the overly westernised fast food restaurant called Wimpy! As one of my expatriate friends very recently commented: "You people are really having a good time! Getting the benefits of the West by staying at home!" I believe it was a statement of fact (at least knowing my friend well) and not so much of a sarcasm that is usually found in such remarks. But then, there are critical implications embedded in the statement.

A town is judged globalise when western food shops are around - Wimpy, Macdonalds, KFC and the like. And here more interestingly, it is not so much the food as the trademark of the shops! After all, the Chinese and Thai restaurants were around for years, but that did not make Dhaka global an iota more. On a more fun note, food globalisation is more "trademarked" gastronomy than a gastronomy that is traded and relished! Who would trade Fakruddin's biriyani for a sleazy (oops! cheesy) beef burger unless it is trademarked Wimpy or Macdonalds? And that again, how often can one relish the burger, both time and space-wise? Try serving it at a wedding and (I believe) you will get the answer.

More important, however, is the sarcasm that I made reference to earlier. Like all sarcasms, there is a touch of envy here and that I find very disturbing. I still remember that at one point of time my expatriate acquaintances used to pride upon their Macdonalds intake and how the children have lost their appetite after coming to Dhaka! Well, all that is gone and with it the enjoyment of enjoying the "global: all alone (and not to miss the point) faraway from Bangladesh! And that allowed many to raise an interesting question almost to the point of a cry: "Why poor and dependent Bangladesh should have all the things of the global and made more dependent and poor?" Once the problem was not being global and now it seems that globalisation itself is the problem. Or, is this simply crocodile tears about which we need not bother much?

Ah, that reminds me, what did friends and the known ones think of my relishing crocodile meat while on a recent trip to Kenya? Not much. I remained a distasteful carnivorous, although I expected them to treat me something of a globalivorous! I guess I have to wait for the day when the Mcdonalds will start serving the croc....

Globalisation and Low Intensity Conflict
The Statelessness of the Rohingyas
by Imtiaz Ahmed

Globalisation whether it is from the top or from the bottom makes no difference, for agenda and programs reproducing globalisation always tend to be elitist and correspondingly Capital-centric and is therefore inversely devoid of peripheral concern whether economic, social or spatial. It is against this background that we will take up the pitiable fate of the Rohingyas.

THE relationship between globalisation and low-intensity conflict (LIC) is *less* obvious and is therefore *more* problematic. Let me make two broad assertions to drive home my contention:

Firstly, although globalisation seeks to break the shackles imposed by the national state or, for that matter, national boundaries, conflicts – from civil to national – are generally *devalued* and *marginalized* if such conflicts have little or nothing to do with the reproduction of globalisation. A conflict is otherwise graduated to 'low-intensity' not so much because of its *intensity* (with respect to security stakes, casualty, military involvement, cost, etc.) but more because of the way it relates itself to the globalised world.

Secondly, in so far as LIC is devalued and marginalized, the resolution of LIC also tends to be *marginal* and *ad hoc*. Put differently, in the absence of proper and effective resolution of LIC not only does it become dirty and protracted but also the suffering it causes to those most directly involved continues to be deep and long. Marginalisation of LIC is otherwise the marginalization of the sufferers as well as the

marginalization of suffering.

Globalisation whether it is *from the top or from the bottom* makes no difference, for agendas and programs reproducing globalisation always tend to be *elitist* and correspondingly *Capital-centric* and is therefore inversely devoid of peripheral concern whether economic, social or spatial. It is against this background that we will take up the pitiable fate of the Rohingyas.

The State of Stateless-ness

According to 1997 Statistical Yearbook, published by the Government of Myanmar, the 'official' population of the Arakan or Rakhine State, where most Muslim Rohingyas reside, numbered around 2.6 million. In addition to this 2.6 million (and this is according to some 'unofficial' estimates made in 1991) another one to two million Muslim Rohingyas also reside in the Rakhine State. This would imply that the overall population of the Rakhine State is around 4 to 5 million, in the government circles, however, the Rakhine State is the home of the officially designated majority - the Buddhist Rakhines. The dis-

tinction between 'Rohingyas' and 'Rakhines' here is a deliberate one, not so much for the reason of semantics (which is somewhat fuzzy) or religion (which is quite obvious) as for the reason of the state. Let me explain.

The word 'Rohingya' is a taboo in the Capital City of Yangon and I would imagine in the rest of Myanmar. In both national (or more appropriately, governmental) and international circles within Myanmar, the word simply does not exist. Even the National Museum in Yangon which has an excellent collection of materials of all sub-nationalities (labelled by the government as 'national races' and categorised into seven in terms of language origin – Shan, Mon, Karen, Kayah, Chin, Kachin and Rakhine) makes no mention of the Rohingyas nor does it have any collections dedicated to them. Why this taboo? Why this deliberate attempt to shun and silence the Rohingyas? Before attempting to dwell on this issue, let me first reflect on the origins of the Rohingyas in Myanmar.

There are basically two theories. One theory suggests that the Rohingyas are descendants of Moorish, Arab and Persian

traders, including Moghul, Turk, Pathan and Bengali soldiers cum migrants, who arrived between the 9th and 15th centuries, married local women, and settled in the region. Rohingyas are therefore a mixed group of people with many ethnic and racial connections. This position is mainly upheld by the political fronts of the Rohingyas, including most scholars sympathetic to their cause.

The second theory, on the other hand, suggests that the Muslim population of the Rakhine State is mostly Bengali migrants from the erstwhile East Pakistan and now Bangladesh, with some Indians coming during the British period. This theory is further premised on the fact that since most of them speak Bengali with a strong 'Chittagonian dialect,' they cannot but be illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. The government of Myanmar, including the majority Burman-Buddhist population of the country, subscribes to this position.

The above two theories may be important in formulating policies, strategies and even political actions and this may be true not only for the pro-Ro-

Globalisation and Low Intensity Security Issues in South Asia
by Omprakash Mishra

The two processes – globalisation and fragmentation – have affected and impacted upon the nature of conflict and the notion of security in the contemporary world. The end of the cold war was a major boost for forces of globalisation. It terminated the east-west rivalry for world supremacy, contributed to settlement of regional conflicts and strengthened the international machinery to address threats to international peace and security.

GLOBALISATION has promoted macro integration at the global level. It has also reinforced disintegrative tendencies and fragmentation within the existing nation-states. Forces unleashed by globalisation have not led people so much to converge around the same values as it has infused in them a greater ability to articulate their values. Over the last two decades students of international relations have been trying to come to grips with the myriad international economic and political changes which characterise globalisation. A fundamental transformation has begun in the way we perceive the world. The Westphalian or realist understanding of international relations is in serious crisis. The concept of globalisation has been the chief contender for the honour of offering an alternative paradigm'. Both globalisation and fragmentation as processes are not simply international but occur at multiple levels and affect internationalism, regionalism and even the cohesiveness of the states themselves.

The two processes – globalisation and fragmentation – have affected and impacted upon the nature of conflict and the notion of security in the contemporary world. The end of the cold war was a major boost for forces of globalisation. It terminated the east-west rivalry for world supremacy, contributed to settlement of regional conflicts and strengthened the international machinery to address threats to international peace and security. At the same time, new and persistent pattern of international conflict in the 1990s has made light of hopeful declarations of ushering in a new world order after the end of the cold war. This theory is further premised on the 'stark simplicities and comforting symmetries of the bipolar global confrontation', the world has entered into a period of uncertainty and unpredictability. There has been violent breakdown of civil society in dozens of countries throughout the world. The profusion of ethnic, tribal, religious and national conflicts have made the world more turbulent. The very nature of conflict has been transformed from conventional war between nation-states to inter-communal conflict within states. A very high percentage of military action is taking place within the states. A wide variety of non-state actors, rebel movements, armed political militias, ethnic and religious groups and mercenaries are involved in such strife and military action. Common characteristic of such intra-state conflict have included multiple warring parties, blurred lines of control and greater involve-

ment of civilians.

With the expansion of the learning capacity and skills of the individual, the macro level has become insufficient to explain world politics. More attention, therefore, has to be paid to the micro level for a better understanding and explanation of disintegrative tendencies and fragmentation of international and national societies. Certain parameters that normally sustain the global system are simultaneously increasing in complexities and dynamism and creating turbulence in world politics. This phenomenon is best illustrated by the increase in the dimension, spread and severity of Low Intensity Conflict (LIC) within the borders of the nation-states as well as across them.

The concept of LIC developed during the early 1970s in an attempt to define a wide range of politico-military activities, which were less intense than modern conventional limited war. The preference for the new term indicated that the concepts of 'revolutionary insurgent warfare' and 'counter-insurgency', which were used in the 1960s, had become dated and 'unsatisfactory'. These terms were value laden. LIC, in contrast, seem to be value-free, indicating only the (low) degree of conflict and not whether the parties are good or bad. Essentially, LIC is armed conflict for political purposes, short of direct combat between regular armed forces. Such conflicts are asymmetrical, ambiguous, unconventional and very often develop into wars of attrition. LIC subsumes guerrilla wars, civil wars, insurgency, separatist movements, communal violence, insurrection, terrorism, coup d'etat etc. LIC is largely a Third World phenomenon and poses a serious and long term threat to nation building exercises and regional peace and security. There is little evidence of this type of conflict declining. On the contrary, LIC is on the rise because it is grows more cost effective, especially in the short term than conventional war and because it carries less risk of escalation. During the cold war, LIC was seen as a secondary issue. Cold war had a restraining influence on the eruption and spread of LIC. Its subsidence has seen increasing instances of use of LIC in various forms by diverse parties. LIC seems to offer a more realistic and cost-effective solution to many groups pursuing different politico-social, territorial or ideological goals. Heightened aspiration of people, improved means of communication, availability of light weight sophisticated weapons have ensured that various ethnic, racial and religious issues turn into uncompromis-

ing demands for self-determination and sovereign independence. All these factors combine to make LIC both desirable and possible.

The changed notion of security and aspiration of peoples and groups to enhance their sense of security have necessitated employment of low intensify conflict strategy by many of them. Again, states wary of fighting a conventional war but persistent in the pursuit of their political, economic, territorial and ideological goals have increasingly resorted to LIC strategy vis-a-vis their adversaries, in most cases neighbouring states. Moreover, states in their goal of preseeving and protecting their frontiers have used LIC in anti-insurgency or anti-guerrilla operations.

In today's world concept of security has travelled far and wide, from the earlier notion of physical preservation of a state to a multi-dimensional concern involving military, economic, environmental, ethnic and political aspects of a nation-state's life. Moreover, growing attention is now being paid to human dimensions of security, such as problems of gainful employment, food, health, environment, personal safety and human rights etc. At the global and regional level insecurity created by population explosion, forced displacement, migratory pressures, drug trafficking, international terrorism have also drawn the attention of scholars and policy makers. Many of these concerns can be termed as low intensity security issues in as much as they do not directly and immediately threaten the territorial integrity of the nation states. But what may be a low intensity issue for the developed countries may be a high priority issue, the question of survival for the developing world. The distinction between 'low' politics and 'high' politics has always been considered problematic and in the last two decades we are witnesses to the breakdown of this distinction in a number of instances. While conventional threats to insecurity have not diminished for a large number of countries, newer threats to security have emerged. The adverse implications of global milieu such as great power rivalry, conflicts and interventions, economic pressures and technological barriers remain in place for the South Asian countries. But it is the unfavourable regional strategic environment characterised by inter-state conflicts and wars on account of boundary disputes, clashes of economic interest and ideological incompatibilities which have been the major source of threat to the security for the South Asian states. South Asia has inherited a volatile mix

that generates a powerful crosscurrent of tensions, both interstate and intra-state. However, the most serious threat to the South Asian States emanate from internal turmoil and disruption arising from struggle for national liberation, underdevelopment, ethnic, religious and social conflicts, wars of political secession, and struggle for rights and shares in power. The domestic threat may be linked with external adversaries and fuelled by them.

A contrast may be drawn between the traditional security issues in South Asia and the low intensity security issues in the region. Changed nature of conflict, its locale and parties and the myriad goals of the adversaries in these conflicts distinguish the 1990s from earlier decade. However, changes in this direction were noticeable from the 1980s. The present concentration of conflict within the borders of the nation states is a continuation of the process, which was evident in the 1960s. Many of these conflicts, mostly in Third World regions, never received international attention during the cold war period. The major difference is that during the cold war these issues were in the background, with cold war exercising a restraining influence on them. Therefore, the issue of low intensity security threats is not new; only that it has become more visible, more intense and more complex. Moreover, the geographical region affected by the LIC has also accelerated them.

So far as South Asian region is concerned the traditional threats to the nation-states continue to remain in place. Despite the changes in the global security environment, regional security concerns of South Asian states have not been affected. The centrality of adversarial relationship between India and Pakistan has not changed despite fundamental transformation taking place in the world. Secondly, most of the challenges facing the state and nation-building exercises are still in place.

Due to the relative 'autonomy' of the inter-state disputes and conflicts in South Asia, the end of the cold war had no positive effect on the region. At the same time, LICs have increased in their dimension, spread and severity. It is from this perspective that we can better analyse and understand the various insurgencies and separatist movements, terrorism and proxy war, ethnic and communal conflict as well as instances of forced displacement in the region.

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Globalisation and South Asian Security : Russia's Approach
by Dr. Vasily V. Mikheev

Globalisation demands that sovereign countries will share their sovereignty with, and will delegate a part of their authority to international institutions. It means that, from a standpoint of a Single World concept, India, as well as Russia or China, or the USA, belongs not only to Indians, or, correspondingly, to Russians, Chinese or Americans, but to all the people of our planet. What else is clear is the fact that the Single World is a goal for the future, a strategic target for mankind. The main problem is: who will rule the Single World?

GLOBALISATION, conceptually, means growing interdependence of the world. In practice, it means that what is going on in one part of the world influences upon the other parts. Originally, globalisation reflected economic integration in the most developed areas of the world as well as worldwide capital flows. Then, the globalisation concept was enriched with political (globalisation of local or ethnic conflicts, or human rights issues) and information-ideological (information flows via Internet) aspects. Being logically developed up to the end, globalisation leads directly to concepts of a Single World Economy, Single World Government and Parliament, a Single World Law-and-Order – i.e., to a Single World that is not divided by state borders or antagonistic political and juridical systems.

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• the economic globalisation concept;
• the political globalisation concept;
• economic globalisation and Asian regionalism;
• Russia's approach to globalisation;
• South Asian security in light of economic and political globalisation.

Economic globalisation

Dissemination (transcending) of interests of

national economic corporations beyond state borders.

• Creation of transnational industrial and financial corporations. Growing economic interdependence of the majority of the countries on the basis of
(1) economic integration and liberalisation,
(2) scientific and technological progress, and
(3) modern information-and-communication revolution that gave the world telecommunications, a supersonic aircraft, a bullet train, PC and the Internet.

• Increasing necessity to accommodate and use material and financial resources of the entire world for solving global social-economic problems.

• Rising above the problems of economic development of individual countries to global levels of importance.

• Growing requirements for coordination, on the global level, of national economic and financial policies and in introducing worldwide unique economic rules to provide for efficient growth of the world economy.

At the end of the 20th century the tendency to economic globalisation enters a critical stage of its development – when none of the world countries can productively develop its economy in isolation from the rest of the world, relying only upon its own forces.

Being carried through to its logical conclusion, the tendency of economic globalisation leads to the idea of a Single World Economy. Political basis for the Single World Economy is a Single World where intercorporation and inter-personal relations substitute intergovernmental relations. And where the Single World government, parliament and juridical system exist. The problem is that, nowadays, the world is not ready to accept such a model of the world order.

Economic globalisation is not just a *tendency* but also, as well, perceived as an *aim*. Making economic globalisation its strategic goal, mankind puts another question – about our *responsibility* of different na-

one of the main contradictions of the modern, post-cold war, epoch.

Diversity of ideas of how to fix this contradiction could be summarised into four main scenarios. *The first one* views creation of the Single World Economy through development of continental economic and monetary unions and continental political confederations, followed by their unification into a Single World. *The second* scenario, supported by the most radical advocates of American values, offers to establish the United States of the World according to the American model and to turn American economic order, American law, currency, etc., into the world order, world law, single world currency and so on. The rest of the world should ignore those countries, which do not accept it. According to the *third* scenario, it is more rational not to anticipate but to focus on further gradual liberalisation of national economies and financial markets, pushing national authorities to present equal rights to local and foreign companies, strengthening international role of the WTO and IMF, etc.

The fourth scenario, shared by the author of this report, and although it seems obvious that all countries should share this responsibility, it is also obvious that the leading powers have to take the major responsibilities. There is also the question of *leadership* in economic globalisation. It seems that the world, in the coming future, will face a *new type of political competition (or even struggle)* – a competition for dominating and creation of a single world economy.

Political globalisation

• *globalisation* of regional and ethnic conflicts, issues of terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, drugs trafficking, etc. – i.e., political globalisation turns these local or regional issues into ones of global concern;

• *gradual unification* of legal and moral norms of social people-to-people relations and relations between people and authorities;

• *information globalisation*

tions for the efficient development of the globalisation-trend, and although it seems obvious that all countries should share this responsibility, it is also obvious that the leading powers have to take the major responsibilities. There is also the question of *leadership* in economic globalisation. It seems that the world, in the coming future, will face a *new type of political competition (or even struggle)* – a competition for dominating and creation of a single world economy.

rity.

Political globalisation opens before international community new opportunities in solving sensitive political disputes. From the standpoint of political globalisation trend, a scheme of solution of such problems could look like the following. International community can sponsor referendum on the future of a disputed territory. Each of three sides – both sides in the conflict and international observers – get equal funding, equal time on TV and radio to explain to the voters what one or another variant of the solution of the problem will mean to them. If confronting sides see perspectives of the world development in light of economic and political globalisation and personification of international relations, it will be easier for them to accept the idea of such a referendum and its results.

Another area where the globalisation concept can help is the problem of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. *India's and Pakistan's* nuclear tests put a question about the credibility of the present international security system based upon the UN, with 5 permanent members of the UN Security Council, and a network of inter-government treaties. The concern became stronger after American and NATO air strikes against Iraq and Yugoslavia, followed by negative reaction from Russia, China, India and some other countries, and by growth of international tension.

A weak point of the present world security system is that both – support of and opposition to sanctions against India and Pakistan or using force against Iraq and Yugoslavia were *politically and not juridically*, i.e. legally, motivated. The logic of the speeding-up globalisation prompts that the world needs new international law-and-order based not only upon inter-government agreements but also upon a *Single World Security Code*. Under such a system,

every nation will know in advance that particular international sanctions and punishing actions will inevitably follow in case if this nation violates laws valid for all. A decision about sanctions and punishment should be made not by one or a few international countries but by a special international court.

Globalisation and regionalism:

Asian open regionalism could contribute to economic globalisation if Asian community is able to find a proper way to solve a few dilemmas the Asian regionalism is facing:

• How to combine efficiently vital economic cooperation with the USA, on the one hand, and inter-Asian integration, on the other;

• How to combine painlessly continuing process of self-identification of Asian nations and the necessity to accept a leading role of Japan in developing Asian economic integration;

• How to engage China and
• What to do with Russia and the CIS?

The latter problem becomes more complicated because of obvious collapse of concept of the *CIS regionalism*. Initially, a CIS integration concept was a closed-regionalism concept aimed in opposing the EU (and NATO) expansion eastwards by integrating economically (and militarily-politically) the former Soviet republics around Russia. However, Russia's failure to build a strong economy and to become a locomotive of the CIS integration made other CIS members look for new approaches to economic regionalism. Now-a-days, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan are looking for closer ties with Western Europe, America and Turkey. Turkmenistan wants more integration with Iran. Maximum what Russia has is Belarus deepening its economic crisis, Tadjikistan, suffering from internal political struggle, and Kazakhstan and Kyrgizia, geopoliti-