

NATO and the world order

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PRAGUE NATO Summit, described as "transformation" summit, was held in the last week of November. NATO Heads of State/Government invited seven former Central and East European countries to begin accession talks to join the Alliance. The summit declared (on 21st November 2002) that the enlargement would "further strengthen NATO to meet the grave threats and profound security challenges of the 21st century...including the threats posed by terrorism and by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery". NATO countries assured Russia that the enlargement should not be perceived as a threat but rather as NATO's determination to protect their population, territory and forces from "any armed attack, including terrorist attack from abroad". In a pre-summit briefing US National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice told the press of the need by NATO, to face the new threats, of a "lighter, more agile and more flexible" force and that "NATO members are working to transform their forces to meet new threats and to increase the ability of our forces to work together". She described Iraq as the "typical and the most important example of the kind of threat NATO will face in the future". In a preview of the Prague Summit

President Bush described the terrorists "bred within failed states and within our own cities" capable of delivering WMD through missiles or terrorist cells and warned that for the terrorists "every free nation is a potential target including the free nations of Europe". Since the threats may come from outside, he said, "NATO must be organized to operate outside of Europe" indeed "wherever it is needed". NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson told a conference in Brussels recently "geography will no longer act as our shield because the current and future security environment does not afford us the luxury of fighting theoretical battles about what is "in and what is out-of-area". American NATO ambassador Nicholas Burns in a speech in Berlin last month revealed, "NATO is already operating well beyond the borders of member states. The old out-of-the-area debate is indeed dead". He reiterated NATO's determination "to act wherever our security and safety of our people demand action, because the virus of insecurity and terrorism is spreading" and this toxic mix of WMD and terrorism has become international and by definition is transnational.

These statements clearly indicate the determination of the "aggrieved" states to violate territorial integrity of the "suspected delinquent" states without clarifying the need for UNSC sanction before

One hopes NATO-Russia Council formed in May would strengthen East-West relations to the betterment of both the worlds and that Putin has irrevocably put Russia in the Western camp, which can provide the Russian people with the sorely needed money and technology for their own advancement. Irish referendum of October on EU enlargement and the November Prague Summit would be good for Europe, which hopefully would continue to play its positive role in the UN

embarking on preemptive military intervention. Sovereignty, as has been understood over the centuries since the Treaty of Westphalia is being shredded at the alter of perceived security threats of a group of countries. Even a hegemonic order is consensual based on support given to it by others. Imperial overstretch by the hegemon will invariably be challenged and will promote further disorder in a world already bedeviled by terrorism whose total elimination is the unanimous promise of the world. Therefore, if the post-Cold War world demands civilized department from the international community then equally the potential "interventionists" should rein in their militaristic urges lest they exceed the bounds of international law. Primacy of the United Nations, which Kofi Annan reminded President Bush lends "unique legitimacy", should be universally respected.

British Prime Minister at the Lord

Mayor's Banquet(on 12th November) described the danger as "extremism driven by fanaticism, personified by either in terrorist groups or rogue states". He spoke of today's terrorists' total disregard for geography, humanity or scale. They are bent upon causing dramatic and devastating outrages and in the process would unhesitatingly court suicide. Tony Blair told his audience of the disappearance of the old Soviet bloc versus NATO adversarial system and in its place today's danger is elusive, capable of striking anywhere, across any national boundary and "in pursuit of a cause with which there can be little or no rational negotiation." He, however, underlined the need to reach out to the Arabs and the Muslims, and the need to "understand the passion and anger the state of Middle East Peace Process arouses", and most importantly the need to put in place the only viable solution -- an Israeli state, recog-

nized by all, and a viable Palestinian state. He gave his government's assurances to help failed or failing states to recover; to create bridges of understanding between religious faiths; and of sense of justice and fairness in dealings with all.

Tony Blair's understanding of the need to reach out to the Arabs and the Muslims; his conclusion relating to the only viable solution of the Middle East quagmire; the theme further expanded in Jack Straw's article on Fundamentalism and Democratic Practice (*Prospect Magazine*-25.10.02) provide renewed assurances to the Muslim world in particular that preemption and exceptionalism would not necessarily be the order of the day and saner elements in the First World could prevail upon the hawkish elements in preventing catastrophe from degenerating into disaster.

But does Tony Blair speak for the First World in the sense that they all share his values? If so, then what

does Bush administration mean when it rejects International Criminal Court by saying "the ICC is an organization whose precepts go against the fundamental American notions of sovereignty, checks and balances, and national independence"? (United States and the International Criminal Court -- John Bolton, Under Secretary of State-14.11.02-Washington D.C). In his rejection Secretary Bolton finds ICC's flaws, both substantive and structural, and its inability "to fit into a coherent international structural 'constitutional' design that delineates clearly how laws are made, adjudicated or enforced, subject to popular accountability and structured to protect liberty". He also sees in ICC's efforts being conflictual with those of UNSC and an attempt to marginalise the global body though UNSC retains the primary responsibility for maintenance of international peace and security. Though Europeans are

completely comfortable with the ICC structure the US finds it "clearly inconsistent with American standard of Constitutionalism". Essentially the American rejection was to be answerable to none but their own system and her refusal to accept the jurisdiction of the ICC to American citizens and American actions.

The object of this enquiry is not to ascertain the reasons behind US' rejection of the ICC but to be reassured of the supremacy of the United Nations in the face of Bush Security Strategy Document which "will be based on a distinctly American internationalism that reflects the union of our values and our national interests". The doctrine of preemption, an integral part of the Security Strategy, has been viewed by an European analyst "as a sign of a permanent break by the United States from the international system or, put more unflatteringly, the assertion of supremacy unburdened by international laws and institutions"(Thomas Valasek- CDI-Brussels-09.10.02). Most Russian political scientists and commentators see the Bush Strategy paper as a declaration of unilateralism and an implicit consent in the theory that anything Bush can do so can Putin. In the milieu of these confusions United Nations and Kofi Annan appear to be missing from the stage. Americans would be hard put to answer as to the locus of the authority under which NATO forces are

operating beyond the NATO borders as Ambassador Burns informed his Berlin audience or how does Lord Robertson speak of NATO's determination to go in hot pursuit anywhere anytime with scant regard for territorial sovereignty of the "invaded" state? Even hegemonic structures presuppose consensual arrangements. Otherwise the moral authority of the hegemon is lessened and the structure is weakened. One cannot but wonder about the subjects on which Bush and Putin disagreed during Bush's visit to Moscow after the Prague summit despite Putin putting up a brave face in view of Russia's erstwhile enemy standing on her doorstep as a result of the induction of the seven new members of NATO. One hopes NATO-Russia Council formed in May would strengthen East-West relations to the betterment of both the worlds and that Putin has irrevocably put Russia in the Western camp, which can provide the Russian people with the sorely needed money and technology for their own advancement. Irish referendum of October on EU enlargement and the November Prague Summit would be good for Europe, which hopefully would continue to play its positive role in the UN such as getting rid of the cancerous growth of automaticity (resolution 1441 of the UNSC).

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Blaming shrimp alone: A gross oversimplification

DR MAHMUDUL KARIM

THE shrimp industry has become a convenient target for environmental critics looking for a scapegoat to blame for the loss and degradation of the world's mangrove forests and the rich and varied vegetation they support. In reality, of course, the issue is much older than Bangladesh's nascent shrimp industry, and much to complicated to be blamed on one lone culprit. While the shrimp industry may be a small part of a large, complex problem, it also holds real promise of a realistic, workable approach to solving that problem.

Let's clarify the situation by answering a few basic questions.

Why are mangrove forests important?

Mangrove forests consist of about 70 species of tropical and subtropical trees and plants that grow at the boundaries of land and salt water. Mangrove forests are important to the estuarine environment for several reasons.

λ They provide shelter and nutrients to commercially important marine shrimp and fish, many of which depend entirely on mangrove estuaries for shelter, nursing and growth in the early stages of their life cycles.

λ They help reduce erosion of riverbanks and the impact of tidal bores, which are frequent along the Bangladesh coast and can result in heavy human and economic losses.

λ They keep the silt load low in rivers, permitting sunlight to easily penetrate the water and leading to increased productivity in rivers and shrimp farms.

Worldwide, mangroves extend over an area of 18 million hectares. The Sundarbans is the world's largest mangrove forest, covering an area of almost 0.6 million hectares in Khulna, Bagerhat and Sakthira districts. The Chakoria mangrove forest in the southeast part of Bangladesh covers a little over 400 hectares.

What are the historical causes of the loss of mangroves?

Despite their economic and ecological importance, mangrove forests have never been afforded the protection they deserve, and 55 to 60 per cent of the world's mangrove resources have been lost to a variety of causes. Growing populations of villagers have cleared large areas of mangrove for agriculture, especially for rice production, as well as for grazing, fuel, construction materials, and wood pulp.

Urban development has also

encroached on mangrove areas. An extensive area of mangroves on the eastern bank of the Pussur River was sacrificed to the construction of Mongla port and its related infrastructure in the 1990s. The logging, oil, and charcoal industries have long had a negative impact on mangrove areas. More recently, tourism has begun to affect mangrove forests. To the extent that this increases the pressure to protect the forests, the effect of tourism will be positive, but it also brings continued pressure to develop these areas for resorts and hotels.

Perhaps the most serious damage began in the mid-sixties, when the Water Development Board began constructing coastal embankments parallel to rivers, claiming over five million hectares of tidal flats with mangrove cover for agricultural production. Nutrient-rich tidal flats that had been ideal nursery grounds for juvenile shrimp, fish and other aquatic organisms were lost as a result. Only narrow strips of mangroves outside the embankments remain as useful nursery grounds. Moreover, the embankments no longer allow high tide waters to inundate extensive, low-lying areas, which are now, as a result, inaccessible to the wild shrimp, fish and other aquatic organisms that once thrived there. Thus, the former wide, shallow, sheltered, mangrove and nutrient rich nursery areas have been constricted into narrow, deep, silt-loaded, impoverished river basins. The situation negatively affects the quantity, quality, and bio-diversity of shrimp, fish and other coastal fauna and flora.

Another major but seldom publicly acknowledged cause of the ongoing degradation of Bangladesh's mangrove forests is the lack of law and order and of effective government intervention. "Extra-legal groups" control much of the "protected" Sundarbans, and the unauthorised removal of mangrove trees and other products from the park is frequently reported. Land continues to be taken away from farmers practicing old, environmentally sound agricultural techniques and illegally filled in for residential and industrial developments.

How does shrimp farming affect mangroves?

Shrimp farming in fact accounts for not more than 5 per cent of the total loss of mangroves globally. According to a recent study by the World-Wide Fund for Nature, "the extent of mangrove destruction world-wide resulting from shrimp farming is only a tiny fraction of the loss to date." Even if one assumes that all

the world's shrimp farming areas (1.37 million hectares in 1996 are on converted mangrove lands, this amounts to only 7.6 per cent of current mangrove resources, and less than 5 per cent of historic resources.

In the early seventies, brackish water shrimp farming began to be practiced in areas enclosed by the BWDB embankments in southwestern and southeastern Bangladesh. In the latter part of the 1970s, the Chakoria forest in Cox's Bazar district was partially deforested to make way for shrimp farms, and even in the protected Sundarbans shrimp farming is now occurring.

What can government do to ensure that mangroves are protected?

λ **The government should only allow individuals who possess the internationally recognised Seal of Quality to participate in the shrimp industry.**

Steps taken by the world community to conserve mangrove resources worldwide must be practiced in Bangladesh. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation has developed an International Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, including aquaculture activities. In 1997, the Global Aquaculture Alliance (GAA) commissioned an international

study by leading mangrove experts which resulted in the recommendation of six management practices, forming the GAA's Codes of Practice for Responsible Shrimp Farming. The GAA's Responsible Aquaculture Programme is based on quantitative and qualitative standards and third-party certification. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) is also developing rudimentary codes of conduct for good shrimp hatchery, farming and processing practices. Producers and the processors who distribute aquaculture products in compliance with these standards are eligible to receive a Seal of Quality endorsement that considerably enhances the attractiveness of their products to world markets.

As these codes come into being, international buyers will only purchase shrimp from countries and companies that meet these international certifications standards. In the environmental area, the codes being developed call for a Total Ban on shrimp farming in mangrove areas. In the human rights and labour area, they call for farmers to have full ownership and title to their lands. The Agro-based Industries and Technology Development Project (ATDP-II) has developed a Seal of Quality Programme to certify hatcheries, farms and processing plants in Bangladesh. Only

farmers and entrepreneurs who can meet the minimum standards being developed are eligible to participate in this Seal of Quality Programme. In addition, ATDP-II is arranging for third party certification of the Seal of Quality Programme by an organization such as the GAA or the WWF. This will insure that there is no cheating or corruption of the certification programme.

The Programme will also ensure that Bangladesh can continue to sell its shrimp in international markets in the future. Failure to establish an effective, privately run Seal of Quality Programme would mean that eventually Bangladeshi entrepreneurs would be unable to sell their shrimp because international buyers will refuse to deal with countries whose shrimp do not meet international standards. One important role of government in a privately run Seal of Quality Programme is to enact legislation that would allow only members of the Programme to participate in the production, processing and sale of shrimp internationally. The threat of being banned from selling shrimp is enough to ensure that no one will be allowed to farm in mangrove areas.

In addition, by supporting the Seal of Quality Programme, the government reduces its expense and earns more revenue. Since the Programme is funded and operated

by the private sector with outside third party certification, it costs the government nothing. In fact, it saves money currently spent on an ineffective government-operated quality assurance programme that lacks credibility with international buyers and has led to repeated threats of a ban by the EU or the US in the past year alone.

Finally, if the Seal of Quality Programme is successful, Bangladesh could go from being a questionable source of shrimp to a world leader in guaranteeing buyers and consumers hygienic, disease-free shrimp raised in an environmentally sound manner, with full respect for the human rights of the industry's workers. Such a reputation would ensure Bangladesh a premium price for its shrimp in the international market.

λ **The Ministry of Land, Department of Fisheries and other government agencies that control the leasing of land should not lease land within mangroves to any person for the purpose of shrimp farming.**

Shrimp farming on land, either privately owned or belonging to the public sector, taken on long-term lease should be encouraged. Investors are more willing to put money into improving land they have complete control over rather than being subjected to short-term

leasing conditions. Such a policy would also eliminate the lack of transparency that has hampered the government's leasing programme.

λ **Government needs to maintain law and order.**

The illegal activities of "extra-legal groups" and gangs in the Sundarbans who remove trees and other products from the park and take land from farmers must end.

What can the shrimp industry do to ensure that mangroves are protected?

λ **The six management practices for shrimp farming in mangrove areas recommended by international mangrove experts must be put into effect in Bangladesh.**

These practices are central to the GAA's Code of Practice for Responsible Shrimp Farming, based on quantitative and qualitative standards and third-party certification. Producers and processors who distribute aquaculture products in compliance with these standards are eligible to receive a Seal of Quality endorsement that enhances the attractiveness of their products to world markets.

That farmers have taken a lead in adopting these practices, and Bangladesh's shrimp farmers have already benefited from studying

their conservation efforts. Thai farmers are replenishing areas of mangroves between farms and adjoining rivers and they are growing mangrove plants along the intake and outlet canals on their farms.

Farmers are also shifting from inter-tidal mangrove areas to supratidal, non-mangrove areas and learning how to acclimatise and culture marine shrimp in fresh water. These closed-system farming practices protect shrimp from pathogenic infections that are brought by saline tidal waters.

Progressive Bangladeshi shrimp farmers and traders from Bagerhat who observed these Thai conservation efforts have organised fellow farmers to plant more than five thousand mangrove seedlings procured from the Forest Department, in Rampal in Bagerhat district. They are also planning to culture marine Bagda shrimp in closed environments to avoid diseases prevalent in areas of open brackish water. These farmers know that they need to follow the Code of Practice required to protect coastal mangroves in their own, as well as national, interests.

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