

When one hundred percent support is not enough

DR. FAKHRUDDIN AHMED
writes from America

"ISRAEL has not had a better friend than the President."

This is what every Israeli Prime Minister has been saying about every American President for the last twenty-five years. It has never been truer than now. The cornerstone of President George W. Bush's reelection strategy is not to make the same mistakes his father did. Swimming in 90 per cent approval rating after the 1991 Gulf War, the senior Bush believed that he was strong enough to take on the Israeli lobby. Wrong! Jews of every stripe, Republicans and Democrats alike, forgot their party affiliations, ganged up on senior Bush, and made sure of Bill Clinton's victory in the Presidential election of 1992.

Immensely popular in the aftermath of his post-September 11 war on terror, President George W. Bush faced a similar moment in March of this year, when Ariel Sharon's army invaded the Palestinian territories. Bush asked Sharon to withdraw "now," adding, "now means now!" Sharon completely ignored the American President and continued his mad rampage. Instead of standing up to Sharon, like Bush's father did to Yitzhak Shamir at an identical juncture in 1991, the junior Bush did exactly the opposite. Apparently, Bush's Middle East policy since then has been to tell Sharon, "Suppose, you tell me what I should say and do, Ariel!" Sharon has enjoyed carte blanche ever since and has used it to his brutal best. Notwithstanding Israel's atrocities, the only time the Bush White House's Jewish spokesman Ariel Fleischer gets riled up about the events in the Middle East is when the Palestinians do

something. Now, could President Bush stand up to the Israeli lobby and keep his job? Absolutely not! They would replace him someone even more than 100 per cent supportive of Israel.

While the whole world knows that the Palestinians are the victims of Israeli aggression of over 50 years, in the American media, the Israelis portray themselves as the victims. The forcible founding of Israel by the expulsion of the local Arabs has been whitewashed as legitimate. Criticism of Israel has been equated with anti-Semitism, a label that is career-threatening for ordinary Americans. The only topic that is allowed for discussion is: "why are these Palestinian terrorists such savages?"

Ever wonder why Palestinian children blow themselves up? No, not because they are savages, nor because they seek the pleasure of instant martyrdom. They know and see what is happening on the ground, and see no hope for the future. Israel has not only been expelling Palestinians from their homeland since 1948, they are slowly but surely grabbing the rest of Palestine and Gaza through settlement building. When the so-called Oslo peace process started in 1993, there were 96,000 Israeli settlers on the West Bank and Gaza. Today, there are 250,000! Yet, it is the Palestinians who are accused of negotiating in bad faith. What do the American Administration and Jewish savants like The New York Times' Tom Friedman have to say about this? "Freeze the settlement building," they would occasionally utter, which Israel always contemptuously disregards. Asking to "freeze" settlement building is like telling a serial killer that if only he would stop, all would be forgiven!

LETTER FROM AMERICA

Patriotic Muslim Americans will support President Bush's war on Iraq if he truly believes that Saddam is dangerous, and that it is in America's interest to do so, even if they do not agree with his assessment. When it becomes clear, however, that the war is primarily designed to benefit Israel, as the conservative Jewish columnist Bob Novak said on "Meet the Press" on December 8, and is Deputy Defense Secretary Dr. Paul Wolfowitz's gift to fellow Jews of Israel, it becomes harder to do so.

What is needed is settlement dismantling. Of course, for that Israel has to be serious about peace, which they are not. All Israel wants the Palestinians to do is act like gentlemen as Israel steals their remaining lands, thus alter facts on the ground irreversibly as America looks the other way, and then go on dismantling Islam's third holiest shrine, the Al Aqsa mosque, and the Dome of the Rock to make room for the lost Jewish temple on the site they current stand. Do they not realize that that will mean World War III?

If you believe that Israelis are serious about peace, ponder over this. In February of this year, Yasser Arafat, in a *New York Times* article, offered his vision of peace, which called for Israel to withdraw to the pre-1967 line. Sharon did not even bother to comment on the plan. Then in June, Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Abdallah floated his plan, which offered Israel recognition by all 22 Arab League states, if they would withdraw to the pre-1967 border. In a subsequent meeting of the Arab League in Lebanon, the Saudi Plan was endorsed unanimously. Israel said that they could not accept the plan. Why does not

President Bush ask Israel for its own peace plan? Because, they do not have one. The only thing that Sharon would say about a Palestinian state is that it must be demilitarized, and its land, water, sea, air space and immigration will be controlled by Israel. How could the Palestinians handle such enormous sovereignty?

To protect its own sovereignty, Israel has decided to rely on overwhelming military force, rather than diplomacy and peace. That is why Israel, through the courtesy of America, wants to make absolutely certain that its Muslim adversaries in the region, such as Iraq, Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan among others, are either disarmed or prevented from acquiring "weapons of mass destruction," which Israel has a huge stockpile of.

The day Oslo was signed by Israel's Labour Party, the rightwing Prince Abdallah floated his plan, which offered Israel recognition by all 22 Arab League states, if they would withdraw to the pre-1967 border. In a subsequent meeting of the Arab League in Lebanon, the Saudi Plan was endorsed unanimously. Israel said that they could not accept the plan. Why does not

Arabs in Hebron's Ibrahimi Mosque as they were performing the Fajr prayer during the holy month of Ramadan. When the writer visited the mosque in 1996, bullet marks could still be seen all over the mosque. Does anyone remember when the suicide bombings began in Palestine? It was AFTER Baruch Goldstein massacred the 29 Muslims at prayers. Of course, the Jewish extremists were not quite done. In November of 1995, Jewish

militant Yigal Amir assassinated the "traitor," Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, for attempting to make peace with the Palestinians. As far as the writer knows, no Palestinians ever attempted to assassinate Yasser Arafat for making peace with the Israelis. Therefore, which party is more peace-prone, Israelis or the Palestinians? Before answering, consider this: in the national election of May 1996 following the assassination of Prime Minister

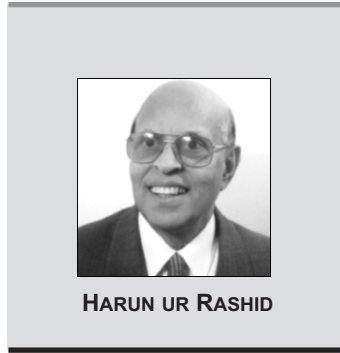
Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli public defeated the other architect of Oslo, Nobel Peace Prize winner Shimon Peres, and elected the enemy of Oslo, Benjamin Netanyahu!

From day one, Netanyahu's strategy for dismantling Oslo was two-fold. First, accelerate settlement building "to alter facts on the ground." Second, for every act of Palestinian resistance, blame Yasser Arafat "personally," even though Netanyahu knew that through such acts the opponents of the peace process were attempting to dismantle Oslo, just as he was! "Yasser Arafat gave the green light," became Netanyahu's oft-repeated mantra, a chant that has now been adopted by his soul mate, Ariel Sharon. So, as Ariel Sharon steals more Palestinian lands, builds more illegal Jewish settlements, demolishes more Palestinian houses, assassinate more Palestinian activists, the only thing the Americans are allowed to discuss in the media is how awful these Palestinians are! What is more frightening is

that instead of attempting to modify Israel's illegal propensities, Bush's America is adopting some of the same tactics itself. The recent missile-killing of alleged terrorists in Yemen, and the recent Bush decree allowing the CIA to kill most wanted terrorists abroad, are cases in point.

Israel lost its credibility with the non-American world long time ago. If America continues to ignore Israeli intransigence, while taking to task Israel's enemies for exhibiting similar tendencies, it risks the same. Patriotic Muslim Americans will support President Bush's war on Iraq if he truly believes that Saddam is dangerous, and that it is in America's interest to do so, even if they do not agree with his assessment. When it becomes clear, however, that the war is primarily designed to benefit Israel, as the conservative Jewish columnist Bob Novak said on "Meet the Press" on December 8, and is Deputy Defense Secretary Dr. Paul Wolfowitz's gift to fellow Jews of Israel, it becomes harder to do so.

EU snubs Turkey's entry bid



HARUN UR RASHID

reforms to be carried out by Turkey do not meet the EU's requirement, it may further delay Turkey's entry into the EU.

The EU leaders maintain that Turkey needs to reform its institutions such as army, police and judiciary. Its human rights records require vast improvement. Although Turkey has been committed to undertake the appropriate reforms under the new government, the EU wants its implementation on the ground. Many observers believe

Jacques Chirac was reported to have said: "It's not enough to respect European law, you also have to be polite and civilised".

Another fact is that the issue of possible Turkish EU membership arouses deep passions across European nations with many people concerned about letting a mainly Muslim country with a rapidly growing population into the predominantly "Christian" EU Club with countries of extremely low birth-rates. Although Britain, Spain and

succeed because of reportedly negative attitude of the Turkish Cypriot Leader Rauf Denkash who was believed to be undergoing medical treatment in Turkey. Many observers saw that Turkey might have a "secret hand" in foiling the talks.

Turkey made its first application in 1961 and was offered the prospect of membership of the EU in 1963 when the Cold War was at its height. When the Berlin Wall came down in 1989, Turkey's strategic and geo-political strength appeared to be of little interest to Europe. Europe's loyalty first goes to the countries of Eastern Europe and a host of former communist states leaptfrogged to the front of the queue and left Turkey in a cold.

Conclusion

Turkey is a member of the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) and its strategic location is important. The Western powers specially the US needs Turkey for its implementation of policy in the Middle East. Turkey has maintained diplomatic relations with Israel and concluded a few defence arrangements with it. This is a plus point for Turkey. Furthermore the new Turkish government, although tinged with Islamic principles, declared its scrupulous adherence to secularism and pro-European policies.

The Bush administration which had been eager for Turkey's early acceptance reacted cautiously to the delay of Turkey's entry talks. Although Turkey was severely disappointed, it took the decision in a positive light. Mr. Erdogan's aide reportedly suggested that Turkey's candidacy would be considered in December 2004 and hopefully the entry talks would start in July 2005. However, cynics wonder whether the EU would ever give the nod to the Muslim Turkey to a "Christian Club".

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BOTTOM LINE

The Bush administration which had been eager for Turkey's early acceptance reacted cautiously to the delay of Turkey's entry talks. Although Turkey was severely disappointed, it took the decision in a positive light. Mr. Erdogan's aide reportedly suggested that Turkey's candidacy would be considered in December 2004 and hopefully the entry talks would start in July 2005. However, cynics wonder whether the EU would ever give the nod to the Muslim Turkey to a "Christian Club".

that the human rights record in Turkey is a delicate question on which the EU may conveniently cite as a ground for delay its entry into its fold in the future.

Why is the delay for Turkey's entry?

A few political observers believe that the political pressure exerted by the US on the EU may have been counter-productive because the EU does not like to be pressurised by any third power. In particular Germany and France reportedly did not appreciate heavy-handed tactics and opposed to entry talks with Turkey next year. French President

Italy supported Turkey's early entry talks, the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden were reportedly reticent about giving a date.

Furthermore Turkey wanted entry talks early before Cyprus was admitted as a member in 2004. Turkish leader Tayyip Erdogan's visit to the member-states of the EU did not help, rather it was viewed by some member-states as a "black mail" campaign to its entry. Cyprus remains divided between Greek and Turkish Cypriots for the last 28 years and the UN's attempt to reconcile the differences between the two sides failed prior to the Denmark Summit. In fact the UN talks did not

Of local governance and related issues

MANZURUL MANNAN

THIS is about an ardent work by two sociologists who have been researching on the subject of the governance in both formal and informal sectors in Bangladesh for many years. The prolific book on local governance and community capacity rekindles a discussion with a fresh perspective. It is a study of differences to offer an alternative paradigm from the conventional and institutional understanding on the local government and governance as it tries to capture the community dynamics on governance. The paradigm is termed as "democratic graduation" to capture triangular political, developmental and conceptual relationships. To understand the paradigm, one has to meaningfully project the democratic graduation against both governmental and market oriented model of local government. To justify the paradigm, the authors have chosen a middle discourse, which is located between philosophical, i.e. human at the center of development and instrumental, i.e., the purposive explanation by state planners.

The book focuses on empirical examples to define realities. However, authors are quite aware of the challenge as to how to relate empirical reality to academic discourse for developing understanding to have a meaningful action. By that, authors

have carefully reviewed different theoretical discourses only to offer an analytical framework to analyze the reality and substance. The analytical framework is triangulated by agency, governance space and institution of sociology to construct relationship between state and society. The application of analytical framework allows readers to browse

BOOK REVIEW: Local Governance and Community Capacities: Search for new Frontiers by Hossain Zillur Rahman and S Aminul Islam. University Press Limited, Dhaka.

into an uncharted territory of local governance; especially it allows readers to develop an insight into the problematic interface between formal institution like Union Parishad and informal intuition like *Shalish*. The interesting aspect of the book is that it not only shows how local government has its regulatory functions over its citizens through its dysfunctional structure, but also how the citizens and subjects function beyond the government's regulatory functions.

The book brings an insight into state-society relationship on two levels. In the first place, it shows the historically designed state structures and its institutional arrangements (Magistracy and Police) that Bangladesh has inherited which generate structural instability in society. This structural instability is perhaps the result of friction

between the political functions of the state and the development functions of the state. In the second place, the nature of the society-state interface tends to produce structural stability through conflict resolution mechanism at local levels. The stability is possible because the state paradoxically provides space for informal governance wherein the

state is either absent or functionally inattentive.

The study offers at least three interesting results on moral imperatives against the dominant belief among educated class and scholars that the villagers and poor persons cannot organize themselves without outside and state interventions. First, the community has the tremendous capacity to organize spontaneously, especially at the advent of crises. Secondly, such organization is possible because the community has a social capital, that is, a trust building mechanism. Lastly, people do have political capital in the sense that they are socially mobilized during elections. It appears that the problem of democratic graduation in Bangladesh is not much of the development of democratic institution at grassroots level, but "there is a fundamental

absence of 'champions', i.e. organized actors who can or care to drive the local government agenda as a consistent strategic goal." It seems that the authors have come to their inferences after studying examples from three sources: a rich repository of case stories, *Shalish* and finally, comparing their findings with existing literatures. In discovering a pattern or a new frontier of the local governance, the authors have followed a mixed methodology to understand the human action and the social world of men and women it creates. In doing so, they have adopted a principle of polarity like positivism versus phenomenology (anti-positivism), survey versus participation. In real field exercise, the findings are the blend of information and data generated through quantitative and qualitative methods, which are processed through a heuristic analytical framework as indicated above.

It is because of new approach, the book itself opens scopes for future study. The book is useful in challenging and raising questions on local governance and community reality: it throws light on how we know what the real dynamics is about the truth in rural life in the changing context of time and society.

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