

Terrorists don't need states



STEPPING away from the partisan screaming going on these days, the 9/11 commission hearings and -- far more revealing -- the panel's staff reports paint a fascinating picture of the rise of a new phenomenon in global politics: terrorism that is not state-sponsored but society-sponsored. Few in the American government fully grasped that a group of people without a state's support could pose a mortal threat. The mistake looks obvious in hindsight, but was, sadly, understandable at the time of 9/11. What is less understandable is that this same error persists even today.

Before the mid-1990s, almost all terrorism against the United States had been backed by a state. The Soviet Union had financed and trained terror groups around the world. Syria, Iran, Iraq and Libya had all sponsored terrorism. The most dramatic attacks on Americans -- the Beirut Marine-barracks bombing in 1983, and Pan Am 103 in 1988 -- had both been encouraged if not planned by governments. Even Saudi Hizbullah, the group that bombed

Khobar Towers, the American barracks in Saudi Arabia, got support from Iran.

Around 1997, members of the intelligence community -- and others, like Richard Clarke -- began focusing on a Saudi man, Osama bin Laden, who they realized was the financier and leader of a new group, al Qaeda. Few in government shared their concern. In 1997 al Qaeda was not confirmed to have executed a single terrorist not see al Qaeda as an urgent threat. They held few meetings on it and in other ways were inattentive to it. One example from the panel's report: the senior Pentagon official responsible for counterterrorism is the assistant secretary for special operations and low-intensity conflict. Even by September 11, 2001, no one had been appointed to that post.

The Bush administration came to office with different concerns. 1980s. We have kept many governments on the list of state sponsors for political reasons. The reality is that the terror we face is mostly unconnected to states." Today's terrorists are harbored in countries like Spain and Germany -- entirely unintentionally. They draw on support not from states but private individuals -- Saudi millionaires, Egyptian radicals, Yemenite preachers.

Afghanistan housed al Qaeda, and thus it was crucial to attack the country. But that was less a case of a state's sponsoring a terror group and more one of a terror group's sponsoring a state. Consider the situation today. Al Qaeda has lost its base in Afghanistan, two thirds of its leaders have been captured or killed, its funds are being frozen. And yet terror attacks mount from Indonesia to Casablanca to Spain. "These attacks are not being directed by al Qaeda. They are being inspired by it," the official told me. "I'm not even sure it makes sense to speak of al Qaeda because it conveys the image of a single, if decentralized, group. In fact, these are all different, local groups that have in common only ideology and enemies."

This is the new face of terror: dozens of local groups across the world connected by a global ideology. Next week I will explain how best to tackle this threat. But first we need to see it for what it is.

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A date with the British ICS

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THE British ICS officers who served the government of East Bengal had left our shores long before Bangladesh was born. Now, far removed from national psyche though, these officers of the "steel frame" fame were obviously part of our country's history, and merit a recall. The images -- individually or collectively -- of the expatriate civil servants were indeed engaging, well beyond the switch to a new bureaucratic order. These officers who were in the top echelons in the Government include Mr. Hatch Barnwell, Mr.D.K.Power, Mr.H.G.S.Bivar and Mr.J.S.Treanor. (The accompanying photograph shows Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth during her visit to Chittagong. Mr.Azam Khan, Governor of East Pakistan and Mr DK Power, Commissioner, Chittagong Division are also seen).

Rightly, as mentioned by Megasthenes in his column, Mr. Hatch Barnwell was conspicuous for cycling to the secretariat from his Minto Road residence. More to it, on alighting from cycle, he would throw his brown felt hat flying to his orderly standing by to catch it. It was a playful sight which I chanced to see on a number of occasions. In the cycling league, I remember, the other two Britishers were Miss AG Stock and Mr. J.S .Turner, both of whom were professors in the University of Dhaka. Life was then tranquil in Dhaka and roads were not cluttered with traffic at all as now. Neatly landscaped, Ramna area with its tree-lined roads and sparse population lent a quiet charm in its exclusiveness. Into the fifties, -- those were another days, another times, lost in memories. Its skyline has now changed beyond recognition, so also the pace of life. But the changes are obviously the price we pay to suit our ambition in urban renewal.

In his capacity as Transport Commissioner, Mr. Treanor made a noteworthy comment in a file that was put up before him after a year. (This was told to me by Mr. Saifuddin Khan PSP who was then a senior official in the same department of Mr. Treanor). He wrote, "This file celebrated its first anniversary unnoticed". This bureaucratess in its brevity indeed meant much more than what meets the eye. It sparked in wry humor and sarcasm, and was, in a way, censorious of those who were responsible for the sornier fate of the file. It was all a touch of Britishness.

Surprisingly, much to our consternation, we, even after decades of independence, find our bureaucrats still smarting from the same old colonial mindset in dealing with the files. The cavalier attitude to the citizens surely undermines the moral dictates of a good government and even diminishes us all.

Mr. Bivar's tenure as Secretary, Judicial and Legislative Department had a touch of bureaucratic maturity par excellence. In those days when the country had to be



Science and technology: What others are doing

AHMAD ISLAM

OF relevance in this connection is the Indian plan, adopted over 22 years ago to build up excellent laboratories in all disciplines of science and technology including those in biotechnology. The author had the opportunity to visit a relatively new molecular biology lab in Hyderabad, India. There he met one well-known Indian scientist, specializing in biotechnology of reptiles. When the author asked him about his previous experience, he said that prior to his joining the Institute, he had worked in the Department of Genetics, Edinburgh University for 14 years. When the author asked him what made him decide to quit such a good research position in one of the most prestigious Universities in the U.K., he replied in a very self-contented manner, "Why should I not come back to my own country when I found the facilities in the UK and India the same? Difference of salary does not matter because here I have the satisfaction of serving my country and on a problem directly related to the benefit of India." If Bangladesh build up state of the art laboratories, backed up by ancillary facilities, then the majority of the country's scientists, now working in different parts of the world would come back. After all, none wants to leave the country for good, unless he is forced to do so in order to further his research interest and

career.

Pakistan's move to create centers of excellence: Some Islamic countries have already taken innovative steps to establish centers of excellence in their countries. For instance, the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan has recently launched a "Strategic Vision and Planning program." Under this program, the Pakistan Government is recruiting 3000 expatriates of outstanding caliber in various fields of science and technology. They are

Rahman, whose vision and dedication made it possible to the creation and running of the above Institute is now the Minister of Education of that country and the above ambitious plan would surely materialize under his dynamic leadership. In order for Bangladesh to reap the benefit of S&T towards economic progress of the country, a similar move needs to be launched beginning with a master plan taking into consideration of urgent needs of the country. In this connection, the

ity in NIB.

The Advanced Technology Program (ATP) in the USA: It will be a good idea for GoB to consider adopting ATP program similar to that now in operation in the USA. According to this program the Government shares the cost of developing high-risk but powerful new technologies encompassing a broad spectrum of potential new applications, commercial products, and services. If the principle of this program is approved, GoB may invest money in industry-proposed projects in order to develop technologies that will pay economic dividends to the nation in the long run. Through cooperative agreements with individual companies or groups of companies, large and small, the ATP invests in industry-proposed projects to develop technologies aimed at improving industrial performance, thereby paying economic dividends to the nation. While selecting the proposals for financial support, GoB needs to be neutral free of political influence. The criteria of assessment of projects should be subject to a rigorously competitive process, based not only on their merits but also business plans.

Examples of India and Pakistan have been given to show that our neighbors have much greater profile of Science and Technology than we do. Nehru catalyzed the pre-eminence of science in India's national culture with the help of his friend Homi Bhaba. Indira Gandhi nurtured this tradition and the Governments that followed have maintained this culture contributing to promotion and development of science and technology concomitant with the building up of infrastructure. In Pakistan, scientists such as Late Abdus Salam, Late Selimuzzaman and now Dr. Abdul Qadir Khan and Professor Atta-ur-Rahman are playing pivotal role in pushing the country forward...

being offered good salaries and facility comparable to what they are enjoying at present in the country where they are currently employed. The best proof that the near future will witness the establishment of such state of the art institutes in Pakistan is HEJ an institute which is known throughout the world for its excellence in chemistry of natural products. The same architect, Professor Atta-ur-effort by GoB in early seventy's is worth mentioning. The author was an expatriate in East Africa. He received a questionnaire from the Foreign Ministry - questions ranging from his qualifications, his future plan and the salary he would expect in case he is offered a job in Bangladesh. Unfortunately, the plan was dropped presumably in the face of opposition from local high officials who became envious about the high salary and privileges that were promised to would-be expatriate recruits.

Bangladesh Academy of Sciences (BAS): In most of the countries, Academy of Sciences play a very important role in the formulation of S&T policies of the country. Although BAS exists, its role has been so far been passive. Its activity is crippled due to financial constraints. It has a skeleton staff to run its office. It does not have any transport of its own. The result is that it cannot discharge its responsibilities to the full.

A recent example will illustrate this point. The USDA has been requesting BAS to provide them with a copy of their constitution or any other legal document, pertaining to its establishment in order for them to create an ENDOWMENT to support agricultural research. Two reminders have come from the USDA within the last four weeks and still it is pending.

The rules of admission of fellows into the BAS should be changed. Into its fold there should be more and more active fairly young scientists elected from both home and ABROAD. Meetings on important issues should be arranged between expatriate fellows, GoB officials and local fellows through video conferencing. This technique is the order of the day and there is no reason why this cannot be employed by BAS. In fact, BRAC University has successfully tried this multimedia in its campus. Adequate funds need to be provided to BAS to make it a vital organ of the country for mutual benefits of both the sides. BRAC University's VC should be the right person to spearhead such a facil-

run with laws made by the British rulers it, at times, were at odds and even inadequate to meet the changed requirements of an independent country. Mentionably, Sher-e-Bangla A.K.Fazlul Huq who was then Advocate General to the Gove-nment of East Bengal was of much help in this regard to Mr. Bivar whenever he sought his advice. As old acquaintance of Calcutta days, their personal equation too was excellent.

Mr. D.K. Power held many top posts in the then government. As Secretary, Finance he was considered to be the kingpin in the administration in those days. In personal term, Mr. Power, however, had a brush with history when he married Jaharat Ara, the heroine of the first-ever Bengali feature film, Mukh-o-Mukhosh produced in Dhaka. This film was premiered at Mukul cinema hall on Nawabpur Road in Dhaka city.

Beyond normal call of duty, the British ICS officers had to do pieces about the stations they served

during their service career. To mention, it is the District Gazetteer of the British days that informed me that the cheese made in Austogram in Mymensingh district used to grace as a delicacy the tables of the Governor's House at Calcutta during Christmas festivities.

We may, however, denounce the British ICS officers as the legatees of

the British raj, but it would be less than fair to ignore their contribution to building our nascent administrative structure in the post-independence period.

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