

Globalisation and global challenges

A.K.N. AHMED

AFTER almost uncontested sway over the minds of political leaders and mainstream economists in the developed worlds for more than three decades, globalisation is now descending from its lofty heights. This is happening due to persistent resistance of increasing number of people in both developed and developing countries, and on clear evidence of the fact that the benefits of globalisation have not been globalised. The world is starting to feel the full impact of globalisation - the whirlwind of trade, investment, and technical change that can build up an economy overnight and bring it low just as quickly both in the developing and the developed world.

This realisation is prompting all concerned, including US leaders, to think anew about globalisation and find out the challenges faced by this process. Globalisation, in short, offers four main challenges. They are:

λ To ensure that its fruits extend to all. Most forecasts say economic growth in the developed world will slow and the expanding markets in developing countries are needed to ensure that living standards keep rising. Four billion people exist on less than \$1,500.00 a year. Globalisation can lift them from poverty and turn them into customers.

λ To calm the fear that growth is destabilising. The Asian crisis, threat-

The challenges now faced by globalisation are among the most difficult facing our world today and are straining the abilities of governments to confront them independently. The overriding facts are, we cannot hide from globalisation, and global problems can be solved only by global co-operation. A meeting may not solve all problems, but collective action can be a first step in generating the confidence needed to do so.

ening some of the most formidable economic competitors in the world, amplifies the fear of globalisation. Still the cost of being left behind by globalisation is usually much greater than the potential for instability.

λ To assure wealthier nations that international competition will not start a race to the bottom. Polls now show that more and more people are blaming globalised trade and investment for economic upheavals in established economies like the US. But there is concrete evidence that stagnant wages in the US and unemployment in Europe have other causes.

λ To address the problems that are complicated by extended trade, investment, technology and communication. The ability to confront problems like environmental degradation, disease, crime, and terrorism will depend on increasing global co-operation.

Undoubtedly, globalisation of trade and investment has weakened the governments and has made life less predictable for individuals who

feel skeptical about fair distribution of its benefits quite justifiably. But those shortcomings can be mended by willing co-operation of all governments -- large or small, poor or rich -- and not by drifting from each other. With larger governments in every country now envisaged, it will be the duty of all governments to join hands together to solve their collective global problems in every sphere of life. In order for this to happen, individuals have to be aware of their duties and have to struggle to acquire countervailing power by using the strong forces of globalisation in order to keep their governments on the right track and prevent them from being monopolised by vested interests at present.

As an important first step in addressing the challenges of globalisation it is therefore proposed that a meeting of group of world leaders from the old industrial countries, emerging economic powers, and those countries facing marginalisation be convened as early as possible. Existing international groupings are inadequate.

The G7 of leading international nations is too narrow in membership. The World Bank and IMF are too focused on finance and too busy to do the errands of the US and the big industrial nations in Europe. Maybe SAARC countries may come in forefront and take the initiative in the matter and project a bold image of itself.

Unlike G7, the meeting should include countries representing all regions and levels of development. A group of about two dozen leaders would be big enough to allow broad participation, but small enough for all to have a say. Participating governments would decide the agenda. Better still, a committee of wise men and women chosen by these governments suggest an agenda covering the challenges of globalisation. It is also essential that this conference will have enough women, since women's rights are now closely linked with globalisation.

A word of caution may perhaps be in order in this respect. While drawing up an agreed agenda, particular consideration should be

given at the outset to developing countries concerns over the efforts of integration of their economies into the existing asymmetrical global economy and to put the free movement of capital at the centre of the development paradigm. They feel very strongly that the neo-liberal economic framework underlying structural adjustment programmes overlooks the disastrous effects on their economies. This perception is particularly strong in Africa where a New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) has recently been launched. They want to be reassured that past prescriptions will not be presented to them in a different package. Furthermore, the committee has also to explore and find out how greater predictability in donor assistance, increased resource flows, minimum conditionalities and acceptance of mutual accountability between donors and recipients through the establishment of an external partner's performance review can be ensured. Without resolving these issues the proposed exercise may be non-starter.

The end of a love affair: Bush dumps Chalabi

RON CHEPESIUK

THE move was not exactly what the Bush administration means when it boasted of unleashing "shock and awe" in Iraq. Still, it had the same effect. On May 20 at 11 a.m., Iraq police and what the press described as their "USA advisers" raided the compound of Ahmad Chalabi, a prominent Iraqi whom, just a few weeks ago, many in the Bush administration viewed as a major player in its plans for Iraq.

With guns drawn, the authorities took computer files, broke a family photo of their target, and allegedly stole his Koran. Remarkably, it was just last January that Chalabi had sat behind Laura Bush while husband George gave his State of the Union speech. "I told them to get out," a furious Chalabi told the press. "We are slaves under (American) orders."

The latest surprise in the surreal saga of post-war Iraq can only be

INSIDE AMERICA

The Chalabi fiasco is another graphic example illustrating the Bush administration's tragic flaw. In these dangerous times, we have a government that has an ineffective, even destructive management style, and which prefers to isolate itself from differing opinions on issues. There were plenty of sources in the CIA and State Department who distrusted Chalabi and warned the Bush administration policy makers to be cautious in dealing with him. But given the ideological agenda of the neo-conservative clique running the White House, their admonitions were ignored or downplayed.

viewed as another blow to the credibility and competence of the Bush administration. I say 'campaign' because 'policy' is too inaccurate a term to describe what the Bush administration is doing to that country. According to press reports, the U.S. accused Chalabi of passing on sensitive intelligence information to Uncle Sam's mortal

enemy, Iran. Remarkably, it was just a few weeks ago that the U.S. was still using

American tax payer money to pay Chalabi and his Iraqi National Congress party (INC) \$340,000 a month for whatever services, if any, they were rendering for our country.

But Patrick Lang, former director of the US Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), told the Newsday newspaper in New York City that colleagues in U.S. intelligence community, had told him that INC was, in fact, working for Iranian intelligence, and supplying them with information it got from its U.S. benefactors. "They (the Iranians) knew exactly what we were up to," Lang said.

If that's true, Chalabi may go down as one of the biggest con men in modern political history, a man who could sell bags of sand to a den of thieves in the Sahara desert. For starters, Chalabi is the man many observers believe convinced the Bush administration that Saddam has those phantom weapons of mass destruction, and that the Iraqi people would view the U.S. as liberators. Even at this late date, prominent American officials are still praising Chalabi for his "services." For instance, last May 21, General Richard Myers, the most senior U.S. military leader, defended Chalabi and his INC, saying Chalabi's organisation has helped save American lives in Iraq. At the same time, prominent neo-conservative and Pentagon adviser Richard Perle, no doubt, also spoke for his pals, when he charged that "the CIA despises him (Chalabi); the State Department despises him. They did everything they could to

put him out of business."

Perle never explained why the CIA and the State Department despise Chalabi, but it's true that Chalabi's relationship with his U.S. benefactors has steadily deteriorated during the American occupation. Chalabi's independence since he moved to Iraq after Saddam's ouster has really irked the Bush administration.

Although Chalabi is not an observant Muslim, he has moved closer to Iraq's conservative Shiite Muslim community. Reportedly Chalabi is trying to forge ties with the U.S.'s arch enemy Muqtada al-Sadr. He has been a vociferous opponent of the U.S. efforts to reinstate large numbers of Saddam's Baathist Party, saying it was like letting Nazis rule post war Germany.

These important developments beg the question: is this an effort by the U.S. to put the genie back into the bottle before it turns into a monster too big to control? At this point we don't know.

Meanwhile, the U.S. has tried to say that the raid of Chalabi's compound was an Iraqi Governing Council decision, but council members have categorically denied it. "The Governing Council unanimously condemns the raid on Mr. Chalabi's house and holds the coalition authorities responsible," Samiel al Askari, Deputy Council representative for Shiite leader Mohammed Bahr-al-Olum.

Ironically, Chalabi, a man with little popular following in Iraq, might actually benefit from falling out of favour with the Bush administration. To many Iraqis, he

will look like a fearless nationalist who isn't going to knuckle under to the super power. Chalabi has been a high profile critic of way the U.S. led coalition is planning to turn over so called "sovereignty" to the Iraqis on June 30.

After the coalition leaves Iraq, it's a good bet that Iran will become the dominant influence in the country. Chalabi will surely gain, if he is in bed with the Iranians.

Chalabi has proven to be slick, cunning and a lot smarter than his former paymasters in the Bush administration. It would be foolish to count him out as a major figure in Iraq's future.

After the raid, Chalabi appeared on many U.S television news shows, insisting he was innocent and saying he was willing to come before the U.S. Congress to face his accusers. That's good idea. Even with the U.S. public on the verge of experiencing commission fatigue, it does deserve straight answers to some important questions.

Let's start with these: How central a role did Chalabi play in convincing the Bush administration that Saddam had WMD and Al Qaeda ties? Where did all the money we gave to the INC go? Why did the U.S government put all its eggs in one basket, and support a man convicted in Jordan in 1992 of embezzlement charges? If the espionage charge is true, how did Chalabi get access to sensitive information, and when did we know he was a spy? Who in the U.S government gave him the intelligence? How many American lives have been lost because of the leaked intelligence?



All health information to keep you up to date

The amazing world of milk

MILK and other dairy products could be the perfect drink and food of life. Both children and adult need dairy for different reasons. Although for children full cream milk is all right but low fat milk is advisable for most adults. We have been listening since childhood that dairy products are one of the four basic food groups we all need for proper nutrition. In fact, it is more than that. Once you are conscious of its consequences -- you will never stop drinking milk became incomparable combination of about eight to ten essential nutrients found naturally in milk. The nutrients found in milk are amazing, like -- Vit A, Vit B12, Calcium, Carbohydrate, Phosphorus, Magnesium, Potassium, Protein, Riboflavin, and Zinc. Sufficient amount of dairy food, either milk, yogurt or cheese, not only helps build healthy bones in children, it is also needed for vision, for production of 'erythrocyte' (a mature red blood cell having an average life span of 120 days; the body needs to produce 240,000 red blood cells per second in order to maintain the proper concentration of blood) and can also help prevent many diseases in both ages.

We know that in our big neighbouring country, one of the most sacred of all sacred cows is the milk of the cow itself. Its white colour throughout the world is the essence of our concept of cleanliness. From America to Australia milk is promoted as the "perfect food" or 'food of life' for humans, and especially for our children. This promotion probably has served its purpose as an average westerner consumes more than 250 pounds of dairy products a year. In America, it is interesting that one out of every seven dollars spent on groceries goes to buy milk or milk products.

Milk is the major source of calcium in our diet. Even more important is the fact that the calcium in milk is more easily absorbed by the body than any other food source. This is the foundation on which strong bones and teeth are built. Even though most parents cannot imagine of raising their children without milk but it is very sad these days that lot of young Bangladeshis especially teenagers neither drink milk nor eat enough calcium in their diets. And in an even more strange revelation, majority of them are female.

The best way to look after bones is to have sufficient calcium before their mid-to-late 20s and subsequently consume a well balanced diet with lot of weight-bearing activity like walking and running and exercises which will strengthen bones. But don't forget about the high calories of full cream milk, yogurt and cheese as well. So don't drink or eat in excess.

In case of breast milk the picture is a little different but more distinct. Although cow milk is ideal for calves, but it is not designed by nature for neonates and infants. It is not wise of human being to think that he or she can replace breast milk with milks of his own formulation. Certain trace elements, amino acids and essential fatty acids are present in human breast milk that are not available in the same form elsewhere. Biochemistry is not yet sufficiently advanced to be able to identify every single substance in maternal breast milk. There are more than 200 known substances in it. All doctors throughout the world feel that breast milk must be the finest food for a baby.

A.K.N. Ahmed is a former Governor of Bangladesh Bank.

Whatever the answers, the Chalabi fiasco is another graphic example illustrating the Bush administration's tragic flaw. In these dangerous times, we have a government that has an ineffective, even destructive management style, and which prefers to isolate itself from differing opinions on issues. There were plenty of sources in the CIA and State Department who distrusted Chalabi and warned the Bush administration policy makers to be cautious in dealing with him. But given the ideological agenda of the neo-conservative clique running the White House, their admonitions were ignored or downplayed.

My advice to President George Bush, Jr. is to start reading the newspapers. That's a good way to start finding out what's happening in Iraq.

Ron Chepesiuk is a Visiting Professor at Chittagong University and a Research Associate at the National Defense College in Dhaka.

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