

# Iraqi inferno will engulf ME

BRIG GEN JAHANGIR KABIR, *ndc, psc (Retd)*

WHAT was planned and executed almost as a bloodless occupation by the cutting edge war machine, turned out to be a nightmarish experience right after 'the mission was accomplished'. This debacle in victory had taken the top brasses of Pentagon by surprise and ridiculed the US political decision-makers. With a one-sided war, and very little resistance from Saddam's forces, victory had conjured itself for a fiasco right from the outset.

In a post 9/11 scenario, a worn-out and exhausted Saddam was dramatized by a set of brilliant people like defense secretary Rumsfeld and vice president Dick Cheney. The oil lobby in Washington, Chairman (General) Myers and his soldiers played as dummy, at the most pawns, in the hands of businessmen turned politicians. President Bush never reads history or cares to know people outside his constituency. Demography, culture, national pride & prejudice have neither the power of bullets to him nor of dollars. Most of this cabinet members are aggressive business executives with proven records but lack the savvy depth of wily politicians. It was a wrong cause, in the wrong hands, at a wrong time backed by the full blast of American power that blinded them to the reality.

When President Bush boastfully said, 'mission in Iraq was accomplished' there were celebrations in two places outside the beltway of Washington. One was in Texas, the oil capital of the world, with the prospect of windfall profit coming from the occupied Iraqi oil fields. Second, of course, was in the cabinet room of Tel Aviv under Sharon, an ex general turned hard-hitting politician. Deceptively smiling also, at a man-made act of Allah, was the extended royal family of Saudi Arabia. Israel and the absolute royalists never felt comfortable with the radical dictators of the Arab land. It was a mean combination of self-interest and hatched up conspiracy of insatiable greed, violating all canons of international law and justice. It was not so much that Saddam had to go but the second largest oil fields in the Middle East had to be grabbed.

But the Iraqis, who refined the art of agriculture and domestication of animals in the swamps of the Euphrates and the Tigris, known as the Sumerian civilization, at the dawn of history, and many times ever since at the creative edge, were not ready to succumb to the brute force but waited to exploit the weaknesses of the occupation forces. And mistakes were many, combining those into blunders of today. Americans and their friends were indeed in the quicksand of Iraq.

To start with, it was violation of the United Nations Charter and brazen disregard for international public opinion to occupy Iraq in the name of finding WMD and chemical weapons.

By not finding the alleged weapons after occupation, Americans themselves denied the battle cry of getting into Iraq. Spinning stories of Al Qaeda connections to find a lame duck excuse, it is bad luck for Bush that the 9/11 Commission has pronounced that Saddam had no connection with Al Qaeda. In the eyes of the world the invasion of Iraq was unjust and illegal.

For the 13 years under UN embargo, Iraq turned into a profitable business for the Europeans, headed by the powerful economies of France and Germany. They had over \$ 90 billion of investments and lucrative business contracts. With vengeance in mind for the failure of Europe to support US war efforts, the victorious Americans declared that they were under no obligation to honor agree-

Kassem, was everywhere down to the villages. They were trained and armed. By trying to cleanse the civil administration of the Baathist elements, nearly everybody in the erstwhile government had to go. All members of the erstwhile armed forces, civil administration and political activists, just about everybody in Iraq had been pushed to pick up arms for their survival and for the national cause, in that pulverized society of denial. If one does not want to term Secretary Rumsfeld a smart fifth columnist he will certainly go down as a great spoiler of military victory.

Demographically, Iraqis are divided in three distinguished political shades with centrifugal tendencies. In the hilly northeast the Kurds had been continuously at war with the centre,

tion, it was a bomb about to explode. Iraq was total chaos after Saddam was gone. And the occupation forces pulled the trigger of the bomb, unwittingly.

Saddam knew he had no chance in case of an open war against the Americans. So, he prepared Iraq for post war resistance. With 50 millions Katyushas, Ak-47s, mortars, anti-tank mines, rocket propelled grenade and launchers, shot range missiles and thousands of tons of ammunition and explosives post war Iraq was awash with weapons and doomed to a civil strife before it could make a new start. Torture, humiliation, sexual abuse, gross violation of human right, in the style of Abu Gharaib, had snapped the last straw of the Iraqis. Most potent of the weapons



ments with the erstwhile Saddam regime and quickly dished out multi billion dollar contracts to Halliburton and other favoured companies. Even the UK, the staunchest ally, was hurt by these actions. Talking purely on the law of convenience, Americans simply failed to share and care about the Europeans on the cadaver of Iraq. The blunders were smouldering but nothing yet could match the blunders with the aggrieved Iraqis.

The occupation forces wanted to take out every Saddam supporter on the pretext of building a democratic Iraq. They outlawed over a million strong armed forces, reservist and paramilitary included. In the chaos of occupation without consolidation, thousands of tons of arms, ammunition and explosives percolated into the society. The Baath Party, the only political tool since the days of Karim

for independence. From Karbala in central Iraq, all the way up to the Persian Gulf, the vast land is occupied by the Shias with Basra to the east along the Iranian border as their political and spiritual hub. The Shias are the majority in Iraq but had never enjoyed their legitimate political rights proportionate to their numbers. It is in central Iraq that the minority Sunnis lived and enjoyed political patronage under Saddam. Americans could not push the Shias to the driving seat due to fear of Iranian influence on the Arab land. Kurds could not be rehabilitated due to the opposition of Turkey, a life long and trusted American ally. And the Sunnis could not be taken into confidence due to the Saddam factor. With the aggrieved Sunnis, the restless Kurds and Shias, no central authority, and abandoned arms and ammuni-

were the thousands of 'kamikaze' volunteers for whom American presence provided a noble cause to blow themselves up. Fear and anger provided an appropriate cause for the nationalist on one hand and international jihadis on the other. Clearly, Jihad had spread from Afghanistan to Iraq on the trail of blazing Americans and now fearfully knocking at the neighbours' doors.

The author is a columnist on defence matters.

# Pakistan evades core issues in N-CBMs talks with India

DR. SUBHASH KAPILA

IN the bleak landscape of Pakistan's confrontationist relations with India, even the slightest stirring is enough to generate a media hype within India. The latest such example is the N-CBMs (Nuclear Confidence Building Measures) discussions that took place between India and Pakistan in New Delhi on June 19-20, 2004. These talks were not a new initiative by either India or Pakistan. The process and the guidelines for the N-CBMs talks were first enunciated in an additional Memorandum of Understanding attached to the Lahore Declaration and signed between Foreign Secretaries K Raghunath and Shamshad Khan on 21 February 1999.

In a bid to impress the international audience, exercised over Pakistan's WMD proliferation and likelihood of a nuclear flashpoint in South Asia, Pakistan seems to have gone through the motions of N-CBMs talks. It needs to be noted that the Lahore Declaration in spirit and act stood opposed by Pakistan's President, General Musharraf, then as Pakistan's Army Chief.

India seems to have gone through the motions without expecting anything substantial to emerge. Both could argue that a beginning of a dialogue on N-CBMs has commenced between India and Pakistan and that itself is a big achievement.

However, the above overlooks the major uncertain implications.

In terms of gains spelt out after the talks in New Delhi, nothing substantial seems to have been achieved. On the contrary, Pakistan has evaded core N-CBMs issues and India seems to have acquiesced to this. First, a look at what has been highlighted as the achievements of these N-CBMs talks.

## New Delhi N-CBMs Talks Achievements:

The Indian media has listed the following achievements as "highlights" emerging from the two-day talks in New Delhi in June 2004:

- Existing hotlines between Directors General of Military Operations to be upgraded, dedicated and secured.
- Dedicated hotline to be established between Foreign Secretaries of India and Pakistan.
- Draft agreement handed over by Indian side requiring both countries to work towards concluding an agreement on technical parameters on pre-notification of flight testing of missiles.
- Unilateral moratorium on further nuclear tests was re-affirmed by both sides; unless in exercise of national sovereignty it decides that extraordinary events have jeopardised its supreme interests.
- Commitment by both sides to continue bilateral discussions and hold further meetings towards implementation of Lahore MOU of 1999.
- Bilateral consultations on security and non-proliferation would continue between the two countries within the context of negotiations on those issues in multilateral fora.

If the above achievements are claimed as the highlights of the N-CBMs meeting at Additional Secretary level, then all that can be said on analysis is that they are not substantive and in no way lead to nuclear restraint, credible nuclear signaling mechanisms or even the minimum to build mutual faith and trust in this critical field.

Even in terms of the Lahore Accord MOU 1999, they are not substantive achievements.

## "Core Points" of Lahore Accord 1999 MOU Not Covered in N-CBMs Meet June 2004:

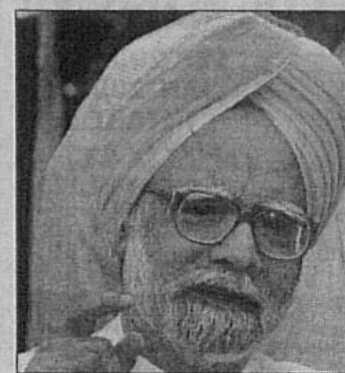
In the just concluded N-CBMs meeting, Pakistan seems to have evaded "core points" set out in Lahore Accord MOU, 1999. The "core points" that seem to

\* India's lack of insistence on discussion of the "core points" of Lahore Accord 1999 MOU or maintaining a silence is bad policy. Differences need to be highlighted; otherwise they send wrong signals to the other side.

## N-CBMs Meet Does Not Seem to Have Discussed Nuclear Signaling:

"Nuclear signaling" is an important component of 'Nuclear Risk Reduction' process. Just establishing 'hot lines' between the Foreign Secretaries or improving existing lines between DGMOs (God knows what it means) is not enough.

In relation to "India-Pakistan Nuclear Signaling" the Stimson Center, Washington in a report issued in 2004, calls for:



now driven by one word, namely "flexibility" on every issue from Kashmir to opening of bus services and to nuclear risk reduction. This has become the buzz word from General Musharraf down to Pakistan interlocutors negotiating with India.

Pakistan is avoiding emphasis on "compromises" in CBM negotiations. This for a very good reason and that is "compromises" entails moving away from stated existing positions by both parties to a negotiation. Pakistan by its overemphasis on "Flexibility" is trying to connote and convey that in any CBMs, there is only one way street and that is that India needs to bend backwards to accommodate/adjust to Pakistan's positions on various issues.

Such an approach so persistently being maintained by Pakistan cannot obviously add any momentum to CBM negotiations. In terms of N-CBMs negotiations with India, Pakistan would expect India to be "flexible" to accept far more strategic restraints than Pakistan would. The aim being to whittle down India's superiority in nuclear weapons. Perceiving that it has offset India's conventional warfare superiority by the Pakistan nuclear weapons arsenal, Pakistan would now seek to offset India's nuclear weapon superiority by 'strategic restraints' via the N-CBMs route.

India needs to be wary of such approaches and the connotation of each word of the text/records /statements of Pakistan need to be minutely weighed.

It is also surprising that Pakistani official spokesman covering N-CBMs were more elaborate on the differences that persisted in N-CBMs discussions in New Delhi, compared to the reticence of the Indian side.

## Concluding Observations:

Pakistan continues to be evasive on the "core issues" of N-CBMs and until nuclear doctrine, security concepts, doctrines and institutional mechanisms for nuclear risks reduction do not come into existence, no substantive progress can be said to be achieved.

Evidence of Pakistan's evasiveness on core issues can be exemplified by Pakistan's Foreign Office spokesman Masood Khan's observations when asked whether India's proposal of "No First Use" was discussed, he retorted: "India says no first-use. We have been saying no-use-of force. At one point, we talked about a no-war pact or non-aggression pact".

Such approaches of Pakistan to core issues of N-CBMs do not induce optimism of progress or breakthroughs. And where progress is directly linked to "progress on Kashmir", as General Musharraf maintains, no grounds for optimism exists in N-CBMs negotiations.

Source: South Asia Analysis Group, New Delhi website.

# 'War on terror' - yet the Afghan crisis persists

BRIG GEN M. SAKHAWAT HUSSAIN *ndc, psc (Retd)*

NEITHER the Afghan president Hamid Karzai, nor his rag tag army, trained by the so-called multinational forces, could make any impression outside of Kabul.

Faced with the grim realities of deteriorating security situation, and US geo-political priority shift, President Karzai has been consistently pleading for more foreign troops in the run up to the election. Bush needs Afghan election more than Karzai, to improve his continuously dipping rating, before his own election in November.

Reports suggest that the insurgents have regrouped and geared up attacks on not only US soldiers but also on aid workers and specially those officials designated to conduct election in September. These facts are acknowledged in Pentagon as well. Quoting Vice Admiral Lowell Jacoby, the Chicago Tribune on Feb 24, 2004 reported, "attacks by a resurgent Taliban and fighters loyal to one of Afghanistan's most powerful warlords have reached 'their highest levels since the collapse of the Taliban government'."

Pakistan, under US pressure, had launched massive military operation in South Waziristan to hunt down the al-Qaeda-Taliban remnants, which resulted in a fiasco. The Pakistani venture could hardly make any dent in the Taliban's increased insurgency against Karzai's forces and US troops in search of the elusive Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar.

Central authority in Afghanistan, past, present and future, cannot be viable without the support of these warlords that run most of the opium business in Afghanistan. In short, Afghanistan has slipped back in the priority list of the US except for the desperate hunt for the elusive Osama bin Laden.

Afghanistan was always regarded as a strategic buffer between the socialist world led by the erstwhile Soviet Union and the US led western liberal democratic

capitalists. The British Raj in India had ensured Afghan neutrality with the application of the policy of carrot and stick. In the US strategy, Afghanistan was never a priority as long as Pakistan and Iran stood in between. When the communists, led by General Daud, overthrew the neutral Afghan monarch Zahir Shah, Washington was busy ap-

internal political upheaval in Pakistan. The Soviet Union legitimised its occupation under the infamous "friendship treaty".

It was only a handful of anti-Soviet members of Carter's team that could identify the Soviet's military ascendancy, both in terms of covert and overt operation that achieved the capability to engage in

support the proxy war, not only against Soviet occupation of Afghanistan but also to carry the proxy war into the pre-dominantly Southern Muslim majority republics of the USSR. Jihad, which was launched at the end of the Carter administration, was given full impetus during Ronald Reagan's presidency. Saudi Arabia financed

one with the newly evolved concept of 'globalisation'.

Washington, under George H W Bush, celebrated Soviet defeat but left Afghanistan at the mercy of the Islamist forces of both home grown and Arab brigades allied to Pakistan's ISI and the remnants of CIA and KGB agents, to squabble for power in Kabul.

The holy alliance that was made between America and the Islamists, gathered under the banner of Jihad to fight Russia, ended in a series of distinctly unholy wars and epidemics of violence, soon after the last Russian soldier departed. Laid in ruins, Afghanistan plunged into a civil war that gave rise to the Islamist Taliban extremists, once reared by CIA, then nurtured by ISI and the Saudis.

Afghanistan lost its geo-strategic importance in the global military context with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the contesting super power, and with the emergence of natural resource-rich Muslim dominated Central Asian Republics. Washington remained oblivious of the fact that the strength of the Islamist forces was even overtaking Central Asia that could deny US from the new source of energy, an alternative of the conflict-ridden Middle East.

It was only after 1998 that the US understood its policy lapses in Central Asia especially in Afghanistan. By the 1990s Afghanistan might have lost its military-political and geo-strategic importance in the changed world, but it remained important in the geo-economic realm.

Violence continues with fresh impetus as US shifts its focus from the region. The remnants of so-called Taliban, al-Qaeda fighters appear now to be more organised than when they were ousted in 2001.

Recent assaults on the Afghan security forces, well-equipped UN organisations and US troops, seem to be well timed. The US forces in Afghanistan, increasingly under attack, not only suffered heavy casualties since the end of the war, but are also being discredited for inhuman handling of prisoners in

Kabul detention centres.

The US led troops needed to launch counter offensive for more than one reason, one of which was propaganda value, to fend off growing criticism of the Bush administration, than for any other substance. Second, was to arrest the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan, where attacks by the Taliban and other resistance groups were escalating. As it emerges, the US has failed to control southeastern Afghanistan as large areas of the south, south east or west are either under the Taliban's or the warlords' control, forcing Western agencies to confine their activities largely to Kabul and Kandahar.

Mr. Hamid Karzai now finds himself less important in the so-called war on terror. Osama bin Laden is becoming less important for George W Bush in his own reelection than Jordanian born Abu Musab al-Zarkawi, alleged to be the mastermind behind Iraqi resistance, now elevated to the equal of bin-Laden by US authorities in Iraq. It is not Afghanistan but Iraq, which holds the second largest oil reserve of the world.

In fact, it is not only the persisting Afghan crisis but looking at Washington's long term stated aim in the Middle East and Central Asia it appears that the "war on terrorism" was never about making the world a safer place, as the Bush administration so often quotes to its benefit. Occupations of Afghanistan and then Iraq are cases in point. In the process it has only heightened the danger of further conflict and war and enabled Islamic extremists, such as bin Laden, to exploit the deep-seated hatred felt by many in the region towards US militarism and neo-colonialism.

In reality, the so-called Islamic Jihad that started from Afghanistan with American alliance is not only paying back America but also engulfing the entire Muslim world, from Morocco to Indonesia.

The author is a defence and security analyst.

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peasing the Soviet Union to finalise strategic arms parity in Europe known as SALT (Strategic Arms Limitation Talk).

With the Iranian debacle the US suffered an unprecedented setback in the Middle East. Mr. Leonid Brezhnev took the calculated risk of invading Afghanistan, capitalising on the US' ambivalent foreign policy under Carter, the disunity among the Islamic countries and

multiple directions. Washington knew that the Soviet Union was overstretched and was weakening within. What Washington needed to counter was the Soviet role played in support of the communist north against the US in the South.

Washington recruited Muslim states like Pakistan and the strategic contender of the Soviet's in Afro-Asia, China. It convinced the largely Sunni Muslim countries to

the Jihad on equal keel with the USA and Pakistan.

The Soviets suffered 35,000 dead and lost \$ 45 billion in a decade of war in Afghanistan. The US gained with every loss that Soviet Russia suffered. The Soviet's strategic defeat in Afghanistan hastened the collapse of the 'Evil Empire' and made USA the sole surviving super power to transform the remnants of the socialist society into a capitalist

## SNIPPETS

### Bangladesh to emerge largest contributor to UN peacekeeping

DHAKA: After the deployment of 2,850 troops in Ivory Coast under the United Nations by August this year, Bangladesh will become the number one contributor of peacekeepers in the world.

With this the total strength of Bangladeshi army personnel engaged in UN peacekeeping operations would go up to 9,691.

Dhaka is the second largest contributor of troops to the peacekeeping operations under the UN.

Some 6,891 armed forces personnel of the country are now deployed in nine countries including Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, Kosovo and East Timor.

Bangladesh has so far earned about \$800 million from peacekeeping operations.

Dhaka first participated in UN peacekeeping operations as part of the Iran-Iraq military observer group with 15 personnel in 1988.

### India says Kashmir frontier fence nearly complete

SRINAGAR: India has nearly completed fencing its frontier in disputed Kashmir in a move to stop incursions by militants from the Pakistani side, according to the Indian Defence Minister.

The fence covers about 500 km of the 742 km ceasefire line that divides Kashmir between India and Pakistan, army officers said. The rest of the frontier was too inaccessible to fence, they said.

"The fencing is almost over. There may be some patches left," Pranab Mukherjee told reporters at the end of a two-day visit to the border region, where a revolt by Muslim militants against Indian rule has claimed tens of thousands of lives.

Mukherjee's announcement came days after India and Pakistan vowed to press ahead with discussions to resolve their dispute over Kashmir after their first formal talks in three years.

The fence begins in southern Kashmir and passes through mountains, valleys and jungles.

Analysts say Pakistan may since have tacitly approved the fence as the two countries make slow progress over a peace process launched last year.

SOURCE: INTERNET WEBSITE

## Editor's note

Dear readers, Of late there have been important developments in the strategic scenario worldwide, starting from the Middle East, particularly Iraq and Afghanistan on one hand, to the Asia Pacific on the other.

Recognising the need to present these issues in a focused manner, we are introducing a new page from today titled, "Strategic Issues" which will appear every Friday fortnightly. Initially, the page will primarily focus on strategic, security and defence matters of national, regional and international significance, and those that affect Bangladesh directly and indirectly.

For your contributions to the page please address your e-mail to, "Editor, Defense & Strategic Affairs" at, sakhan@thedailystar.net