

Iran: Washington's dilemma

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M R. Kermit Roosevelt, grand son of the US president Theodore Roosevelt and a distant cousin of President Franklin Roosevelt, who masterminded the CIA coup that put the Shah of Iran back on his Peacock Throne in 1953, had done great disfavour to the entire region. Kermit, as special CIA officer, was instrumental in overthrowing the first ever democratically elected national government of Prime Minister Muhammad Mossadeq and restoring the Shah back to power, only to be overthrown by the 'radical cleric' Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini 26 years after Mossadeq's bid to democratise his country with thousands of years of civilisation.

Mossadeq not only failed to democratise Iran but the entire region. Democracy and nationalism were then considered to be inimical to western interests. Mossadeq's biggest bigotry that western powers considered was nationalisation of oil. Today, after forty years of the overthrow of Mossadeq, USA and its allies find that Iranian democracy does not fit with Jeffersonian system that Mr. Bush is so keen to transplant in the region. The CIA is now espousing Reza Pehlvi, son of late Reza Shah Pehlvi to lead the regime-change in Iran. Iran is an important country in the region especially its standing in the potentially rich region of Central Asia. Iran too is powerful with the potential of becoming the second nuclearised Muslim country on the eastern periphery of the Middle East, which is now being dominated by US surrogate, Israel.

Having had Iraq's strategic strength smashed, Israel is now aiming at Iran. Israel finds that unless Iran is subdued Jerusalem would remain under serious threat from hard-line Shi'ite Islamists. Iran is one of the two countries that has direct link with anti-Israel militias. Iran-supported Hezbollah is now operating from southern Lebanon with Syrian protection. For decades the US has been protesting both to Damascus and Tehran to cease support to what Washington views, terrorist organisations like Hezbollah. USA had held Hezbollah responsible for Beirut suicide attack on US marines in 1983 where 300 marines were killed and it was forced out of Lebanon. US accused Syria of conniving with Iran, though the two countries have serious politico-historical and ideological differences. Curiously enough, Tehran did not have good relation with most of the Arab countries but managed to cooperate with Syria in opposing Israeli design to create 'Eretz Israel' (Land of Israel). Tehran-Damascus relationship has grown stronger since Iraq-Iran war.

Syria under Hafez al Asad did not support Saddam Hussein in his war against Iran. In fact in 1983 Syria had moved its troops nearer to Iraqi border forcing Iraq to redeploy its forces from Iranian borders. However, the strategic relation between the two grew stronger since the Iraqi invasion and presence of US troops in Iraq. Both Iran and Syria are skeptical about the new status of Iraqi Kurdistan in a new Iraqi power equation. The recent Syria-Turkey-Iran understanding on the issue is regarded as a significant move to counter any US ploy to grant Iraqi Kurds more autonomy or quest to make northern Iraq into part of a confederation. That would embolden the Kurds of these three countries. Already Turkey has let US know its concern about the status

of the oil rich Kirkuk region of northern Iraq.

However, the recent row between Iran and the USA stems from Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 and deteriorated since the US Embassy hostage crisis in the same year. In 1980 the US congress had categorised Iran as a terrorist country and imposed sanction on the sale of weapons. In 1995 the Clinton administration imposed economic sanction under ULSA (US Iran-Libya Sanction Act) which was extended once again in March 2004 by the Bush administration which termed it as "axis of evil". Tehran now realises that the US is capable of taking unilateral action as part of the pre-emption policy. Iran is well aware that the US troops retain some degree of capability in enveloping Iran with their presence in Afghanistan and Iraq. But there is a sigh of relief in Tehran as the US sinks deeper in Iraq quagmire.



when the US seems to have admitted losing control of Iraq's future.

Geo-strategically Iran is too important a country, which the US can ill afford to ignore. No doubt the fall of Saddam and the US aggression in the region has made Tehran's Islamic government nervous but it has taken on the challenge by reviving its nuclear programme, ostensibly described as a peaceful project. Iran has abundant uranium to mine. In February 2003 Iran announced mining uranium from Saghund, near the city of Yazd, construction of uranium enrichment facility at Natanz and heavy water plant at Arak. The IAEA reports that Iran's centrifuge is one of the most advanced systems that can turn uranium into weapon grade isotope with available Iranian experts. Very recently, Pakistan's nuclear scientist Dr. AQ Khan and ex-CAS General Aslam Beg

Shahab-4 is capable of carrying 1000 kg payload and can carry nuclear warhead. The range covers the entire Middle East, Israel and the shores of Europe. As per US intelligence, if Iran were not checked, its missile development by 2015 would acquire capability of hitting the US mainland. The credibility of this information is debatable, at least with the Iraqi experience as an example. At least the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), a consortium of Iranian opposition groups, Reza Pehlvi included, claims that Iran has already successfully tested much of its long range missiles beyond known range.

Apart from Iran's potential to challenge Israel and the US presence in Middle East, Tehran is a key country in the economic realm too. The country now has a proven oil reserve of 125.8 bbl (billion barrels) that makes Iran's holding 10% of world's reserve. The latest survey estimates the reserve to be as high as 132 bbl and major reserves are located nearer to Iraqi border and Persian Gulf Region. Iran's 25 out of 32 fields are onshore and seven are offshore around the Gulf. That gives Iran more plausible reasons to strengthen its military capability particularly strong naval presence. Iran is the second richest country in the field of natural gas. It has a proven reserve of 948 tcf (trillion cubic feet), second in the world to Russia.

Moreover, being the most powerful regional force and its strategic location south of Caspian Sea, Iran holds considerable influence on the resource rich Central Asian countries. Iran is a major Caspian Sea littoral along with other four and jointly shares the Caspian resources as per treaties with Soviet Union in 1921 and 1940. However, of late Tehran has been pressuring the other four republics to delimit the Caspian basin to identify territorial, continental shelf and EEZ, USA, the largest investor in the Caspian Region, is sceptical of Iran's intentions. The sanction on Iran is already hurting US companies particularly in natural resources sector. On the other hand French, Russia, China and to some extent British firms are investing in for developing untrapped gas and oil fields. Development of Pars gas field, which is one of the biggest, is said to have a reserve up to 100 tcf.

Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline would be one of the major breakthroughs in export from this field. It is, however, estimated that US companies are losing \$5 billion annually in business because of the sanction. There are growing pressures on Washington to settle Iranian imbroglio in one way or other. Be that as it may, Iran is rather tougher subject for Bush administration to digest. Militarily the Iraqi venture has exposed US' weakness as a holding power. With Iraq's experience it is highly unlikely that the US would like to venture in yet another Muslim country within the periphery of the Middle East. On the other hand Iran is also keen to ease relation with Washington but with a minimum give and take in political and economic sphere.

If Mr. Bush is re-elected we may witness a rehashed diplomatic move via Europe. A change in Washington may open a fresh avenue to settle the decade old impasse. One has to wait till November 2, 2004 to see which way Iranian crisis would turn.

Iran is a different ball game than Iraq.

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POST-COLD WAR TRENDS

President Putin's regime and changing foreign policy of Russia

DR. RAFIQU ISLAM RIAD

AFTER the end of the Cold war Russia somehow is all out for pursuing a prestigious foreign policy. In January 2000 when the people of Russia elected President Vladimir Putin, Russian foreign policy experts were delighted. Putin welcomed Igor Ivanov (a Primakov appointee) as his foreign minister. After this the foreign policy of Russia has been pursued judiciously.

After the general elections of 2001 Putin became the second President of the Russia Federation and immediately set about to improve its relations with the USA and the West. The first initiative taken by Putin to regain the prestige of Russia's foreign policy was to improve relations with the West. So Russia's foreign policy was extended to Germany first. Putin invited German investment as much as possible. He preferred pro-western friendship to pro-American. Historically and culturally Russia is closer to Europe. Russia turned a blind eye to American criticism of its policy in Chechnya, and indirectly promoted Russia's aim to join NATO with the help of Germany.

Putin even expressed his strong desire to make START-II effective. Blair himself enhanced Britain's 'very warm' ties with Russia by visiting Russia as many as five times during Putin's first term in office. This also signaled acceptance of Putin's foreign policy by Western Europe. Although Britain was always critical of Putin's Chechen war, he kept the human rights violation issue in Chechnya in low profile.

After Tony Blair, Putin directly took initiatives to normalise Russia's relations with France. Putin invited Jacques Chirac to visit Russia who was highly pleased with Putin's personality. The Strasbourg based European Council for human rights failed to damage Putin's reputation as a young and energetic foreign policy pursuer. In March, 2004 when he was elected a second time to lead Russia.

Putin took direct initiatives to close the anti-American surveillance activities (funded by Russia) in Cuba. NATO took the initiative to invite Russia as an observer to this organisation. But Putin's desire was to get a full membership of the NATO. Some NATO members were in confusion regarding its future role in world politics and started negotiations

with it. President Bush Junior described the Russia-American relations as the 'New World Order' and assured it of expanded role in NATO. In May 2002 Russia gave consent to reopen Russia-NATO joint centre in Moscow which had closed after the NATO strike in Yugoslavia in 1999.

Russia under Putin's leadership cannot reduce its level of ties with China and North Korea. Russia's Iran policy is under criticism by the State Department. Russia is the sole exporter of technologies for Iran's nuclear projects. Financially Iran is a beneficiary of its friendship with Russia. After September 11, 2001 President George Bush described North Korea, Iraq and Iran as 'axis of evils' compounding Putin's problems further.

In the Post-Cold War era Russia's Foreign policy is constructively engaged in Latin America. From 2001 the stable price of Russian oil has enriched Russia in expanding its foreign policy objectives. Venezuela is an influential partner of Russia. Naturally it wants to keep its relations warm with Venezuela. So Putin's policy for a time fell into indecision. Finally, Putin decided not to go into conflict with America over Hugo Chavez.

Russia's involvement in South Asia is also a new priority in its foreign policy. Post Cold War Russia's priority is to support UN strongly. If America does not bypass UN, Russia hardly will take any action against international norms under the leadership of Putin.

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from its policy of conciliation and engagement. Iraq is a former ally of Russia (USSR) and owes it \$ 8-10 billion, which is not a small amount for the problematic economy of Russia. So Russia took a different stand with regards to President Bush's anti WMD stance. President Bush's new doctrine of pre-emption (a new character of America's foreign policy, September 20, 2002) against any terrorist country has left Putin in a quandary about America's future behaviour in international politics.

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INDIA'S NEW WAR STRATEGY

'No' to 'cold start'

FIRDAUS AHMED

REPORTS during the Army Commander's Conference at Delhi have it that a new Army doctrine is in the pipeline. Details may never be released in keeping with the Army's isolationist tradition. The earlier Training Command generated Army doctrine, named 'Fundamentals and Concepts' and released to the public in a bout of inexplicable glasnost, was equally inexplicably graded classified soon thereafter. Therefore, any reflection on the new doctrine, dubbed 'Cold Start', would very likely be as wanting in information. The present is as apt a time as any since the issue has not as yet been swept away from the public eye. The implications of the new doctrine on nuclear deterrence require to be grappled prior to the next crisis rendering the effort too late. In times of relative peace, peace-mongers need to be as vigilant as Military Operations planners are busy.

News reports let on that the Army envisages a 'cold start' to the next round in which smaller groupings of all arms called 'integrated battle groups' are to carry the war into enemy, read Pakistani, territory. The Army appears to be acting on the 'lessons' of Operation Parakram, in which the mobilized might of the Indian Army was preempted by deft diplomatic action on the part of Pakistan and its new-found patron, the USA. The window exploited by them were the three weeks or so. It took the Army's three 'strike corps' to get into position to 'fight and win the nation's war'. In the event, President Musharraf's speech of 12 January 2002 defused the war situation into what spin doctors have since referred to as 'coercive diplomacy'. A 'cold start' with 'integrated battle groups' will ensure that the Army is on hand to flex its muscles in real time the next time round.

In order to keep the military instrument relevant to the next crisis, the Army appears to be unwittingly narrowing the window of opportunity available to diplomats and crisis managers. The time window was crucial in early January 2002 to extract from General Musharraf his landmark speech of 12 January. Similar crisis management will be precluded next time if 'integrated battle groups' are already on the starting blocks. Secondly, there are credible reports that the last time witnessed a close shave in which one of the 'strike corps' jumped the gun. Such false starts would be more likely with smaller and quicker 'integrated

were accused of transferring centrifuge technology to Iran. That accusation was denied by both. However, apparently it seems that Iran is well on its way towards acquiring minimum deterrent to bargain on strategic issues from a position of strength.

Tehran's missile development, particularly Shahab series has become a cause of concern for both Israel and USA. Latest test fired Shahab-3 ballistic missile has a range between 1800 and 2000 km. Liquid fuelled ballistic missile



India's ballistic missiles on display

the current peace initiatives will lose steam once it is assumed that the military alternative has been revitalized yet again.

The tacit mutual deterrence regime presently operational in the subcontinent will be upset by adoption of the new doctrine. Even President Kalam in a telling faux pas early in his tenure acknowledged that nuclear weapons had kept the peace during Operation Parakram. It can be surmised that Pakistan's decidedly uncertain 'nuclear redline' stayed India's hand to an extent. Besides India was then at a loss as to how to use its 'strike corps' in a manner not to breach the nuclear threshold; this despite having practiced the manoeuvre during a media-hyped Exercise Purna Vijay ('Total Victory') in simulated nuclear conditions with a 'strike corps' the preceding year.

Therefore, the Army has come up with the idea of smaller 'battle groups' to wage war more in keeping with its post Operation Vijay doctrine of Limited War. This would also enable the 'salami slicing' of Pakistani territory (referred to by Prawin Sawhney and VK Sood in their *Unfinished War*), so as to offset its appreciated nuclear 'first use' doctrine. Undermining the Pakistani deterrent in this manner could have the unintended fallout of forcing Pakistan to contemplate deploying tactical nuclear weapons and even further lowering its 'nuclear redline'.

The Indian doctrine formulators perhaps hope that this new operational level doctrine will have the strategic outcome of deterring Pakistan from pursuing its proxy war agenda. Such reasoning could prove disastrously wrong once the 'battle groups' have been launched with the 'strike corps' forming up in their wake. The onus to keep the war 'limited' would then be foisted on Pakistan when its regime is reeling from the Indian attack as also against its political backlash within Pakistan. The 'cold start' doctrine is thus no answer to India's strategic cul de sac, an answer that can only emerge from the peace initiatives underway.

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'battle groups' available in larger numbers and with relatively greater autonomy. Thirdly, the political head could well be enticed or coerced into contemplating the military option once the means are readily available and arrayed in battle ready formation. The earlier hiatus between ordering mobilization and the decision to wage war will no longer be available for soberity to sneak in by the back door in a war charged atmosphere. Lastly,