

Indo-Bangladesh Relations-I For a Paradigm Shift

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STRATEGIC Dimension of Indo-Bangladesh Relations' written by Brig. Gen. M. Abdul Hafeez, DS 12.7.04 commenced with this quotation of J.N. Dixit, "India got involved in Bangladesh liberation movement also for meeting India's own political and strategic interests", (J.N. Dixit, "Liberation and Beyond," p-270). Brig. Gen. Hafeez adds, "India's redoubtable National Security Adviser did not however elaborate those politico strategic interests in his book; neither have those been conclusively known from any other source."

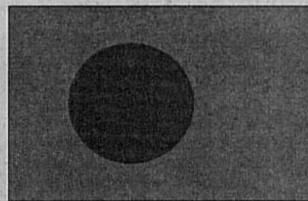
JN Dixit, an experienced diplomat, distinguished himself as Director of Special Division created in the External Affairs Ministry to deal with political dimensions of the 'East Pakistan' crisis in 1971, and as the first Head of Mission to Bangladesh soon thereafter in January 1972. The book, however, contains misinformations and manifests serious efforts to make Bangladesh 'a casualty of smear campaign'. Dixit seems to have also influenced the bandwagon of black propagandists and rumour mongers against Bangladesh.

In the same book Dixit has written, "Mujib went underground around midnight on March 25.... Major Ziaur Rahman briefly captured Chittagong radio station and broadcast a declaration of independence," (p-43). He continues, "Lt. Gen. Tikka Khan captured all the radio station and communication centres in East Pakistan by the forenoon of March 26" (p-43). But Lt. Gen. Jacob, Chief of Staff of India's Eastern Army during 1971 writes in 'Surrender at Dacca', "Major Ziaur Rahman, the Second in Command of 8 East Bengal Regiment took over the Command of Chittagong and on 27 March seized the transmitting station and broadcast his declaration of independence," (p-34). Mr. Dixit takes 'U' turn in page 43 and says, "Meanwhile Mujib stayed at his residence in Dhanmondi in Dhaka....". His earlier statement about Sheikh Mujibur Rahman going underground amounts to casting aspersion on our undisputed leader, beside spreading inaccurate facts to the whole world. Surprisingly, Dixit wrote on a very sensitive subject without keeping himself fully informed.

Dixit continues, "Several Muslim countries gave Pakistan direct military aid. Saudi Arabia lent Pakistan 75 fighter planes the Libyans another 60. Even the late King of Jordan with connivance of the United States supplied Pakistan with 10 American F-104 aircraft, circumventing the formal US embargo on American military supplies to Pakistan," (p-123). Preparation of such a dossier on Pakistan with or without Indian intelligence network is like a WMD stunt.

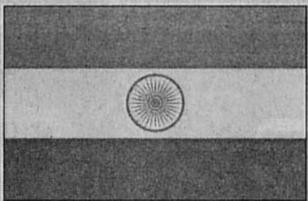
He continues, "I received information from our intelligence source on the morning of January 7, 1972 that Mujibur Rahman had been released and flown to an unknown

destination from where he was to make arrangements for his return to Dhaka. By monitoring Pakistani international telephone calls and through other sources, we learnt by the late afternoon of January 7 that Mujibur Rahman had been flown to Ankara in Turkey from where he was to go to London. By the morning of January 8 Bangladesh Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad along with a senior official of the newly constituted Bangladesh Foreign Office, Farooq Ahmed Chowdhury, arrived in New Delhi. Samad informed D.P. Dhar that Mujibur Rahman would be flying back to Dhaka on



"Islam pasand", p-267 and "Islami station of Bangladesh," (p-269), give clear impression of his sub-conscious mind. Besides, Dixit shows lack of knowledge about the repatriation of Bangladeshi personnel from Pakistan and the prisoners of war from Bangladesh to Pakistan. It is also a part of "psy-war" against Bangladesh.

JN Dixit was not the only important personality in India who had not told 'The Whole Truth'. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, in her address at Columbia University, USA, on sixth November 1971 said, "So India today is facing a real threat. We had



As said by the 'Father of Geopolitics' Sir, Halford J Mackender explosion of social forces do not dissipate. They sharply echo and re-echo from time to time and from place to place, depending on circumstances. The debacle of 1971 was only one of the several 'problems' re-echoed in the Sub-Continent (the 'Mother India') as consequential effect of disregarding geopolitics or ignorance about it by the top leaders of Indian National Congress who have been under the spell of 'Hindutva' and 'Ram Rajya.'

January 9 afternoon," (p-125). Dixit continues, "Mujibur Rahman landed at the technical area at Palam airport early in the morning at 7:30 am on January 9 and was received by Mrs. Gandhi and the entire Cabinet," p-125. A series of wrong dates and distortion of 30 years old historically important events make the book very unreliable. These are not printing errors.

Dixit ventured beyond the limits of decency, civility and diplomatic norms by saying, "Significant segments of Bangladesh bureaucracy and armed forces, specially those who came to Bangladesh much after liberation, were disaffected from Mujib. In fact, they were opposed to the creation of Bangladesh. Mujib's absorption of them in the power struggle gave them opportunity to act against him," (p-210). Highly irresponsible statements like these are deliberate attempts to undermine Bangladesh. One may ask, 'was such attempt meant to prepare the field to eventually achieve "political and strategic interests in the long run"? His utterances like "Islamic band wagon," (p-266); "pan Islamic political movements", p-267;

reached a point in economic growth, in social stability, this was not an easy task; it was achieved against very great odds. We had help from many countries including the United States....". She continued, "So just when we came to a stage where we think we can go ahead much more easily, much faster, we suddenly have the problem of another country. They are not our problems... the cry for independence arose after Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was arrested, and not before. He himself, so far as I know, has not asked for independence, even now." (Bangladesh Documents, Vol II, p-275).

It is a matter of great regret that the Indian Prime Minister did not take cognizance of the Declaration of Independence in March 1971. The proclamation of independence, formation of provisional government and laws continuance enforcement order, all in April 1971. Besides, several official actions were taken by the government of Indira Gandhi at the request of the government of Bangladesh, which took oath on 17 April 1971 on the

soil of Bangladesh. Evidently her words were not meant to convey the 'whole truth' because her address was meant for favourable 'political cash-flow' whereas the seeds of problems that she mentioned about were actually sown by her father Jawaharlal Nehru on 10 July 1946.

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However, only twenty seven days after her address at Columbia University, Pakistan attacked India in the Western sector on 3 December, 1971, and events changed very fast. On 4 December the Acting President of Bangladesh and the Prime Minister wrote a letter to the Indian Prime Minister to recognise Bangladesh, and on 6 December the Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi wrote to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, "I am glad to inform you that in the light of the circumstances prevailing at present the Government of India have decided to grant recognition. This morning I made a statement on the subject in our Parliament. I enclose a copy," (Bangladesh Documents, Vol. II, p-586 & 589).

Two pertinent questions arose when Pakistan attacked India: would India attack Pakistani positions in 'East Pakistan' without recognising Bangladesh as a sovereign State, and whether India would consider it necessary to recognise Bangladesh if Pakistan did not attack India? Whatever may be the answers, aggression by Pakistan against India facilitated Bangladesh to obtain recognition from India, about which, the Govt. of Bangladesh repeatedly requested in the past without any response from Indira Gandhi.

Pakistani attack had also prevented a situation whereby formal recognition could still be accorded but in exchange India could secure permanent benefits to meet her "political and strategic interests" that Dixit mentions in his book. Such a situation could have brought Bangladesh down to a vassal status.

It is a matter of serious study and analysis as to how or whether such interests are still being pursued and if any catalytic agent is available in Bangladesh in the disguise of patriots. Being the National Security Adviser of India, Dixit is expected to know about it, but he is not expected to agree.

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FIRDAUS AHMED

IN a recent article 'Securing India' in the EPW, a noted critic of the defense establishment, Gautam Naulakha pegs the budget allocation for 'defence' at Rs. 101,128 crores after adding a proportion earmarked for space, atomic energy, and the forces controlled by the Home Ministry. This makes the spending on defense amount to 22% of the expenditure of the central government. As against this, he reveals that the expenditure on three heads - education, health and rural development - amounts to Rs 37,726 crore, 'which is little more than a third of the resources allocated to the military! Furthermore, about Rs. 15000 crores is allocated for India's internal wars, while the figure set aside for the social sector is a mere Rs. 10,000 crores.

These figures reveal that despite the onset of détente with China and the possibility of the same with Pakistan, there has been no change

War 2020 reveal that Asymmetric Wars form the face of the future. Therefore, spending on high profile acquisitions such as the Phalcon system, Agni III (in the pipeline), the Gorkhkov, etc., is to prepare for the 'wrong war'.

Clearly there is need to move security thinking away from the stranglehold of the strategic community fixated on Lahore, Agra, Islamabad and most recently New York. The security paradigm needs to focus on human security. As a fallout of the Millennium Summit, the UN Commission on Human Security, co-chaired by our very own Nobel laureate, Dr Amartya Sen, has already fleshed the concept out. However, its report submitted last year has not commanded the attention it deserves in the media or on the seminar circuit of the national capital centric strategic elite. It is no wonder then that the defense budget shows a hangover of the last century instead of

communities; to deepen democratic principles and practices; all to promote a human security culture and framework." Thus it is evident that human security complements state security, as threats arise from a neglect of 'people', for which the current paradigm has no credible answers.

With India's population set to overtake China by 2035, it is questionable whether the state security paradigm and the kind of militarisation it entails, can secure India's future. Take for instance the brouhaha that has surrounded the motivated release of the wrong figures regarding the 'demographic time bomb' constituted by India's Muslim minority. Such controversies sow the seeds for future conflict. Only the human security paradigm, focused on development and education can preclude or cope with such a future.

The human security paradigm needs to be adapted to the South

The human security paradigm needs to be adapted to the South Asian conditions. Presently, the SAARC summits, in order to be considered successful, require the heads of the two antagonist states to meet on the sidelines. Instead there is an urgency to look at the collective future in its complexity anew through the conceptual perspective made available through the exertions of Dr Sen and UN's former High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs. Sadako Ogata. There is no escaping the conclusion of the Commission that "human security should be mainstreamed in the agendas of international, regional and national security organizations." It is time to liberate the security agenda from Cold War vintage strategists.

in the trend in expansive defense budgets since the Kargil Conflict. So much for one of the promised benefits of nuclearisation. Neither has the limited political utility of a conventional military force been driven home to the security establishment, despite the yearlong lesson from Operation Parakram.

Taking into account lessons from the unfolding conflict in Iraq, it is arguable whether political ends can be met by military force. Not all of America's F and B series of armaments and platforms can bail it out of the demographic terrain encountered. According to the doyen of military thinkers, there have been only nineteen conventional wars since the Second World War, while there have been over 57 major conflicts in the 90's alone. Learned prognostication for United States' National Intelligence Council project on

securing India of the future.

Human security is 'people centered'. The UN report does not contest the primary responsibility of security residing with the state, but forwards the case that security challenges have become complex and thus requires broadening of the security paradigm. The two mutually reinforcing strategies it recommends are 'protection' and 'empowerment'. Protection through norms and institutions is to preserve the people from threats while empowerment, such as through promotion of health and education, is to enable them to cope with these autonomously. Human security goals, in the words of the Commission, are: "To prevent conflict and advance human rights and development; to protect and empower people and their

Asian conditions. Presently, the SAARC summits, in order to be considered successful, require the heads of the two antagonist states to meet on the sidelines. Instead there is an urgency to look at the collective future in its complexity anew through the conceptual perspective made available through the exertions of Dr Sen and UN's former High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs. Sadako Ogata. There is no escaping the conclusion of the Commission that "human security should be mainstreamed in the agendas of international, regional and national security organizations." It is time to liberate the security agenda from Cold War vintage strategists.

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ARAFAT

A leader larger than life

BRIG GEN SAKHAWAT HUSSAIN (RETD)

THERE are few leaders in contemporary world that could become synonymous with freedom struggle, creation of a nationhood and process of establishing a state through a long drawn relentless conflict, all at the same time. Mr. Yasser Arafat is one of the few leaders who have earned a special place in history. He is the symbol of independent Palestine whenever that happens. No matter whatever time it takes to materialise the Palestinian dream to live freely in a portion of their land, it would be Arafat who would take his historic place as Father of the Palestinian Nation, even if it is at the chagrin of Israel and Zionism.

Arafat, who endured almost five decades of continuous fight for the right of his nation turned into refugee, is no more there to see the establishment of future Palestine or to salute the national flag on the top of Dome of Rocks in Jerusalem which was his dream when he left Jerusalem in 1947 at the age of 17. His last weeks in a military hospital outside Paris were perhaps the longest that he spent away from his organisation and people. In his death Arafat has left a bewildered nation still struggling to re-establish a state, in continuous conflict with mighty occupation force, Israel.

Arafat breathed his last in the early hours of 11 November, having been in and out of coma for days. The world would no more witness a leader draped in battle fatigue with traditional Arab headgear shaped as the map of greater Palestine, smiling even when he was in the most distress-

ful conditions in the conflict zone.

A life time fighter, Arafat was an inspiration for the world's oppressed nations fighting to achieve legitimate freedom. Now that Arafat is no more in the global scene much bigger question looms over the horizon as to who would step into the global profile that Arafat created? But the bigger question that now appears to be most crucial is what effect Arafat's demise would have on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and the future of Palestine? Would Sharon continue with his unilateral withdrawal from Gaza instead of a comprehensive peace plan the Oslo process has envisaged? Would the re-elected US president push for two states with complete West Bank and East Jerusalem as capital? All these are complex and decade-old complicated issues that the world would wait to see. However, one could only contemplate the enormity of the situation should there be disunity among the Palestinian organization in quest of power as time passes by. There would definitely be power struggle but that may not happen right now as Palestinians are well aware of the need for collective calm in the face of the most provocative atmosphere that is created on the issue of burial of the late Palestinian leader. Israel's refusal to sanction a place in the holy site of the Dome of Rocks is indicative of the future struggle if Palestinians have to realise their century old dream of freeing their land, at least at the minimum.

There could be no peace in the Middle East unless a just solution to the issue is found. Everything rests on the only superpower i.e. USA and its reelected president George W. Bush who had through-

out despised Yasser Arafat like the Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. Sharon and his fellow Zionists have refused to recognize Arafat as world leader and consider him a terrorist masterminding the undoing of Israel. If not in words, ironically US president George W. Bush had almost similar views. Bush considered Arafat as spoiler of last Camp David peace agreement mediated by President Clinton in July 2000.

It is not Bush alone but most of the hawks within American administration and think tanks that hold Arafat responsible for deadlocking the Camp David process even when the Oslo peace accords gave him international legitimacy. To Bush and his neo-conservatives, Arafat was instrumental in negating the US' chance to act as peacemaker by rejecting the best offer Palestinians had at Camp David brokered by Clinton. Argument goes that Ehud Barak offered the most generous deal any Israeli leader could make to the Palestinians. Instead Arafat declined to take the offer without putting up any alternative. But while talking to Mr. Graham Usher couple of days before his journey to Paris, and as he reports in 'Middle East International' at Ramallah, "He (Arafat) dismisses the charge with a shaky hand". Arafat clears his position on Camp David. "Barak never made an offer at Camp David. It was Clinton, in December, who offered me 96/97% of the West Bank, plus land swaps of equal quantity and quality. And we were discussing that at Tabaa." Mr. Graham Usher pointedly asked Arafat to clear his position on the accusation leveled on him for not taking the offer. In reply Arafat said, "Barak wanted



89% of the land, minus military areas Israel wanted to keep in the West Bank. He wanted Israeli control over our borders, coastline and air space. But Barak's most explosive mistake was to demand Israeli sovereignty over the Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem. I took the proposal to the Islamic Conference's Jerusalem Committee. I said, "If you accept this offer, I will accept it." Every one of the 16 countries refused." It has always been the demand of the Muslims all over the world either to inter-

nationalise Jerusalem or hand over the sovereignty of Haram-al-Sharif to future Palestinian state. One may remember that the emergence of OIC (Organisation of Islamic Conference) was based on the demand of freeing Jerusalem and Haram-al-Sharif soon after the Al-Aqsa mosque was burnt down by the Jews in 1969.

According to Arafat, 2000 Camp David did not mention right of return of the refugees who were forcefully evicted in 1948 from their land within Israel. Millions of

refugees still live under refugee status in Gaza and West Bank and elsewhere in the neighbouring countries particularly in Lebanon. While talking to Mr. Graham Usher on this most complicated yet important issue, Arafat said, "Israel didn't talk about the refugees at Camp David. It was Clinton. I said to him: 'What about the 320,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon?' Clinton said there were only 180,000. I said, 'let there be 100,000'. They must be allowed to return. Their lives are miserable." But Camp David did not press on the issue and Arafat could not have taken the gamble depriving the causes of refugees that he had fought for throughout his life. Very recently while endorsing Ariel Sharon's unilateral plan of withdrawal from Gaza president Bush dismissed the right to return by stating that Israel is a 'Jewish Country' that would remain so against the backdrop the Palestinian major demand. Yasser Arafat may have been accused of concentrating all powers with him but to ordinary Palestinians especially the refugees have only looked up to him to remain steadfast on vital issues of Jerusalem and right of return. Now that Arafat is not there one has to see how much compromise that US and Israel extorts from the new leadership if at all second Bush administration is compelled to listen to the British counseling US.

However, once Bush refused to deal with Arafat during his presidency rather pushed for reform within the Palestinian Authority (PA), Arafat was forced to appoint his deputy Abu Abbas as prime minister to resume talks with Israel but not with enough authority to reign in the suicide squad of

Hamas and Islami Jihad. The Palestinian Authority was also accused of indulging in corruption and Arafat of nepotism. A definite conflict cropped up between the young and the old guard within PLO and its largest party, Arafat's own Fatah. There has been definite power struggle within PA and PLO as Arafat's health was fast deteriorating in the last few weeks. The struggle may continue once the shock of losing Arafat is overcome.

Though the collective leadership is now shown with the face of two of the senior aids to Arafat, Abu Abbas as head of the PLO and Fatha and Ahmed Qoreea as PA chief but the fact remains that the struggle between the young and the old generations may surface once reality is faced. Power struggle could come in open particularly in case of the largest organisation, Arafat's own Fatha. It is said that relatively younger leader like Marwan Barghuti is most preferred to lead Fatha but Mr. Barghuti is now serving life sentence in Israeli jail. Mr. Barghuti was instrumental in the second Intefada and was despised by Ariel Sharon. However, the fear now is that there is hardly any leader who has the universal or effective appeal within all factions of Palestinian organisations to replace Arafat. And there are all the chances that if Israel remains adamant to execute unilateral withdrawal from Gaza and retains major settlement in West Bank by 2005 more hard-line organisations like Hamas and Islamic Jihad would gain strength undermining the authority of the PA. That would not go well with any party involved in the peace process. It

is now the duty of the international community to facilitate election within sixty days as envisaged in the Palestinian constitution to elect a head of the PA. Elections should also be resorted to elect head of other organisations that Arafat had been holding for over four decades.

Though it is sad to suggest that Arafat is no more in the scene and that might prompt Bush to force Sharon to start the dialogue and 'road map' be revived and pursued by the Quartet, but much would remain on the 'Judeo-Christian' power block both in the US and Israel who supported Bush over Kerry. Now that Bush has amassed political capital as he stated in his first press conference after re-election, he must spend it -- now -- to show the Palestinians that through their own efforts they can forge a peaceful destiny. But should Mr. Bush use that capital to push Palestinian to accept the unilateral plan of Sharon the situation may worsen from what it was during Arafat, as there would be no one to blame by Washington.

Having been used to Arafat's demeanor and his silhouette on the world event it would be rather difficult to expect any one to take his place. We the Bangladeshis, who have always been steadfast supporter of Arafat's struggle to see him establish an acceptable peaceful Palestine would remain supportive of that cause whoever takes his mantle. We pray for Arafat and his lifetime goal, establishment of an independent Palestine.

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