

CORRUPTION

A threat to national security

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MARGARET Thatcher once said, "... changing methods won't work, the aim is to change the soul." I would like to start the discussion keeping the theme "soul searching" in perspective.

National Security is no longer a question of defending the territorial integrity and sovereignty. Times are changing fast and we have already moved into a new perception about national security. It encompasses more than national defense, internal and external security. The foundation of national security rests on the social and economic welfare of the people. National Security in a holistic view is nothing but fulfillment of national aspirations or protection of core values. I have discussed at length on this issue in my article "Electoral Mandate and National Security" published in The Daily Star dated 8th October 2004. In the same article I have said that the people hands over the national power to the winning party to strengthen and protect national security. National Security is therefore derived from national power, which is a mix of strategic, military, economic, institutional, political and cultural forces.

It is through appropriate utilisation and strengthening of instrument of national power that a government protects national security. As I have written earlier, good government / governance is one of the instruments of national power. This instrument in fact co-ordinates and helps strengthening other instruments of national power like: The People, The Economy, The Diplomacy, The Military and Faith in the Almighty and self. If the government fails to be a good one, or fails to govern to meet the aspirations of the people so as to be called good governance, isn't then national security threatened? Can we call a government good government when the country for four consecutive times was identified as the most corrupt nation? The nation is not corrupt it is the government. Why for a few, the whole nation should be blamed? I believe that corruption have crept into our national vein to such an extent that it poses a threat to our national security. If it is a deliberate exercise for retention of power and wealth, the nation once again is very unfortunate. The issue is discussed briefly here.

The search for good governance seemingly is an endless one. The term corruption is inbuilt within the realm of governance. If this is polished, reduced, condition created to be removed then it is called good government or governance. If it is encouraged, institutionalised and not checked then it is bad government or governance. Ensuring goodness in governance and raising its level - intensity and coverage wise have always been aspirations of people and a challenge to rulers since the very dawn of state or community rule.

After independence our constitution

enshrined the aspirations and ideals of our freedom struggle. Since independence, the search has been on for good governance. It started with securing fundamental rights and directive principles of state policy for the common men. Concern for this persisted in recommendations of various committees, commission on administrative reforms, seminars, various government, non-government and international bodies. Despite all these efforts, institutional deterioration and decline of values in general remained unarrested. These germs of ethics and corruption have gradually sneaked into our few vital national institutions like judiciary and executive bodies. I need not elaborate this. Moral decay of leaders who rule the country has now put additional strain on the nation than other problems like population explosion, education that it can no longer be borne. The root of moral degradation of leaders is corruption for retention of power and wealth.

Corruption and National Security
As explained earlier, the interplay of a country's internal and external environments is what national security is all about. The external environment depends upon our relations with neighbors, both immediate and strategic, and internal actors and powers. The internal environment encompasses every aspect of our national life like economic development, law and order situation, social bond and cohesiveness, protection of life and property, management of financial institutions, NGOs and international bodies and so on. If we are number one in corruption progressively, how do we manage the internal environment, thus national security? In fact when we talk of comprehensive security, it is primarily management of internal environment, though one augments the other to fulfill national needs. In the era of technology and globalisation, the parameters of both the environments have shrunk and are gradually getting blurred.

Military strengths alone cannot defend a nation, its territory and vital interests. Synergy of efforts of all elements of national power under a good government is needed to defend national security. More importantly non-traditional threats need to be better comprehended in order to understand the effects of corruption in enhancing these threats. The non-traditional threats erupt from the mismanagement of internal environment and poor leadership. National Security cannot be achieved when people starve, live in insecurity, lose trust on law enforcing agencies. When government officials suffer from severe sense of insecurity, they are forced to indulge in corruption to attain false sense of security, after the change of government in our country. This has become a political culture in our society. Such situation is pitiable for any nation. The contemporary concept of national security hinges on the strength of economic and technological power. The Soviet Union disintegrated,

besides other reasons, because of the collapse of its economy. Yugoslavia has broken into pieces because of internal disorder. It is the good government free of corruption that manages a country's economy, financial institutions, and other vital organs of the government and manages internal order to protect national security. Thus good governance forms an integral part of national security. And good governance means good leadership, free of corruption imbued with high sense of national pride and culture.

Corruption could be at public and private level. In this article public corruption or corruption by the government servants and politicians are dealt with. Though private corruption at multinational company / industrial houses have negative impact on national security, this also gets encouraged due to corrupt bureaucracy and political leaders. When a government servant takes undue

privilege of his position, or accepts any gratification from any person for any favour, which he is not authorised, he is corrupt. In simple terms it is the misuse of government organs and power for private gain. The pillars of good governance / government lie solely on the hands of public servants both bureaucrats and politicians. But, unfortunately corruption is spreading like epidemic in national life, faster and seemingly in more deliberate fashion than ever before.

Why Corruption?
The search for the root of corruption and how gradually it has sucked in, into our national life may take us back to the Mughal and the British rule. Looking back to blame others and the old systems have become our habit and culture. This will be a waste of efforts.

We are now more educated, society has

become more cultured and ethical, or at least expected to be so. Why then corruption is now more dominant and prominent than ever before? Why it is more institutionalized (looks like) and some consider legal and ethical? Corruption of institutions and individuals, when not checked and allowed to grow, is institutionalised.

There are many reasons why corruption breeds. It is probably political corruption, which encourages others to follow the path. Politics in our country has now become a lucrative career. The roots of political corruption probably lie in the need to raise funds by any means to meet the election expenditure. Therefore, the elected representative gets honour bound or forced to repay his business master/godfather later with different illegal benefits. He also has to get back the money he spent during election. This certainly leads to corrupt practices.

With this comes the criminalisation of politics. The politicians encourage the underworld to get involved in politics and readily seek their help. Thus, violence becomes the routine norm of political culture. Political parties also enroll mostly mastans/ godfathers type of people in the party to attain political power by any means sacrificing all ethics at the cost of national interests. What a pity for any nation?

Corruption of the police up to certain level seems to have become the accepted norm of our national life. This is probably the culture of our sub-continent. What is of concern is that this has now entered the veins of civil and other bureaucracy and institutions at an alarming level. It looks as if a politico-bureaucratic nexus has been formed on the issue.

Sometimes the system encourages corruption due to lack of transparency, red-tapism, slow judicial procedure etc. It may be sometimes due to social phenomenon and creation of environment where bureaucrats, government officials of all kinds including businessmen/houses are forced to be either with "government party/support government under any circumstances or you are against me". If you are against me, you are antisite.

When one is forced to consider that one may not retain ones job if there is a change of guard, or one is forced to get involved in truly anti state / anti national activities for which one may face charges later, then one has to look for making quick money. One is trapped into an environment of unethical acts. When a serving bureaucrat sees his one time colleague moving from door to door for a job after early retirement, his children withdrawn from school, he is forced to think of his future.

Where there is no security of government officials backed by appropriate constitutional guarantees then all agencies, businessmen, criminals and people undermine them. The government then cannot function and corruption

automatically ensues.

The corrupt and power hungry politicians fail to understand that they are undermining and corrupting the institutions at the cost of national interest for personal ego/benefits. The government servants /officials are the backbone of any country. When government officials are humiliated, sent on early retirement without any reason, misusing constitutional power, the others in the service suffer from insecurity. The nation suffers from insecurity. The country gets divided when environment exists of "either be with me or you are against the state." If this phobia is not checked immediately, then government machinery will never be neutral, transparent and the country will suffer. Whole nation will gradually get addicted to corrupt practices. Any one with little knowledge, common sense and national pride will understand its implication. Why then is it happening? This is spoiling, corrupting and weakening the institutions. The fabric and elements of national power are being weakened.

Corruption begins at the top. It starts with political corruption and gradually seeps down the bureaucratic and other institutions' ladder. The incompetent bureaucrats of all types line up with politician for personal gain and extension. The politician encourages them to hide their incompetence for retention of power, money and future protection. In the process the competent goes down. Leadership gets weakened and corrupted. Ultimately the nation suffers. National security is undermined.

A good government or good governance is not a finished product. It is a dynamic concept. The main attributes of good governance are rule of law, accountability, decentralization, transparency in public affairs, independence of the judiciary, respect for human rights, peoples participation, equality of treatment, absence of discrimination, social sensitiveness, ethical approval, knowledge based leadership, willingness to anticipate and change direction to cope with changes as they arise from time to time. Where do we stand on the issue?

EndWords

Corruption is a disease that has become so widespread in our society that it pervades all areas of public life. It not only threatens our economic security, it also engenders dissatisfaction, disillusionment with the govt. and thus poses a direct threat to our national security. How do we proceed if corruption also is equally on the march?

Corruption needs to be weeded out. Our national security is at stake. It is time for the nation to search its soul and look for alternatives, not the methods but the leadership for a fresh start.

The author is a free-lancer



Democracy is the panacea of Muslims

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THE accusations that in his first term President Bush has invaded Afghanistan following 9/11 and occupied Iraq ignoring world opinion, at home, lost millions of jobs and created a great divide between white majority and the rest are still valid. And now the ground reality is that he is there for four more years with reinvigorated mandate in every count that matters in American politics. Consensus is the recipe of the kings and dictators: democracy is nearly always chaotic. The great presidential race has unified America in diversity than consensus. The bolstered president knows issues clearly and shades of opinion nationally and internationally. It is time for him to do the work sheet for the last administration on his inevitable march to history. All depends how he wants to be remembered.

In an earlier article I had suggested that Muslims, instead of becoming captive voters of a particular party, should be able to bargain. They are in crisis and need a visionary wisdom. The leaders must understand the ground reality that in crisis time, help is not likely to come without asking for it. Muslims pathetically lack capacity to force US administration but certainly can influence the decision-making if only the meager resources are wisely managed. Muslims need to assure and befriend the world to walk out of the stigma of terrorism, to sell the just causes that have fallen under the debris of 9/11.

Human conduct is never beyond salvation, not even when swords are drawn or battles are fought. With little exception, Muslims

world over, need vision and courage to convert the ongoing crisis into opportunity. The so-called Muslim Belt is divided between kings and dictators, suspiciously looking at their neighbours and invariably presume progress of societies may enlighten the people to reasoning. Perpetuation of the rule is the game plan by retarding the people in one pretext or the other. More backwards the societies are, more entrenched the rulers feel; safest if they can retard the societies to the medieval hue.

Bin Laden has come the harms way, giving false hope of light on frustration. Master-da Surja Sen, Charu Majumdar, Shiraj Sikdar,

the Guevara, Red Brigade of Japan and Bader Meinhof of Germany might have become folklore to some; but added little to human history beyond wasting blood and lives. Democracy is the panacea of the down trodden billions, and also the salvation of Muslim multitude. When a society has fallen behind by centuries the vision must hang on for decades and generations with the sweat and toil in it. The caution must go along that even if on the right track Muslims cannot replicate Europe in a decade or even a generation, which Europeans did since the Renaissance- a restless syndrome that we witness in Bangladesh. The oppressed Muslim Belt, desperate under humiliation and frustration can hardly see the beacon light without visionary leadership. Democracy is a culture, which builds painstakingly in confusion and frustration over decades and generations. It is, however, the only superhighway to everything that modern civilization offers.

Renaissance is the buzzword, which provided the key to the quantum leap of Europe, conceding right of individual over all else. Five hundred years on, today if any authority, no matter how much traditional or legal, denies the rights of people over the state, that source of authority is unethical, illegal and usurper in character. Before anything is said and done, the state authority must belong to the people and the government chosen by them. There is need to rewrite and reinforce social contact theory for the non-representative regimes.

Occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq has opened the eyes one more time that it is easier to identify foreign invaders and fight against them than occupation by indige-

nous forces that betray identity and deny steam for resistance. Take the case of unfortunate Iraq. How many millions were killed to perpetuate Saddam's iron grip on Iraq used chemical bombs to suppress Kurds and Shiites, built notorious Abu Ghraib prison to torture and kill dissidents without trace or record (that Americans did the same but was caught due to the culture of freemen), attacked Iran and finally occupied Kuwait to bring curse on him and the Iraqis. Even the brave Iraqis, who are now giving unprecedented resistance, belittling all strategic wizardry and military pundits of highest repute, failed to resist him. If occupation is inevitable it is better by the foreigners who cannot hide their identity and evade the wrath of the people. And in today's matrix, facing people's anger is not cost effective by a foreign power.

What is the quarrel between the Muslims and the West? The tailor-made hypothesis produced by Professor Samuel P. Huntington in the name of 'The Clash of the civilization' in the dying days of the eventful last century is in fact an antithesis to globalism and shared destiny of mankind. Progress of humanity on the twin track of science and reasoning has dwarfed the differences of culture and civilization into irrelevance. The clash is between democracy and non-democratic regimes. Optimism of global village is already asking for the burial of 'The clash of the Civilization' before it could get down from the cradle of the hypothesis.

While saffron bigotry is a living menace in India it is a sought after strategic friend of everybody today, due primarily to the strength of its democracy. In the seventies, when President Nixon was personally very angry with India, he could do little beyond occasional growling due to shared culture of democracy of the two peoples. And that people to people cultural friendship is totally missing today between the Muslim Belt and the West. The salvation is in setting the home right on a minimum agenda. Muslim countries of the Oriental have started the pilgrimage towards democracy. Let the Muslim Belt for once look EAST. The mountainous problems of today will be less than moles if only democratic culture is spread & shared. Surely, destiny has imposed a responsibility on God-loving Bush as a moderator. And he has no option to fail.

If democracy is anchored in the Muslim Belt future US presidents can, at worst, growl at the Muslims over the differences. Muslims have the option to convert the present crisis into an opportunity for democracy. Let them rise to the occasion.

The author is a writer on defense issues.

ROAD MAP TO PALESTINE

Unity amongst the Palestinian leaders is the pre-requisite

DR. MUHAMMAD RAFIQUL ISLAM RIAD

The hawkish Jew politicians and the Orthodox Israelis heart and soul wanted to bury Yasser Arafat alive. But Yasser Arafat with his own patience, wisdom and perseverance was able to survive 75 years. He not only was a world leader but also a real politician. China described Yasser Arafat's demise as the "lose of its great friend". It also termed Yasser Arafat as an "exceptional leader".

In 1948, after the creation of Israel the people of Palestine were victimised greatly. Increasing occupation of Palestinian land by the Israeli army and its systematic torture compelled many Palestinians to take refuge in Jordan and Syria. The young Arafat started the Fatah movement in 1960. In the 1980s this movement became popular in Palestine and Yasser Arafat achieved fame. In 1974 he delivered his speech in the UN as the first PLO leader. In fact, before 1993 PLO did not dream of recognising the Jewish State. In September 13, 1993, by signing the Oslo Peace Treaty, Yasser Arafat recognized Israel. Yitzhak Rabin and the dovish Israeli political leaders were happy with the outcome of the peace treaty. In November 1995 Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated and Yasser Arafat became helpless. The post-Yitzhak Rabin Israeli hawkish politicians started playing dirty games with Yasser Arafat. Benjamin Netanyahu's diplomacy made him dissatisfied.

In 2000 Yasser Arafat discussed peace process with Israeli Prime Minister Barak. Yasser Arafat had to keep extra

patient. In 1987 he started Intifada. In 1988 after the declaration of establishing a free Palestine state Yasser Arafat achieved international recognition of many countries. The EU had always backed Arafat and became the most influential donor of Palestine during Arafat's years.

Internationally Yasser Arafat became isolated in 1990 for supporting Iraq in the first Gulf war which annoyed the US. In real sense, at that time most of the people of Palestine had sympathy for the general Iraqi people. So it was difficult for Yasser Arafat to bypass his people's demand.

Hamas brought difficulties for Yasser Arafat time to time. In fact Hamas is popular amongst some Palestinians. Hamas suicide bombers created panic in the Israeli security forces. However, Yasser Arafat was able to bring all Palestine leaders under one umbrella. After September 11, 2001 Yasser Arafat became a victim of Israeli propaganda machine who accused him of helping Palestinian groups. At the same time, George W. Bush described Yasser Arafat as a "back-dated and failed" leader. Even the US and Israel refused to negotiate with Yasser Arafat anymore.

Some corruption scandals against the Palestinian Authority brought miseries for Chairman Yasser Arafat. But his people showed strong support for Yasser Arafat and he began to live in his Ramallah residence despite Israeli pressure and brutality. Ahmed Qureia started negotiations with Israel instead of Yasser Arafat.

Nothing fruitful came from these negotiations as the tricky Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom dominated ME politics on the excuse of the US war against terrorism worldwide.

After November 2, 2004 President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair took fresh initiatives for the revival of ME peace process. After November 11 Yasser Arafat's death, Ariel Sharon expressed his desire to negotiate with Palestine on the future of ME peace process. He hinted that "time for change" had come. On November 19 at the IISS, President Jacques Chirac kept emphasizing on reinforcing peace process in the ME in the post-Arafat period. In November Colin Powell's visit to Palestine was to keep ME peace process on the right track. The same was the purpose of the British foreign secretary, Jack Straw's visit to Israel, to discuss the future of peace process.

In the meantime, Fatah has decided to back present interim PLO chief Mahmoud Abbas as the presidential candidate for the January 2005 election. It is already a sign of unity of the Fatah leaders. Finally, if the Palestinian people who will decide the future of their country. The more the leaders are united the more will Israel and US be active to recognise the Palestinian Authority as an independent state the more.

Kofi Annan's Road Map to Palestine surely should be implemented as soon as possible.

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