

We now have to move on to the court of public opinion

MALEKA BEGUM

DIRECT election of women to reserved seats in parliament is a long-standing demand of the women's movement and women's organisations. It is also part of an important process for the socio-economic, political, and cultural development of both the male and the female population of Bangladesh. There is much national and international evidence in this connection.

Although participation of women and children in the French Revolution created a new era in history, no word has been incorporated about the rights of women in the human rights declaration (1773). Following the movement of womenfolk, "women's rights" was finally added in Article 17, which says that if women can be hanged to death, they should have the right to go to parliament. There were similar stories in other countries too.

The role of women in the liberation war is yet to be fully recognised in this country. Family law is still a weapon for repression of women. The tendency to forget about the rights of women by politically powerful people is still a sad truth. We all know how badly this tendency exists in Bangladesh.

The female population accounts for about half (48 to 49 per cent) of the total population across the world, as it does in Bangladesh. So mention has been made in the Bangladesh constitution about women's rights to participation in decision making for the development of the country, and their rights to socio-political, economic, and cultural advancement in the world. It would seem worthless to debate the issue now. But we are informed that there are debates on the matter on a regular basis in the political arena, within the ruling party, administration, society, state, judiciary, even in the courtrooms.

If we read the history of the women's rights movement (except the pre-medieval history), we would learn that the right of women to be elected was banned, limited, and became a matter of joke for the first time in France through the structured democratic law in 1773. (Liberal politicians made jokes by describing imaginary stories about elected women are sitting in parliament while pregnant. Source: August Bebel translated by Kanak

A combined coalition, comprising women's movements, organisations, and individuals has to be formed with the target that a list of five competent local women will be prepared for every seat and all out cooperation will be extended for electing at least one representative from the list. Active and close relations with women voters have to be established and a work-plan to create awareness should be devised.

Mukharjee in Kolkata, 1983). Later on, abortion was banned in 1803, voting rights were cancelled in England by parliamentary reform act in 1832. During the workers' conference in 1857, the right of women to work was revoked and later on the right to be elected also. In her book titled "A Room of One's Own," Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) says the history of creating obstacles to women's emancipation by men is more interesting than the stories of women's emancipation.

The obstacles to women's emancipation put up by men in that age have now transformed into another form. This can be seen in the continued existence of the patriarchal system and gender disparity. Women themselves could

equally be accused of creating obstacles to women's emancipation. We should not have misguiding impressions that only men are creating obstacles to women's emancipation. In Bangladesh, obstacles to women's development are now being created by the patriarchal-conservative social, family and political structures of both men and women.

In the 21st century, the very presence of women in democratic political platform, parliament, institutions, and the administration is facing challenges from the patriarchal system. The prime minister and the opposition leader of Bangladesh are women by nature but their actions have been no different from the actions a man

would have taken in their position. The issue of direct election to reserved seats for women in parliament did not receive due recognition when either of them were in power. This non-recognition was linked with the patriarchal structure and also with the political culture of the country.

The election to reserved seats, which will be represented by political and non-political representatives of the women's movement, should be through selection. But when it got involved with the interests of political parties, then there was a demand to revoke the selection and elect representatives to reserved seats through direct election. It became such an issue that election constituencies should

be increased from 300 to 400.

Therefore, there should be 400 seats in parliament. If at least one-third (as per the UN convention) of 400 seats, or even better, half of total seats are reserved, representatives in those constituencies would be elected by all men and women voters during the general election. In this way women's seats should be reserved as the attitude towards women and the impressions about them in family, society, and political parties are conservative and backward, and this keeps women from being nominated and elected in open seats.

Anyway, the womenfolk in Bangladesh do not think that all avenues are closed. The same way that Rokeya Shakawat Hossain, Leela Roy, Pritilata Oowaddar, Monorama Basu, Ila Mitra, Ashalata Sen, Shamsunnahar Mahmud, Sufia Kamal organised movements to create new roads by breaking through the closed ones, today's womenfolk need to go in the same way to the court of the people.

The womenfolk have the constitutional right to participate in direct election to 300 seats. So they have to establish the political platform of women to secure their rights and to participate in direct election in those 300 seats. The political platform of women has to prepare a list of candidates through a countrywide campaign, nominate candidates, and raise election funds. This avenue has to be explored in order to break out from the existing closed roads.

A combined coalition, comprising women's movements, organisations, and individuals has to be formed with the target that a list of five competent local women will be prepared for every seat and all out cooperation will be extended for electing at least one representative from the list. Active and close relations with women voters have to be established and a work-plan to create awareness should be devised. Preparation should be taken right now for mobilising the support of the 50 percent female voters and of like-minded male voters too. Let us raise the slogan: Cast your votes for women candidates in direct election.

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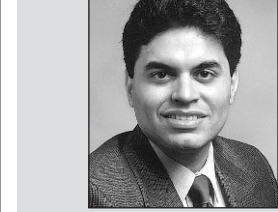


Rallying for right.

Mishandling the China challenge

FAREED ZAKARIA

writes from Washington



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If you look at two recent events, you might well conclude that the Chinese are a lot smarter at handling the United States than we are at handling them. This week China National Offshore Oil Corp. (CNOOC) ended its bid for the American energy firm Unocal, scared off by rising opposition to the deal from Congress. The deal would not have given China any special look on energy supplies. The only real downside to its collapse is that we will never get to see the merger fail, as it likely would have, and recognise that the Chinese had overpaid for a second-tier firm. Recall that before the Japanese went on their real-estate spree in the 1980s (which scared Americans silly and produced the 1988 law that allows the government to block such deals), they bought oil reserves and other such commodities, thinking they'd gain special advantage through direct ownership of them. But markets didn't work like that then and it remains to be seen if that strategy would work now.

More important, the way in which the United States killed this deal has sent a bad signal around the world. It suggests that we're intolerant of China's economic rise and want to stop it. It also suggests hypocrisy. For years the United States has been pushing countries around the world to open up their energy sector to foreign investment. In particular, we've been making this case aggressively to China and Russia. When protectionist officials in other countries want to fend off a bid from an American (or other foreign) company, they invoke national-security concerns. Now they have a perfect precedent. And if the effect of the Unocal affair is to close the energy sector around the world to foreign investment, the damage done to American interests probably

China's rise presents great opportunities and great challenges for the world. But they are new and quite complex. There are some in Washington -- like Rumsfeld -- who seem to see it as a replay of the Cold War, with China playing the role of the Soviet Union. This misunderstands both present-day China and the world we're living in.

outweighs any gains in killing the deal. It also slows the opening of the Chinese economy, which is bad for the United States for both economic and political reasons.

Now take the second event, the recent announcement of the "East Asian Summit" in Kuala Lumpur this December. The summit will include the Southeast Asian countries plus China, Japan, South Korea, India, New Zealand, and Australia. In other words, it is not simply an East Asian gathering but rather a broader one encompassing the major nations of the Asia-Pacific, with one notable exclusion: the United States of America. Despite being the dominant military and political player in the region, America has not been invited, the first time it has been excluded in such discussions.

This is how the Chinese challenge presents itself. It is not a crude attempt to corner the world's energy supplies but rather a quiet effort to establish itself as the dominant player in Asia. China pursues this strategy not by making noisy threats, but by making itself crucial to other countries in the region. Consider the turnaround in Indonesia. Ten years ago, when Indonesian officials spoke of their security concerns, China was usually on top of the list. Today, they speak of China only as a partner.

China's growth strategy has been different from that of Japan. When Japan rose to power, it did so in a predatory fashion, pushing its products and investments in other countries but keeping its own market closed. China has done the opposite, opening itself up to foreign trade and investment. The result is that growth in countries from Brazil to Australia increasingly depends on the Chinese market. China is making itself indispensable to the world. Even India, which is wary of China's rise and is a counterweight to it, will not ignore this reality. In three years its largest trading partner will be China, displacing the United States of

America. The Bush administration does not seem to know how to handle this new challenge. Donald Rumsfeld, fresh from wrecking US-European relations over the last three years, has decided to try his hand at Asian affairs. He's off to a characteristically clumsy start. Rumsfeld made a speech in Singapore recently where he complained about China's rising military budget. It's a cause for concern, but Rumsfeld handled it crudely, producing a backlash. Singapore's Straits Times was one of dozens of regional newspapers that reported on the speech by pointing out that "the US military budget consumes more than \$400 billion annually (closer to \$500 billion if you add in Iraq and Afghanistan) and accounts for almost half of global defense spending." "Experts estimate," the newspaper continued in the next sentence, "that China spends between \$50 (billion) and \$90 billion on defense." Now instead of talking about China's military growth, Asians are talking about Rumsfeld's paranoia.

China's rise presents great opportunities and great challenges for the world. But they are new and quite complex. There are some in Washington -- like Rumsfeld -- who seem to see it as a replay of the Cold War, with China playing the role of the Soviet Union. This misunderstands both present-day China and the world we're living in.

George Santayana famously observed that those who can't remember the past are condemned to repeat it. Here's my variation: those who only remember the past are condemned to misread the future.

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Anatomy of a first-class school

DR. FAKHRUDDIN AHMED writes from Princeton

WHILE the Rhodes Scholars, the English-speaking world's cream of the crop, held their Reunion in mid-July at the University of Pennsylvania, the Bangladeshi version of "cream of the crop," the former students of "East Pakistan" (now Faujderhat) Cadet College, held their Third North American Reunion on July 30, in New York City. Coincidentally, the only two "East Pakistanis" to win Pakistan's lone annual Rhodes scholarship (1970 and 1971) were students of Faujderhat Cadet College. The writer was fortunate to be the first. The chief guest at the Reunion was the college's former English teacher, Mr. A. T. M. Nasir Chowdhury, of the illustrious Chowdhury family of Noakhali that also boasts of Kabir Chowdhury, the late Munier Chowdhury, and Pakistan's Col. (Retired) Abdul Qayyum Chowdhury. Faujderhat Cadet College is an example of how to establish an excellent school in Bangladesh.

from Bholu, Barisal, Khulna, Jessore, Bheramara, Parbatipur, Mymensingh, and Sylhet. Our best student, Adnan, was from Bhairab Bazaar and our second best student, Mushfiq, from Ghorashal, Dhaka. Only one out of the five to place within the first ten (including the first three) in Dhaka Board's 1963 SSC Humanities examination was from Dhaka, everyone else was from rural areas or mofussil towns. Thanks to the foundation laid by Col. Brown, Faujderhat Cadet College has so far produced famous professors, Rhodes Scholars, head of the army in Bangladesh, top civil servants, top journalists, actors, national record holders in track, top industrialists and philanthropists, members of the parliament, and a Foreign Minister.

Col. Brown hired excellent native teachers, many of whom were first

lar component. We played football, cricket, rugby, hockey, basketball, boxing, swimming, gymnastics and track and field. An avid rugby fan, Col. Brown desperately attempted to make us rugby players, with limited success. While the inter-house contests brought out intense rivalries, the only outsiders we played were the Britishers of the Chittagong Club, in cricket and rugby. Later, a few Pakistani school teams played us in football. Every autumn we had the steeplechase run, which the student body hated; although a few like the writer did not mind because they did well. Col. Brown would use his enormous clout to bring famous sports personalities to the college. Pakistan's Olympic gold medal-winning hockey team visited in 1960 and presented the college the hockey stick with which the winning goal was scored. In 1962, during the rest day of the Dhaka Test

sions such as "OKI" We never had an American teacher! Once in a blue moon, Col. Brown would take us to Chittagong's Ujala Cinema Hall to watch Hollywood blockbusters such as Gregory Peck's "Guns of Navarone." Touring British Shakespeare companies (a la Merchant-Ivory film "Shakespearewala") visited occasionally and put on acts from Shakespearean plays. Col. Brown taught us some gentlemanly etiquette: "When eating, do not put your knife in your mouth," (just as Herbert teaches Pip in "Great Expectations") and "When you shake hands with a man, look him in the eye and give him a firm handshake; be gentle with a lady!" Col. Brown trained his boys to be socially savvy men of the world.

Overall, Col. Brown's moulded his students in his own image and through his guidance made them citizens of the world. Stationed in

caliber of the student body has diminished. But, we still have good students. The quality of administration and teachers is a concern. The principal has to a person with charisma and a vision. I do not know the quality of the principals we have today; I don't know how they measure up to Col. Brown. Is the current Faujderhat Cadet College attractive enough for visionary foreigners like Col. Brown to take the plunge? Why not? This is an age of globalisation. We should be attracting talent from all over the world.

Many of the brightest Bangladeshi students now study in excellent Indian schools. Why not the reverse? If we regain our past glory, students from India and neighbouring countries will be coming to Faujderhat Cadet College to study. We should not be insular. And we must make sure we set aside certain number of seats for foreigners. If Col. Brown and our former teachers were there today, we would be pulling in foreign students and teachers by the plane loads.

A few weeks ago, there was an article in The New York Times about Dhaka's Bashundhara, the largest inner city mall in South Asia. The reporter interviewed the visitors at the mall, and every man and woman said that Bansundhara was possible because it was a private enterprise; if the government was involved, it would never have been constructed.

So, how does the college get back to its glory days? Simple, really. Make Faujderhat Cadet College a private institution. Make it a global institution. Nestled between the Bay of Bengal and the hills two miles inland, Faujderhat Cadet College's setting is idyllic. With land and sea breezes, the weather is excellent. It is connected by road, sea, railroad, and air, not only with the rest of Bangladesh, but also with the rest of the world. If foreigners were attracted to Faujderhat fifty years ago, they will find it far more agreeable today. The college should not only recruit the cream of the crop from Bangladesh, it should also be welcoming foreign students. It must be made attractive to foreign faculty. If in seven short years (1958-65) Col. Brown's uncompromising genius could transform a fledgling rural school in Bangladesh into one of the finest educational institutions in the Indian subcontinent, surely the least we can do to honour his legacy is to take the college back to its glory days.

MOHAMMAD AMJAD HOSSAIN

In view of strong protests from Congress and public against acquisition of American company by Chinese companies America's free market theory seems to be facing serious test. They think their security at stake if China bought the Unocal. China National Offshore Oil Company (CNOOC) raised its offer by \$ 2.5 billion dollars to buy Unocal. The interference by the government in fact undermines the right of Unocal shareholders to maximize the value of their investment while accepting higher bid that CNOOC offered. CNOOC has offered \$ 67 a share in cash while American company Chevron proposed around \$ 62 a share. The US House of Representatives approved a resolution by a 398-15 urging Bush administration to block the purchase of Unocal. Unocal, the California based oil company remains engaged in production and development of oil, exploration of natural gas and liquids and has been in operation in Thailand, Indonesia, Myanmar, Bangladesh, the Netherlands, Azerbaijan, the Congo, Vietnam, Alaska and the lower 48 states of America.

The resolution and public clamour have caused severe reversal of the policy of Chinese companies going ahead outward. In the face of the decision by the board of Unocal to accept the latest bid of Chevron corporate, which is still below the Chinese offer, CNOOC neither raised its offer further, nor contested the deal and finally backed out. Meanwhile, another Chinese company, Haier Group, China's largest home appliance maker, withdrew from the three-way contest to buy America's number three appliance maker, Maytag. Maytag's shares in the market fell dramatically with the announcement of withdrawal by the Chinese company.

The fact remains that China is the single largest investor in America. China's holding of American treasury securities amounted to \$ 600 billion. This reminds me the outcry of Democrat Congressman Jim Moran, who said "we may be the most powerful nation in the world, but China, as the largest investor, has a great deal of leverage. This poses a threat to our sovereignty."

America has taken initiative to propagate free trade globally as the best means to develop strong economy. In this context, America has ratified a number of bilateral and multilateral free trade agreements. The present trend tends to be diametrically opposite.

Since the global trade in textiles and ready wears became quota free from January 1, 2005, China like other textile producing countries prompted to flood the markets in EU and America. While EU chose to negotiate with China over limiting



Special Development Zone, Wuhan Hebei: China has attained fast an enviable economic boom.

imports of clothing and textiles, America slapped new quota on several categories of clothing and textiles imports from China with effect from May, 2005.

A protectionism in the market economy? This reminds me what Dr. Supachai, Director General, WTO said: "It is through trade that countries can chart a path towards sustainable development and a higher standard of living while the trend is encouraging. Trade expansion is still hampered by barriers, which must be brought down."

Apparently America remains engaged in protectionism. There had been constant pressure on China to revalue its currency: Yuan. In April, 2005 the Senate voted 67-33 in favour of considering legislation that would impose a 27.5 percent tariff on all Chinese exports to America. The implementation of the legislation is delayed to give time to China reconsider revaluing its currency. China already criticised Bush administration for violating WTO rules with the imposition of a new US import quota on Chinese textiles. Yuan was of opinion that the timing of yuan revaluation would not be decided by Washington, but by Beijing. In spite of imposition of quota by America, three months statistics ending in May, 2005 shows that America has trade deficits with China amounting to \$ 15.8 billion. America has turned out to be the biggest trading partner of China. However, China is projected as an unfair trader.

In view of growing campaign by the Congress and some business circles, China announced its decision on July 21 to raise the value of Yuan by about 2 percent in an effort to buy foreign assets at cheaper rate while its export would cost more. That means poor consumers would pay more to buy Chinese products in America. Presently 1 dollar is pegged to 8.11 Yuan. The move was welcomed by Bush administration. Possibly China's decision to revalue its currency deters imposing 27.5 percent tariff on Chinese exports. In

the long run the country which is campaigning to revalue Yuan will have to regret as China's purchasing power would allow it to buy more oil and gas as its strategic goals.

It is not understood why the political clamour remains mute when billions of dollar assets of America are acquired by the Chinese institutions which include treasury bonds and notes and recent purchase of well-known American businesses: IBM's personal computer business by Lenovo Group Ltd. At a cost of \$ 1.75 billion.

However, China's overall commercial presence in the United States has been modest. In 2004, Chinese firms accounted for only \$ 490 million of US direct investment whereas US multinationals have \$ 15 billion in China. An interesting comparison of capital flows between developed and developing countries in 1997-1998 was given by Paul Krugman, columnist in the New York Times (Published July 22). He is of the opinion that "these days things are running in reverse; capital is flowing out of emerging markets, especially China, and into the United States". Japan, Korea, India, Taiwan and some Middle East countries are investing in developed countries, including America. According to Jephraim P. Gundzik, President of Condor Advisors, Inc. "the politicisation of economic relations between Washington and Beijing poses a significant threat to the US economy. Efforts to push the price of China's imports higher with quotas and tariffs will push inflation higher." (Condor Advisors provides emerging markets investment risk analysis). Therefore, the administration and Congress should understand and reassess its opinion and avoid unnecessary quarrel with China in the interest of America's economy.

Mohammad Amjad Hossain, a former diplomat resides in Virginia.

LETTER FROM AMERICA

If foreigners were attracted to Faujderhat fifty years ago, they will find it far more agreeable today. The college should not only recruit the cream of the crop from Bangladesh, it should also be welcoming foreign students. It must be made attractive to foreign faculty. If in seven short years (1958-65) Col. Brown's uncompromising genius could transform a fledgling rural school in Bangladesh into one of the finest educational institutions in the Indian subcontinent, surely the least we can do to honour his legacy is to take the college back to its glory days.

class honours and masters graduates of Dhaka University, such as, Mr. A. T. M. Nasir Chowdhury, Mr. Abul Kasem, Mr. Nazrul Islam, the late Dr. Badrul Millat, the late Kazi Azizur Rahman, Dr. Sirajul Islam, Dr. Selim, Mr. Bokiattullah, Mr. Salimullah, Mr. Haroonur Rashid, Mr. Abul Ashraf Noor, Mr. Ashraf, Mr. Wahiduzzaman, Mr. Abul Hasan, Mr. Kazmi and Dr. Anisur Rahman. An exceptionally-gifted and visionary principal, Col. Brown attracted British teachers like a magnet. The first two were Mr. S. L. Croft who taught English, and Mr. O. N. Bishop, an excellent teacher, who taught science. Later, Mr. Watson and Mr. Harry Shutt (who helped stage "Julius Caesar" in 1964) taught English, and Mr. Macbeth, another excellent teacher, taught physics. In addition, there were on campus several British Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) boys, who were taking a year off before going to college. The VSOs were closer to our age and lived in the houses with us. Blessed with such stellar and inspiring faculty, failure was not an option.

against Pakistan, the English Test Cricket team visited and gave us lessons in bowling and batting. Col. Brown insisted that students learn and play all the games, "so that you can enjoy watching when your playing days are over." To top it all, we had the Outward Bound and Adventure Training Camp, a wilderness survival camp, on the Rangamati Lake, every year, under the tutelage of Mr. MacGregor and the VSO boys. Students who underwent the full cadet college training, could not remain bookworms and had to become all-rounders, just as Col. Brown had envisioned.

Culturally, Saturday evenings were set aside for watching documentaries supplied by the British Council, Dhaka. Occasionally, Shakespearean films such as, Laurence Olivier's "Hamlet" and "Richard III" were screened, as were British feature films such as, David Lean's "Great Expectations," Alec Guinness's "Kind Hearts and Coronets," and Kenneth Moore's classic "A Night to Remember." American movies were never shown and Col Brown frowned upon American expres-

the tiny village of Faujderhat, we did not simply imagine the outside world, we lived in it. When a devastating cyclone and tidal bore hit coastal Chittagong in the autumn of 1960, Col. Brown suspended class for a week and made us help reconstruct the houses of the poor in the neighbouring villages, earning profuse praise from the press and "East Pakistan" Governor Azam Khan. When John Glenn completed the orbiting of the earth in 1962, Col. Brown informed us. When President Kennedy was assassinated in November 1963 and Sir Winston Churchill died in January 1965 we observed two minutes of silence for them. In February 1964, Col. Brown sent us the wonderful news, "Cassius Clay has knocked out Sonny Liston!" We may have been living in Faujderhat, but we were tuned to the world. We were trained not only in the best tradition of Bangladesh, but also in the best of tradition of the British public schools. Col. Brown made us gentlemen fit for the world.

There was only one cadet college in Bangladesh during our time. Now there are several. Since the cadet colleges have become regional, the