

Recognising Israel

M. SHAHID ALAM

It appears that General Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan's military dictator since October 1999, is on a mission to legitimise Israel: and he is going about it with the zeal of a new convert.

On September 1, 2005, Pakistan's foreign minister met his Israeli counterpart in Istanbul. This was followed by a meeting between General Musharraf and members of the American Jewish Congress in New York.

Earlier, the General praised war-criminal Ariel Sharon as "a great soldier and courageous leader" for pulling out illegal and often murderous Jewish settlers from the Gaza. Moreover, after the two "courageous leaders" shook hands in New York, the Pakistani General told reporters, "And that's very good." Very good? The question is, for whom?

The General wants Pakistanis to believe that recognizing Israel will be good for their country. His minions in the government and media argue that this is a pragmatic, even daring, measure that finally breaks free from the 'archaic sentimentalism' about the Ummah -- a 'vague concept' according to one columnist. Is this true? Or is the Pakistani dictator surrendering the national interest in order to perpetuate his own grip on power? This question deserves our sober consideration.

The claim that General Musharraf is acting in Pakistan's national interest strains credibility. The General has found regime salvation in what the US calls its 'war against global terrorism.' Instantly, on the night of September 11, he had seen the opportunity in America's putative war against terrorism -- and seized it with both hands. Musharraf's compact with his American mentors

was transparent. The US would support the General, and he would join America's 'war against global terrorism.'

This compact has been hugely profitable for the General. And he has never missed an opportunity to peddle its ethereal advantages for Pakistan even as he continues to surrender his nation's core values and interests. His method is simple. He has redefined Pakistan's 'national interest' to coincide with that of the United States. As he put it in June 2003, during a visit to Washington, "Whatever we are doing, we are doing in our national interest, and fortunately our national interest coincides with those of the United States, which is the beauty of our relationship."

The General's gains are clear; but what has Pakistan lost? Pakistan surrendered its territorial sovereignty to the US, handing over Pakistan's airspace and land bases to be used in a war against a friendly neighbour, Afghanistan. As a result, Pakistan lost the 'strategic depth' it had created in Afghanistan -- though, not with the best means -- by handing over Afghanistan to its strategic adversaries, the Northern Alliance and India. On its eastern border, Pakistan stopped supporting the resistance in Kashmir. In 2003, after the American invasion of Iraq, the General tried desperately to send Pakistani troops to police the US occupation of that country, but, thankfully, that move was defeated by Pakistanis.

On the domestic front, the General has been supporting the US 'war against terrorism' by promoting a new-fangled ideology of 'enlightened moderation,' no doubt a product of neoconservative think tanks in the US. This is an attempt to shift Pakistan away from its core values of

Islamic governance, law, morality and justice. The primary targets of this campaign are the *madaris* (the Islamic schools) and the *Ulama*, the historical safeguards against Western imperialism and state tyranny in Islamic countries. Now the US wants to destroy them under the pretext that they are 'breeding grounds of terrorism.'

The move to recognize Israel is merely the latest in the series of capitulations Pakistan has witnessed since September 11, 2001. It is an Israeli demand advanced through the agency of the US government. The General is being asked to give positive proof of his partnership in the 'war against global terrorism' by reversing

There are the conditions which Israel must satisfy before the Islamic world -- or indeed, the world -- can willingly grant it legitimacy. Israel must dismantle its apartheid structure and remove all the barriers to the return and rehabilitation of the Palestinians it has pushed out of their homes since 1948. Once these conditions have been fully met, Israel -- under whatever name -- will cease to be an imperialist project. It will lose its expansionist logic. It can then become a native of the Middle East, and live at peace with its Muslim neighbours.

Pakistan's strategic opposition to the unnatural creation of Israel. Pakistan's founding father had described Israel as the "illegitimate child of Western imperialism." Under Israeli-US pressure, the General is determined to turn Pakistan into an instrument for promoting Israeli ambitions in the Islamic world.

Much of Pakistan's media is now swamped with writers staking putatively 'nationalist' positions on the question of recognizing Israel. Suddenly, these writers are beginning to discover endless -- and vital -- advantages that will begin to flow to Pakistan once it normalizes relations with Israel. It only remains for these deluded Pakistanis now to celebrate the ancient ties -- going back to Abraham -- that have always bound the two fraternal nations. If the

countries, to pick them off one by one.

In this connection one may recall the disastrous experience of the Arabs with their 'nationalism.' At the outbreak of the WWI, the Ottomans allied themselves with the Germans in order to neutralize longstanding British and French imperial designs against their state. When the Turkish entry in the war threatened their position in the Arab world, the British sought to incite an Arab rebellion against the Ottomans. The Arab chieftain of Hijaz -- Sharif Hussein of Makkah -- was picked for this service with promises of an Arab kingdom. These early Arab 'nationalists' even agreed to hand over Palestine to the Zionists. What did these gullible Arab nationalists receive in return for their betrayal of the Islamic Ottomans who

had staunchly refused to cooperate with the Zionists? A vivisection of the eastern segment of the Arab world into paltry Arab fiefdoms, mostly controlled by the British, French and, later, the Americans. In addition, they helped to create Israel, which would engage in ethnic cleansing and endless wars against the Arabs into the indefinite future.

Let the Pakistanis also consider momentarily the implications of an Iran driven by nationalism alone to normalize relations with Israel. What if the two then joined hands with India to try to balkanize Pakistan? Drafting blinkered 'nationalist' arguments -- or with appropriate inducements from Israel and India --

argument is quickly exposed. With its light-weight economy -- currently, 12 percent of India's, and shrinking -- Pakistan cannot even dream of matching the attractiveness of Indian markets for Israeli exporters. India's trade with Israel -- including trade in military hardware -- will continue to grow rapidly even with Pakistani recognition of Israel.

If anything should alarm Pakistan, it is not India's growing trade relations with Israel. After all, Israel is a mere one-third of one percent of the world economy. If India is Pakistan's most serious adversary, economically and militarily, Pakistanis should rather worry about the rate at which they have been falling behind India in

economic size, living standards, education, science, technology, and democratic institutions. Could the General make a start by eliminating the last deficit in democratic institutions?

A second argument maintains that Pakistan can begin to mobilize Israel's powerful lobbies in the US, in particular AIPAC, for its own interests. All it has to do is normalize relations with Israel. The naïveté of this argument borders on stupidity. Yes, Israel hankers for legitimacy which only Islamic states can give it. It is the key that will unlock the doors to Israeli penetration of the economies of Islamic countries; this will allow Israel to undermine the Islamic resistance to Zionism from within these countries. Surely, Israel will dangle the moon before gullible

Pakistani generals and diplomats. But recognition is like virginity. Once Pakistan loses it, Israel will move to its next Islamic victim.

It is worth recounting here what one Pakistani newspaper -- *Daily Times* -- claims is Pakistan's chief leverage over Israel. It writes that "Pakistan will remain strategically more important [to Israel] as a Muslim state than India as a buyer of [Israeli] arms. India has offered itself as a partner in war; Israel actually needs a partner for peace in the Middle East." It is hard to fathom why Israel would turn to Pakistan -- a country in South Asia -- if it needs a partner for peace in the Middle East. Equally stunning, this newspaper has wholly bought into the Israeli canard that they had no partners for peace -- even after the Oslo accords. Israel's expansionist agenda depends on ethnic cleansings and wars. It has never lacked for Arab states eager to capitulate -- once it defeated the Arab armies in 1948. Peace has never served Israel's expansionist logic.

The General has repeatedly argued that there is no moral case now for denying legitimacy to Israel. If the Palestinians can recognise Israel, he demands, why should Pakistanis insist on being "more Palestinian than the Palestinians?" On moral consideration, this argument has no validity. Does a crime become legitimate if its victim -- left undefended by society -- 'accepts' his victimisation? The Palestinian recognition of Israel amounts to nothing more than this. Abandoned by the world community -- including the Muslims -- some Palestinian factions chose the path of negotiation with their tormentors. In negotiations too, the Palestinians continue to reap a bitter harvest. Yet, instead of offering substantive support to the Palestinians, Pakistan's military

rulers seek to legitimise Israeli crimes -- on the plea that the victims have done the same. This cannot be deemed moral: instead, it is moral cowardice in the extreme.

The deluded Pakistanis who urge recognition must be told -- and told repeatedly -- that Israel has only one strategic interest in Pakistan. Israelis look upon Pakistan as a target for attack and dismemberment, and this for two reasons. As the second largest Islamic country -- by far the largest in West Asia -- it could someday challenge Israeli ambitions in West and Central Asia. More urgently, Israel views Pakistan as a potential nuclear threat. In either case, Pakistan interests Israel primarily as a target -- a target for its F-16s, missiles and nuclear arsenal. This proposition holds regardless of how cravenly Pakistan seeks to befriend Israel. Israel will not tolerate a united and nuclear-armed Pakistan. Let Pakistanis ignore this incontestable fact only at their peril.

In closing, I would like to state -- for the record -- what I believe are the conditions which Israel must satisfy before the Islamic world -- or indeed, the world -- can willingly grant it legitimacy. Israel must dismantle its apartheid structure and remove all the barriers to the return and rehabilitation of the Palestinians it has pushed out of their homes since 1948. Once these conditions have been fully met, Israel -- under whatever name -- will cease to be an imperialist project. It will lose its expansionist logic. It can then become a native of the Middle East, and live at peace with its Muslim neighbours.

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How Bangladeshi Americans can help Bangladesh with their votes

DR. FAKHRUDDIN AHMED writes from Princeton

AN American friend once told me that America does not necessarily do something because it is right; many a times America does something because a pressure group within the US wants it done. The classic example always cited is that of the Israeli lobby. America's total political, economic and military support for Israel is not necessarily because most Americans want it, or because support for Israel is in America's interest; it is because the very powerful Israeli lobby wants it. Any American politician challenging the Israeli lobby's might usually commits political hara-kiri.

In 1981, President Ronald Reagan wanted to sell AWAC early warning planes to Saudi Arabia. The American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) put up such tremendous resistance to the sale that although the Senate narrowly approved the sale, the Reagan administration got the message. From then on, the Reagan administration cleared most of the important political appointments with the AIPAC first, before proposing them. In 1978, the Israeli lobby ousted the Democratic Senator from South Dakota, James Abourezk, who was an Arab American. And in 1981, the lobby used its political and financial muscle to defeat the Republican Congressman from Indiana, Paul Findley, for his supposedly pro-Palestinian views. A more recent example of lobbying is the neoconservative-triggered invasion of, and the ensuing debacle in Iraq.

Jewish Americans are not the only group lobbying for the interest of the country of their ethnicity. Most other hyphenated American citizens do it. In 2002, Indian Americans poured in money from all over the US to defeat Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney, Georgia's first African American Congresswoman, for her supposedly anti-Indian views. (McKinney was re-elected in 2004). And in the 1990s, Pakistani Americans harnessed their financial clout to defeat US Senator Larry Pressler of South Dakota, who was instrumental in enacting tough US economic sanctions against Pakistan for its nuclear programme.

Bangladeshi Americans, too, can do a lot of good for their country through lobbying and voting. However, the first loyalty of anyone who has taken the oath of allegiance to the US while becoming a US citizen must be to the US and the US only. Fortunately, the interests of the US and Bangladesh almost never clash.

The United States considers Bangladesh a friendly nation. And Bangladesh always looks up to America.

For lobbying, the best model to emulate is that of the AIPAC. The AIPAC does not care whether the Labour or the Likud party is in power in Israel. They look after the interest of the state of Israel only. Even when Israelis commit terrorist acts, such as Baruch Goldstein's massacre of 29 Muslims at Fajr prayer at the Ibrahim mosque at Hebron during Ramadan in February, 1994, they make a careful distinction between terrorism by individuals, which they condemn, and the state of Israel, which they defend and promote.

Bangladeshi Americans can do the same. Religious violence, terrorism by non-religious elements and corruption in Bangladesh must be

condemned for their own sake. These vices, if unchecked, will eat away at the fabric of the nation. Attempts must be made to extirpate violence, regardless of which political party/parties are in power. Unless these plagues are controlled, if not eliminated, Bangladesh may not even exist for long, and if it does exist, it may not be worth having. Those American citizens of Bangladeshi origin who truly wish Bangladesh well can get involved and put pressure on Bangladesh government in power to improve the law and order situation in the country, without resorting to the colonial mentality of asking foreign masters to chastise the Bangladesh government.

There are internal political, social and religious fissures and strife in all countries of the world. Intelligent nations keep their own dirty laundry within their borders. The confrontational-party politics in Bangladesh should not be allowed to spill over into the international arena to the detriment of the country's interests. It is important to make a distinction between party politics within Bangladesh and the promotion of Bangladesh's interests abroad.

There is reality and there is perception. The nation and the negatively impact the interests of all the citizens of Bangladesh. Regardless of who is in power, Ram and Rahim will still have to eat.

Real problems give rise to a perception problem and an image problem. Only by addressing and redressing the real problems, Bangladesh can hope to remedy its image problem. Denial will not help. After helping Bangladesh overcome its real problems by putting pressure on the government to act in earnest, Bangladeshi Americans can work towards helping Bangladesh overcome its image problem. In a globalized world, image matters. Good image helps a nation in leveraging benefits from global political and economic order. Good image engenders foreign investments, better deals for aid, trade concessions and foreign support in crucial national and international arenas.

Advertising Bangladesh's shortcomings only, on the other hand, plays right into the hands of those who do not wish Bangladesh well. Friendly foreign nations will be wary of investing in, and loath to treat a nation with respect, which its own citizens advertise as corrupt, intolerant and worthy of contempt

government must not be in denial of the reality in Bangladesh. It is the civil society that provides the fillip for most of the progress in Bangladesh. Bangladeshi Americans can help by supporting civic action within Bangladesh. Bangladeshi Americans can foster close links, and join forces with the Bangladesh's civic society with the aim of promoting democracy and development, combating corruption and fighting the religious and non-religious militants. With their economic power and immunity in Bangladesh because of US citizenship, they can be a major force for change. They are, of course, free to support and fund any political party or NGO of their choice and they can be a dominant force for the advancement of Bangladesh in every sphere. Dislike for one political party should not lead to actions that

and condemnation. Such mislabeling punishes Bangladesh and rewards Bangladesh's enemies. If patriotic Bangladeshis feel that their native land has indeed degenerated into such an abyss, it is their duty to work to reverse it. It is the duty of a self-respecting nation to resist allowing its political foibles to be rectified through the intervention of the lawmakers of another nation!

If we believe that unless the party we favour is in power, Bangladesh is not worth having, that attitude is not helpful to Bangladesh. Well-wishers of Bangladesh must work to make Bangladesh better, regardless of which party is in power. After all, for better or worse, over the last 15 years, the majority of the Bangladeshis had elected the governments in power. The attitude that "I can't deal with this rotten government, so would the

Washington DC-northern Virginia, Florida, Texas, Illinois, Ohio, Michigan, Minnesota and California. Every citizen of the state votes for the governor and the two Senators of the state. Every congressional district of each of the above states and others in the US has hundreds to thousands of Bangladeshi American voters.

Massachusetts, for example, has thousands of Bangladeshi Americans across the state eligible to vote for the governor and the two Senators. Likewise, there are hundreds to thousands of Bangladeshi Americans in each of the congressional districts of Massachusetts and other US states. Bangladeshi Americans can lobby their governors, senators and congressperson in each of these 50 states for the good of Bangladesh. Leveraging a better deal from the US for Bangladesh whether in terms of more aid or trade concession, foreign investments and American support for Bangladesh on other issues of importance to Bangladesh, such as, securing positions of leadership in international organizations, will help the nation no matter which party is in power.

From personal experience the writer has seen that a congressman responds to a constituent's request the same day; the Senators within days. Even the Governor helps his or her constituents in every way he or she can. Of course the reason for such prompt service to the constituents is the hope of securing their votes. The political life of a politician depends on the constituents' votes and the funds they contribute for his/her election campaigns. If there are overriding local, national or international issues that impact America, those issues should be the sole concern of every American as they decide who to vote for.

In the absence of overriding American issues that trump all other election issues, the voter may vote on issues that are dear to him/her personally. For example, if a congressman or Senator's actions or statements harm Bangladesh, Bangladeshi Americans can help Bangladesh by first writing to the legislator for an explanation, and if the explanation is unsatisfactory, by voting to oust the legislator from office, just like every other hyphenated Americans do. On the other hand, if a congressman or a Senator does something good for Bangladesh, Bangladeshi Americans should thank the legislator in writing, vote en masse for the legislator and write the legislator a handsome check!

There are Bangladeshi Americans in every state of the United States including Alaska. Large concentrations of Bangladeshi Americans can be found in Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland-

The invention of porno torture

It is no surprise that the military court that convicted Lyndie England found no porno torture in the case. In fact, England was not even charged for committing any form of torture. She has been found guilty of one count of conspiracy, four counts of maltreating detainees, and one count of committing an indecent act. No Iraqi detainees were summoned as witnesses to tell their story of shame, degradation, pain and suffering that porno torture inflicted on their bodies, minds, and souls.

DR. LIAQUAT ALI KHAN

LYNDIE England, the Army private photographed holding a naked Iraqi by a dog leash, has been convicted leaving behind a nagging question: how far up does the responsibility go? By no means is Lyndie England alone. She is the scapegoat of a larger US Torture Establishment. A related question that demands scrutiny is the widespread use of porno torture. Photos and stories emanating from Abu Gharib and Guantanamo, the military prisons that would live in infamy, reveal that American soldiers, CIA interrogators, and military contractors, all have engaged in porno torture against Muslim detainees. Unofficial stories circulating on the internet are beyond belief. But even official acknowledgement, though exposing only tip of the iceberg, furnishes credible clues that porno torture has been, and probably still is, a favourite tool to degrade and torment Muslim detainees.

General Antonio Taguba, who investigated charges of torture in Iraq, reported numerous episodes of porno torture. At Abu Gharib, detained Muslim boys were sodomized and detained Muslim girls were raped. Detained Muslim men were stripped naked and stacked in pyramids. Some were forced to engage in oral sex with each other. Some were forced to wear female underwears. Reports from the Guantanamo gulag are no less pornographic. One Muslim detainee was smeared with the menstrual blood of a prostitute. Another was led to believe, through long therapy sessions, that he was a closet homosexual -- torture aimed at dismantling the detainee's self-identity. Yet another detainee reported: Americans stripped me, hit me and beat me up. I pointed to where the pain was but they took it as a joke and they laughed. All these sadistic episodes are examples of porno torture.

Porno torture is not defined in law. However, laws do define pornography and torture separately. Pornography is visual depictions, including photograph, film, and video, of actual or simulated sexually explicit conduct. Torture is the intentional infliction of severe physical or mental pain on a person

for the purposes of obtaining information or a confession, punishment, or intimidation.

From these definitions, porno torture may be deduced as the intentional infliction of severe physical or mental pain for interrogative, punitive, or abusive purposes by forcing a person to engage in sexually explicit behaviour which is recorded, or staged before a live audience.

Note that porno torture is not the same as porno conduct. What distinguishes the two is the element of consent. The person engaged in porno conduct consents to visual depictions of his or her actual or simulated sexual acts. By contrast, porno torture forces the person against his or her will to engage in actual sexual acts for or before an audience. Just like porno conduct, porno torture is also photographed, filmed, or videotaped for the gratification of others. At Abu Gharib, for example, an act of torture was committed when naked detainees were forcibly stacked in a pyramid. This act of torture turned into porno torture when sexual torture was photographed, filmed, or videotaped. Recording of sexual torture however is not critical for pornographic purposes. Porno torture may be committed for the gratification of a live audience, with or without producing any visual record.

Torture is by no means an exclusive American practice. Almost all states, including Muslim nations, practice atrocious forms of torture.

Porno torture, however, is unique. It is unique not because it is harsher but because it is unusual. Very few states have been reported to practice porno torture. So a question arises: Why has the US Torture Establishment invented porno torture to degrade and torment Muslim men, women, and children? There can be several believable explanations. Here are two:

The first explanation is legal. The Torture Establishment knows that the United States has not fully accepted the concept of mental torture. The Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment (1984), a universally subscribed international treaty, prohibits physical or mental torture

and allows no exceptions under any circumstances. In 1994, however, the United States ratified the Convention with several reservations. One reservation narrows the scope of mental torture. No mental torture is actionable under US laws unless it causes "prolonged mental harm." Accordingly, the Torture Establishment might have foolishly concluded that porno torture may be inflicted on Muslim detainees since it presumably causes no severe physical injury or prolonged mental harm.

The second explanation is cultural-religious. The Torture Establishment interprets the war on terror as a religious war. It presumes that terrorists are Muslim fundamentalists with conservative sexual morality. The presumption is valid to the extent that Islamic culture shuns porno nudity and porno sexual acts staged for the gratification of an audience. However while a multi-billion dollar porno industry is permitted under the US laws, Muslim nations practice severe censorship to minimise the entry of porno products. This awareness of cultural difference empowers the Torture Establishment to use porno torture as an effective tool in challenging, confusing, and degrading the religious orientation of Muslim detainees. The Torture Establishment is betting that porno torture would cause severe mental pain and suffering to Muslim militants but no perpetrator will be prosecuted.

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