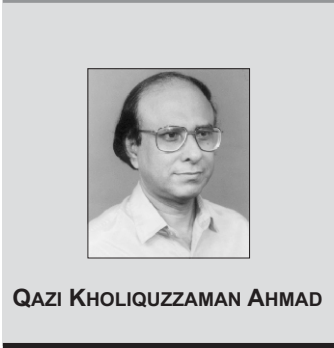


Towards an inclusive globalization



QAZI KHOLIQUZZAMAN AHMAD

WHAT does "an inclusive globalization" mean? In general, inclusiveness would mean that all those who come within the purview of the framework one is talking about have the opportunity, backed up by appropriate institutional, legal, and other arrangements, of responsibly participating in its management and equitably sharing in its outcome.

In the case of globalization, inclusiveness would, therefore, mean that it is managed in a manner that all participating countries of the world have their perspectives properly reflected in its policies and workings, leading to secured equitable opportunities and benefits for all.

Also, within the nations there must be socio-economic-political equity for all segments of society. Clearly, therefore, international financial architecture and governance institutions, including rules of business and participation, need to be properly reshaped for globalization to be inclusive of the perspectives of all participating nations.

At the same time, economic, social, and political processes within nations need to be reorganized to ensure people's effective participation in all the processes of social transformation such that equal benefits are secured by all segments of society.

The topic of a recently CPD-organized dialogue, addressed by Nobel laureates Amartya Sen and Muhammad Yunus and global financier and chairman of Open Society Institute, George Soros, was "towards an inclusive globalization."

George Soros has been widely reported to have played a large role in creating the East Asian economic crisis of 1997. But, he is now also known for his philanthropy, and advocacy for establishing open societies. In his presentation he declared himself against market fundamentalism, the protagonists of which claim that the market can solve all economic and other development problems, and the state can, at best, be a referee.

BEHIND THE FACADE

The role of the government has to be balanced vis-a-vis the market. The government must safeguard and enhance the interests of the poor and downtrodden. The potential economic and service sectors may need, and should be provided with, state assistance over an appropriate period of time to withstand the undesirable (e.g. dumping) and unequal foreign competition.

He notes that capital moves with great ease around the world, including to and from the developing countries, while people's movement from the developing to the developed countries does not form part of present day globalization. In other words, globalization is only partial. Obviously, the poorer countries are at a serious disadvantage as the movement of their people internationally is highly restricted, while foreign investment is, not infrequently, exploitative.



Amartya Sen has declared himself to be anti-anti-globalization, implying that he is neither pro- nor anti-globalization. He is for the opportunities presented by it to be taken advantage of. It is important, he suggests, that the pros and cons of globalization be properly weighed, and appropriate approaches undertaken to maximize the benefit. He says that the market is no panacea for all ills, and market fundamentalism is not acceptable. He has also criticized the US and Western European countries for the high agricultural subsidies provided in those countries, while they are calling for free markets to be established everywhere.

In Yunus's opinion, the developed countries monopolize the management of globalization and its benefits. He has used the metaphor of globalization highway having been captured by big vehicles from developed countries, while rickshaws from Bangladesh cannot find a place in there. He rightly emphasizes the importance of technological upgrading and adoption of new appropriate technologies in improving economic prospects of developing countries.

He suggests that ICT (information communication technology) is a highly potential source of growth and social progress.

Judged from the above mentioned, and other comments made during the dialogue, clearly the three panelists agree that the ongoing globalization works eminently for the developed countries, but not much for the poor countries. Amartya Sen, in fact, suggests that not much can be expected from reforms of global financial architecture



ture and governance institutions with a view to giving a greater say to the developing countries, which is so necessary for improving the management of globalization aimed at making it more inclusive. I find that, in reality, not only that the developing countries have not been benefited very much, many, in fact, have suffered setbacks as a consequence of globalization. In this context, one may see the 2003 UNDP Human Development Report.

Also, although the disparity between developed and developing countries was glaring and increasing even before the globalization process began, it has been increasing faster in the wake of globalization. In the developing countries, also, socio-economic disparity has been increasing in the wake of globalization, with poverty remaining entrenched at high levels. Obviously, the poorer countries and the poor people in those countries have remained excluded from the ongoing globalization.

Also, as things stand, and the attitude of the developed countries remaining unflinching in the matter of protecting and enhancing their own interests regardless of what-

ever happens to the developing world, an inclusive globalization clearly seems a far cry. Consider the international arrangement a bit more. The ongoing globalization is not working, and will not work, for the developing countries in general, and the least developed countries in particular. Because unequal international politics has shaped the arrangement, and the developed countries have largely set the rules of the game under which it is managed.



The developed countries, in fact, control all the institutions through core financial contribution-based voting power, as is the case with the World Bank, IMF, and regional development banks and, in the case of those UN agencies where the principle of one country one vote applies, through the overpowering influence that they exert as they provide maximum financial resources to these institutions.

The way the developed countries have been conducting negotiations aimed at reforming the institutional arrangement and the rules of business governing globalization clearly indicates that they are not about to relent and come forward to reshape the management of globalization to make it inclusive and equitable. One example has already been given, which has to do with the persisting high agricultural subsidy in the US and Western Europe while the developing countries are required, as aid-conditionality, not to provide any such subsidy to their farmers.

Another example is that the developed countries show little interest in pursuing the Doha

Development Round, which has to do with accelerating development in the developing countries, while they seek to pursue the Singapore Issues (viz. trade and investment relationship, interaction between trade and competition, transparency in government procurement, and trade facilitation) vigorously. Yet another example is, despite promises made again and again, financial and technological assistance provided by the developed countries to the developing world remains a fraction of the promised levels.

Surely, unless the developed countries come forward to change the rules of business, there is nothing much that will happen towards reshaping globalization in order for it to work for the developing countries as well.

Under the circumstances, a developing country like Bangladesh faces harsh external challenges. The options available are very limited. From a marginalized position it can continue to ask for more foreign aid, better trade deals, and more foreign direct investments. Its urgings may not yield much positive result; but when they do, to an extent, the terms and conditions will be largely dictated by the other parties and institutions involved. In the process, the sovereignty of the receiving country will be compromised in relation to economic decision-making, and even in relation to decision-making in social and political arenas.

In order to try and make the best (in terms of meeting the challenges and taking advantage of the limited opportunities) out of a highly unequal global order, and also to strengthen their negotiating positions for a more inclusive globalization, the developing countries must upgrade their national economic and negotiating strengths. In pursuing this goal a country like Bangladesh may proceed as follows.

First, it needs to strengthen its economy by properly and efficiently developing and utilizing its internal economic, social and political forces. On the economic front, particular emphasis needs to be placed on such objectives as technological upgrading and broad-basing; human capability development through appropriate education, training and health services at all levels; employment generation and productivity improvement; agricultural reorganization and modernization; promotion of small and medium enterprises; and infrastructure development.

Politics needs to be reoriented

to be reflective of the people's perspectives, for which establishment of participatory democracy and good and effective governance at all levels of society, from local to central, is essential. In this context, widespread awareness building among the people leading to their collective pressure could be essential; this process may be spearheaded by the conscientious segments of society.

The role of the government has to be balanced vis-a-vis the market. The government must safeguard and enhance the interests of the poor and downtrodden. The potential economic and service sectors may need, and should be provided with, state assistance over an appropriate period of time to withstand the undesirable (e.g. dumping) and unequal foreign competition.

The government must also ensure that national interests are upheld in both public and private dealings with foreign companies. In the social arena, the key elements include promotion of socio-economic equity through appropriate policy interventions, acceleration of poverty reduction through comprehensive approaches addressing the multiple stresses faced by the poor, and undertaking of steps to raise public confidence in key national institutions.

Secondly, it should take steps to strengthen its regional cooperation for mutual benefit from potential joint activities, and to collectively address common international challenges. It can also, for the same purposes, strengthen its ties with other groupings of developing countries to which it belongs, and forge new ones if deemed necessary. However, it has to be remembered that all the developing countries do not face the same internal and external realities; and the international interests of many of these countries may be competing against, or be different from, one another.

It is, therefore, necessary to forge and strengthen cooperation with regional and other developing countries on the basis of jointly identified mutual benefits derivable from appropriate joint activities, and to promote genuine common interests internationally. This is not an easy task but one that, if properly established and implemented, should help all partners derive good dividends.

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Down with the elections



MUHAMMAD HABIBUR RAHMAN

Down with the elections!
Down with the elections!
I will not surely vote to lend legitimacy
To the perpetrators of bastard democracy.
I have no zeal, enthusiasm, or gusto
To vote for the violators of election manifesto.
I won't vote for the gun-runners
Even if they carry the freedom banners. And surely not for the arms-smugglers
And surely not for the cheats and jugglers.
I won't vote for the traffickers of women and children
Rather I'll throw away the ballot paper down the drain.
I won't vote for the violators of parliamentary decorum
And those who are responsible for failure of quorum.
Who boycott parliament, but enjoy all the perquisites And sell their privileges in the black markets.

If I tear the ballot paper to pieces,
Won't that be deemed as a note of protest,
As in the American flag-burning cases?
As a law-abiding citizen, and not out of fear,
But for avoiding a hassle, I elect not to tear
The ballot paper to pieces, and instead I wait
For a lack-lustre candidate, Who has got the least chance to win.
And no chance to harm me or ruin.
You may say it's a negative vote, But you may kindly note
For casting a positive vote I may have to wait
For a dream candidate
For a long time -- maybe for eternity,
Till someone appears riding on a white horse To build the golden city.
Meantime, let me vote on the polling day,
I am free on this only day.
Let me vote for the candidate Who has got the least chance to win.
And no chance to harm me or ruin.
I will not surely vote to lend legitimacy
To the perpetrators of bastard democracy.

Justice Habibur Rahman is a former Chief Justice and Chief Adviser to the Caretaker Government.

SM Murshed: A unique voice

HALIMA AKHTAR

SM Murshed is a prominent figure and name across all sections of our nation. His aristocratic background was a fitting precursor to a brilliant academic career. Murshed rose to pre-eminence as a jurist imbued with a deep sense of social justice.

His contribution to the field of literature and belles-lettres was no less outstanding. All in all, he lavishly bestowed upon us his vast store of wisdom on various issues ranging from jurisprudence to politics to innumerable social causes.

As a jurist he was a pre-eminent exponent of the rule of law. Like many great legal minds he drew his inspiration from a variety of historical, philosophical and theological sources. Yet he was able to interpret these sources in his own inimitable fashion.

His genius lay in the ability to merge these diverse influences into his own brilliant individualism. He was acutely aware of the fact that excessive insistence on the letter of the law often violates the spirit, and turns the law into an ass.

The application of the rule of law is ultimately down to the deft, and even witty, handling of the law by legal practitioners. Murshed demonstrated his talent in this connection by reforming innumerable laws, and unraveling their complexities; offering us something truly unique in the process.

He can be compared to great jurists such as Marshall, Oliver Wendell Holmes and Lord Denning. He was forever kind and generous with his affectionate advice for his juniors, without ignoring those senior to him. His relations in this area were governed by mutual self-respect and tolerance.

Murshed's reputation as a great judge came through some famous cases, like the Mahmud and Samabarton Mamlas, all of which are landmarks in the legal history of Pakistan. His forte lay in constitutional law as evidenced by the minister's and "Pan" cases.

His fame was not just confined within the shores of his country, but he had an international reputation in this regard. Like all great judges his judgments were not only impartial but were also tinged with humanity and compassion. Indeed, few took exception to his judgments.

But the hallmark of a truly great man is the ability to rise above the narrow confines of his profession. Murshed never allowed himself to be shackled by any particular ideology or dogma, but took a keen interest in the political developments of his time.

He was distressed by the episodic communal violence that



punctuated the politics of the 1940s. Following the transfer of power and the partition of India in 1947, he joined those who were determined to bring to an end the frenzy of communal violence that swept through the Indian subcontinent.

In 1954 he helped draft the famous 21-point manifesto of the United Front led by his uncle Sher-e-Bangla A K Fazlul Huq. He played a prominent part in the mass upsurge of 1969 against President Ayub Khan, and in the round table conference convened by Ayub in its wake.

He gave his support to the 11-point demand of the students of East Pakistan. During Bangladesh's war of liberation he refused to collaborate with the Pakistan army despite the inevitable pressures.

His commitment to democracy, and his interpretation of the same, was akin to Abraham Lincoln. He dedicated his energy to the freedom and well being of men.

He protested vehemently against any form of corruption, venality and exploitation. When the education department of our country was becoming corrupt, Murshed stressed that the role of teachers was to instill values, indicating that they should be at the forefront in protesting against any undesirable situation.

Inevitably, men like Murshed have to confront many obstacles. Socrates was forced to drink the cup of hemlock; Murshed, too, was subjected to many pressures by the government for his honesty, integrity and above all his independence. But he did not sell his soul, remaining uniquely courageous in maintaining his freedom.

As a man Murshed was loving to his family and affectionate to his friends. His compassionate vision of Islam still inspires us. Not only was he a truly international figure, but he will also continually inspire us as someone whose values and principles, as well as steadfastness in this regard, often without recompense, are worth emulating in an age of time-serving convenience.

Halima Akhtar is a freelance contributor to The Daily Star.

The withdrawal syndrome

DILIP HIRO

UNTIL recently the words "Vietnam" and "quagmire" were unmentionable in the Bush White House's discourse on the Iraq war. But, the stream of bad news from Iraq turned into a flood with the onset of the holy month of Ramadan, and opinion polls point toward the Republicans' loss of the House of Representatives.

President George Bush conceded that Iraqi insurgents' increased violence was comparable to the Tet offensive in South Vietnam. In January 1968, Vietcong guerrillas in South Vietnam and North Vietnamese troops jointly attacked US and South Vietnamese targets. Their offensive undermined Pentagon claims that the US was in control of the situation and drained Americans' confidence in President Lyndon Johnson. Instead of seeking re-election, he retired from politics.

Intent on the US not losing the war, Bush maneuvers to present an imminent change in his policy of "staying the course" as a tactical shift.

Nonetheless, as Richard Haass, former director of US State Department's policy planning under Colin Powell, put it, "a tipping point" has been reached in American politics with regard to Iraq. If Bush's change of direction ends willy-nilly as an ignominious withdrawal of US troops, then the Middle East and the rest of the world will lose their awe of the sole superpower's military might.

October 2006 was lethal for the US military in Iraq, with 105 troops killed. Meanwhile, Iraqi civilian deaths run at nearly a hundred a day. Polls show two-thirds of Americans regard the war as going "somewhat or very badly."

In response, the White House

leaked the information that top officials are setting political and military benchmarks for the government of Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki. "The New York Times" reported that the "benchmarks" pertain to disarming militias, halting sectarian violence and shouldering more responsibility for security.

The benchmark concept had surfaced earlier in leaked stories from the Iraq Study Group (ISG), appointed in March by Congress, with Bush's approval, to examine the worsening crisis.

One of its so-called "classified" recommendations is to specify benchmarks for the Maliki government to fulfill in the process of taking over the task of securing Iraq, thus enabling the Pentagon to withdraw its troops first to large bases inside Iraq and then to neighboring countries, leaving only US military advisers embedded with the Iraqi army.

The main source of ISG leaks seems to be James Baker, the group's co-chair, along with democrat Lee Hamilton, former congressman and vice-chair of the US 9/11 Commission.

Former secretary of state under President George Herbert Walker Bush, Baker is a loyal Republican and a longstanding friend of the Bush clan. Though holding no official position in the present administration, he meets with George W Bush frequently to discuss "policy and personnel."

By leaking proposals to be officially unveiled by ISG in January 2007, Baker sets the stage for Bush to mask any future deviation from present policy as a change of tactics rather than strategy.

Significantly, in his October 21 radio broadcast, Bush said: "What is changing are the tactics we use to achieve that goal [of victory]."



The definition of "victory" has undergone a sea change since Bush's declaration of "Mission Accomplished" aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln on May 1, 2003.

From the beginning the Bush administration had Iraq in its sights. At the first meeting of the newly constituted National Security Council on January 30, 2001, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld offered an assessment of the broader US goal of overthrowing Saddam Hussein, according to "The Price of Loyalty," published in 2004 by Ron Suskind. "Imagine what the region would look like without Saddam and with a regime that is aligned with US interests," Rumsfeld said. "It would change everything in the region and beyond. It would demonstrate what US policy is all about."

American neoconservatives

and their exiled Iraqi allies fed a dire assessment of Saddam's regime into a White House that was set on invading Iraq regardless of the facts on the ground.

A scenario of post-Saddam Iraq crystallized: The new Iraq would be democratic, capitalist, peace-loving, ready to offer permanent military bases to the Pentagon. Its privatized oil industry would integrate with US petroleum corporations and opt out of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), thereby weakening it. A flourishing democracy would engender a domino effect, turning the region into a haven of democratic politics, co-existing peacefully with Israel.

More than three years later, however, Washington devises frantic plans to ensure that Iraq does not degenerate into a failed

state, endangering the region's stability as well as US security. Bush now aims for nothing more than a "stable Iraq able to defend itself."

A pragmatic Baker visualizes Washington abandoning its long-term goal of democracy in the Middle East, and suggests that "victory" be defined as "achieving representative government, not necessarily democracy."

Opening the previously strong public sector of Iraq to foreign companies by denationalizing 200 state-owned companies reduced the stake that Iraqis had in their own economy and increased unemployment.

At the first hint of denationalization, however, Iraq National Oil Company employees resorted to large-scale sabotage from which the industry has yet to recover. So Washington shied away from privatizing Iraq's petroleum industry while OPEC continues to exempt Iraq from its quota system - a policy dating back to time of United Nations sanctions on Iraq to reduce Iraqis' suffering - Baghdad has no intention of leaving OPEC.

Given the perilous lack of security in Iraq, no major foreign oil companies, American or not, now eye Iraq's hydrocarbon resources. Politically, the mayhem created by the Anglo-American invasion and its aftermath has set back the cause of non-Iraqi Arabs who pushed for political reform at home before 2003.

Now the leaders of the authoritarian and semi-authoritarian Arab regimes warn that the American model of democracy will tear apart national identity and create divisive sectarian and ethnic identities, turning the region into mini-states along the post-Yugoslavia model. They have successfully marginalized the advocates of political liberalization by describing

them as allies of the unpopular Bush administration.

Within Iraq, the key question is: Can federated Iraq be established without ethnic-sectarian cleansing? The answer has to be no. The four major cities -- Baghdad, Basra, Mosul and Kirkuk -- accounting for more than half the national population are ethnically and religiously mixed. The only realistic solution could be housing segregation in these cities.

The most effective way for Shiite and Kurdish leaders to win over reluctant Sunni counterparts on accepting a federal Iraq would be to agree to a formula of allocating oil income to each of the 18 provinces according to population and echoing the Sunnis' hostility to the presence of the American troops.

With Muqtada al Sadr' Shiite followers sharing Sunni hatred of the US forces, chances of the Iraqi government allowing the Pentagon long-term military bases on its soil are minimal.

Stabilization of Iraq is urgently needed. If Bush decides to adopt the Iraq Study Group's "leaked" recommendation of getting Iraq's neighbors -- including Shiite Iran and Sunni Syria -- involved in stabilizing chaotic Iraq, there is a chance of a tenuous restoration of law and order to let the Pentagon withdraw its forces in stages. But Bush has ruled out talks with Syria and Iran.

So the odds are that Bush will preside over a messy retreat from Iraq, leaving behind a country in the throes of a civil war likely to suck in its neighbors, and eroding further Washington's already low standing in the region.

Dilip Hiro is the author of "Secrets and Lies: Operation 'Iraqi Freedom' and After" published by Nation Books.
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