

Need for National Security Council

KHAN FERDOUSOUR RAHMAN

RECENTLY the National Security Council (NSC) is a much talked about issue. The national security process of Bangladesh has been neglected for the last 36 years since the independence in 1971. No effective process so far was followed to design such need; the country has even experienced long time insurgency in CHT, repeated border skirmishes with the BSF, and grenade attacks in various times including coordinated countryside explosions and bombings by the suicide squad of the JMB. Today the existence of NSC is a must to combat terrorism.

National security refers to the requirement to maintain the survival of the nation-state through the use of economic, military and political power and the exercise of diplomacy. NSC is a body of the executive branch of the government responsible to coordinate policies on national security issues and advising the head of the government accordingly. It is often headed by a national security advisor with assistance from senior officials of military, diplomatic, intelligence, law enforcement and other agencies. The functions and responsibilities of NSC of any particular country should not be amalgamated with the functions and responsibilities of Security Council of the UN and any such council under any military dictatorship.

In USA, since its inception under President Truman, the NSC is the principal forum of the President for considering national security and foreign policy matters with his senior national security advisors and cabinet officials. It also serves as his principal arm for coordinating national security and foreign policy among various government agencies. It was established by the National Security Act of 1947 and in 1949 it was placed under the Executive Office of the President, and is chaired by him. The Vice President, Secretary of State, Secretary of the Treasury, Secretary of Defense, and Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs are its regular attendees. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is the statutory military advisor and the Director of National Intelligence is the intelligence advisor to the Council. The Chief of Staff to the President, Counsel to the President, and the Assistant to the President for Economic Policy are invited to attend any NSC meeting. The Attorney General and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget are invited to attend meetings pertaining to their responsibilities. When appropriate, the heads of other executive departments and agencies, as well as other senior officials, are invited to attend meetings of the NSC.

In Israel the NSC was estab-

lished in 1999 during Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu. Other than strategic advice and security recommendation it carries out long term planning of security approaches and maintains relation with national security elements of selected friendly countries. Comprised of five wings, i.e. security policy, foreign policy, society and infrastructure policy, counter-terrorism, and organizations and operations, the NSC has both legal and financial advisors. Its recommendations are not obligatory to the government.

The NSC in Russian Federation is a consultative body, chaired by the President and comprised of key ministers and agency heads for coordinating and integrating national security policy.

In Turkey, the NSC is an advisory organ, comprised of selected cabinet members, the Chief of the General Staff and a few Commanders of the Armed Forces, and chaired by the President.

In Pakistan, the NSC is a consultative body and chaired by the President and having 13 members, e.g. Prime Minister (head of the government), Chairman of the Senate, Speaker of the National Assembly, Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly, Chief Ministers of the Provinces, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, and Chiefs of Staffs of three Services. It serves as a forum for consulta-

tion for the President as well as the government on matters of national security including the sovereignty, integrity, defense, and security of the State and crisis management in general. The NSC in Pakistan may also formulate recommendations.

In China, the Central Military Commission (CMC) with two wings, i.e. state CMC and party CMC, and both is chaired by the President. The state CMC created in 1982 is elected by and theoretically reports to the National People's Congress but is in practice autonomous. The party CMC is elected by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and is subordinate to the Politburo of the Party (the highest decision making body of the Communist Party).

In Iran, the NSC was established in 1989 to determine the national security policy and is chaired by the President of the Republic.

In India, the NSC was established in 1998, which is the apex agency looking into the political, economic, energy and strategic security concerns. The three-tiered organization of the NSC comprises the Strategic Policy Group, the National Security Advisory Board and a Secretariat represented by the Joint Intelligence Committee. Besides the National Security Advisor, the Ministers of Defense, External Affairs, Home and Finance, and

the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission are members of the NSC. Other members may be invited to attend its monthly meetings, as and when required.

Bangladesh needs to constitute the NSC with the head of the Government as its chief to work as the coordinating body in the battle against terrorism or for any other security issues. Ministers and secretaries for home and foreign affairs, chiefs of three services, heads of both NSI and DGF, and principal secretary to the head of the government may be the other members of the committee. The committee should sit together with a regular interval, and consult and take suggestion from the civil society on any important aspect.

The NSC of Bangladesh needs to be constituted and structured to facilitate serious deliberation of strategic threats and problems in an independent and objective manner on a full time basis. This should be left to the military hierarchy, strategic think tanks and a NSC Secretariat composed of professional, full time strategic and intelligence analysts and expert consultants. Finally, the NSC should be legislatively institutionalized as a constitutional body so that there is a continuum in national security decisions.

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Prospects of Indo-Bangla strategic partnership- Part II

WALI-UR RAHMAN

FOREIGN Minister of India, Pranab Mukherjee, made three offers: India was issuing a gazette notification to withdraw non-tariff barriers to Bangla exports, outright import of two million pieces of garments, restoration of rail link connecting Sealdah with Joydevpur. He also assured that India had no intention of withdrawing water at Tipaimukh, and offered to build a bridge over Raghachhera river. Above all, both India and Bangladesh agreed to "jointly combat terrorism." These are all announcements in small letters, but they carried a message of big hope foreshadowing a future to be characterized by trust and mutually of interests between the two countries. The Chief Adviser reciprocated in kind when he said, inter alia, the soil of Bangla will not be allowed to be used by 11Gs or anti-India terrorist groups (be it indigenous or exogenous). The confidence level was also seen in the body language of both. There was a time in the cold war interregnum, when a sound or sight in the Kremlin sent thousand Sovietologists in America brooding over mails and ciphers cryptograms and cryptic messages or the size of letters in the Pravda, if this conveyed a message of some kind. India requested, we understand, in private meetings, the handing over of the ULFA leaders, one in jail and others at large, known to be using the territory of Bangladesh, ostensibly to the detriment of Indian interest.

The immediate past Government showed a strange but somewhat familiar "diplomatic etiquette". When thousands of Bangladeshis were under the juggernaut of brutal oppression and uncivilised police behaviour, invocation of 'human rights' convention in regard to ULFA leaders was just mocking the state of Bangladesh. Silence would have been better than human rights mantra. Many Bangladeshi criminals are reportedly hiding in hotels in West Bengal. The Indian Government would do well to investigate. For that we need an Extradition Treaty between the two countries. There is an Act on Extradition Treaty passed in 1974. Some efforts were made, but the initiative was stillborn because of reasons yet unknown.

Now the Ministry would be at a

loss over the question of over 300 alleged criminals including JMB leaders and money launderers who have taken shelter in India, mostly in West Bengal. This is a time when the non-partisan government is seriously engaged in meting out justice to the criminals and godfathers, moonshiners and bootleggers, we have no available instrument in hand to make a legal demarche to our neighbour India.

There, however, exists an 'informal mechanism' agreed upon by the Commonwealth countries' Foreign Ministers sometime, in the mid-seventies, called the 'Commonwealth formula' which opens an informal way for negotiations between and among Commonwealth Countries facilitating exchange of criminals or terrorists or money launderers. For that goodwill among Governments is the most important factor. In 1996-1998, negotiations were initiated for a deal with the UK, Zimbabwe, Canada, and Kenya for extraditing alleged criminals hiding in or visiting those countries. Our initiative after initial success was cut short again by the shortsightedness of the relevant ministry of the Government!

Commonwealth formula can now be looked into seriously till a treaty is signed with India. In my view this is an opportunity for both India and Bangladesh to show statesmanship, rise above narrow political or regional considerations and strike a deal, albeit short term or mid-term, so that the politicians will have no chance of looking back or gerrymandering existing agreements or MOUs. The SAARC summit to be held in April 3-4, 2007 in New Delhi provides an ideal moment to restore history, history forged by the sacred blood of the heroes of both the neighbours, thus recognising the valiant fighters like one soldier-officer Major Raj Mohan who had sixty percent burn on his body, ten thousand Indians dead and those millions in Bangladesh who laid down their precious lives to give us independent sovereign nationhood. Bangladesh is not a nation of ingrates, India is a great historical nation. While Tata and other energy establishments may take 2 to 3 years to complete their plants, India in its great secular tradition of sacrifice and hospitality, as demonstrated in 1971, may allow a tripartite agreement to be signed for transmission of power

from Bhutan (300 megawatt) and Nepal (500 megawatt) to Bangladesh, urgently. New Delhi should appreciate that the present non-partisan Government has come into place to perform a historic job. The people of the Republic want them to do it. The energy sector was left totally crippled. As the former energy minister said, Tk. 6000/- crores were plundered without adding one megawatt of power to the national grid! The present Government has to redeem and save the Republic from a strategic meltdown.

As I said earlier, the centre of gravity in global affairs is moving to a dynamic Asia. The ADB in one estimate said Asia made three-fifths of the world's GDP around the timeline of 1820. The same study suggests that by 2025 Asia could return to the 1820 position. In this era of globalization Japan, China and India will be responsible for this tectonic shift in world economic dynamics. It is to be noted that India and China produce more scientists than all the countries taken together. And 60 percent of that is produced in India. The cutting edge of Indian supremacy in technology and soft power industries will be its human resources, second to none in the world.

In this backdrop India could move beyond historical legacies and play its role in the shifting geopolitics of the present time. India can make her journey into the historic niche by extending Bangladesh a helping hand she needs. With India's 100 core people, the robust entrepreneurship of the Bengalees could convert this region into a vibrant economic zone to the benefit of both. With infrastructural connectivity between India and Bangladesh, the sub-region could make a giant march to economic prosperity, particularly on the eastern flank of Indo-Bangla region. Such a partnership could set an example for other regions in continent of South Asia.

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Fallout from a screwup

MUMTAZ IQBAL

A big screw up based on false pretences upsets family members, alienates friends and reduces ability to influence people. Defeat is an orphan and tar baby.

Bush is finding this out to his cost and the world's consternation as he frenziedly pursues a "victory" to reverse his sagging reputation and legacy.

The screw up is Iraq. The "victory" sought is to knockout the Taliban in Afghanistan and brow beat the Iranians to surrender through tough talk, brandishing weapons and threatening to unleash the Israelis.

IRAQ SITUATION

Everything that could possibly go wrong in Iraq has. Bush's high water mark was the carefully staged Mission Accomplished speech on the aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln on 1 May 2003.

Since then, things have gone downhill. What was a family quarrel became an open fissure as the US public soured on the seemingly endless war and high casualties.

One upshot was that Democrats won control of Congress last November and on 16 February 2007 the House of Representatives passed a non-

there have become stable enough for Iraqis to handle security. Perhaps. But many see the announcement as the final unraveling of the Bush-Blair Iraq entente.

On 22 February, Brit MOD announced that Lt. Harry Windsor (Prince Harry) would go with his unit to Iraq, the first royal to go to war in the ME 800 years after Richard the Lionheart led an English army toward Jerusalem.

Talk about Harry's safety swamped that of Brits role in Iraq. Tim Luckhurst, former editor of Scotsman, suggested that this was Blair's cynical ploy to divert attention from the war. Tony's not lost his touch!

Denmark also announced withdrawal of its contingent of 460 by next August. Tiny Lithuania is considering the same for its 53 soldiers.

When in trouble, create diversions. To take the spotlight off Iraq's unwinnable war, Bush is highlighting US action in Afghanistan to record a "victory" and ratcheting up the nuclear "threat" from Iran.

AFGHANISTAN

To preempt a Taliban spring offensive, US is diverting a brigade (3,200 soldiers) from Baghdad to southern Afghanistan the Brits are

as Washington keeps its forces. Public support for the war dropped from 55% in March to 35% by late December 2006 after Canada lost 44 soldiers and diplomats last year.

NATO considers itself as good guys, but many Pushtuns see them as a white infidel occupation army. Speaking by satellite phone, senior commander Mullah Dadaullah told Reuters that about 6,000 Taliban are trained and equipped to attack the foreigners once the weather warms up.

So a long hot summer lies ahead in southern Afghanistan. NATO resolve will be tested by the number of casualties taken as that will directly impact public support back home.

With its superior firepower, NATO will probably contain, even lick, the Taliban who, however, may not oblige by launching any serious offensive. NATO may have the watch, but the locals have the time, as Afghans point out. Who lasts longer and delivers is the name of the game.

Afghanistan has embarrassed Italy. On 21 February 2007, a parliamentary vote in Rome over sending troops to Afghanistan and expanding a US military base in Italy led to PM Romano Prodi's resignation.

This reveals the concern festering in Europe over US policy of

some strongly pro-US Italians like leading former diplomat Sergio Romano. He believes the US should not have bases on Italian soil, since they may be used to facilitate attacking Iranian targets. The Italian backlash suggests European leaders realize the perils of supporting the Bush administration at this sensitive moment.

The Pakistanis are also upset. US is pressuring Islamabad to do more against Taliban and al-Qaeda militants. Cheney repeated this message, hinting at aid cut-off by Congress, in his hour-long luncheon meeting with Musharraf on 26 February.

Musharraf rejected this call, insisting his forces have already "done the maximum" possible against extremists. Pak-US love-hate relationship appears to be heading toward a tense phase.

ESCALATING TENSION WITH IRAN

According to US neocon lore (exemplified by Michael Ledeen of American Enterprise Institute), taming unruly Afghanistan is a job for boys. Real men are needed to tackle Tehran. That's why Bush administration has been playing up Iran's so-called "involvement" in Iraq leading to GI deaths.

This effort started in August 2005. Mainstream US media citing

officials at a press briefing echoing Colin Powell's distorted UN presentation of February 2003.

However, their credibility plummeted when General Peter Pace, Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff, stated the next day that he didn't know of this briefing and couldn't say for sure that topmost Iranian leadership was complicit in anti-US hostilities in Iraq.

This disclaimer apparently had no impact. On 27 February, the US Iraq command in Baghdad claimed again to have recovered Iranian-supplied weaponry. If at first you don't succeed, try again!

Bush is steadily raising the stakes in this risky game of chicken. He's got two carrier groups (Stennis and Abraham Lincoln) in the Persian Gulf with a third on the way. Hillary Mann, the administration's former National Security Council director for Iran and Persian Gulf affairs, thinks some US officials are itching for a fight with Tehran. "They intend to be as provocative as possible and make the Iranians do something [America] would be forced to retaliate for." (Newsweek 19 February 2007)

Washington wanting Iran to suspend uranium enrichment before any talks corroborates this approach. This is asking Tehran to surrender before negotiations. The proud Iranians reject this.

VP Cheney hinted darkly on 24 February in Australia that the US remained "deeply concerned" about Iran's activities, and that "all options are on the table."

The 23 February deadline for Iran's compliance with Security Council Resolution of 23 December 2006 calling upon Iran to suspend enrichment has passed. Washington is working on a follow-up UN resolution that will further tighten the screws on Iran in its quest for a regime change.

Tehran's banking on Russia and PRC to thwart the US initiative by dangling lucrative contracts before Moscow and Beijing. It's working to detach the EU from the US because of the unpredictable consequences following any hostilities.

The cover in the 26 February issue of The Economist, a reliable interpreter of US politics, highlights Bush's plight. It shows him in a wheelchair with his whole body swathed in bandages surrounded by probing Democratic and Republican doctors. The lead article is titled Saving the Bush Presidency

US saber-rattling and psy-war-leaking news of Israel seeking Pentagon permission to overfly Iraq to bomb Iran—is reminiscent of the run-up to the Iraqi invasion, when Bush falsely accused Baghdad of having WMD and links to al-Qaeda.

Is this sordid story being repeated again over Iran? Or will the once bitten Bush administration be twice shy of taking on another unwinnable war that could destabilize the international system perilously?

It's a dangerous way for Bush to carve out a positive legacy.

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binding resolution --246 to 182 including 17 Republicans opposing Bush's "troop surge" plan to send 21,500 more soldiers to pacify Baghdad.

This deepening strife has caused Bush loyalists to bug out. On 21 February, the Brits announced that its 7,100 troops around Basra would leave by end 2008 in batches, with 3,000 gone by end-2007.

Blair claimed that conditions sending another 1,000—to reinforce NATO contingent of American, Brit, Canadian, Danish and Dutch forces. Washington's annoyed France and Germany refuse to let their soldiers in Afghanistan to fight.

This reinforcement has aroused mixed feelings amongst US allies. The Canadians were hoping to withdraw their 2,600 soldiers based entirely in frontline Kandahar by 2009. Now Canadians are stuck there as long

extraordinary rendition to pursue terrorists with some European states connivance.

In Italy, the so called Imam Rapito (kidnapped imam) affair led to five Italians including intelligence chief Nicolò Pollari and 26 suspected US CIA agents being indicted. In Germany, the Khaled al-Masri case has revealed German complicity in his rendition and led to arrest warrants issued against 13 CIA Officers.

US policy has pissed off even

unnamed military and intelligence sources reported interception of an Iranian shipment of "professionally made explosive devices" that would penetrate US armoured vehicles, hinting that the Revolutionary Guards organized this supply on orders of Iran's top leadership

This planted story, warts and all, was repeated on Sunday 18 February 2007 in Baghdad by three unidentified US military

Terrorism: The dilemma of definition

PRAKASH CHANDRA JHA

DEFINING terrorism has always been a difficult exercise. Past work on a general definition of terrorism has often been controversial, and no consensual definition has emerged at the international level. Without a definition, it is difficult to decide what constitutes a terrorist act, and it becomes problematic to formulate or enforce international agreements against terrorism.

Defining terrorism became even more difficult following the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and adoption by the Bush administration of the phrase 'war on terrorism' which many countries consider inaccurate and too broad. Middle East and African countries in particular, felt that terrorism against tyranny was acceptable and did not want to condemn national liberation movements as act of terrorism.

The challenge of reaching consensus on a definition of terrorism exists not only at the international level, but also at the national level. For example, U.S. government departments and agencies provide a variety of definitions. President Bush's National Security Strategy of the United States of America, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Department of Defense, the U.S. Criminal Code, as modified by the 2001 PATRIOT Act, and the Department of State, rely on their own definitions of terrorism, which are often quite different from one another.

The inability to define terrorism has prevented the emergence of a coordinated, effective counter-terrorism strategy among nations of the international community. The failure of the United Nations in this regard is a testament to the inherent difficulties associated with defining this phenomenon. Divergent viewpoints about what constitute terrorism and whether a definition is necessary or desirable has given terrorist organiza-

tions an advantage and placed countries in a vulnerable position. Without a coordinated international counter-terrorism effort, responses to terrorist acts will continue to be slow and reactive, while preventive measure will be minimal.

After 9/11, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted general legislative measures against terrorism-with serious legal consequences-without defining it. The UNSC has instead encouraged states to unilaterally define terrorism in national law, permitting wide and divergent definitions. It failed to define terrorism until late 2004, despite using it as an operative legal concept with serious consequences for individuals and entities. The Council's 2004 definition raises other problems, since it is non-binding (allowing states to preserve unilateral definitions) and potentially conflicts with multilateral treaty negotiations on terrorism.

The UNSC, however, adopted several resolutions following 9/11. By resolution 1373, UNSC imposed sweeping legal obligations on all 191 UN member states. It requires every country to freeze the financial assets of terrorists and their supporters, deny them travel or safe haven, prevent terrorist recruitment and weapons supply, and cooperate with other countries in information sharing and criminal prosecution. Further, by resolution 1373, the UNSC mobilized states for a campaign of non-military cooperative law enforcement measures to combat global terrorism.

Furthermore, the resolution also led to the establishment of the Counter-Terrorism Committee. In April 2004, the UNSC further strengthened the UN counter-terrorism programme by adopting Resolution 1540. The new resolution prohibited states from providing support to non-state actors that attempt to acquire nuclear, chemical, and biological weap-

ons. In October 2004, it approved resolution 1566. Though these measures were useful, many countries have expressed the view that a convention with an unsatisfactory and non-binding definition of terrorism would not be worthwhile.

As far as the UN General Assembly is concerned, there have been many attempts over the years to arrive at a consensual definition, but such efforts have failed so far. Recently, it adopted a resolution on a strategy to counter international terrorism on 8 September 2006. Despite the resolution's consensual adoption, a number of speakers from the Middle East and African countries regretted that it had not included a definition of terrorism or any specific reference to 'state terrorism.' They argued that the strategy should have distinguished between 'terrorism' and 'the legitimate rights of people' to determine their own future.

To sum up, it can be argued that defining terrorism is not merely a theoretical issue but an operational concern. Terrorism is no longer a local problem of specific countries but an issue involving a number of international aspects. Since terrorism is a global phenomenon, responses to terrorism must also be global. Developing an effective international strategy requires agreement on what we are dealing with. A definition of terrorism is needed and the more objective the definition, the easier it will be to reach international agreement. The sooner countries arrive at a consensual definition of terrorism, the better it would be for the world to fight it.

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