

Endless negotiations, deterrence and balance of fear

THE Israeli security doctrine is currently in a total deadlock. The last Israeli incursion into Gabaia, in the northern part of Gaza, failed to achieve its goals. The Israeli government has realized the ineffectiveness of using its arms capabilities in civilian areas. The limited Israeli penetration caused 130 Palestinian casualties of which two-thirds were civilians.

is very crucial to the Olmert policy, not in order to push things that were left from Annapolis but to give legitimacy to the Israeli containment doctrine towards Gaza and Hamas. In that sense, Abu Mazen is a strategic actor who is helping Israel formulate and reshape its policy toward the Palestinians. Condoleezza Rice, the US Secretary of State, announced the restoration of the talks during her recent visit to Ramallah (5 March 2008, transcript of press conference between Condoleezza Rice and Tzipi Livni). The American Secretary of State did the Israeli policy a great favor by pressing Abu Mazen to rejoin the talks and to re-manipulate the American policy toward Egypt by reallocating \$100 million to Cairo in order to play a role against Hamas.



that argument. It perceives the Palestinian issue as a security issue and not as a political one, which has to be solved in cooperation with the Israeli side. The US already has had three generals representing it by carrying out and monitoring any agreement, or even any possible minor agreement. General William Fraser is the latest general to be sent to the region by Ms. Rice. Before him was James Jones and before that, General Dayton, who was instructed to coordinate the military assistance with Mahamed Dahlan immediately after Hamas came into power in January 2006.

Concerning Gaza, Israel has to consider Mahmoud Abbas abandoning the negotiations if it starts a ground campaign. Israel also has to consider the eruption of another front in the northern part in Lebanon with Hezbollah, domestic unrest inside the West Bank and further harsh international reactions. No one can be sure of a decisive victory in a ground battle. Israel can start such a battle but it cannot assure the desired outcome. Furthermore, the launching of rockets may not be stopped. In addition, squeezing an entire civilian population to the corner might not be achievable in such an operation.

or the Tony Blair Quartet or now according to the Angela Merkel proposal to hold an international conference in Berlin which will strengthen the role of Germany. Rationally, the current situation is strategically good for Israel. Israel is exerting pressure to maintain the current situation in Gaza of keeping the Hamas leadership under siege while continuing the dialogue with the Palestinian Authority, and at the same time presenting the problem of the Palestinians as an international problem that is related to Iran and Muslim extremists and not a nation who has equal rights in this country.

Iraq war: Victims and villains

MUMTAZ IQBAL MOST wars have heroes, victims and villains. Not the Iraq War. It has no heroes, only victims and villains. The war's fifth anniversary on 19 March 2008 is a good time to examine who these are.

(using Lancet figure), died for this dubious achievement. Add to that 60,000 wounded, and many American families had their lives uprooted. US casualties are directly traceable to the Bushies' failure in conceptualizing, planning and executing this illegal conflict. Iraq has strained the US military. It has a lot to be ashamed of (Abu Ghraib; Guantanamo; Bagram).

Borrowing financed the war. "This is the first major war in American history where all the additional cost was paid for by borrowing," notes Goldman Sachs Vice Chairman Bob Hormats. The budget surplus Bush inherited in 2000 is in deficit, with 40% of the increased debt held by PRC and other foreigners.

slammed it as "a tragedy for Iraq, for the US, for the UN, for truth and human dignity" and a "setback in the world's efforts to develop legal restraints on the use of armed force between states." An unintended victim was ex-Secretary of State Colin Powell, described by fellow Jamaican Calypso King Harry Belafonte as the Bush house boy. His UN speech of 6 February 2003 was a pack of lies that ruined his gilt-edged reputation.

Hoon, Blair's Foreign and Defence Secretaries, are Gordon Brown's Lord Chancellor and Chief Whip, respectively. Politicians are great at comebacks. We Bangladeshis are finding this out! Bush's legacy is in ashes because of poor performance: spectacularly unsuccessful (Iraq), insipid (Katrina), lackluster (seniors' health-care) and stillborn (social security reform). A fiscal conservative, he drove the US treasury into massive deficit with tax cuts and war financing. He sanctioned torture, upheld renditions, curtailed civil rights (Patriot Act), authorized illegal wiretapping and undermined America's moral and material standing domestically and internationally.

Japan voices concern over China space program

TOKYO - A Japanese defense ministry think-tank has warned that China's space program could pose a military threat to other countries. The review, released March 26, also said China is likely to continue its space development program "as a vital means of achieving military competitiveness against the United States."

Changed scenario in Pakistan and Kashmir

The events of 9/11 and the subsequent American "war on terror" brought a perceptible shift in the course of Pakistan's foreign policy, evident from its volte face, particularly in its relations with its immediate neighbourhood. President Gen. Pervez Mushharraf is credited as the doyen of the gradual change in Pakistan's traditional Kashmir policy. He has always talked about finding an "out of the box solution", besides meeting India "half-way" in order to carve out a solution to this chronic problem.



outside Iraq mainly in Jordan and Syria. About the terrible intangible costs, Baghdad University Professor Nabil Younis writes the war destroyed Iraq's "...valuable military and economic asset, institutions and traditional, social and spiritual heritage." (The Times, 18 March).

much related to the Iraq war." Warspending didn't stimulate the domestic economy much, prompting the Fed to loosen liquidity that led to the housing and consumption boom and subsequent bubble. Hormats doesn't consider the war to be a "...significant cause of the present downturn" but concedes the opportunity costs to strengthen the US economy--to be great.

Blair like Saddam has gone, leaving office in disgrace. He's turned his talents to addressing the Israeli-Palestinian problem. Good luck to him. Some colleagues survived the shipwreck. Jack Straw and Geoffrey

was not a real or imminent threat to anybody," he wrote and that responsibility for the war "must lie with those who ignored the facts five years ago." This can only refer to the dynamic duo of Bush and Blair who fabricated facts and knowingly exaggerated Saddam's menace.

There's a lively debate amongst US historians whether or not Bush is the worst of all US presidents, eclipsing Grant, Harding, Hoover, Nixon et al. There's no such uncertainty in the rest of the world. It thinks Bush stinks. Bush destroyed US's good image.