

After Musharraf what?

BARRISTER HARUN UR RASHID

AFTER resignation of President Musharraf, it is disappointing to note that Pakistan's politicians are divided as ever. The PPP and PML (N), the two largest parties in Pakistan are deeply split on national issues. PPP is led by Bhutto's widow Asif Ali Zardari and PML (N) is led by former Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

Disagreement on three national issues

(a) Who will be the next President of Pakistan?
(b) How to reinstate the deposed 60 judges including the deposed Chief Justice of Pakistan Iftikhar Chaudhry
(c) Whether Musharraf should be tried for violating the constitution or given immunity?

Nawaz Sharif wants the new President from less populated provinces, such as Baluchistan, while Zardari wants the post from his province Sindh. Meanwhile, PPP nominated Asif Zardari for the President of Pakistan. Mixed signals are reported in the media from Nawaz Sharif on the nomination. The election will take place on 6th September. Meanwhile the chairman of the Senate is acting as President.

Also Nawaz Sharif wants all the 60 judges, including the Chief Justice, reinstated by an executive order. But Asif Zardari wants that they should be reinstated through a resolution of Parliament that includes clipping of some powers of the independent-minded Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry.

At the back of his mind Zardari thinks if the Chief Justice is back to his post he might declare the

amnesty given by Musharraf to Zardari on corruption charges illegal, and he will be charged with corruption. Furthermore, it is believed that Zardari wants current Chief Justice Dogar to stay because he is from Sindh while Nawaz Sharif thinks that Dogar should go because he was unconstitutionally installed as Chief Justice by President Musharraf under emergency rule.

The third issue is what to do with the ex-dictator. Nawaz Sharif and lawyers want his trial for violating the constitution by imposing emergency rule and deposing 60 judges including the chief justice. PPP does not want that Musharraf should be tried, and would give a safe passage if he wants to go overseas.

The ex-president is the fourth army General who came to power through a coup in October 1999 but was not forced by any other army General to hand over power. General Yahya Khan was forced by General Yahya Khan to hand over power to him, while General Yahya Khan was compelled by General Gul Hassan to hand over power. General Zia ul Haq died in mysterious circumstances in 1988 after remaining 11 years in power.

He is the only dictator in Pakistan who resigned after almost nine years in power to avoid impeachment proceedings. It is likely that Pakistan Army does not want "one of their men" to be put on trial. It is reported that the army wants him to get out of the country for a few years.

Musharraf perhaps thinks differently and wants to live in Pakistan. He thinks that he has done nothing wrong and is indispensable for the stability of



Pakistan. He imagines that both Nawaz Sharif and Zardari will be at each other's throat within six months and Musharraf would be called back to power by people for stability in Pakistan as General De Gaulle was recalled in 1958 to save France from political chaos and instability.

Given the above background, it is easy to note the wide divergence of views of political leaders and that of the ex-President Musharraf. Each thinks that he is right. How it

unfolds in coming days is another matter.

Musharraf's role before and after 9/11

The question is what had been the role of President Musharraf before and after 9/11? Observers say that it was while Musharraf was a senior figure and then chief of the army that the Pakistani military created the Taliban as their instrument in Afghanistan.

All through Musharraf's career,

he has known Pakistan to be partly responsible for nuclear proliferation. A few years ago in Sydney Musharraf explained he knew nothing of the efforts of Pakistan's chief scientist, A.Q. Khan, to sell nuclear technology to other nations.

Analysts say that if the Pakistani military really knew nothing about Khan's activities, they were the most incompetent military in the history of the world, as control of nuclear weapons technology is

always the single most important concern of any military that possesses them.

Similarly, observers claim the Pakistani army under Musharraf had a long and bloody record of supporting militants in Indian-controlled Kashmir. He was behind the unnecessary Kargil war and reportedly kept secret from his political masters. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had to go to Washington to deal with President Clinton with the consequences of the Kargil war.

Musharraf: an US ally

So how is it that Musharraf was hailed as an ally of the West in the war on terror and was often praised by US President George W. Bush?

After the 9/11 attacks the US was in a fury. It demanded that the Taliban, then in government in Afghanistan, hand over the al-Qa'ida leadership. When the Taliban refused, the US wanted Pakistani co-operation to move against the Taliban.

Musharraf agreed, but only after he had been threatened with the most dire consequences by the US Deputy Secretary of State. Both Musharraf and Washington then made a virtue of necessity. Musharraf said he would turn Pakistan totally against terrorism. He not only facilitated the US operation against Afghanistan, he periodically rounded up al-Qa'ida leaders in Pakistan.

But the notable thing about the US operation in Afghanistan was it did not capture or kill the top Taliban leadership, who all took shelter in Pakistan. During the subsequent years, as Musharraf pretended to be a friend of the

West, he took nearly \$US12 billion from Washington, but he never arrested a single significant Taliban leader. It became clear that the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence never gave up its investment in the Taliban.

Musharraf and his military cohorts thought they could outsmart everybody, walking both sides of every street. But finally everyone turned against Musharraf. The terrorists hate him for his operations against al-Qa'ida. The Pakistani people came to hate him for his trashing of their democracy, and his political allies were humiliated in the last election.

Furthermore, the campaign against the militants is unpopular in Pakistan because it is seen as an American conflict foisted on the country. Musharraf could not fully explain to the public that the effort to quell the Taliban is in Pakistan's interests as well. This has led to his unpopularity because people perceived him as "an agent of the US".

Meanwhile, members of the Taliban taking refuge in Pakistan's tribal areas have radicalised Pakistani tribal leaders, so that there is now a roaring Pakistani Taliban movement and, as the economy and the state decline, extremism is moving beyond these areas and gaining wider support in Pakistan.

Ultimately Pakistan must confront its extremists for its own reasons. It needs a military that can do its real job and civic institutions, such as the judiciary, that can do theirs. Cleaning up the mess Musharraf has left is a huge task for Pakistan's squabbling and unimpressive politicians.

Pakistan's instability and South Asia

Pakistan's political problems affect South Asia including Bangladesh in three ways. What happens in Pakistan greatly influences South Asia, particularly in India, and vice versa. Second, Pakistan has become the global centre of jihadi terrorism, almost certainly the haven for Osama bin Laden and the al-Qa'ida leadership. The hundreds of thousands of Pakistanis who travel back and forth within South Asia have proved an intelligence nightmare for South Asian nations. And third, Pakistan possesses between 50 and 100 nuclear weapons. It has been involved in nuclear stand-offs with India, and in the past has sold nuclear technology to nations such as North Korea and Libya.

Perhaps the greatest concern is the "steadfast efforts" by the extremist groups to infiltrate Pakistan's nuclear laboratories, the heart of a vast infrastructure that employs tens of thousands of people.

Conclusion

It is hoped that politicians in Pakistan rise to the occasion and put the country above their personal interests. It is a nation of 160 million within South Asia and South Asian nations must ensure that Pakistan does not become a 'failed' state.

Some observers suggested that a delegation of civil society from South Asian nations may visit Pakistan and hold discussions with Pakistani leaders. Pakistan stands at a cross roads and they have to be vigilant and united at this critical hour of the nation.

The author is a former Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN, Geneva.

Counter terrorism strategies in India and Israel

DR. R BHANU KRISHNA KIRAN

INDIA and Israel exist in a hostile environment, encircled by inexorable adversaries and a militarised regional milieu. Both countries have fought wars and witnessed crises in every decade of their existence and both are nations confronting external and internal security threats due to terrorism. Israel pursues its unconditional anti-Islamic stance, while India pursues the path of a secular state to reconcile its large minorities and each country has adopted significantly different strategic approaches to combat terrorism.

India, with an extensive history of counter terrorism operations, offers three examples of counter terrorism strategies: in Punjab, in Kashmir, and in the northeastern states of Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura and Nagaland. Security procedures, economic and social development programs, legal measures, intelligence, and international cooperation, have emerged as significant aspects of these counter terrorism campaigns. The Indian counter terrorism strategy has been a facet of statecraft, which privileges diplomacy and international cooperation. It has always been political and multidimensional and has never been the exclusive domain of the military. India's counter terrorism strategy has never sought the annihilation of the enemy and its politico-military behaviour has been Clausewitzian at all time.

By contrast Israel sees counter terrorism strategy as a military problem, comprising of military and police operations to disrupt terrorist infrastructure; commercial aviation security; defense against chemical and biological attacks; intelligence collection and analysis and efforts to strengthen the endurance psychology of the civilian population. Israel uses harsh steps like the elimination of terrorist leaders, the use of air force against terrorist targets, naval attacks and punitive measures like exile, and sealing or destroying the houses of proven terrorists.

Even though India has suffered the largest number of terrorist strikes and deaths due to terrorism in the world, it has never used the artillery or other heavy weapons against the terrorists in any part of India or permitted targeted killings of terrorist leaders. India fights terrorists with weapons that will not lead to a disproportionate use of force and collateral damage. It is committed to peace talks and ceasefire agreements with various terrorist groups, whereas Israel has not adopted these modalities. It is apparent that Indian counter terrorism strategy may be considered "soft" when compared to the hard-line approach of Israel. These distinctions have emerged from the dynamics of culture, politics, geography and technology, which provide the framework for these variations in the strategies of India and Israel.

Meanwhile, India and Israel also recognize the importance of emerging technological trends on counter terrorism strategy, but Israel is more developed than India, which is evident from India's import of weapons systems and surveillance equipment from Israel that is also developing technology specific to counter-terrorism.

India has developed an age-old tradition of religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence deriving from Hinduism. Arguably, Indian counter terrorism strategy is influenced by its tolerant culture. By contrast, the culture of Israel derives from its long history of Zionism and Jewish history. Beyond Zionism, Israeli mythology serves as the only source of Jewish military tradition; the immense skill and courage of the Hebrew soldier has fascinated the world.

Even though India and Israel became independent around the same time, India, as a state, has existed much longer than Israel. Indian state institutions exhibit a higher degree of lethargy and less novelty compared to Israel. The political leadership of Israel established a state that suited their needs with Israeli political culture incorporating strong precepts and ideas about the use of force. Whereas in the case of India, the colonial state has disappeared, Indian politicians have retained its features to continue the legacy of colonial rule.

The geography and strategic depth of India and Israel are radically different, which is an important factor that differentiates their strategic approaches to fighting terrorism. Due to its unstable geo-strategic location, Israel has adopted a belligerent approach for its survival. As a very small country with very small population, Israel has no military depth. Conversely, India has been a political entity for thousands of years and has a history of statehood under several empires and rulers. Most of its boundaries are natural and its strategic location is geographically and historically consolidated. India has a long history of non-aggression and non-expansion beyond these boundaries, and has continued this tradition after independence.

In conclusion, the counter terrorism strategy reveals the inheritance of the nation's cultural traditions and political institutions that are deeply embedded in the state's culture and psychology, which have a profound influence on the development of counter terrorism strategy. In addition, geographical location and the trends in technology have a role in shaping this counter terrorism strategy.

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US Presidential election: The international dimension

KHALED KHALIFA

INTERNATIONALLY the US presidential elections between the two candidates, Republican John McCain and Democrat Barack Obama, reflect all spheres of the US administration. The current American president is a lame duck who cannot conduct any substantial domestic or international policy.

President George Bush's gloomy visit to Europe was proof of the limits of his doctrine. During his visit, Bush asked the Europeans to take on a greater participation in the war in Afghanistan. Bush's main assumption is that Afghanistan is the center of Taliban activity, which attracts Al Qaeda and other international terrorist organizations. Bush intended to recruit both Europeans and non-Europeans.

It's quite clear that this American president has dragged these countries into an endless war without any ability to reach a satisfactory conclusion. Concerning the Taliban it will require a long battle but it's an important step in the Afghan nation building process. What we have seen to date is a long battle with a large number of casualties. It has been the grand project of one man named George Bush. However, at the end of the day he will have helped consolidate the Afghan national myth. At the same time the process will have been long and painful to the people of Afghanistan, the Muslim world and the Coalition forces who are paying the price for his ambitions. Now at the end of his rule, George Bush is urging European countries to send even more troops to fight his war against terror.

The situation in Iraq is the same. Bush continues to stay in Iraq as an occupying force. He couldn't succeed in convincing other countries to stay and most of his allies have already left Iraq. The future of Iraq, however, will be decided by the next president, Obama or McCain. McCain will continue the status quo because he has the same beliefs. Obama as president might behave differently. He might start thinking of evacuating the American forces. Bush will try to prevent him from doing so by escalating the crisis with Iran and by signing a new agreement with El Maliki. A long-term security arrangement with El Maliki would prevent any quick withdrawal from Iraq by either Obama or McCain.

It's quite difficult to imagine that even if Obama is elected he could give an immediate order to withdraw. Bush is aware of that possibility and during the last stages of his presidency is trying to lay the groundwork in the international arena for an environment that would give legitimacy to the American occupation of Iraq for a long period of time. If McCain is Bush's successor he will adopt the

same policy of a long term American presence in Iraq.

Concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the regional polarization will continue for a long time. Israel is living under the short-term command of Olmert. This is a leadership that has no legitimacy to make changes, to lead processes or embark on political maneuvering with the Palestinians, the Syrians or the Lebanese.

Olmert is involved in many scandals, which prevents him from acting. According to conventional wisdom, Olmert will try to "gain" time, or more correctly "waste" time in order to clear his name. Any other leader who becomes his successor will face the same problems and challenges without any possibility or ability to change things.

The Palestinian leadership headed by Abu Mazen is a prisoner in the American-Israeli triangle. His perception is that the US puts pressure on other countries to continue supporting Israel and not imposing a just, peaceful solution between Israel and the Palestinians.

The US wants to continue with the current situation and current relationship with Israel. It also wants to continue with its current containment policy against Iran, which is part of its policy supporting Israel. The American administration has no interest, no ability and no will to put pressure on

Israel. America's main interest, actually, is to continue with the conflict in order to have influence in other parts of the Arab world.

Condoleezza Rice's most recent visit, her sixteenth, to Israel without any comprehensive results and Bush's last two major visits to the

country were proof that they have no real intentions to come up with a solution on Israel. Nevertheless, on his farewell visit to Europe, Bush asked the Europeans to support the Bush Doctrine. We can say that Bush, in the name of his War on Terror will continue till the end of

his term with his containment policy against the entire region, which will continue to boil over for years to come!

The author, who is a journalist and member of The Arab Council for Foreign Relations, has contributed this article to The Daily Star.



Is Biden a good choice?

M. Serajul Islam

SENATOR Obama has chosen Senator Biden as his running mate during the Democratic convention now underway in Denver. Many outside the USA and particularly in Bangladesh will be disappointed that it was not Senator Hillary Clinton on the ticket. Has Obama made the same mistake that Al Gore did in 2000 where the choice of the Vice-President was crucial in the ultimate result in a very closely fought election?

It is a question too early to answer. Between now and Election Day on 4th of November, a lot of hitherto unknown issues are bound to come into play. Also, the issues at play already such as the Iraq war and the state of the economy will come under much more serious scrutiny of the media and the electorate. Together with these issues, the candidates will also face the same soul searching attention of voters. After eight years of George Bush who has not just turned the world upside down but has also messed up his own country in a manner no US President has, the coming US Presidential election will be the most important ever for the Americans.

During the primaries, Obama came from the back and captured not just the imagination of his own party but the nation in beating the front-runner Hillary Clinton with the promise of change. He was a breath of fresh air for a suffocating nation. He caught the attention of voters nationwide earlier with his keynote address at the Democratic Party convention in 2004. Then as

he toured the country, speaking on behalf of Democratic Party candidates in the 2006 congressional elections that the party won handily, the nation saw him and was impressed. His two biographies, Audacity of Hope and Dreams from My Father, both best sellers, have helped him touch base round the country. Thus when he became the presumptive candidate against Senator McCain, opinion polls nationwide gave him a 15% lead by early June; his performance before the media and his closeness to a discredited Bush administration helped Obama.

That double-digit gap has now vanished. A CNN poll this week put both candidates tied at 47%. A CNN poll a month ago had McCain trailing Obama by 7% margin. McCain who was an underdog in his own party's nomination race and then underdog to Obama when both were presumptive candidates is now in the race with a bang. It would therefore be useful to look into the reasons why Obama lost his big lead. Obama came into the scene with his charm; his opposition to the Iraq war and his message of change that rekindled in many hopes that Kennedy had brought to a majority of Americans in the 1960 elections who were frustrated with 8 years of Eisenhower when communism made great strides worldwide. In fact, it was the Iraq war that many had predicted would make or break either of the candidates in getting voters' approval. Obama got the early lead, despite being the first ever black to dream of becoming the US President, because, with his charm and charisma, he consis-

tently opposed the Iraq war, and has made no flip flop on the issue.

By June, an "Obamamania" had gripped USA. A new generation of first time US voters in millions of all races were flocking wherever Obama spoke, encouraging many to believe that the White House was within his reach. Although McCain has very strong credentials as a war veteran who had spent 5 years as a POW in Vietnam and excellent foreign affairs credentials being credited for normalization of US's relations with Vietnam, his age and his appearances before the media where he has fumbled many times, brought many detractors, some even suggesting his mental competence. In one of his famous faux pas before the media, he placed Iraq on the borders of Afghanistan.

The sharp differences remain. Yet Obama's lead is falling for a variety of reasons. Millions of voters who were hitherto watching the candidates without commenting are now coming into the equation as the election enters the post-convention period. They are looking at the issues more than the candidates. Of these issues, Iraq war is now playing out in a much different manner. In the last few months, the violence in Iraq has decreased dramatically; so has the number of US soldiers getting killed there. Americans, despite acknowledging that the war was a mistake are less concerned with it now as they were a few months back. They feel that US involvement there will end anyway, no matter who the President becomes because an agreement has been reached this week between Iraq and USA to pull out all troops by 2011. Ironically, many now feel that

McCain, with his experience in foreign affairs and his background as a war veteran, may be better placed to end US involvement in Iraq.

Thus Iraq war trump card for the Democrats has lost a lot of its value, making the poor health of the economy, healthcare, the central issues for the voters. The rising gas price from \$US 1 plus a gallon at the beginning of Bush's tenure to over \$US 4 a gallon at present, has caused an economic upheaval in the lives of all Americans in a way never before in history, leaving no corner of the economy unaffected. People are losing their jobs, their houses and indeed their hopes for their future. The average American is now aware that gas price has risen so dramatically because no major oil fields have been discovered worldwide, none in the USA where prospect of discovering oil in the Gulf of Mexico is tremendous. Unfortunately, the Democrats oppose offshore drilling on environmental grounds led by Al Gore and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi that Obama supported during the primaries. The Republicans are blaming the Democrats for rise of gas prices by telling Americans that if the Democrats withdrew their opposition to offshore drilling, gas prices would fall significantly. That argument is sinking with the voters against Obama.

In his keynote speech at the Democrats' Convention in 2004, Obama had said that there is no conservative America; no liberal America but a United States of America. Americans cheered that speech as it was delivered with oratory that was charismatic. But

that oratory and charisma shelled a fundamental truth about the American society; that America is primarily a conservative country where liberal ideas are not popular. The Republicans represent that conservative heart of USA, which is not far from there are many conservatives also among the Democrats. Thus sheer arithmetic works in favour of the Republicans, which is why they won six of the last nine US Presidential elections. Further, the Republicans are up against an inexperienced black candidate who has a Muslim middle name. Added to these, Hillary supporters (8 million plus voted for her in the primaries that was more than Obama's vote tally) have threatened to work against Obama after she was by-passed by Biden, a possibility that the McCain camp is already fully exploiting in their ad campaign.

Obama should have chosen Hillary to bring the party together when his ratings are falling. He has however chosen Biden to overcome his weakness in foreign affairs where Biden is the expert and currently Chairman of the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Biden is also expected to overcome voters' concern that Obama is inexperienced in the way federal government works. But Biden has his own problems, having withdrawn from the 1988 Presidential race on charges of plagiarism as a law student and then as a politician when he lifted extracts out of a speech of the British Labour Leader Neil Kinnock in 1987. The Republicans are sure to exploit the weaknesses

to their fullest. Earlier, Obama visited Israel to answer criticism that he is weak in foreign affairs. There he promised the Israelis everything and to the Palestinians very little. Just before his tenure ended in 2000, Clinton had offered to the Palestinians East Jerusalem as capital of the state of Palestine. Obama's promise of the entire Jerusalem to Israel has disappointed the Muslim world, which believes that the failure of resolving the just rights of the Palestinians will not set to rest the current tensions between the West and the Islamic world.

All these facts taken together suggest that a predominantly conservative USA, despite all Obama's charm and brilliance, is viewed as a liberal though he is trying his best to stress upon his conservative Christian upbringing (in his grandparents' home) where also his onetime pastor Reverend Jeremiah Wright has done incredible damage. Thus his liberal beliefs, his Muslim middle name, his Afro-American background and his inexperience may yet be his greatest obstacles and he has to convince the Americans on each of these before they give him a nod for the White House. Charm, oratory and charisma may not take him. Biden's choice as his running mate may improve his ratings with those who view foreign affairs as an important issue. Unfortunately most Americans do not and thus Hillary and not Biden may have been a better choice.

The author is former Ambassador and Director, Centre for Foreign Affairs Studies.