

Border attacks: Impact on Pak-US coalition against terror

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THE cross border ground attack from Afghanistan into Pakistan's tribal North West on September 3rd by helicopters involving commandos of the US Special Operations Forces to hunt down Taliban and Al Qaeda in their sanctuaries without Pakistan Government's knowledge has placed US-Pakistan coalition to fight terror under serious stress. It came three days before Asif Ali Zardari was elected President and was the main subject at his first press conference where journalists cornered him for his innocuous reaction on the attack. The US attack could not have come at a worse moment for Zardari who has a tainted image and little political experience and badly needs to create an image that he is not a US lapdog. It was left to General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani, Chief of Army Staff to take the strongest stand against the US action, calling it a threat to Pakistan's sovereignty that would be met at any cost.

The cross border ground attack is part of a three phase American plan to try and capture top Al Qaeda and Taliban leaders including Osama Bin Laden and Ayman al Zawahiri. It was carried under an order that Bush signed secretly in July and became public knowledge only after the September 3rd attack. Attacks from helicopters and Predator unmanned drones with knowledge of Pakistani military intelligence was being carried out for some time and seven such attacks were carried out since August 13th causing significant number of civilian casualties and discontent in Pakistan. Earlier on August 27th, General Kayani had a meeting abroad USS Abraham Lincoln with senior US military leaders where he underlined public support for military operations for winning the war on terrorism. Later, the US Joint Chiefs of Staff

Admiral Mike Mullen acknowledged Kayani's argument although it is now clear that Kayani was not informed about Bush's secret order.

The resurgence of the Al Qaeda and Taliban forces in Pakistan's fragile north-west had been worrying the US for some time. This year 113 US soldiers have already been killed in Afghanistan against a record 111 last year and 519 deaths since the war against terrorism started seven years ago. The White House had been under increased pressure from the intelligence and military to use ground force to attack Al Qaeda and Taliban in their sanctuaries without informing Pakistan's military intelligence, which the State Department opposed for keeping together the coalition that was weakening for a number of reasons. Bush finally agreed with his military and intelligence when he was given enough evidence that Al Qaeda and Taliban were being tipped off by Pakistan's ISI about operations against them well in advance.

General Kayani has been backed by Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani fully on his tough stand. Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, whose party is the largest opposition, has called for Pakistan to pull out of the coalition. In a country, where despite the alliance at the top with the USA, anti-American sentiments are widespread, the cross border ground attack has not created the passion in the streets that was expected. The media, however, has criticized Government's reaction as lip service, hinting instead at a secret deal between Washington and Islamabad on the cross border ground attack. One reason for the subdued public outcry is that the main Islamic Party of Maulana Fazal-ur-Rahman has joined the coalition with Zardari's People's Party and thus has been restrained in arousing public sentiments. The

Ramadan is another reason for the subdued public reaction. One issue is clear though that Kayani made his statement without consulting the President that could hint at bumpy relation between the two in future; that is not a good omen for Pakistan's attempts to return to democratic rule.

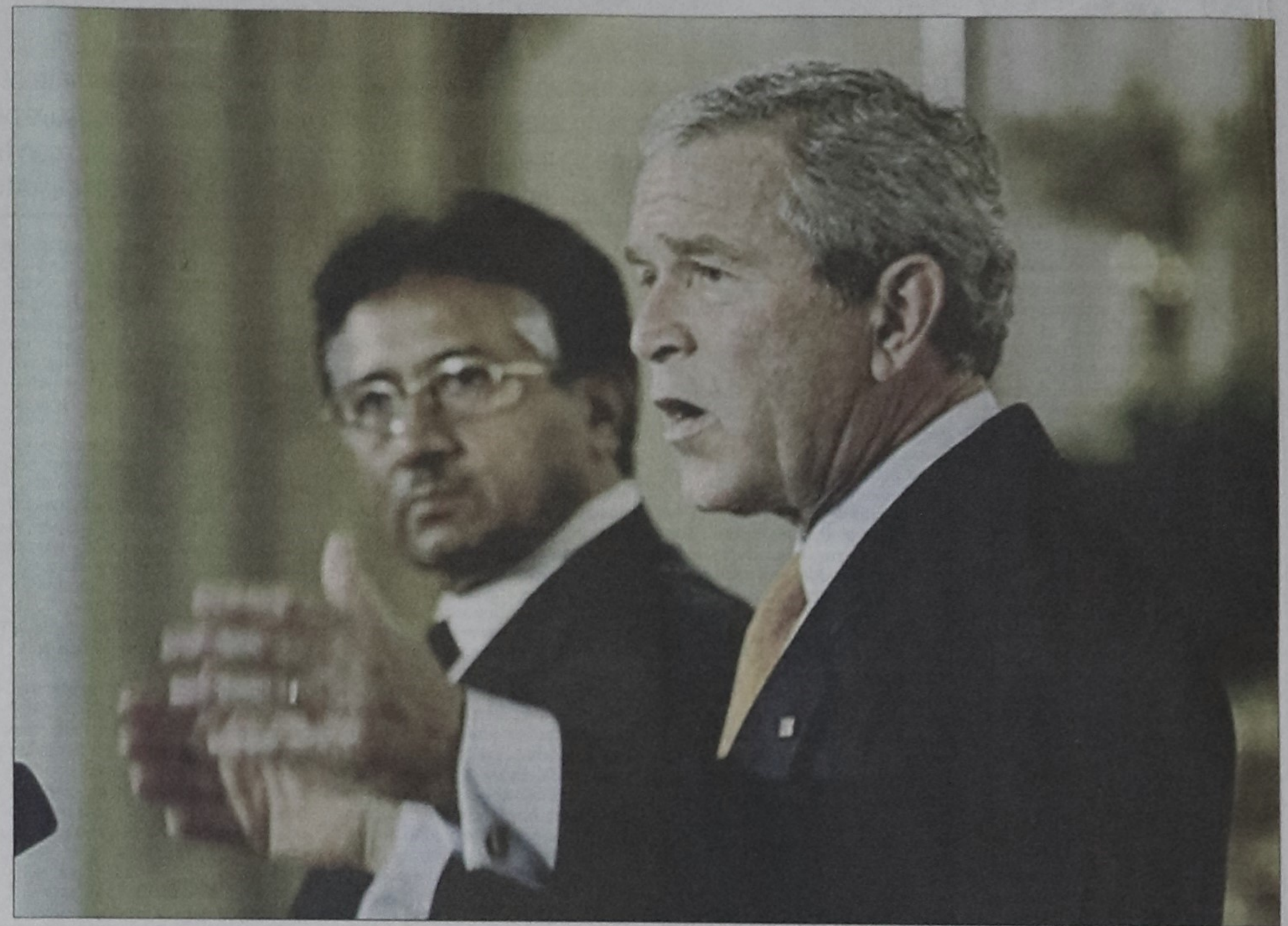
Apart from the issue of the cross border attack, Pakistan has not been happy for some time, even when Mushraff was in office. That her contribution has not been acknowledged in Washington properly, having so far sacrificed more than a thousand army and police personnel in fighting the war on terror against public opposition is the main reason. The unilateral ground attack has thus added salt to the injury.

The September 3rd attack under Bush's secret order underscores USA's deep mistrust of the ISI. But then Pakistan's ability to pull out of the coalition is easier said than done. Pakistan Government has high stakes in keeping the US happy because of the billions of dollars she receives in aid. Before 9/11, Pakistan was a pariah state to the USA because Mushraff had usurped power through a military coup. Yet, after 9/11, it was Mushraff who received one of the first calls from Bush and Pakistan became USA's closest ally in the war against terror. It allowed its territory to be used for bringing down the Taliban in Afghanistan that was shielding Osama Bin Laden and Ayman Zawahiri. A President who could not even hope for a courtesy call at the White House officially before 9/11 was invited to share time with the US President at his Crawford Ranch, a place reserved for just a few of the world's leaders as Bush and Mushraff became buddies and USA and Pakistan partners in the war against terror. Mushraff, to his credit, used US aid and friendship for Pakistan's economic

development extremely well.

Nevertheless despite Mushraff, Pakistan's public opinion remained sympathetic towards the Islamic fundamentalist, proven by the many assassination attempts on him, some involving people assigned to give him security. The irony is that it was the US encouragement that created not just wide public support in Pakistan for the Islamic fundamentalists; it was the US that brought Pakistan's ISI to close interaction with the Taliban to end the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Over a decade the ISI, the Taliban and US intelligence worked hand in glove against the Soviets. When Soviet Union broke, the US withdrew abruptly from Afghanistan without acknowledging that their encouragement had created the Taliban and Al Qaeda. The US's sudden withdrawal understandably did not destroy the nexus between the ISI, the Taliban and Al Qaeda that was merely suppressed when Mushraff took Pakistan to join the US coalition. With the weakening of top leadership in Pakistan, the nexus is surfacing.

Pakistan is facing a 'catch 22' situation; damned if they stay with the coalition, damned if they do not. In fact Pakistan is in no position to decide the issue, Kayani's resolve to protect Pakistan's territorial integrity at any cost notwithstanding. The two sides must sit and resolve US's claims that its troops stationed in Afghanistan can cross into Pakistan anytime without permission under the rules of engagement that Pakistan hotly contests. Till then, the US action under Bush's secret order is bound to make Pakistan's volatile politics even more volatile and uncertain. The embarrassment it has caused will favour the extremists. The worst predicament faces Zardari because he is the one who would, as President, have to face the developments



from the cross border attacks as the focal point. If such attacks increase, the US would expect him to back the attacks, something that he can do only by becoming unpopular with his people. Already, many questions have been raised about him for the way he found the route to Pakistan's presidency. If he fails to satisfy public opinion by backing the US on the issue, he would be seen as a US lackey, something he can ill afford if he intends to remain President a long time. Those who had cheered in the streets when Mushraff resigned

may have to think again for despite his bragging, Mushraff had demonstrated the ability to lead Pakistan. Pakistan is facing a very uncertain future and her tryst with military dictatorship may return again. US could expedite that by more cross border attacks that would only make Pakistan's politics more fragile and make it difficult for her to support US in a manner that would ensure victory in the war against terror. September 3rd cross border attack is thus a watershed in US-Pakistan relations.

At the point of writing, Pakistan's new leaders seem to have opted for diplomacy, dropping sharply on the rhetoric, although not abandoning it altogether. Defense Minister Ahmed Mukhtar has claimed that the Government has received assurances from State Department and Pentagon that September 3rd action will not be repeated; the two sides will exchange information and Pakistan military and paramilitary will take action against the terrorists. This is a statement to placate Pakistan's domestic

needs. Possibility of Pakistan-USA relations deteriorating over Bush's secret order may not end so easily; not till a new President enters the White House for Bush may yet be hoping, now desperately, to net Osama and Al Zawahiri before he moves out! Meanwhile all Pakistan's leaders can do is hope that US would relent on cross border and missile attacks and public reaction would remain subdued.

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India needs to change its foreign policy to be a global power

BARRISTER HARUN UR RASHID

THE 21st century arrived only eight years ago. There is no zero sum game in global power. If one rises the other falls.

Many political analysts say that this century will be a century for Asia as the two giants, China and India, are emerging as global powers. Bush's foreign policy was ostensibly based on the neoconservative idea that the US's role in the world was to spread freedom and democracy by military means, if necessary. The

geographical area. It is 23 times larger than Bangladesh. There are almost 1,000 people for every square mile of area nationwide, much denser than China. India is likely to overtake China in the 21st century as the world's most populous country.

India is strategically located in South Asia and shares border with almost all countries in South Asia. It is located in the middle of South Asia and the ocean that hugs it bears its name, Indian Ocean, which reaches out from the sands of Egypt to the Straits of Malacca.

It is a nuclear power with a

Nicobar, are getting stronger day by day, to meet future challenges on the sea.

India has also undertaken a number of naval and air projects including military reconnaissance centre in the Maldives and Sri Lanka. In 2005, India has begun constructing a 37,500-tonne aircraft carrier that will fly MiG-29 fighters, joining only with navies of big powers in such capabilities. It also plans to lease two nuclear submarines from Russia. The US has openly discussed the sale of naval vessels, combat aircraft, patrol aircraft and helicopters to

banks more developed. India has an overall advantage over China in the long run.

India's positive image

India's rising economic power coupled with influence in other field has not been unnoticed by big powers because it is likely to shift the geographic distribution of global power in Asia and force a restructuring of Western-dominated international bodies, right up to the UN.

Recent visits of leaders from the US, China, France, Germany and Russia has demonstrated to recognize this very reality. The new Secretary General of the UN Ban Ki-moon has appointed a senior retired Indian diplomat as his Chief of Staff, acknowledging India's meaningful role in global affairs.

India's strategic dimension is gaining greater weight with the US. The National Security Strategy document, released by President Bush in September 2002, spoke about building a strategic relationship with India in a global context.

Both the US and India have a convergence of interests in the Asia-Pacific area, such as combating terrorism, preventing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and delivery systems, ensuring the security of sea-lanes, securing access to the energy resources and markets in the region and managing consequences of instability from conflicts and failed states.

The US-India nuclear deal, once it is approved by the US Congress, will come into effect. It has got the green signal from IAEA and 45-member Nuclear Suppliers Group that included China. The deal is bound to contribute to India's military strength in sophisticated weapons.

What are the factors that may impede India to achieve its goal?

There are many reasons but some are described below

First, India needs to cultivate and promote relations with its neighbours in South Asia so that a shared or common security perception exists among all the South Asian countries. The fact is that currently, some of the countries in South Asia perceive security threats as arising from within the region. That means India has to come first in resolving bilateral issues with pragmatism and common sense to remove mistrust and suspicion among countries in South Asia.

Second, India's continued Kashmir policy needs to be revised. The policy was enun-

ated by Nehru in the 50s and does not fit in the context of India's emerging as global power. India has adjusted its foreign policy with regard to the US and so also it calls for policy change in Kashmir dispute.

Third, India's policy toward Afghanistan needs to be adjusted in the context of current security environment. Currently India wants Afghanistan within its sphere of influence and so far has been successful with the Karzai government. But Pakistan appears to be reluctant to accept in strategic terms that position because it does not want to be sandwiched between India and Afghanistan that is under India's sphere of influence. The subtext of the continuing war in Afghanistan is related to which country India or Pakistan will hold influence in the events of Afghanistan.

Fourth, there is a perception that US-India close relationship is a counter-weight to China's rise as a great power. China and India face contested land borders in the West and in the East. In November 2006, Chinese Ambassador to India reiterated his country's claim to Arunachal Pradesh but India's Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee rejected the claim, saying it was an "integral part of India".

India and China should sit down and talk on the long territorial disputes that have soured relations for decades. Furthermore, the unwillingness of India to conclude FTA with China demonstrates a degree of tension between the two nations, with lingering memories of the brief 1962 war in which China soundly defeated India.

So long the perception of rivalry between China and India continues among other countries in Asia, India will find it difficult to be understood of its role in the region by some countries in Asia.

India has to impress on other countries that India's relations with the US is not to contain China in Asia-Pacific region and maintain a policy of equidistance between the US and China.

Conclusion

Although India's rise power cannot be stalled, its foreign policy has come under close scrutiny. As noted in the above paragraphs, policy with regard to Kashmir dispute and Afghanistan needs to be revisited and adjusted accordingly so that the vision of India being a major player in world affairs is being achieved.

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Search for a new doctrine

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Washington had confessed that there was nothing like Al Qaeda or WMD in Iraq during Saddam's time: occupation has invited Al Qaeda for a killing feast. Seven years of pounding on possible and suspected Al Qaeda connections has led to nowhere. The elusive Bin Laden and his terror outfit are still expanding from their hideouts. 'Either with us or against us' had forced Pakistan to be a reluctant partner and anti-American feeling is intense among the people of Pakistan today. Frequent bombing from North Africa to Philippines, in Europe and elsewhere tell, Bush doctrine is neither working in the front nor taking the people along. There should be a search for a new strategy that will keep people engaged not by force or threat but by shared values and gains. The new doctrine must make nations partners, not the collaborators of the strategy.

From Lal masjid to latest attempt on the Prime Minister Yousuf Jilani, the scenic capital of Islamabad is incrementally becoming a battlefield. Al Qaeda may be the brain but it is mostly Taliban - the child of Pakistan that is sucking it dry. Events suggest the boundary between Taliban and Al Qaeda is losing its identity more and more like the Durand line between Pakistan and Afghanistan. It was overplay by Pakistan beyond her capability in the Afghan inferno that is turning back on Pakistan now. When Pakistan is failing to save her own capital and the leaders, her handle on the Taliban does not appear to be convincingly firm when India alleged complicity of the neighbor in the recent bombing of the Indian embassy in Kabul. Unfortunately pointing finger at the neighbours is the cheapest ballgame of the lazy brains of the subcontinent. The latest bombing in New Delhi suggests terror management is an international concern and needs proactive regional strategy and cooperation.

In the global context the first realization is that Muslims must be the part of the civilization, not the opposing force. We must dig out Francis Fukuyama's original thesis - 'End of History' which he did not exactly say, to gloss over the streams of cultural heritage into a broad based civilization. It is time for Prof Huntington to write against his own antithesis to save the world from the curse of 'The Clash of Civilization'. The new strategy needs to inject pride and honor among the players to eliminate conflict from the face of the earth. Religions do not fight; religionists may, on perceptions of their own. Like blaming the neighbor in the subcontinent, blaming the religion or color of the opponent has become the cheapest way to hide the failure. Terrorism is the wrong means and methodology of job orientation. Hindu Tamils of northern Sri Lanka are jihadist of their kind, more dreaded than many terrorist groups of international acclaim.

Obama and McCain are fighting war of words for the White House that is metaphorically putting lipstick on the pig. We are watching the effects of these personalized, philosophized and tactical attacks to gain mileage on the American voters. Where words fail guns take hold. Modern civilization does not allow guns as a means of conflict resolution. Let Muslims be a positive social force of change;

not collaborators or opponents in the gun-barrel strategy. It is time to tell how much Muslims have lost since 9/11 and with little compassion, tell them how much they can gain through parleys and accommodation.

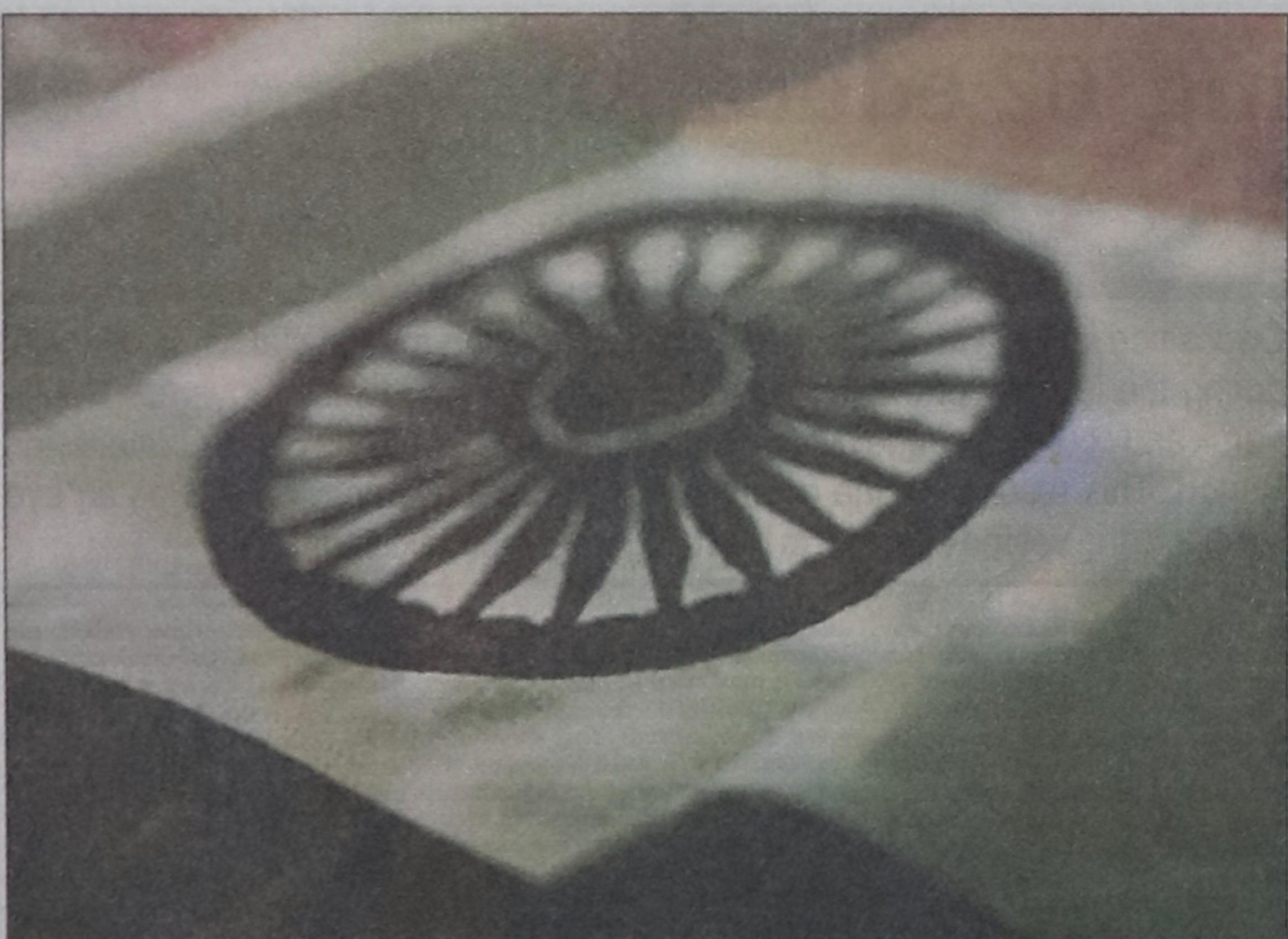
Individuality and self-awareness - gifts of modern civilization have made societies obstinate towards bullying. Bangladesh is poor and mismanaged. But if someone admires our fortitude, love for democracy and human rights, that person will be instantly a friend of Bangladesh. It is neither misjudgment nor exaggeration; we love to talk, no other system allows talking against the establishment and that is how democracy is entrenched in our chemistry despite failures. Every society has their bright and dim sides; the west is in a strong position in the global village to encourage the goodies of all societies for proliferation. It is going to be much cheaper strategy than thousands of lives and trillions of dollars wasted.

Muslims have taken a century of bashing since World War I. More they suffer, more they miss the heritage and desperately look towards religion for salvation. Unlike vigorous attempts by Japan and Germany following the devastations of World War II, Muslim society was paralyzed by the defeat in the First World War. New strategy must encourage them to walk out of the melancholia. Democracy is the fulfillment of desires and aspirations; it must be the strategy of those who want to see poor societies move forward on the highway of civilization. West had their democracy in bits and pieces. Let the benefits of democracy slowly but surely percolate through the barriers and prejudices. Please do not fight for the right of the Danish cartoonist, advance democracy among the Muslims that will downgrade irrationality to the level of manageable nuisance.

The ground reality of Arab-Israeli conflict is very far from where it started. Israel is as much a reality today as an independent Palestine. The long struggle and suffering has crystallized the realities for all sides. The boundaries in disputed areas can wait, duly managed by the UN forces; Palestinians must be immediately offered sovereignty over the undisputed land. A sovereign Palestine will have higher stake in going into clash with stronger Israel for fear of the loss. At the same time Israel will have difficulty in crossing international boundary on one pretext or the other. Palestinians might have lost everything during the last sixty years; interestingly, hawkish Prime Minister Olmert of Israel finally confessed - they are also tired of winning without an end in sight. He is now asking for peace settlement before his imminent departure. A full agreement and total peace may not be possible in one document; sovereignty must be accorded to Palestine immediately followed by hard negotiations.

It is too late for President Bush for a strategic shift. Wall Street collapse will take its toll on the economy and bad news from subprime meltdown will continue coming until the end of 2010. In a free market greed and competition are the twin track of occasional bubble burst. It does not matter whether Obama or McCain becomes the next president, they will have to get the economy in shape and bring the world closer.

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flawed policy has failed.

The US will remain as dominant power during the century but it will not be able to force any issue unilaterally. Many say the power of the US has peaked when it attacked Iraq in 2003. We live in a non-polar world because the US cannot do what it wants and at the same time other powers cannot do anything without the US. It is a volatile world because the balance of power is in transition. This transition from unipolar to multipolar world creates instability and conflict around the world.

India emerging as a global power

Some of India's vital statistics are enumerated below
India is the second largest populous country (nearly 1.1 billion) in the world and seventh largest in

range of missiles to carry nuclear weapons far and wide. It is reported it has 35-40 nuclear bombs. It is said to be investing money to improve the range and mobility of its missile systems for delivering nuclear warheads.

Under the US-India nuclear deal, it will receive nuclear fuel and technology and will be much more capable to enlarge its nuclear arsenal. According to the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, the India's Defence Ministry has earmarked US\$ 2 billion annually to build 300 to 400 weapons over the next 5 to 7 years.

India has large army (1.3 million) and possesses conventional sophisticated weapons.

It has a strong military presence in the Indian Ocean and its naval bases in far off islands, Andaman and Lakshadweep and