

NAM Summit: New hopes

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THE two-day long 15th NAM Summit ended successfully at the Egyptian Red Sea resort Sharm-el-Sheikh on July 16th with a 100-page Declaration. It gave new hope that a movement and an organization that was the product of the Cold War and was expected to die a natural death with the end of that war could revive once more. UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon articulated that hope when he told delegates at the inaugural session "It is abundantly clear that no country - regardless of size or resources - can solve problems alone... that raises the stakes and the space for the Non-Aligned Movement to shape a better world."

The bipolar world under which the two super powers had divided the world into armed camps created the need for a separate forum for a large number of developing nations that emerged as a result of de-colonization after the Second World War to carve their own destiny according to their own vision. Visionaries like Nehru of India, Tito of Yugoslavia and Soekarno of Indonesia, Nasser of Egypt and Nkrumah of Ghana were the leaders whose initiative historically called "the initiative of five" led to the creation of NAM. The term non-alignment was coined by Nehru in a speech in 1954 incorporating the five principles called "panchashheel" to guide China-India relations. When the first NAM Summit was held in 1961, the "panchashheel" became the five pillars of NAM.

These pillars were mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; mutual

non-aggression; mutual non-interference in domestic affairs; equality and mutual benefit; and peaceful co-existence. In 1970 Lusaka NAM Summit, peaceful resolution of disputes and opposition to military pacts were added as additional principles to which later opposition to allowing foreign military bases was included.

When the Cold War ended, everyone was counting days for NAM to fold as the NAM principles lost a lot of relevance. It did not; nor did it show much signs of life either. The world was expecting that the tense international situation would dissipate with the end of the cold war rivalry between the USA and USSR and their followers and peace and development would become sustainable features of world politics in a unipolar world. Concepts like globalization created additional optimism about the positive shape of things to come. Unfortunately world politics became more conflict ridden because the bipolar world, while threatening something ominous where even nuclear conflict was possible, kept disagreements among nations from breaking into uncontrollable conflicts and wars by balancing such disagreements. With early signs of the end of the Cold War, we saw the first Gulf War and then emergence of terrorism as a global phenomenon. With the beginning of the new millennium came the 9/11 terrorist act. The US took full advantage of its super power status in a unipolar world in pursuing the perpetrators of 9/11 and their supporters by declaring "war on terror" and attacking Afghanistan in pursuit of Al Qaeda that USA held guilty for the 9/11 terror-



ism made good use of the Summit to hold bilateral meetings of which the one between the Indian and the Pakistani Prime Ministers was very significant. These bilateral meetings also highlighted the interest of member states to work out their bilateral differences in order to make NAM more effective. The positive environment and determination in Sharm el Sheikh and the feeling that the world needs a forum such as NAM notwithstanding, the ultimate objective for the organization to be treated by the developed world as equal is still a long way. Although, NAM makes up 56% of world population, their economic clout is still weak that they can make up only by uniting in negotiating with the developed nations. NAM's Chairman and Egyptian President Hosne Mubarak has articulated this need when he said at the Summit that its successful ending is "not the end of the road" and that member states must now endeavour to follow the decisions and outcomes to "take our vision to our partners outside the Movement." Under changed international environment, the partners may be better poised to listen and accommodate. Former US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, on a visit to India in 2007, had advised India to forget NAM and "move beyond old ways of thinking". The optimism that has emanated from Sharm el Sheikh should make Rice's advice worth trashing.

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ist act. The USA then invaded Iraq, where there was neither Al Qaeda nor terrorists, despite opposition at the UN and worldwide.

Globalization, that was supposed to make the world a global village, has also not worked for a more peaceful world as the developing nations had expected. Inequalities and injustice in the world economic order increased against the developing nations making it more difficult for them to break through the vicious circle of poverty.

The emergence of President Obama has brought some rationality back in world politics but with many lessons learnt. Although threats of colonialism and imperialism that had motivated the developing nations to join the NAM have receded or gone away, the new dangers from globaliza-

tion and neo-con administration in USA during the Bush era have brought into play greater and graver challenges. These new challenges have created a new need for the developing nations for a forum to articulate their grievances in world politics and economics. In other words, these challenges have created the stakes and the space for a new role and space for NAM to which the UN Secretary General has pointed.

The Sharm-el-Sheikh NAM Summit has underscored the desire of the member countries to create that role and space for NAM and make it the main forum to represent the developing countries in all multilateral fora, specially the UN. The Declaration has thus articulated the issues of common interest of the member states in order to re-invent the

organization in a world different from what it was when NAM was launched but one where they need it as much, if not more, to fight for their rights and aspirations that are now subject to a new set of challenges, more demanding than those faced during the Cold War. The common positions included in the Declaration are therefore on international issues such as disarmament, human rights and democracy, Palestine, world financial crisis, food security, UN reforms, climate change and regional issues. The Declaration has also documented a course of action over the next three years so that the objectives enumerated in the Declaration are realized.

The Sharm el Sheikh Summit also elected Egypt as the current Chairman of NAM for the next three years

and also decided to hold the 16th Summit in Tehran. This is an important decision, one that is going to help invigorate the organization. Egypt is amply suited to play the crucial role that would be required to mould NAM under changed circumstances; for NAM would have to rid itself of a lot of rhetoric that had characterized the movement in the past. Although with a membership of 118 nations that makes it the biggest international organization after the United Nations, the group has still a great deal of divergent interests, even conflicting ones. For example, Egypt, the current Chairman, has deep differences with Iran, the next Chairman, but for the organization they must now work together. In choosing Iran to host the 2012 NAM Summit, the organization has placed on it the responsi-

bility to moderate her rhetoric and foreign policy goals for the sake of NAM.

For Bangladesh, the NAM Summit has been eventful. The Prime Minister was visible with her active participation and was elected Vice Chairman from the Asia region. This will enhance Bangladesh's importance in global politics. In her address she articulated Bangladesh's position on such critical issues as climate change, food security, world economic meltdown and international terrorism. The meetings that she had on the side lines were perhaps more significant, particularly her meeting with Manmohan Singh, where, on the divisive and dangerous Tipaimukh issue, she received a positive commitment from her Indian counterpart.

Other member states also

The new Israeli Arab political representation: The aftermath of electing a new chairman

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A great event transpired among the Arab population in Israel at the end of April, 2009. Mr. Mohamad Zeidan former Mayor of the Kfar Manda Local Council was elected to be the new Head of the Arab Follow up Committee. Mr. Zeidan was elected by a consensus of members of the Follow up Committee which includes Mayor, MKs from all Parties and heads of Arab political movements. Actually, this is the first time ever that the position has been divided in two. Mohamad Zeidan will be the Head of the Follow up Committee and Mr. Ramez Jaraisy, the Mayor of Nazareth, will be the Head of the National Union of Arab Councils and Mayors. Both Mr. Zeidan and Mr. Jaraisy have been participating in directing and administering the Follow up Committee but in two different areas, the political and the municipal.

Mr. Zeidan was a compromise choice and outsider, who was brought from the Secretariat of the Follow up Committee to balance the different political forces inside the Follow up Committee. Zeidan will try to maintain his job by working collectively with all Parties. Zeidan was a communist when he was young during the late 1960s. Later he ran for the Knesset with the Arab Democratic Party but failed to win a seat. Currently, he is close to all the political parties and movements. He is also accepted by the Communists, Liberals and both branches of the Islamists. All the Parties agreed to nominate him in order to bring fresh blood and to bridge the rift between all the parties. It is not certain how much power he will wield and how he can run the Follow up Committee given the complicated circumstances of the new political reality. Neither is it sure whether he will use new techniques to face the rising ultra national policy of Israeli decision makers.

Concerning opposition to the new laws which were submitted by Lieberman's party, Zeidan strongly attacked the Loyalty and the Naqba laws. However, some other Israeli political circles were aware of the danger of these two laws and have been fighting against them because they work strongly against Israel itself and its image more than against the Arabs. On the other hand, both

Islamic movements, the Northern Branch and the Southern Branch, ignored these laws and didn't take them seriously although they deeply affect the status and the nature of the Arabs in Israel.

Former MK. Abbas Zaquor from the Southern Islamic Movement decided during 2007 to split from the Movement. He was expelled from the Southern Islamic Branch and decided to keep his Parliamentary seat for himself. Later he joined the National Democratic Party which was headed by Dr. Azmi Beshara and was placed fourth on their list. He was not elected but is waiting for a rotation with the party's number two Adv. Said Nafah.

Mr. Zaquor caused great damage to the Southern Branch of the Islamic Movement in Israel. What transpired showed that this movement is like every other secular movement looking for Knesset seats and personal interests. However, with a strict decision and swift action the Southern Branch succeeded to reconstruct itself by electing a new young journalist to replace Mr. Zaquor, Mr. Masoud Ganaem from Sachnin. They also elected Mr. Ibrahim Sarsour as Chairman which is a cooperative endeavor of Dr. Ahmad Tibi and Mr. Talab El Sanan and the Arab Democratic Party. Surprisingly all four were elected to the Knesset and all four are members of the Follow up Committee.

The Southern Branch which has popular support mainly in the Galilee is trying to recruit for more political participation and influence. In addition to its dedicated and continued mobilization, the Southern Branch is also working effectively with all the Arab Knesset members and the members of the Follow up Committee. It is fighting for more political representation. At the same time they are working without any results for the unification with the Northern Branch of the Islamic Movement.

Moreover, the Northern Branch of the Islamic Movement in Israel has less belief in the efficiency of political participation in the Israeli Parliament. It believes in the political "game" but only within the local Arab authorities. Shiech Raed Salab, Head of the Northern Branch, occupied the post of Mayor of Um El Fahem for many years. There also are other Mayors from the Northern Branch.

They also believe in the importance of Arab political representation. They are also represented inside the Follow up Arab Committee and in the National Union of Arab Councils and Mayors.

The Northern Branch mostly focuses on the holy Muslim sites which were deserted and neglected. They are working very hard for the recognition of Muslim Waqf properties from the Israeli government. They are mainly fighting against the concept of 96% of the land having been seized and confiscated over by the Menhal Mekarkai Israel, the Israeli Lands Authority. Their most important achievement came from fighting against the government confiscation of the Roha Land near the Triangle. Jerusalem and the Al Aqsa Mosque is an important issue on their agenda. They strongly challenge Israel over the image of Jerusalem as a Moslem City versus the Israeli claim that it is the Capital of Israel.

The Northern Branch coordinates somewhat with the Southern branch because both branches originate from the same party which was founded by Shiech Nimer Darwish from Baqa El Garbia. Currently, both parties recognize the fact that the two branches are actually two different and separate movements. The two parties partially cooperate in the Follow up Committee but not on the issue of political participation in the Israeli Knesset. The overall trend of Arab Political Unification in the next elections to the Knesset might lead to more dialogue between the two movements. The reconstruction in the Follow up Committee process will also affect the dialogue between the two parties.

Mohamad Zeidan who is an independent candidate without any political affiliation might succeed in stabilizing the Committee and conducting a new process of influencing Israeli politics mainly by opposing the new Lieberman laws which aim to increasingly marginalize the Arab population. If he succeeds, then the politicians who support political participation will gain more influence at the expense of those who don't believe in political participation. In that sense, dialogue, cooperation and coordination are dependent on the new Chairman.

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Is Iraq falling apart?

BARRISTER HARUN UR RASHID

IN the north Iraqi Kurds do not fly Iraq's flag anymore but their own Kurdish banner on public buildings, the first step to move away from Baghdad's control. As a sign of independence from Baghdad, leaders of the Kurdish north want to enter into separate oil agreement with foreign companies and the move has annoyed the Iraqi government. Furthermore, Kurdish leaders in Iraq are pushing ahead with a new constitution for their semi-autonomous region, a step that poses a new threat to unity of Iraq. The new constitution approved by the Kurdistan parliament on 24th June is scheduled for a referendum by September 2009.

Most expect the Kurdish people will approve the constitution. This underscores the level of mistrust and bad faith between the region and the central government in Baghdad. The proposed constitution enshrines Kurdish claims to territories and the oil and gas beneath them. But these claims are disputed by both the Iraqi government and ethnic groups and were supposed to be resolved in talks begun quietly in June between the Iraqi and Kurdish governments, sponsored and backed by the United States. Instead the Kurdish parliament pushed ahead and passed the constitution, partly as a message that it would resist pressure from the US and the Iraqi governments to make concessions.

The disputed areas, in northern Iraq, are volatile. There have been several tense confrontations between Kurdish and Iraqi forces, as well as frequent attacks aimed at inflaming sectarian and ethnic passions there. The Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki is reportedly not on speaking terms with the Kurdish region's President Barzani. Iraqi political leaders have denounced the constitution as a step toward splintering Iraq.

A growing number of Iraq experts believe disintegration of Iraq is inevitable in the long run, while others say that a confederal Iraq might emerge. The question is whether the Sunnis will accept a confederal country without the share of oil resources.

Many suggest a plan to carve the country into three regions-- Kurdish in the north, Sunnis in the middle and Shiites in the south. Both the north and south regions are oil-rich while the middle is bereft of such resources. This will be an end to united Iraq and may remain the legacy of the unwanted war of 2003 by the Bush administration.

As President Obama said in Cairo on June 4th: "Iraq was a war of choice that provoked strong differences in my country and around the world... I also believe that events in Iraq have reminded America of the need to diplomacy and build international consensus to resolve our problems whenever possible. Indeed, we can recall the words of Thomas Jefferson who said 'I hope our wisdom will grow with our power and teach us that the less we use our power greater it will be'."

Michael Hudson, a Professor of Arab Studies at Georgetown University in Washington reportedly has stated that "What we are seeing now may be signs of things to come, but that was not so much inevitable as it is a result of our action." Implications of disintegration of Iraq as

a country

First, one worst-case scenario is that an autonomous Shiite region in the south of Iraq could encourage the Shiite minority in Saudi Arabia's north, a significant oil region, to press for autonomy or at the extreme may demand to join with its Iraqi brethren to the north. Any unrest in the region poses a blow to global economy dependent on oil.

Second, some strategists say that the dissolution of Iraq will be a great boon for security of Israel. Zionists at the beginning of the 20th century wanted to create many small states and unthreatening Arab States. If Iraq's disintegration takes place, their wishes would be fulfilled.

Third, if small states are carved out on the basis of sects, the whole Arab world would be at risk and a new map of small and weak states would emerge and the unity in the Arab world would be fragile. The Sunni dominated-states, such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt, are worried about their security threat.

Who are Kurds?

A largely Sunni Muslim people with

After the Kurds supported Iran in the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war, Saddam Hussein retaliated, razing villages and attacking peasants with chemical weapons. The Kurds rebelled again after the 1990 Gulf War only to be crushed again by Iraqi troops. About 2 million fled to Iran; 5 million currently live in Iraq. The United States has tried to create a safe haven for the Kurds within Iraq by imposing a "no-fly" zone north of the 36th parallel.

Despite a common goal of independent statehood, the 20 million or so Kurds in the various countries are hardly unified. From 1994-98, two Iraqi Kurd factions, the Kurdistan Democratic Party, led by Massoud Barzani, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, led by Jalal Talabani fought a bloody war for power over northern Iraq. In September 1998, the two sides agreed to a power-sharing arrangement. Meanwhile, the Kurdistan Workers' Party, the PKK, currently waging a guerrilla insurgency in southeastern Turkey, has rejected the Iraqi Kurds' decision to seek local self-government within a federal Iraq. The PKK believes any independent Kurdish state



their own language and culture, most Kurds live in the generally contiguous areas of Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Armenia and Syria, a mountainous region of southwest Asia generally known as Kurdistan ("Land of the Kurds").

During the early 20th century, Kurds began to consider the concept of nationalism, a notion introduced by the British amid the division of traditional Kurdistan among neighboring countries. The 1920 Treaty of Sevres, which created the modern states of Iraq, Syria and Kuwait, was to have included the possibility of a Kurdish state in the region. However, it was never implemented although promised by Britain. After the overthrow of the Turkish monarchy by Kemal Ataturk Turkey, Iran and Iraq each agreed not to recognize an independent Kurdish state.

In Iraq, Kurds have faced repression.

should be a homeland for all Kurds.

Over the years, tensions have flared between the PKK, led by Abdullah Ocalan, (now in prison) and Barzani's KDP faction, which controls the Turkey-Iraq border. Barzani has criticized the PKK for establishing military bases inside Iraqi-Kurd territory to launch attacks into Turkey.

In recent days Turkey has changed its policy and extended its reconciliatory hands to Kurds for preservation of their language and culture. It could be argued that Turkey's bid of membership to the European Union may be blocked or delayed unless some sort of reconciliatory steps is accorded to the Kurds in the country. The current Turkish policy is based on realism and for its overall national interest.

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