

BDR mutiny: One year on

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It is one year of one of the blackest events of our history. Time is really the best healer. But on the other side, many contentious spots remain vivid. Rumors and suspicions continue to dominate public discourse and spreading hatred and pointing finger against each other sees no end. Many blogs, face book groups, and websites have joined to fuel fire to the propaganda war that the killing was politically linked.

I had the chance to look into at least five such interesting observations which were being widely circulated on web, such as:

1. Why did the Government not have any information on the conspiracy of this magnitude?
2. Why did the government send inexperienced ministers to negotiate with the rebels?
3. Why did Jahangir Kabir Nanak and Shahara Khatun go in and out of the BDR compound without security? Why did they feel safe and secure in such a hostile environment?
4. Why were the BDR rebels given general amnesty without confirming the fate of the Army officers and their families?
5. Why did the government move the Army 3km away from the BDR camp and blackout the whole area effectively allowing the criminals to flee from the scene?

These five seemingly serious allegations were put on an article of an Islamist website and subsequently on many blogs and face book groups. I was very curious about these arguments and have given some thought to it.

I don't find any barometer of what



'experienced minister' really means. If having no experience in running a public office is considered as inexperience, this would hardly suit the idea of injecting new and fresh faces into politics. During 2008 US Election, we frequently heard the argument against Barack Obama that he was too inexperienced to run a country like United States.

As for ministers' security one cannot understand why BDR Jawans would have wanted to harm those ministers who were negotiating and

trying to address, among other issues, the soldiers' demands.

The issue of general amnesty has been widely discussed, perhaps the most talked about issue surrounding BDR mutiny. Many argue that the government declared amnesty to the rebels given the fact that they raised some valid demands. It can be assumed that the government wanted to demonstrate that they were not against the genuine demands. If we consider the whole thing as a rebellion, and the possibility of confrontation

between the army and BDR camps scattered around the country, the general amnesty seems to be a good decision to quell the situation.

The fifth allegation is self-contradictory. At the one hand one is asking for a military solution - attack on the rebellion's base - and on the other hand criticising military preparedness! We know that the surroundings and adjacent areas of Peelkhana are densely populated. We understood from the later clarifications by the concerned high-ups of

the government that they initially avoided the idea of an attack and opted for negotiation to seek a peaceful (we discovered that it was not that peaceful as all expected) solution to the issue. The government prepared for both situations - continue the negotiation and if that collapses carry out an attack. For the second option, they reasonably pleaded to the people living adjacent to Peelkhana to move to a safer place. The only allegation one can put here is the failure of the government to cordon off the area.

There are also criticisms on the blackout. Blackout could have easily been effected by the BDR soldiers themselves and it was easy to switch off the power station inside the Peelkhana.

Military operations are the worst solution ever if you look back into history. It only brings misery and sufferings to many. We lost 57 officers and if any kind of military operation was carried out, we might have saved a few of them, but the cost would have been very high given the political consideration.

The common people want objective analysis of the event. Every responsible party should stop politicising this very sensitive matter further. The nation has already paid high cost for politicising our military. We need to maintain a clear and distinct line between civilian and military affairs. The more we maintain the safe line, the better for the nation. Subsequently, we want our leaders to focus on economic prosperity in an age of Asian Century.

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NATIONAL SECURITY The human element

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DURING the Cold War, the security discourse centred on East-West rivalry, a global struggle for dominance between the USA and the Soviet Union. In 1946, George Kennan, then US ambassador in Moscow, argued that the Soviet power was inherently expansionist and would have to be contained. That was the beginning of the "Policy of Containment" that marked the US security policy throughout the Cold War. Security between the two sides was ensured by what was diabolically called "Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD)". It was assumed that because none of the adversaries would be 'mad' enough to seek self-destruction, they would not attack each other. While the peace activists were calling for banning the nuclear bomb, the security experts were arguing that the bombs were actually ensuring a "Warm Peace" by preventing direct confrontation between the two Super Powers. Thankfully, the Cold War ended, when Soviet Union broke up in 1991, not due to any war or invasion, but because of the communist economic structure collapsed in the face of democracy and free market. During the 1980s, thanks to the initiative by the UN, there was gradual realization that the concept of national security need not be confined to the narrow world of East-West rivalry, but should be broadened to include other issues that pose serious danger to individuals, societies, states and the humanity.

With the end of the Cold War and increasing globalisation of the world economy, war between major economic powers became unlikely. For example, Europe is economically so intertwined that it is virtually impossible to fight a war between EU nations. As the security scenario changed, there was increasing demand to revise the traditional concept of national security. Yet, as the world moved away from the nuclear precipice, it did not see the end of war or interstate conflict. Indeed, since the end of the Cold War, there has been an increase in armed conflicts - mostly in the ME, Asia and Africa. Often these conflicts, such as in the Balkans or in Rwanda had ethnic, religious or economic origins. Non-state actors such as terrorists, drug and arms smugglers continued to threaten peace. While military issues continued to dominate Arab Israeli or IndiaPakistan relations, for many others problems of poverty, lack of governance, sectarian violence

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fuelled unrest. Countries, such as Somalia, ceased to exist as a nation because of the collapse of the central government. Thus, discourse on security gradually shifted from state towards individual, from purely military to non-military threats.

In 1991 Stockholm initiative on Global Security and Governance referred to "challenges to security other than political rivalry and armaments" and to a wider concept of security, which deals also with threats from failures in development, environmental degradation, excessive population growth and movement, lack of progress towards democracy. Robert McNamara, the US Secretary of Defence through much of the Vietnam War and later the President of World Bank stated "It is increasingly being realized that it is poverty, not the lack of military hardware that is responsible for insecurity across the southern half of the planet". The first explicit document to mention Non Traditional Security / Human Security was "The UNDP Report of 1994" drafted by late Dr. Mahbub-ul-Haq. It listed seven components of human security namely: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security.

While the liberals, such as Barry Buzan or Richard Ullman, advocated for an expansion of the security concept, the realists such as Daniel Deudney opposed the idea. He argued that inclusion of a wide variety of security issues would "soon drain the term any meaning. All large-scale evils become threat to national security." Realists' position was that only those threats that could lead to armed conflict and violence should be included, not a plethora of issues. The academics were thus grouped as the traditionalist or realist on one side and non-traditionalist or liberal on the other. While the traditionalists argued for the security of the nation's "Core Value" that rested on territorial integrity, sovereignty and non-interference in the way of life, the liberals wanted to focus on issues that threaten the quality of human life.

While the realists would argue that threats of violence against the state could never be ruled out in the long run, and as such, a deterrent military posture at the minimum must be maintained, the liberal would argue that through strengthening the conflict resolution institutions, spread of democracy and human rights and through the general betterment of human life we could create condition where military deterrence would not be necessary. The liberals would, therefore, push for spread of democracy and human rights. In their view, a world of democratically elected governments would ensure peace, as originally proposed by Emanuel Kant in 1795 (Perpetual Peace).

In this era of globalization and economic interdependence, no nation is an island. What was considered "internal affairs of a sovereign state" a decade ago might be an international issue now. For example, ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, or repression on ethnic minorities in Darfur or Iran's perceived bid to acquire nuclear capabilities are no longer matters of domestic interest; those draw international response. Terrorism, as demonstrated by Al-Qaeda and its affiliates, pose a grave danger to international peace and security. Issues such as Climate Change would affect humanity across the globe. Poorer states are more at risk, but the richer ones cannot get away from the fallout too. Thus, while states continue to define the identity of its citizens, the focus is shifting on the quality of life of the people. Here, at home, the debate goes on. While our sovereignty and territorial integrity is not so much threatened by external powers, our burgeoning population, endemic poverty, recurrent natural calamities, illiteracy and backwardness pose serious challenge to the nationhood. The concept of national security would, therefore, be a more comprehensive exercise than what the realists would imagine.

The author is a freelancer.

Afghan campaign will be tough: Petraeus

WITH US forces entering the second week of a 12 to 18-month campaign in Afghanistan, the general in charge of US forces in the region acknowledged yesterday that the way ahead will be tough.

"I have repeatedly said that these types of efforts are hard, and they're hard all the time," Gen. David H. Petraeus, commander of US Central Command, said on NBC's "Meet the Press."

Likening operations in Afghanistan to the surge in Iraq, the general pointed out that when US forces go on the offensive to take away Taliban safe havens, they will see definite resistance.

Petraeus said the past year has been

forces into the country.

Early results have included taking down high-value targets, such as Taliban shadow governors, Petraeus said.

"We are there for a very, very important reason and we can't forget that," Petraeus emphasized. "We are in Afghanistan to ensure that it cannot once again be a sanctuary for the kind of attacks that were carried out on 9/11, which were planned initially in Kandahar, first training done in eastern Afghanistan before the attackers moved to Hamburg and then on to US flight schools."

When asked if al-Qaida still poses a threat to the United States, Petraeus pointed out that the terrorist organization is a "flexible,

Iran launches first domestically made destroyer

Iran's navy launched its first domestically made destroyer in the Persian Gulf on February 19 in a ceremony attended by the supreme leader and the commander-in-chief Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the media reported.

"Iran's navy on Friday took the delivery of the first indigenously designed and developed guided missile destroyer 'Jamaran' in the Persian Gulf," Iran's English-language Press TV reported.

The vessel has a displacement of around 1,400 tons and is equipped with modern radars and electronic warfare capabilities, the report said.

"Jamaran, a multi-mission destroyer, can carry 120-140 personnel on board and is armed with a variety of anti-air

and surface-to-air missiles with a top speed of up to 30 knots and has a helipad," the report added. "The vessel has also been equipped with torpedoes and modern naval cannons."

Iran's state television also showed footage of the vessel and the ceremony at which it was launched by Khamenei flanked by the top Iranian military commanders.

Much of Iran's naval equipment dates from before the 1979 Islamic revolution and is US made. Since the revolution, Tehran has purchased a number of Russian-made submarines.

In the past year Iranian navy has carried out a number of missions in the Gulf of Aden and offshore Somalia where it was commissioned to escort Iranian

merchant ships and oil tankers.

Tehran is enriching uranium, which many Western countries and Israel fear is a step toward manufacturing an atomic bomb. Tehran rejects such charges, saying its nuclear program is entirely peaceful. On February 18, the UN atomic watchdog expressed concern that Iran might have been trying to develop a nuclear warhead. On February 19, Iran dismissed the concern as "baseless."

Iran is under UN sanctions for failing to obey Security Council resolutions demanding that it halt enrichment. Neither the United States nor Israel has ruled out military action if it does not eventually do so.

Source: www.defensenews.com

UAE military chief visits S. Korea

Lt. Gen. Hamad Mohammed Thani Al Rumaithi, chief of staff of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) armed forces, arrived in Seoul on February 22 for a four-day visit, the Ministry of National Defence said.

The visit by the UAE military leader comes amid high expectations here that the two countries could resume talks on the sale of the T-50 Golden Eagle supersonic trainer jet, jointly built by Korea Aerospace Industries (KAI) and Lockheed Martin.

Last month, it was revealed that the Emirates had reopened talks with KAI on the T-50 after failing to finalize an agreement on the purchase of Italy's M-346 trainer jet.

The UAE selected Alenia Aermacchi last year as the preferred bidder for a \$1.4 billion deal to acquire 48 train-

ers. But the Middle East nation has failed to reach a deal with the Italian company because of "misunderstanding" over trainer specifications, according to an Arabian defence source.

"Through the bilateral talks, both leaders will discuss a wide range of issues to improve bilateral defence cooperation, such as high-level military exchange visits, military training, cooperation on arms acquisition and support," the ministry said in a news release.

During his stay, the UAE chief of staff is scheduled to visit South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Special Warfare Command in Seoul and the Naval Operations Command in the southern port city of Busan, it said.

Last November, Kim visited the United Arab Emirates to

support the country's successful bid to build four nuclear reactors in the Arab nation. Kim met UAE leaders at that time and agreed to bolster their defence cooperation by promising to transfer key arms technologies to the Emirates, according to sources.

The single-engine T-50 features digital flight controls and a modern, ground-based training system. It is designed to have the manoeuvrability, endurance and systems to prepare pilots to fly next-generation fighter jets, such as the Eurofighter Typhoon, the F-22 Raptor, the Rafale and the F-35 Lightning II. The jet has a top speed of Mach 1.4 and an operational range of 1,851 kilometres.

Source: www.defensenews.com



spent putting things in place for a "comprehensive civil military campaign," putting in the best leaders, helping to develop concepts, giving counterinsurgency guidance and starting to filter an additional 30,000

adaptable" enemy whose threat, although diminished within the 20 countries making up the Central Command area, is one that requires constant vigilance.

Source: www.defencetalk.com

Evolving a strategic matrix

PANKAJ JHA

IN the backdrop of an increasingly assertive China and an uncertain Pakistan, India has embarked on a major strategic offensive which includes taking American allies on board, cooperating with countries that are apprehensive of China and, last but not least, using its more than average economic growth to entice export led economies of Asia. If one analyses state visits to India in the last six months, it becomes clear that though climate change and WTO negotiations have been the issues discussed with trans-Atlantic countries, however, economic resilience has proved that India rather than being a 'swing state' is very much on the path of becoming the 'second state' in Asia. The strategic community in India has witnessed visits by the Japanese Prime Minister, German President, Canadian Prime Minister, Australian Prime Minister, South Korean President, Vietnamese Defence Minister and Malaysian Prime Minister in a period of three

months. This shows India's elevation as a relevant regional power. India has initiated a comparatively quick defence procurement process and defence budget allocation has also risen dramatically in the last five years, despite the fact that each year thousands of crores are left unutilised.

In its eastern neighbourhood, India has signed a defence MoU with Vietnam which includes provisions of training, defence cooperation, cooperation against piracy and joint exercises. Vietnam is currently strengthening its navy and has ordered six kilo-class submarines from Russia and is also keen on the Russian Sukhois. Japan also has shown interest in not only economic cooperation with India but also over an 'Action Plan on Security Cooperation' which points to the fact that the 'China threat' is not being ignored under the usual posturing. Issues such as areas of strategic interest, defence cooperation including joint exercises and non traditional threats are highlighted. While China has been harping on the need to secure its supplies and has

projected its Indian Ocean policy, India should also devise South China Sea policy on the same argument of 'securing trade and energy supplies'. The visit of Malaysian Prime Minister to India in January 2010 has buttressed India's position both in the economic and strategic realms. The Malaysian Prime Minister did endorse a joint statement pertaining to labour welfare, defence, science and technology cooperation, energy, climate change and higher education but the stress was on negotiating a favourable trade agreement with Malaysia. Southeast Asian countries are clamouring for Indian investors' attention and Indian markets while India is keen on markets for its services industry. With the rapid growth of services industry, greater than 35-40 per cent each year, India is keen to cash in on the knowledge base. Also the services industry in Singapore has reached a threshold level and India wants to diversify its services base. In that case Malaysia acts as a lucrative alternative. Malaysia wants to export its palm oil to India on

reduced tariffs because of the fact that Indonesia and Malaysia are competing for India's palm oil markets. The Joint Study Reports for both countries have been submitted to the respective governments and economic bargaining has begun. Economics is bestowing strategic leverages to India. Though India cannot compete with China, it surely can erode the cost advantages of the rising economic superpower.

In the strategic context, the enhancement of the Andaman and Nicobar base with the proposal of deploying more naval ships (currently there are only about 3-4 logistics ships stationed in the Andaman and Nicobar Command), as well as the proposal for stationing two Sukhoi squadrons in the island group, shows trends towards dual use in terms of securing the idyllic islands as well as projecting power. Mincing no words, it is also important that through the years in the Annual reports of Ministry of Defence, China has appeared as a threat and Maritime Doctrine 2009 also caters to such a strategic compulsion. India's diversified defence

procurement as well as development of the long range missiles like Agni V shows that the will exists to meet strategic challenges. Also cooperation with countries like Korea and Australia shows that India is working on the second arc concept which spans from Japan, Korea and Australia. A number of agreements have been signed with these countries over a wide range of issues. With Korea, there are possibilities of defence cooperation more so in areas of joint exercise, production as well as export of defence equipment, perhaps even the construction of nuclear power plants in India. India is also looking for compatibility with Australia, in spite of the attacks on students the two countries are carefully calibrating their strategic needs and mutual interests. The two countries' Joint Declaration on counter-terrorism, defence and maritime security clearly articulates the strategic convergence. India's current initiatives are thus sure to create in the coming decade a 'strategic parallax'.

Source: IPCS, New Delhi.