

Bangladesh and the rise of the rest

We are now living through the third great power shift of the modern era. It could be called "the rise of the rest";

Fareed Zakaria
The post-American World

'Henry Kissinger famously dubbed it a "basket case" at its birth in 1971, and Bangladesh appeared to work hard to live up to the appellation... No longer. Bangladesh has much to be proud of. Its economy has grown at nearly 6% a year over the past three years.... \$12.3 billion worth of garments last year, making it fourth in the world behind China, the EU and Turkey. Against the odds... Bangladesh ought to be held up as a role model....'

Sadanand Dhume
Bangladesh 'Basket Case' No More
The Wall Street Journal



SIFAT UDDIN

It has been a popular thing to say that China is carrying the world in the recovery from the Great Recession. No more it is the United States of America, the great rescuer of Great Depression of Thirties. In 2008 the lion share (57.90%) of world GDP growth was simply from other states and IMF estimated that by the year of 2012 emerging economies will be the major contributor to the world GDP growth. All these interesting developments were followed by, coincidentally, the publication of The Post American World (2008) by Fareed Zakaria, an India origin American expert on USA where he claimed that may be at politico-military level USA is remained as a single superpower but in every other dimension- industrial, financial, educational, social, cultural- the distribution of power is shifting from American dominance to many small states let alone the big powers like China, India etc. In this thought-provoking book Zakaria claimed that the emerging international system is likely to be quite different from those have preceded it; no more it is the era of American unipolarity as it had been since 1991 rather the era of rise of the rest. Now let us see the location of Bangladesh in this era of the rise of the rest. Though Zakaria never specifically mentioned Bangladesh as on promising member of the rise of the rest but let us see the prospect of Bangladesh following two developments including the last UN summit and the pro-

posal from the US for sending troops to Afghanistan.

Last UN Summit and Bangladesh

This year the UN General Assembly was special for Bangladesh. Simultaneously another- UN summit on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was going on in New York. Bangladesh received an award for their partial MDG success in reducing child mortality rate. The current child mortality rate in Bangladesh is around 2 percent. The UN set a target of reducing the mortality under-five by two-thirds since 1990 to till 2015. In recognition to their success in reducing child death UN awarded Bangladesh. Having such to two global summits side by side and receiving award in one summit automatically upgraded Bangladesh's position in the other. But already the global community knows Bangladesh for different good reason- its biggest contribution in UN Peace Keeping Force. At present 10,744 personnel are serving for UN across the globe.

In that summit Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina led Bangladesh from the front; was bold to claim and lively to make feel the presence of Bangladesh. She demanded pledged enhanced assistance of developed nations for developing countries as she addressed the UN MDG summit reflecting Bangladesh's centrality in the process. Hasina claimed for fund to recovery their environmental damages caused by global warming. Bangladesh aimed for at least 15% of any money which rich countries

pledge to help developing nations cope with climate change. What I found that she was confident in her claim. In fact Hasina knew that this year Bangladesh come to participate with more better image and confidence- Democracy back on track; good MDG scores; highest peace keeping force provider for UN; going for war crime trial as her promise for human rights and Bangladesh's firm stance against crime against humanity. Having all these good scores in her hand she urged the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to involve Bangladesh in the policymaking and responsible duties of the United Nations as the country is capable of carrying out such trust. She made the plea during a meeting with the UN secretary general at the UN building in New York.

Bangladesh in Afghanistan?

In an unofficial meeting US special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard C. Holbrook found Bangladesh lucrative to offer sending Bangladeshi troops to Afghanistan. Bangladeshi counterpart Dr. Dipu Moni diplomatically kept the reply hiding by giving an impression that Bangladesh will consider this proposal in near future. Bangladesh is generally critical of the US presence in Afghanistan, while being keen on fighting terrorism. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has proposed a regional task force against terrorism to which the US has given an in principle approval.

Holbrook's offer irritated Taliban more than Bangladesh Government.

They warned Bangladesh (rather threatening) by reminding its (Bangladesh's) proper political wit shown so far about Afghan issue. I say that Yes, Bangladesh has enough political wit to not being worried about Taliban's warning. Bangladesh will judge the matter from the perspective of national interest not from the point of view of a fundamentalist group. As there is no UN peacekeeping force and the aggression on Afghanistan was not endorsed by international community, Bangladesh cannot take the risk for the interests of American imperialism. What Bangladesh can do help Afghan people to overcome illiteracy, infrastructural underdevelopment; medical backwardness and others. Bangladeshi workers, teachers, doctors and NGO activist may work under the supervision of international organizations working in Afghanistan. Bangladeshi policy-makers may join in the Afghan policy making bodies and thus can assist the US to help Afghan people. Bangladesh has already offered to send teachers and doctors to Afghanistan. The present context no how support Bangladesh to continue war anywhere, let alone other factors like military strategy or credibility or ability to war in Afghanistan. It requires economic strength, political stability within country and at last but not least grand popular support. At present nothing of these criteria can be fulfilled by Bangladesh to initiate a war against terrorism in Afghanistan.

Epilogue

In international politics small states like Bangladesh are being cornered by big powers. The problem is rooted within the system- the international system is so much hierarchical that small powers hardly get attention. Anyhow Bangladesh successfully managed to catch the attention from actors like the US and the UN and now Bangladesh needs to maintain this momentum. Anyone will agree that the offer from the US towards Bangladesh is a clear depiction of Bangladesh's relevance and better image in international affairs. From other perspective this is a clear manifestation of major shift in US policy towards many small powers like Bangladesh. The US now feels the heat of the rise of the rest. States like Bangladesh have abilities, potentialities to act; to work for global peace and prosperity. Now Bangladesh needs to stay on the track towards democracy and maintain steady economic growth to maintain present impetus and to keep the momentum as a member of the rise of the rest.

The author is a Masters in International Relations, University of Dhaka and freelance writer at-fairbird.net



Glimpses of Indo- Bangla Joint Expedition and Training Exercise

Towards a new path

LT. COL. ABDULLAH AL MAMUN, PSC, G

RECENTLY, a team of Bangladesh Army participated in a joint training exercise with the Indian Army in Jorhat of Assam. This is for the first time that military forces of the two neighbouring countries have done so. In the very recent past, six members of Bangladesh Army, including two officers, participated in a mountaineering expedition. Those were the events that offered both the countries opportunities to interact with each other and benefit from the experience thus gained.

It is worth mentioning that the history of ancient Europe was full of mistrust, hegemonic behaviour and wars, including two world wars. As history suggests, the two Great Wars were initiated by Austria against Serbia and Germany against Poland respectively. After the end of World War, at the eve of 20th century, European Union (EU) emerged as the uniting force. Now they have a common market as well as a common currency that paves the way for further progress. Now the people of Europe enjoy more economic strength, security, and other amenities than that of other parts of the world. Their level of trust and confidence has gone to such a height that these days they require minimum formalities to travel within the continent.

Bangladesh, who has the highest contribution to peacekeeping efforts, believes in the spirit of - 'friendship to all, malice to none.' However, we need to strengthen friendly relations with our neighbours. To do so we need to come out of all prejudice and be more forward looking. Probably the above-mentioned events are the beginning of a journey through a new path.

The author is serving as a Grade-1 Staff Officer in the Army HQ.

Leaked cables show US fears over North Korean missile exports to Iran

US diplomats believe that Iran received 19 Musudan intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) from North Korea, according to confidential US Department of State cables released by the WikiLeaks website and seen by The New York Times.

While the Musudan's estimated range of 2,500 km to 4,000 km means Iran could use it to strike European cities including Berlin, Moscow and Rome, experts have played down the significance of the news.

The Musudan, also known as the Mirim or No Dong B by the US and BM-25 by Israel, is believed to be based on the Russian R-27 (SS-N-6 'Srb'), with which it shares a distinctive triconic nose shape. It is believed to be about 12.5 m long, with a body diameter of 1.5 m and a launch weight of 19,000 kg.

Iran was originally thought to have bought 18 Musudan missile sets from North Korea in 2005. However, a December 2009 report said that some components for these missiles had been intercepted in July 2009 by the United Arab Emirates.

According to the leaked US Department of State cable, dated 24 February 2010, US officials told Russian officials they believed that a shipment of complete systems had taken place and that Iran had received 19, not 18, Musudan missiles.

Source: janes.com

The state of Israel: Conflict of faith & the future

SULTAN MOHAMMED ZAKARIA

ONCE again, so-called Middle East peace process has been reoriented by yet another US President Barak Hussain Obama. He struggled for the middle part of his name while campaigning for the election. That bitterness may have had some impact in his later foreign policy decisions on Middle East. As the days progressed, we became very clear that the rhetoric of a young, enthusiastic presidential candidate would end up in nowhere and nothing could change the big brother's foreign policy direction. The root strength of Netanyahu's adamant and arrogant position on settlement issue lies where- need not a further explanation. Reality is- nobody can fix the ever complex Middle East conflict unless everybody concerned goes back to the old days and apprehend the origin of the crisis.

The Jews were at perpetual loggerheads with Christians from the very early period of Christianity over the conversion issue. Intensification of Jews-Christian conflict led to the Christian's characterization of Jews as agents of the devil. In the medieval Europe, Jews experienced several brutal massacres during the long crusade era. And also in between 1251 and 1320, the Jews were subject to attacks by the Shepherds' Crusaders followed by expulsions and banishing of all English Jews. Thousands of Jews were subsequently expelled from France, Austria and Poland. Until 1840s, European Jews were required to regularly attend the sermons urging their conversion to Christianity. They were illegally taxed for practicing their religion and forced to live in a designated place (ghettos) and many more. And in the final blow, the massive killings of millions of Jews, we witnessed during the Second World War was also held in Europe.

For many such reasons, Jews, for centuries, were looking for a safe and secured place and nothing could provide them with better security than that of a state. In 1897 Theodor Herzl established a Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, which urged for the restoration of a Jews state in Palestine. Choosing Palestine was apparently a religious cause as Herzl wrote: "Palestine is our ever-memorable historic home. The very name of Palestine would attract our people with a force of marvelous potency." The movement for marching forward to Palestine was seemingly both an escape from a hated place- Europe and also to find a common and historic place that would be catchy to Jews of all over.

The State of Israel was created arbitrarily and



its populace was mobilized from some other sources. On November 2, 1917, The British Foreign Office issued a declaration signed by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Arthur James Balfour, "...His Majesty's Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object..." Later on June 30, 1922 a joint resolution of both Houses of Congress of the United States unanimously endorsed the Mandate for Palestine confirming: "Favoring the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people..." The most notable features of the US Congress' debate were the speech of Representative Walter M Chandler. He argued in favor of Jews national home and boastfully presented three choices for the existing Arab inhabitants of Palestine: 1) to remain in the land under the Jewish Government domination, 2) to sell their land to the Jews, or, if they do not consent any of the previous, 3) "...they (the Arab inhabitants) shall be driven from Palestine by force." No hide-and-peek play. And after May 14, 1948 that

was exactly happened to the Palestinians- they were forcefully driven out from their own land.

The legitimate question is: who authorize the British and the Americans to make such declaration and exercise that arrogance? Is that for winning a war? Perhaps. Later, the League of Nations, which was the catalyst and instrumental in keeping the global controls in favor of those winning nations, endorsed the so-called British mandate for the Jewish national home on July 24, 1922 (the endorsement historically viewed as a Mandate for Palestine):

"Whereas recognition has been given to the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine and to the grounds for reconstituting their national home in that country."

Now let us argue: what is that "historic connection"? Is that the claim that: "The Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people..." (Declaration of Independence of Israel, on May 14, 1948)? If League of Nations is very much convinced with the argument then the millions of Christians can claim the same land (Bethlehem) and their right to settle there as we know the fact

that the Jesus Christ (PBUH) was too born in that place. And the League of Nations could not fulfill the desire of millions Buddhists' followers' wish to return to the tiny city- Lumbini, Nepal. That was unhesitatingly a bizarre kind of argument. The natural course of action of each and every religion was that their followers spread all over the world to preach their respective religious messages.

Later, on April 18, 1946, League of Nations transferred its duties to the United Nations (as it was dissolved on that day). And Great Britain (the so-called Mandatory or Trustee of that land) did turn over its responsibility to the United Nations as of May 14, 1948, the very day Israel declared its independence. That healthy (!) process of being a Mandatory or Trustee or transferring rights of lands or many others issues related to Palestine totally ignored its own people. It never bothered to ask or include Arabs. It did not consider the potential dangers and plight of its existing inhabitants. Letting aside the legality question of Balfour's declaration, the text itself it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country was vastly ignored as spirit. We know the fact that more than seven hundred thousands of innocent people were displaced and suddenly turned into refugees as a consequence of 'imposed' Israel state.

Moreover, one of the Jew's arguments in justifying the imposed state was that all Middle-Eastern states were artificially created by the colonial masters rather than home-grown ones. Quite true. Even then, a Jew living in Germany cannot claim his right to live and settle in Jerusalem unless he is allowed to buy lands or taking refuge by the local inhabitants. Although the argument that the Arab states are artificially created partly renders the scenario, the other side of the argument is that none of these countries' inhabitants were mobilized from any other sources. They all were living in that place for centuries. And as John Stuart Mill, a renowned political scientist, once noted, "The worth of the state, in the long run, is the worth of the individuals composing it." Therefore, the creation of artificial states with aborigines and the imposition of a state through colonizing it cannot be viewed from the same angle, cannot be traded off and justified.

Jews often and boastfully refers to that "Mandate for Palestine" as the legal basis of the Jewish

State. But we all know those international laws are subject to change once some other nations win some other big wars, start ruling, and setting their new agendas. It can, well be argued that if winning a war is the criterion to set the legitimate standard then should we wait for another war to hear the voice from the Arabs? This may sounds bitter, but tragically it's true that mostly war defines the laws of international politics.

Whither Arab Peace initiative?

After all these odds, can there be a peaceful solution to the Middle-East crisis? Do we really need more bloodsheds, destructions, and hatred? I believe most of the peace-loving people would say 'no'.

In March 2002 Arab Summit in Beirut, Lebanon, a peace plan was adopted by all the Arab states, led by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, calling for the ending of decades of hostilities and a comprehensive peace with Israel reversing their earlier stance of three 'noes'- no peace, no recognition and, no negotiation. In that proposal Arab states offered Israel with the full acceptance, normalization of relations with all Arab states including the Muslim world in exchange of full withdrawal of its forces from all the territories occupied since 1967, provide a just solution to the Palestinian refugee issue, and the establishment of a Sovereign Palestine State with East Jerusalem its capital. There was never proposed such a thing to this crisis. As Arab leaders noted that "...it was such a deal that the founders of the State of Israel would surely embrace with characteristic boldness and, negotiate with vigor."

Jews once enjoyed the status of being a Muslims' ally during the crusade-era. Now, the Muslims are in place and offer a solution - a long cherished homeland for Jews with full recognition and security guarantee. Will the Jews embrace the historic choice? Do the Jews really believe that only 'Merkava-type' power can provide its security in the long run? Alarming rise of anti-Semitism in Europe can alter the momentum. Arabs are too rethinking about their own peace proposal as already a number of Arab countries hinted that the 'Arab Peace Initiative' will not be on the table forever. Time is running out for both sides. To avoid a dangerous end game, there is no alternative to a peaceful resolution to the crisis. Middle East cannot afford anymore bloodsheds and tears.

The author is attached with Development Initiative Trust as Research Coordinator.