

POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Mainstreaming climate change adaptation into national planning

Bangladeshi in US terror plot

Need for circumspection in action and words

THE news of a Bangladeshi 21 year-old hauled up, allegedly for planning to blow up the US Federal Reserve Bank cannot but cause grave concern to us. This is the first such instance of a Bangladeshi being implicated in a plot to carry out terrorist acts in a foreign country.

In this regard there are two issues that occupy our minds.

Firstly, without passing a value judgment on the guilt or innocence of the accused, we are at great pains to correlate the alleged act of Nafis and the description of his department and disposition as a human being. It is difficult to see him being predisposed to violence from how his acquaintances and friends have described him. He believed that a true Muslim could never consider violence as an option. At the same time he had expressed his admiration for Osama bin Laden who he believed was not involved with 9/11. We are also aware of his strong religious views from his Facebook page.

And that brings us to the matter of 'entrapment' and his falling into the trap laid by the FBI. Again, without splitting hairs on the definition of 'entrapment,' one wonders whether one ought not draw a fine line between the act of a motivated person indulging in a deliberate work of terrorism and one in which a person is encouraged by FBI sting operation to do what Nafis did. But be that as it may, the state cannot abandon Nafis, and the government must ensure that he gets a fair trial and face the consequences of its outcome, whatever that might be. Under no circumstances should his parents face harassment of any sort.

The second important point that we must focus on is that given our zero tolerance for extremism and terrorism it was time we acknowledged the presence in our midst of people with mindset that might have motivated Nafis to work in the manner he allegedly did and evolve means to address that. By the same token, the US must also acknowledge that its activities globally have fomented extremism and odium towards it, even among the moderate segments of Muslim youths in many parts of the world including Bangladesh, and work to address that. This should not be construed as condonation of terrorism. Far from it, we condemn terrorism most strongly, whoever be the perpetrators.

Eight million with no education at all?

Something is going wrong somewhere

A society where as many as eight million young people between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five have never completed primary education is clearly an ailing one. And it is so because these people, a sizeable part of the national population, do not have the skills necessary that can enable them to shape their lives in accordance with their needs. The Unesco report which makes note of this anomaly in Bangladesh society is thus one with which we not only agree but are also disturbed by. The report should be a wake-up call for the authorities.

There are obviously some fundamental reasons behind the young not going to school, chief among which is poverty. And poverty not only has a telling effect on the health of the young but is also a big reason why these unhealthy young are nevertheless looked upon as tentative economic wage earners, albeit at a meager level, for their families. If now these eight million are without primary education, it is quite clear that the message has not gone down to them that education is one surefire method that can help push poverty aside. It is for the authorities to emphasise, on a nationwide basis, the lesson that primary education is a guarantee of a future of self-reliance because it will enable the young to understand and master those skills which will help them as they grow into adulthood.

That said, there now comes up the question of a lack of interest in the young about primary education. It is here that institutional measures, initiated by the government across the board, must be undertaken toward making primary education a compulsory affair. That calls for more teacher training methods and insistent, regular classroom teaching as well as attendance. In recent years, Bangladesh has certainly made qualitative improvements in education. Even so, the reality of 44 million of its people, out of a total population of nearly 120 million, remaining beyond the pale of primary education is a crying shame. In our times, countries which have gone through revolution before the revolutionaries eventually took charge have seen the numbers of their educated grow by leaps and bounds. Why should we, having won our own revolution



SALEEMUL HUQ

AS the adverse impacts of human induced climate change become apparent and irrefutable, more and more countries

are developing national adaptation plans. Most of these planning exercises start by treating climate change impacts as risks to be adapted to and base the analysis on which parts or sectors of the country are most vulnerable and then develop plans to reduce their vulnerability. The Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP) is a good example of this type of plan.

However, as the magnitude and long-term nature of the climate change threat is realised it is becoming clear that simply implementing a set of adaptation projects, although useful, is not going to be sufficient. If long-term resilience is to be built then climate change adaptation (as well as mitigation) needs to be embedded (or mainstreamed) into regular national planning at all levels. The Planning Ministry in Bangladesh has started such an initiative to embed climate change into regular planning and also to have a climate change element built into the national budget.

The International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) at the Independent University, Bangladesh has also taken an initiative to train officials from

ministries of planning in Asia and Africa through a series of short training courses on mainstreaming climate change into national planning.

The first training course for Asia was held in Dhaka last year and the second course for Africa was held recently in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Altogether over fifty planning officials from over twenty countries in Asia and Africa were trained. They have now, themselves, formed a network of Climate Change Planners.

Some of the lessons that have already emerged on this issue are described below.

One aspect of moving from project based adaptation to mainstreaming it into plans is to change the perception of climate change from risk to opportunity. In this case the opportunity is to transform the country into a climate resilient one over the longer term.

Planning versus projects:

The first lesson is that while adaptation projects are a useful place to start, the long-term nature of climate impacts will require an altogether greater effort to develop a climate resilient economy. Thus, instead of developing separate, stand-alone, National Adaptation Plans (NAP) as many countries are doing, it is better to mainstream climate change into regular national plans. Therefore, the NAP process should be seen as a process of mainstreaming rather than producing a stand-alone plan.

Planning is needed at all levels:

The second lesson is that mainstreaming climate change into planning needs to be done at every level, not just national plans. Thus sectoral ministries such as water management, agriculture, health and others also need to mainstream climate change into their respective sectoral plans. Also very important is the need to mainstream into local level planning where possible. Some countries, such as Nepal, are developing Local Adaptation Programmes of Action (LAPA).

International funding for adaptation:

As international funding for adaptation begins to arrive in developing countries an interesting, potentially contradictory, issue may emerge. This is the fact that while international funds for adaptation will require activities they fund to be clearly identified and reported on, thus favouring a project approach, while the argument that such international funds will be most effective if they are in fact mainstreamed into national plans and budgets. This seeming contradiction can be dealt with by making clear identification of climate change funds within national budgets.

Conclusion:

The community of practice of Climate Change Planners that is emerging and growing across Asia and Africa will have an opportunity to meet again at the seventh international conference on Community Based Adaptation (CBA7), which will be held in Bangladesh in April 2013 where the theme will be "Mainstreaming community based adaptation into national and local planning." One aspect of moving from project based adaptation to mainstreaming it into plans is to change the perception of climate change from risk to opportunity. In this case the opportunity is to transform the country into a climate resilient one over the longer term.

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The New York Times EXCLUSIVE

Why Netanyahu backed down

GRAHAM T. ALLISON JR. and SHAI FRIEDMAN

FOR three years Israel's Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, and his Defense Minister, Ehud Barak, seemed to be united in urging an early military attack on Iran's nuclear facilities. But recently that alliance collapsed, with Netanyahu accusing Barak of having conspired with the Obama administration, in talks behind his back.

The clash came as a surprise in Israel, but in hindsight, there was a prelude -- the speech Netanyahu delivered a week earlier to the United Nations General Assembly. In a memorable cartoonish graphic, Netanyahu depicted a "red line" that he said Israel would not let Iran cross. But he also acknowledged that Iran would not be able to cross it until next spring or summer. In doing so, he essentially reset the urgency of his warnings and ended speculation that Israel might mount a unilateral attack on Iran before the American presidential election.

The public row with Barak illustrated the magnitude of Netanyahu's retreat and his difficulty in explaining it. He was left with implying that he had been undermined, if not betrayed, by his own defense minister. But that was not the full story of why he had blinked.

In fact, Netanyahu's about-face resulted from a long-building revolt by Israel's professional security establishment against the very idea of an early military attack, particularly one without the approval of the United States.

For months, former and even serving chiefs of Israel's defense and intelligence communities have vigorously and publicly opposed Netanyahu's case for attacking Iran sooner, rather than after all other means have been exhausted. Meir Dagan, the much respected former head of Mossad, did so to an American audience in an interview with Lesley Stahl broadcast last March by CBS' "60 Minutes." In Israel earlier, he had been quoted as saying that such an attack was "the

stupidest idea I have ever heard."

In addition, Netanyahu and Barak had proved unable to win sufficient support for early military action from other members of the government. Despite months of sustained effort, Mr. Netanyahu was not able to muster a majority even in his nine-member informal inner cabinet, much less Israel's larger security cabinet, whose agreement he would need before attacking.

And in August, Israel's President, Shimon Peres, took the occasion of his 89th birthday celebration to decisively reject any unilateral Israeli attack. The country's pre-eminent elder statesman and the father of Israel's own nuclear project, he broke with the non-political traditions of Israel's largely ceremonial presidency to argue that the central issue was the harm that going it alone could do to future American-Israeli relations.

Despite months of sustained effort, Mr. Netanyahu was not able to muster a majority even in his nine-member informal inner cabinet, much less Israel's larger security cabinet, whose agreement he would need before attacking.

Meanwhile, behind the scenes, the Obama administration was conducting a quiet campaign that would strengthen the view, already circulating among Israeli security professionals, that prematurely attacking Iran would not advance Israel's interests and would damage Israel's relationship with America. Instead of holding Israel at bay or threatening punitive action, the administration was upgrading American security assistance to Israel -- so much so that earlier this year Barak described the level of support as greater than ever in Israel's history.

This increase was manifested at every level: intelligence sharing that resulted in a convergence of assessments about Iran's nuclear efforts; joint cyber operations to slow Iran's nuclear programme; support of Israel's development of antimissile defences; and reaching a common declared

strategic approach to Iran's nuclear programme. That approach now focuses the two countries' efforts on preventing Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons, while also ruling out the option of a retreat to containing and deterring a nuclear-armed Iran.

Equally important, increased American assistance has been accompanied by closer institutional links between the two countries' defence and intelligence communities, as well as more intimate personal ties between both communities' top echelons. Through numerous meetings in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Washington, the Obama administration has used these connections to convey an unambiguous message: Do not attack before all non-military efforts to roll back Iran's nuclear program have been exhausted.

Ever deeper American-Israeli defence ties have created what might

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be labelled a "United States lobby" among Israeli security professionals, who now have a strong interest in continuing the close partnership. It is no accident that the security institutions have become among the most vocal opponents of attacking Iran. No one knows better than they what is at stake if they ignore Washington's concerns.

And their views have resonated with the Israeli general public: A poll conducted jointly last month by the Truman Institute at Hebrew University and the Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research found that 77% of Israelis now oppose a military attack on Iran that is not approved by Washington, although 71% would support an attack with American consent.

The plain fact is that the Obama administration achieved its objective of persuading Israel to refrain from a

premature attack largely without explicit or implied threats. Instead, it has built a closer relationship with Israel's defence community, and has capitalised on it.

And that should be a model for the future.

Especially when allies are as close as Israel and the United States, the relationship between them should not depend on whether the personal chemistry between their leaders is strong or weak. Instead, it should be based on firm mutual respect for the enduring national interests each side has. On that score, the professional security officials on both sides can be counted on to put domestic politics aside and to try to find a mutual approach to thorny problems, so long as they can talk candidly, and often, with each other.

A related conclusion is that an American administration will be most successful when it speaks, publicly and privately, with one voice -- with the same message coming from the White House, the Pentagon and the Joint Chiefs. Then, its interests and priorities will be unmistakable to Israeli leaders, all of whom know how important American largess is to their own country.

These are important lessons not only for the future American-Israeli discourse on Iran, but also in the event that the next American administration, re-elected or new, will attempt to resurrect efforts to achieve Arab-Israeli peace. In that case, too, the United States is most likely to gain Israel's cooperation by coupling a demonstrable commitment to the country's security with a clear, unambiguous and sustained articulation of American national interests. And a thick, multi-layered conversation between the national security elites in Israel and the United States could ensure that the two countries remain in sync, even when their leaders are not.

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THIS DAY IN HISTORY

October 21

1979 Moshe Dayan resigns from the Israeli government because of strong disagreements with Prime Minister Menachem Begin over policy towards the Arabs.

1987 Jaffna hospital massacre is carried out by Indian Peace Keeping Force in Sri Lanka killing 70 ethnic Tamil patients, doctors and nurses.

1994 North Korea nuclear weapons program: North Korea and the United States sign an agreement that requires North Korea to stop its nuclear weapons program and agree to inspections.