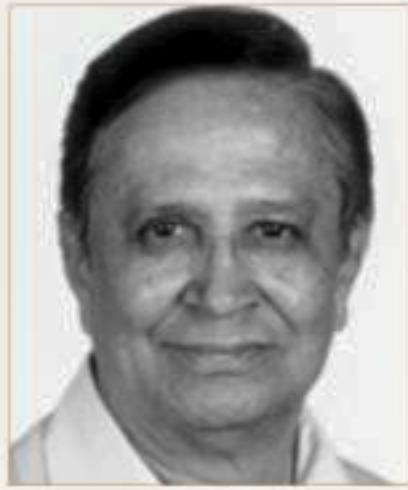


Is Syria going the Libyan way?

PLEASURE IS ALL MINE



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

In this line of thinking, a deterrent punitive action against an irreverent Assad regime is considered a compelling necessity.

However, is military intervention as imminent as it is made out to be? From the look of things, it appears that the US, Britain and France may be rushing to action. The rush of blood has been looked with suspicion by spirited Clare Short, a former foreign secretary to Tony Blair's government. She resigned on the issue of Blair joining the US' invasion of Iraq on the unproven ground of existence of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Saddam's hands. Her position was to be ultimately vindicated by the hoax revealed on the WMD. More important, Britain got sucked into a war tunnel for years that claimed not only precious lives of Britons but the Iraqis as well.

Now in the case of Syria, Clare Short suspects Israel is up to an insidious Zionist design, if I have heard her correctly over BBC. It has already conducted air strikes inside Syria. Syria too, has threatened to attack Israel if the US carries out air strike on Damascus. At the same time, Hezbollah-Iran-Syria connection is thickening to a plot for regional conflagration on Shi'ia-Sunni sectarian lines. On the other side are Saudi Arabia and Qatar, who being Sunni, are supporting the Syrian rebel groups. It is alleged that materials for chemical weapons were supplied by some Sunni governments to Assad who leads the Alwayte, a branch of Shia Islam.

Iran, for its part, has warned of a burning powder keg in the region.

The Western impatience to get a move on in Syria is driven by a preemptive agenda as well as a motive of teaching lesson to an errant dictator who is but walking dead. Part of the spectacle is grandstanding with perhaps the first taste poised to be given of the US' Asian pivot in the Mediterranean waters to whom it may concern.

The facts on the ground provide a breathing space, though. This, in spite of the war drums beating overtime with muscle flexing, sabre-rattling, troops and equipment positioning across the region and beyond.

The respite is made up of some distinct elements which by no means can be short-circuited to produce a resolution for an impulsive unilateral military intervention. It is fundamentally noteworthy such an intervention lacks well-defined purpose because, for all we know, no regime change is being aimed at nor a takeover of the country. How would power vacuum then be filled in when there is no identifiable rebel group or combination of groups which can be chaperoned into a proxy war as the air strikes went on without Western powers committing their troops on the ground till the enemy is reduced to submission?



Incursion of organised crime

M. EMDADUL HAQ

CRIMINALS are on the rise all over the world, and their illegal activities go beyond local or national boundaries. This article explores the economic penetrations of criminal enterprises to run their tightly ordered activities.

Commonly, illicit activities of a conspiratorial group of criminals are known as Organised Crime (OC). Criminal actions are clandestinely synchronised through a nexus or syndicate for making money. Structured in a pyramidal hierarchy, criminals employ violence and bribery in carrying out operations. Threats of grievous consequences are made to the targets for internal and external control in their dealings.

Among the numerous types of political crimes, secret killing, violent politics, campus violence and militant actions are salient in Bangladesh. Organised trafficking in arms, drugs, humans, cattle, and other commodities takes place with India and Myanmar. Organised financial crimes include public sector corruption, domestic and transnational bribery, money laundering and so on. Organised social crimes include extortion, fraud, robbery, abduction, theft, etc.

Like in many other countries, national and transnational crimes are a serious menace in Bangladesh. Organised criminals use cell phones, internet and credible front-organisations in the movement of large scale money and weaponry. They take part in underground operations with white collar criminals, and employ sophisticated methods for money laundering.

Michael Newton (2011), in his book *Chronology of Organized Crime: Worldwide*, gives narratives of crimes that took place in human history from 6,000 BC to the present. Thousands of criminal cases ranging from imperial misdeeds to ordinary ones have been described in this work.

I showed in my work, *Drugs in South Asia: From the opium trade to the present day* (2000), how the greed for drug money tempted the British to invade the Kingdom of Bengal in 1757 and seize leadership in the Indo-China opium trade. The book also tells how India, after losing its traditional supremacy in opium supplies to Australia, advanced Phensidyl trafficking in Bangladesh since the 1980s. Surpassing Pakistan's Golden Crescent and Myanmar's Golden Triangle, the Indian traffickers now command the Golden Ways region in the global narcotics map.

CIA taught Afghan Pathans how to convert opium into heroin in their anti-Soviet drive in Afghanistan, which caused proliferation of heroin trade in southwest Asia during the 1980s. Since then, drug money continued to be the backbone of Afghan politics that brought poor villagers closer to the Mujahideen than to the Taleban.

The creation of political vacuum due to war and annexations had special relevance for the surfacing of Mafia activities in Italy at the turn of the 19th century. A century later, political instability in the former USSR left many government workers and KGB members underpaid or jobless, and they ultimately joined criminal syndicates. Criminals now control more than 40,000 financial institutions, including many government organisations, in Russia. Emerging political volatility, possible power vacuum, absence or weakness of state authority will increase OC in Bangladesh.

Highlighting the cross-regional accounts, Belén Boville (2004), in his book *The Cocaine War in Context: Drugs and Politics*, points a finger at the criminal nexus within bureaucratic and financial institutions, including police and military organisations. This work pinpoints dominant drug cartels in Columbia, including their father figures Pablo Escobar, Medellín, Cali, and other 'baby cartels.' Unless we wish to be branded as the 'Columbia of the East,' after Pakistan, we need to take action against such cartels.

Dennis M.P. McCarthy, in his work *An Economic History of Organized crime: A national and transnational approach* (2011), discusses mafia activities in different parts of the world. He says that the US mafia is led by five crime families from New York City and 26 Mafia 'families' across the US and Canada. Besides taking part in international illicit drug trafficking, the US mafia shelters overseas partners and their businesses.

McCarthy writes that cocaine goes from South America, through Africa, and into Europe primarily through Spain, which is a major distribution centre for the narcotic. The 'unwashed' euros travel in the opposite direction, from Europe, down to Africa, across the Atlantic to South America, eventually to end up in the US. While some narco-euros are laundered in Europe, most enter the US, where they penetrate the economic and financial life in numerous ways. In the process of money laundering, the international drug cartels receive huge sums of money from cocaine sales in the US.

In Asia, the Chinese Triads and the Japanese Yakuza belong to the world's top ten Mafia groups. These umbrella organisations involve individuals, societies or syndicates in their groupings. Both have achieved enduring global presence. They share a common culture that promotes exceptionally strong bonding to stay intact as they operate in difficult environments.

Nevertheless, OC in Africa has not received as much publicity as have the mafias in other regions. Gaining from the political gridlock in Bangladesh, Nigerian criminals are using the country as a crossroads for international drug trafficking. Some big catches have already revealed the threat, and more attention should be paid by law enforcement agencies to their movements and activities in Dhaka. Teenager Oishee's drug addiction and the murder of her parents should be a wake up call to the parents, law enforcers and public leadership of the country.

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First and foremost, UN inspection team will take four days to find out traces or clues of either presence of chemical weapons or attack by using them. Then, it will take few more days to analyse and assess the data to reach a conclusion. Russia and China, opposed to military intervention, are also keenly awaiting the inspection team's findings.

Meanwhile, a Security Council meet of the Big Five ended without a resolution that UK tried to put on the table. The Security Council process is likely to take its own time given that Russia or China can singly veto any resolution for deterrent or punitive action. But surely, conclusive positive findings of the IAEA would weigh in for the shape and content of the resolution to emerge from the UN Security Council.

The protagonists of tough action against Syria tend to recall that in the Korean crisis in 1950 when consensus couldn't be arrived at in the Security Council, it got referred to UN General Assembly which by a two-thirds majority passed a resolution for intervention.

That is hardly the option in 2013. This is because even the intent of a deterrent or calibrated intervention of the US and British governments will have rigorous reality checks in their own countries. The hemorrhage, maiming, traumatising and heavy costs exacted by Afghan and Iraq wars remain imprinted on the consciousness of the Western taxpayers and elected public representatives. It won't be a smooth sail for Obama and Cameron as they attempt to elicit the support of MPs and Congressmen for their plan of action. As it is, there is a five-day respite for Obama to participate in G8 Summit. David Cameron is recalling the parliament to consider the emergent issue, which too will take its time. The test, however, is to take Russia and China along with an inclusive diplomacy walking the extra mile.

Our hope, meanwhile, is best conveyed through a Bangla maxim: 'Kill the snake but keep the stick intact.'

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WITH all eyes on Egypt, Syria gets jealous and draws attention by crossing the red line. It is gas, not solids, that gets warships cruising. The UN, acting on its characteristic speed (takes Bin Laden off its sanctions list two years after his death), will surely pass a strong resolution ending with the ominous line: "Genocidal dictators, beware of our non-binding resolutions."

There are the usual exercises -- embassies pulling out 'non essential' employees. Which begs the question, if they are 'non essential,' what were they doing there in the first place?

In all fairness, Bashar-al-Assad and special envoy Kofi Annan did jointly declare a cease fire. Annan said: "Cease!" Everyone stopped firing. Assad then said: "Fire!" The firing resumed.

Meanwhile, the crimson tide in Egypt continues to determine who is really more popular, Sisi or Morsi. Perhaps they are confident of their popularities based on their own Twitter feeds.

President Obama, in a rare bi-partisan move, sends the veteran John McCain to Egypt as his envoy (G.W. Bush would have sent a convoy). Good choice. The Senator has experience dealing with the Egyptians since the Ramesses II Administration. Meanwhile, the Obama Administration continues to drool over whether to use the four letter word, 'coup.'

So, here are a couple of more dimensions to add to the Middle East peace process. Note, it is a 'process,' not a 'resolution.' I think that is the fundamental problem, focusing on the process rather than a few solid resolutions to establish peace in the region, once and for all. Oh wait, there's the other four letter word to take into account, 'veto,' the UN constipator, which can't be fixed even with a laxative.

The UN's policy on the Middle East remains as not having a policy on the Middle East. Don't hold your breath on it changing its motto anytime soon: "Making a better tomorrow, tomorrow." So, conflicting parties, just go ahead and declare peace! Even if no one cares about stopping bloodshed, sometimes declaring peace at least confuses the daylights out of the other side. And then, the UN can go ahead and send a special envoy -- Angelina Jolie. That will calm down the middle aged hormones.

Sigh... The US had Watergate. For Syria, it is Assadgate. With the desert on one side and the Red Sea on the other, Egypt is literally stuck between a (crumbled sea of) rock and a hard place (to swim in).

Egypt reminds us of President G.W. Bush saying: "I am gravely concerned that Hamas wins the Palestinian elections. However, democratic elections can sometimes produce unwelcome results." Couldn't agree more, as he said this right after his re-election in 2005...

How about a Facebook page style election? A 'like' is a vote and can be cast or withdrawn at anytime. As soon as the number of 'likes' go below that of the first runner up, the latter is immediately sworn into office. Hey, this could be a solution right here in a few months time...

Uh, oh! Mark Zuckerberg may now be in the line of fire, for creating Facebook.

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Morsi-sisi burning

HUMOROUSLY YOURS



NAVEED MAHBUB

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TRIBUTE My respected senior

MUHAMMAD SHAFIQUR RAHMAN

WHEN I met Dr. Zahir for the first time in 2004, I was fascinated by his good looks and his flamboyant personality. He interviewed me and took me as an intern. I have never seen a person more devoted to work than Dr. Zahir. He believed in and preached Benjamin Franklin's age-old saying: "Never leave that till tomorrow which you can do today." He used another saying when we dithered in something: "Unless you start you will never finish." I have taken this advice for my journey in life, and it has been of enormous practical help to me.

He was a compassionate and kind-hearted man. He treated his juniors with due deference, and rewarded us generously. He treated everybody with respect, not only his fellow lawyers, irrespective of his or her social status. He mocked the prevalent social customs by referring to George Orwell's *Animal Farm*: "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others."

Honesty and diligence were Dr. Zahir's hallmark. While addressing the court he never concealed facts or precepts of law in order to achieve immediate success, unlike most lawyers. He never gave his clients hope of success, even if it was a case with merits. He used to underline mostly the adverse aspects of litigation, and discouraged people from going to court. "Do not go for lawsuits," he used to say. "You will get thirty six wounds (*mamla chule atharo gha*); your lawyers will get richer and you will get poorer." What amazed me most was that he was so quick in grasping complicated legal problems that he would accept senior briefs while walking in the corridor of the court, and would march into the courtroom and instantly deliver lucid arguments on the subject!

He was born at Bhabanipur in Calcutta on May 22, 1939. His father, Justice Muhammad Asir, was a lawyer in Calcutta High Court and later a judge in Dhaka High Court. Because of his father's eminence Dr. Zahir had the opportunity from his childhood to come in touch with eminent lawyers/politicians like Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy, Sher-e-Bangla A.K. Fazlul Haque and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Before he succumbed to multiple myeloma in December 2011, he was as fit as a fiddle. "Two courts," he used to joke, "attract me most: the High Court and the tennis court." He could also play piano, guitar and organ, and sometimes sang old English and Bangla songs. He lived his life to the fullest. It is a pity that such a buoyant life would come to a sudden end like this.

When the news of his death broke on July 11, the world stopped for us, and for all lawyers and the honourable judges of the Supreme Court. Judges rose from their benches to pay their last tribute to this larger-than-life personality. Proceedings at both Divisions of the Supreme Court halted unprecedentedly.

The president, prime minister, speaker of the Parliament, leader of the opposition, chief justice, Supreme Court Bar Association, Bangladesh Bar Council, Law Reporters' Forum, senior lawyers and many people from across the country sent their condolences. His demise marked the end of an era in the legal domain. His absence will be acutely felt by all people involved with law. May Allah grant him eternal peace.

The writer is a Barrister-at-Law and an associate of Dr. M Zahir & Associates.



Dr. Zahir

ACROSS

- 1 Degrade
- 6 Lousy
- 9 Matter-horn, for one
- 12 Made on a loom
- 13 Oprah's network
- 14 Kin of alt. sp.
- 15 Ransacks
- 16 Swaggering
- 18 Plump
- 20 Capri or Wight
- 21 "Eureka!"
- 23 Slithery swimmer
- 24 Clan emblem
- 25 Melville's Billy
- 27 Beelzebub
- 29 Nicolai's nickname
- 31 Vinegary
- 35 Language of Sri Lanka
- 37 Commotion
- 38 Deceive

DOWN

- 1 Puncturing tool
- 2 Greet the bad guys
- 3 Guacamole base
- 4 Son of Adam
- 5 Follow native type
- 6 Drop the ball
- 7 Off
- 8 "CSI"
- 9 Seaman's evidence
- 10 Tureen
- 11 Preface
- 12 Girl in "Peanuts"
- 13 Make obscure
- 14 Piquant
- 15 Pedestal
- 16 Petri dish
- 17 Nabokov title
- 18 End
- 19 Before

Solution time: 25 mins.

Yesterday's answer 7-12

CRYPTOQUIP

XBYWW. EDBFKD ZHWCDERDXX

XSFQX ZSDED QDFQWD

ZDRK KF DRJYJD HR YRJEL

EYRKX: KHEYCHRJ OFXXKX.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: SHE RECENTLY HIRED HER FORMER BOYFRIEND AS AN EMPLOYEE, BUT UNEXPECTEDLY HAD TO AX THE EX.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Q equals P

BETTLE BAILY



HENRY



QUOTABLE Quotes

"To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream; not only plan, but also believe."

Anatole France