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DAWN

Power politics in Middle East-II

How Ummah can meet the challenge

By Prof Khurshid Ahmad

One of the inspectors has currently admitted about the role of the United Nations Special Commission on Iraq saying that it has taken over Iraq through remote control. But the question now is for how long can it be tolerated?

Here we need to ponder as to how America is maintaining double standards in this regard. Iraq has two objections to the unending role of this Commission. One, these inspectors insist on trampling down the political sovereignty of Iraq and the self-respect of its rulers. This humiliation knows no bounds. Secondly, the majority of these inspectors is from America and Britain whose spite towards Iraq is an open secret, and one is expected to carry out impartial investigation.

Both the objections are valid in principle and that is the reason that France, Russia and China have given weight to these objections. But America insists that it will play the role of police officer, advocate and judge all together. The duplicity of America has been badly exposed by the law that has recently been passed by the American Senate. America has signed the Chemical Weapons Convention. Under this convention, the UN inspectors can inspect the concerned sites within two weeks on receipt of any complaint. In this regard, the American attitude, even after the confirmation of this convention by the Senate, is that out of the total 20 occasions twice it has not allowed the inspectors when attempts were made to carry out inspections. Both of them were from the Organization of the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, but American objection was that these inspectors were from Iran and Cuba. If America has the right to veto any inspector of the UN, then why cannot Iraq or any other country exercise the same right!

Article 307 of the law pending for approval is even more objectionable, according to which America wants to acquire the authority to deny inspection of any of its sites in the name of its national security. The law is conferring this authority upon the President and it is being legislated that this law would not be challengeable in any court of law.

In another Article, it has been provided: any objection by the President to an individual serving as an inspector...shall not be reviewable in any court for inspection. (The Guardian: Feb. 12, 1998)

The Guardian, in its editorial comments adjudges it as double standard for inspection. It declares in clear terms that Saddam Hussein is not the only one stretching the rules, America is also stretching them. Now who can defend the ethical position of America with this duplicity?

A fundamental question is whether America, Britain or any other country has the right to ride over Iraq in the name of the UN. This game is still on; seven years have passed and now this oppression is fully exposed. The UN Resolution 687 makes mention of the stockpile of weapons but the permission for the

use of force is not there. For that purpose Britain wanted to move a new Resolution but America was not willing, apprehending lest Russia, China or France veto it.

It is a clear admission of the fact that the use of force on the question of inspection is unjustified both legally and morally. Further, even the permanent members of the Security Council are not unanimous on this issue. Rest of the world is also against it. But America is bent upon forcing its own will, brushing aside the views of the world community. So obstinate they are that President Clinton boasted a number of times and even repeated it in his 'State of the Union' address that "in case Saddam did not follow the unanimous view of the world community, we are prepared to punish him and we shall do it." But excepting America and Britain, all the countries of the world are opposed to the use of force on this issue. Russia has gone to the extent of warning America that in the event of America acting unilaterally, there is the possibility of the Third World War. (The Guardian, Feb. 9, 1998, p.11)

Arab League represents 22 Arab countries. Its secretary general not only opposes this military action but also calls it as obduracy and obstinacy of America. Most of the British press has criticized the policy of the British Government and has declared it as surrender to America. During 1991 Gulf War, American and British Army Generals had also considered it dangerous and unproductive and had opined that it shall yield nothing except massacre of innocent people. American targets have been termed as ambiguous and just a Fuzzy Symbolism. (The Independent, Feb. 12, 1998). Mostly, the intellectuals treat it as an Imperialistic game, pure and simple. Herald Pinter is a writer and an intellectual, as well as Cardinal Basle's words are worth reproduction:

"The USA is a monster. It is actually USA that needs to be stopped. Everyone knows that war is appalling but what we lose sight of is that it is being abstracted now and sanitized to such a degree that Mr. Clinton has killed children and he has not even noticed it because they are actually abstractions they are children dying of his sanctions... Despite continued references to the solidarity of the international community, the United States in fact held international law in contempt for so long it has succeeded in rendering the concept meaningless... The USA is now a bovine monster, out of control. (The Independent, Feb. 13, 1998)

Another aspect of this invasion of Iraq is that it is being projected as enforcement of the Security Council Resolutions. But in these Resolutions, there is no mention of the use of force. Even if this is ignored, question arises if the Security Council Resolutions relate to Iraq only. Whether all the Resolutions about Israel are simply blessings and benedictions in nature and need no enforcement? Israel has been openly violating not only one but dozens of them with full intransigence and America backing it.

Is the Security Council Resolution No 242 not enforceable? Is it not a fact that the Security Council has passed more than 40 Resolutions about unlawful settlements in Palestine? Why are these not enforced? Is it also not a fact that thrice in 1997 the General Assembly passed almost unanimously Resolutions against the construction of fresh housing settlements in Baitul Maqdis by Israel with only one single vote of Israel against it, but Israel spurned all of them and declined to comply. There is none who can force Israel to comply with these Resolutions. Has not India openly flouted the three unambiguous Resolutions of the Security Council on Kashmir?

Reality is that America not only remains silent in regard to Israel's excesses but the whole game is rather played to build up Israel as the supreme power of this region. For the last 20 years, America has been providing economic aid to Israel (not loan but open assistance) amounting to \$1.2 bn. per year and \$1.8

bn as arms aid which adds up to 53 bn. This is happening at a time when the external aid of all poor countries has been stopped or transformed into interest bearing loans. Israel is the richest country of the region its GNP having risen from 520 bn. per year to 598 bn. per year during the last 20 years of this amount, 20 per cent is spent on its war preparations. From the next year, America has promised to increase the military aid of Israel from \$1.8 bn. to \$2.4 bn.

While Israel is being patronized richly, the state of Israel is not only stultifying the UN Resolutions but it is not even prepared to fulfil in the least the promises held out to America in the Oslo Agreement itself. Under the Agreement, 30 per cent of the West Bank area of river Jordan was to be surrendered to the Palestine Authority, but practically only two and a half per cent area has been handed over. Israel is not prepared to give any more. None is now prepared to discuss anything as to the punitive action against it. Instead, in response to each case of obstinacy, America comes out with an assurance of support and backing to Israel.

A survey of the situation brings out the salient features of the real game of the Imperialist powers. It is frivolous to expect anything good from them. Finally, the question is what the Muslim Ummah should do to meet this situation. Should the Ummah surrender to these powers? Should it forget its faith, give up the objectives of its life and accept the chains of new slavery willingly and wishfully, or fight valiantly against the forces of evil as was done in the past, and once again draw up the battle line relying on Allah and take the way of Intifada for the sake of our faith, self-respect, and future at every front and ultimately at the universal level?

This is the only way leading to freedom, existence and respect. The decision of the history is that the weak and the vanquished always struggled through this way to get rid of the oppressors' clutches and thus change the course of history itself. No superpower remains a superpower forever. History is the graveyard of at least 26 superpowers and two such powers (Britain and Russia) have gone down in our lifetime, becoming powerless. What is needed is determining the objectives correctly and undertake planning for a long, enduring struggle.

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