

In an address to the cadets from West Point on June 1, 2002, President Bush spoke of a 'new doctrine' and the way he sees America's new role in the world after the September 11 attacks. Speaking of his 'new doctrine', he said that not only will the United States impose preemptive, unilateral military force when and where it chooses, but will also punish those who engage in terror and aggression, and will work to impose a universal moral clarity between good and evil. "If we wait for threats to materialize, we will have waited too long." The reference of course was to the "mad terrorists and tyrants" with weapons of mass destruction, and where "the gravest danger to freedom lies at the perilous crossroads of radicalism and technology." Coming out of the closet on the word 'preemption', he said new threats also require new thinking, and that deterrence meant nothing against shadowy terrorist networks. "All nations that decide for aggression and terror will pay a price ... We will lift this dark threat from our country and from the world ... our security will require all Americans to be forward-looking and resolute, to be ready for preemptive action when necessary."

Bush said that, the US "must uncover terror cells in 60 or more countries ... we must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans, and confront the worst threats before they emerge." The Cold War doctrine of deterrence, intended to curb potential aggressors through fear of overwhelming retaliation "means nothing against shadowy terrorist networks with no nation or citizens to defend." In a reference to the "axis of evil", he said, containment "is not possible when unbalanced dictators with weapons of mass destruction can deliver those weapons on missiles or secretly provide them to terrorist allies."

The Bush 'doctrine' assumes three paramount objectives:

- Removal of governments repugnant to the US.
- Use of preemption against such governments, terrorists and weapons of mass destruction programmes of the 'rogue' regimes.
- When necessary, take unilateral action where allies are not forthcoming.

Going a step further beyond expounding on his new 'doctrine' on June 17, he directed his national security aides to make a doctrine of pre-emptive action against state and terrorist groups trying to develop such weapons into the foundation of a new national security strategy. According to his national security advisor, Condoleezza Rice, "It really means early action of some kind", ranging from direct military action by the United States, to joint operations with Russia and other powers and incorporate economic incentives. Explaining the motives for these actions, Rice said, "It means forestalling certain destructive acts against you by an adversary." There are times, she said, when "you can't wait to be attacked to respond."

In his eagerness to bullwhip the "terrorists" following the 9/11 incident, President Bush really 'lost it' during State of the Union Speech in January 2002, when he lashed out at what he termed the "axis of evil", his version of Reagan's 'evil empire', comprising Iran, Iraq, and North Korea. Today, the list has been expanded to include Syria, Libya, and Sudan. The President declared: "States like these (Iran, Iraq, North Korea) and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world ... All nations should know America will do what is necessary to ensure our nation's security ... I will not stand by as peril draws closer and closer. The US will not permit the world's most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world's most destructive weapons."

Seeking to justify President Bush's new 'doctrine', Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld commenting to the Washington Post on June 17, said that, the US military is not developing a doctrine of using force preemptively against terrorist-sponsoring states. However, the war in Afghanistan shows it is prepared to use pre-emptive attacks.

The general consensus within the administration is that nipping future threats in the bud, would eventually be a far more effective ploy than the previous doctrines. Proponents argue that terrorist and others are not deterred by the threat of large-scale reprisals. It is a significant move away from the chess-like military strategies of the cold war and supposedly deals more broadly with a range of options to prevent so called "rogue" states from obtaining large-scale weapons or sponsoring terrorism. The new Bush doctrine is expected to become the foundation of a new national security strategy, and work on it is expected to be completed by August 2002. Officials say that they are fine-tuning the policy to make it clear that the United States has options beyond armed intervention. Those options include joint operations with Russia and other powers. Potential targets include weak states that have become, in the words of one official, "petri dishes" for terrorist groups. This would allow the Americans, to move swiftly to eradicate "terror networks" before they have had the opportunity to carry out or even plan operations against the US and

its allies. At the same time it would cause a cessation (or at least it is hoped) in development of weapons of mass destruction by nations such as Iran and North Korea. Officials however, maintain that deterrence has not completely been abandoned.

The West Point statement and the consequent response by the Bush administration are not altogether unexpected. Ever since the Rumsfeld Commission Report of July 1998, the US has been trying to develop a strategy to deal with states developing ballistic missiles with biological or nuclear payloads, particularly that of Iraq. In May, 2001, in his speech at the National Defense University in Washington, President Bush had spoken of a 'dangerous world' which needed new concepts of deterrence that rely both on offensive and defensive forces. "This is still a dangerous world, a less certain, a less predictable one. More nations have nuclear weapons. Some already have nuclear aspirations. Many have chemical and biological weapons ... Most troubling of all, the list of these countries include some of the world's least responsible states."

It is pertinent to note here, that all the countries identified in the 'axis of evil' are parties to most international treaties dealing with arms control regimes, for example, the Non Proliferation Treaty. Iraq was a full party to NPT when its civilian nuclear reactor 'Osirak' was attacked by Israel in 1984. The lack of response by the international community clearly showed that no treaty would protect civilian facilities if the powerful states felt they should be taken out.

As with the Osirak incident, the 'doctrine' of preemptive action comes in the wake of the eroding credibility of international arms control and disarmament regimes. The Bush administration has not only put an end to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), but has also made a unilateral withdrawal from the ABM Treaty. Moreover, it has also stopped the process of negotiations on an additional protocol, which was to have been added to the Biological Weapons Convention to make it a more comprehensive treaty.

With the inability of the US intelligence community to provide timely and accurate estimates of nuclear and ballistic missile threats to the country, and the growing fears of 'terrorism' and 'dirty bomb' attacks on the US mainland, the doctrine of preemptive strikes might turn out to be more than just a strategy.

Implications of the new 'Doctrine'

While this new approach to deal with threats to US security may appeal to many 'patriotic' Americans, on the other hand, the orthodox zeal with which President Bush has sought to develop policies to deal with particular problems has created more contradictions than solutions. Examples abound in the form of his rejection of binding treaties (Kyoto, ABM, CTBT), imposing economic duties (the Steel dispute with Europe and Japan), and seeking immunity from the international criminal court for its civilians and soldiers and threatening to withdraw from peacekeeping missions around the world. Surprisingly, the UN granted one-year immunity to the US personnel from persecution by the ICC in July 2002. This only proves that it is after all a unipolar world, and with the impotency of international forums such as the United Nations, the powerful can get away with almost anything, even preemptive strikes against targets which pose no credible threat other than just being plain distasteful to the US.

The clearest contradiction in foreign policy is evident in President Bush's revelation of his new 'doctrine'. In all the nuclear strategies, doctrines and concepts evolved during the Cold War years to combat the 'evil empire' never did any of the US administrations, from Eisenhower to Reagan, think of developing a national security doctrine based on pre-emption. The Cold War was symbolized by such concepts as "massive retaliation" "flexible response" and "mutual assured destruction" MAD - the very foundations of what nuclear pundits call deterrence - to achieve a stable nuclear world. Put simply, the US accepted the existence of the Soviet Union's nuclear arsenal, but it contested the danger with the threat, at first of massive reprisals, and even total annihilation, and then with the proclaimed ability to meet the threat at any and all levels, as well as other means to contain, curtail and limit Communist expansion. In the long run this approach was justified as illustrated by the eventual triumph of the western bloc and the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

With the disappearance of the Soviet threat, this policy did seem more and more archaic to US policy makers as new states with nuclear and missile capability emerged, who did not follow the patterns initially set by the US and the Soviet Union. In a transformed post- Cold War security environment, the US increasingly became concerned with states exploiting these changes. Moreover, a number of countries do not welcome the US role as a self-styled stabilizing power in many regions around the world, the most notable being the Middle East and Afghanistan.

The new Bush policy can be seen as the prototype for future actions and can provide a dangerous precedent for other nations to follow suit. Previously the only other time the US had ever taken preemptive action was in the 1962 Cuban Missile crisis, when the US Naval vessels "quarantined" the Cuban waters. A proposal to take out Soviet facilities was floated but rejected. Later, in that decade, President Johnson, toyed with the idea of strikes against China to prevent it from deploying its nuclear arsenal, but this never came to fruition.

The 9/11 incidents in the United States and the consequent 'war on terrorism' has led the US towards a more unilateralist approach to global politics with little regard for concerns by allies. 9/11 gave a license to the US to pursue extensively interventionist policies in the Middle East, and South/ Southeast Asia. The success of these operations seems to have convinced US President George W. Bush that deterrence is no longer a workable strategy in his war with the terrorists. With preemption as a national security policy, the US is now free to attack any country, any time and anywhere as part of the new preemptive doctrine. In its drive to deal with the "axis of evil" the Bush doctrine sees no role for consultation with allies and rationalizes the US military aggression under the guise of preemption against a perceived threat. Many US allies have already distanced themselves from the way President Bush is conducting his 'war on terrorism' and his notion of an 'axis of evil'.

Although the administration describes the new policy as a broad one, and one that names no countries or terrorist groups, it is already being set in motion against Iraq. Twice since Sept. 11, Mr. Bush has signed orders authorizing more spending for Iraqi opposition groups, with a focus on intelligence-gathering and on the infiltration by American Special Operations forces and CIA operatives. According to a report in the New York Times on July 5, in an effort to operationalize his preemptive 'doctrine', President Bush has ordered overt military operations against the Iraqi leader. According to the report, Pentagon has drawn up detailed plans for a ground, sea and air invasion of Iraq. The mandate apparently includes provisions for lethal force as well as providing greater support to Iraqi opposition groups.

It is not clear whether the US realizes the full repercussions of destabilizing existing norms and principles of international relations and regimes that define strategic relationships, and moving the world on a destabilizing course. By undermining all international norms, it will only create an anarchic environment where other states may defy their treaty obligations on grounds that their accession to these is constantly being made non-credible.

If the proposed changes in laying down a new national security policy do go through, it would also deal a fatal blow to Article 51 of the UN Charter, which gives states the right to act purely in self-defense only "if an armed attack occurs" (not "is likely to occur".) It would also set a dangerous precedent, as powerful international players may feel able to take on actions against others on flimsy, unproven charges of "harbouring terrorists." Both India and Israel are the most likely beneficiaries of such a yardstick. India, could launch "limited" strikes against alleged bases in Azad Kashmir, while Israel may be encouraged to further its adventures in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with or without any bombing outrage.

The US has shown every inclination of undermining organizations like the UN. Given President Bush's penchant for rejecting treaties and conventions, it is not entirely improbable that he may soon be pressing to incorporate new changes in the 50-year old UN Charter in line with the needs of the 'lonely superpower' and the unipolar moment.

#### Impact of the Preemptive Strikes

The biggest impact which the US hopes to gain by proposed preemptive strikes is the potential effect on all would-be weapons proliferators around the world. While Iraq continues to defy the US threats of military action, both Iran and North Korea have shown a greater willingness for talks with the US.

However, preemption is attractive on the surface, but as the US gets deeper into it, it may get more and more complicated and dangerous. This is especially true if the military objectives of such an operation are not immediately clear. Such strikes may do a lot more damage than good. The risk of escalation is all too clear, in their desperation, target countries may attack US interest in their immediate vicinity. It may lead to clandestine movements and projects moving underground, making them much harder to crack. It will all but end any diplomatic initiative, which may be far more effective than a unilateral military push. Countries will be a lot less inclined to take action against "mad terrorists and tyrants", if the latter are attacked first. Also, the intelligence will have to be almost perfect, for the risk of accidental hits that take out a large number of civilian casualties is ever present and would be a substantial detriment to long term US goals.

The policy is also likely to create greater friction within the US administration. The State Department and the White House routinely give conflicting statements about the Middle East. The main disturbance seems to be between Secretary of State Powell and Vice-President Cheney. The former has, since his army days, been very suspicious of such ideals and anyway has a much more multilateral approach than his unilateralist colleague. This would indeed complicate efforts to build up a consensus with allies such as the Europeans. The architects of this doctrine may have calculated that in the long run the Europeans may accept and privately welcome the American decision. The Pentagon has already been very vocal through Secretary Rumsfeld about the lack of European military prowess, and the lack of suitability of the present European defense structure in order to deal with the existing threat.

#### Implications for Pakistan

Preemption holds ominous signs for Pakistan, already under pressure by the US to help search the remnants of Al-Qaeda believed to be hiding out in the frontier territories along the Durand Line. Although the Pakistani government has extended all possible support, international media reports believe that Al-Qaeda may be regrouping in Pakistan. Such reports have given rise to fears that the Al-Qaeda may try to destabilize a politically and socially weak Pakistan, and there are growing western concerns that Pakistan's nuclear missiles may end up in the hands of Osama and his associates.

India will most certainly try to get all political mileage out of such fears, and may push the US to use preemption to take out such weapons. The Israeli raid on the Iraqi nuclear reactor, Osirak, in 1984, presents a model. India has already asked the US to declare Pakistan a terrorist state, although the former has refused to do so at this point in time. For Pakistan, already under the watchful eyes of the western media and intelligence agencies regarding the possibility of its arsenal passing on to Al-Qaeda, this is a worrying development. In the present climate, such an event is unlikely in Pakistan especially given the very clear-cut command and control structures that have been put in place and made public, but may occur if a "unfriendly regime comes to power."

For India, the US doctrine of preemption may be a God-sent. It has already been making accusations that Al-Qaeda is currently operating along the Line of Control in Kashmir, and this may be an opportunity for India to carry out 'hot pursuits' inside Pakistan, using preemption as an excuse to neutralize "cross-border terrorism". Already, the international community is jittery about the possibility of a military conflict in Kashmir, which has the possibility of spiraling out of hand into a nuclear conflict. Under these circumstances, Washington may do everything in its power to neutralize militancy in Kashmir. It is already been convinced by India that terrorism cannot be tackled without ending the insurgency in Kashmir.

India has shown all intent to duplicate US policies, and with Washington preaching preemption, it may just use any large civilian casualty in Kashmir as an excuse to launch strikes into Azad Kashmir. With 'deterrence' as a policy thrown out of Washington, the US may not be too averse to such action. Both countries have already pledged to double their efforts to battle the Al-Qaeda network.

The new US policy is a dangerous and a provocative one. On the surface it seems that a huge change of priority and thought-process has occurred after September 11. It remains to be seen however, whether or not the US can have its own way without upsetting the entire international order by setting up new "Bush fires" in the process.

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