

One has to accept the fact the U.S got the best possible choice when it elected Barack Obama as its new President. So did Sri Lanka in electing Mahinda Rajapakse as its President. Both these men had similar missions to accomplish in getting rid of the threat of terrorism although their arena of operation was vastly different. Obama had to take care of the whole world whereas Rajapakse had to look after a tiny patch of land in the Indian Ocean. Whatever it is, both made it clear that they were going to do that. The man from the small island did that with apparent ease, and that within the space of three years. Mind you, though the theatre was smaller, the main player was supposed to be the world's worst and most ferocious terrorist outfit, which experts categorized as invincible.

Western powers, including Obama's U.S., were skeptical and even wanted Mahinda Rajapakse to halt operations and negotiate with the terrorists. He was stubborn and paid no heed to their advice. He halted operations only after the enemy was vanquished.



OBAMA'S DILEMMA

- JUSTIFYING THE NOBEL PRIZE

remember the demonstrations outside his hotel in Oslo saying that he had not earned it. In fact I was wondering myself why a man like Mahinda Rajapakse was overlooked by these peace-makers in selecting their man. Only some odd newspaper in Canada had thought about him. Its views were not apparently taken seriously by powers that be.

U.N. resolutions calling for halting them. U.N. too is helpless as the world policeman U.S. is behind Israel which refuses to heed U.N. warnings or injunctions.

lem.. The way he addressed the Washington audience of course left no room for such eventuality. Maybe he too is amenable to change.

How defiant Israel had become on the issue of building new houses in occupied Palestinian land was amply demonstrated by Israel P.M. on his recent visit to Washington where he publicly asserted that Jerusalem was Israel territory and no one can stop their building on it. The funnier party of this was that the initial announcement about these houses was made in Israel at a time when U.S. vice President was on a visit there. Doing that was a slap in the face of not only Joe Biden the V.P., but on U.S. government as well as it was calling for a halt in the program. Benjamin Netanyahu's Washington declaration was greeted with applause by his audience, a fact that underscores the severity of the problem faced by Obama administration in handling recalcitrant Israel. There is a powerful Jewish lobby in the U.S. that prevents it from doing anything the hard line Israel government would undertake.

Another part of Barak's statement makes the U.S. position even more precarious. One would hope that with all the financial and military assistance given to Israel, the U.S. is in a position to dictate terms to its ally. No. That is out of the question. Here in his statement the Israel's Defense Minister categorically says that an 'imposed U.S. solution was not welcome.'

On its part the U.S. too would not want to hurt the feelings of its friend. That I think is the main treason for the stalemate.

Granting that Israel would ultimately agree to sort out the issues of contested Jerusalem, final borders of a newly created Palestine, and the question of Palestine refugees, what can one expect as the outcome of all this? Will it be the peaceful co-existence of two independent states of Israel and Palestine? This indeed is a very tall order and it would no doubt be an occasion for celebrations right round the world.

Another tricky question remains unanswered. Why did Benjamin Netanyahu refuse to attend the summit convened by Barak Obama to discuss the nuclear issue? Hardly anyone has raised this question, but it is too important to be swept under the carpet. The whole world knows that when the Arab Nations threatened to question Israel on its nuclear arsenal, its P.M. did not like the idea and kept away. It sounds simple, but one has to ask first the convener of the summit himself why he did not raise the issue. Everyone is aware of the nuclear arsenal in the possession of Israel, but no one wants to talk about it. Why? It is Israel that makes the biggest noise about Iran's nuclear intentions. The U.S. cannot be ignorant of this startling reality. However it seems to be quite comfortable with Israel's nuclear arsenal while moving heaven and earth to stop North Korea and Iran getting this dangerous weapon. How long can the U.S. go on fooling the world on this selective operation to rid the world of nuclear weapons?

These are the two questions that the U.S. President Obama is caught between. He cannot ignore one and try to sort out the other. On the other hand, no partial solution is going to work in the long run either. Hopefully he will address the two issues directly and talk frankly with his friend Israel to get its agreement to solve both problems.



True, the well-meaning Western powers were not happy, perhaps because this man achieved something they simply could not believe.

Did they acknowledge this achievement and praise him for that? Did they give him credit for doing something they did not think possible? No. They started looking for ways to find fault with him and his army to see whether he could be hauled before some U.N. committee or body to answer charges of human rights violations. Leading this campaign were two foreign ministers from U.K. and France, with the ever-benevolent Eric Solheim in tough.

Obama on the other hand was concentrating on his operation against the Al Qaeda, which the U.S. initially linked with Saddam Hussein, who had no dealing with Osama bin Laden or his terrorist group. It is also interesting to look back and see the culprit that initially nourished both Saddam Hussein and bin Laden and went after them when they fell out. Saddam was popped up against Iran while bin Laden was required to chase Russians from Afghanistan. This was not Obama's work, but he inherited it with the mantle of power. The rest of the world, in particular the Western Powers, had to fall in line and join in the war against both these enemies of the U.S.

Leaving all that aside, one has to admire the new U.S. President and his very genuine interest in world peace. He has already set the ball rolling with addresses to Arab audiences and discussions with world leaders regarding nuclear disarmament. It was well before these conferences that the world did take note of his intentions and the prestigious Nobel Prize for Peace was awarded to him. I

One has to accept reality and recognize Obama as the most deserving peace-maker at the moment.

Whether he has earned his prize or it was given in anticipation of what he is going to achieve, is something all concerned must tackle in earnest. In short, Barak Obama has to prove to the world that what he accepted was what he really deserved. For that he has to work hard as achieving world peace is no easy task.

He has to act on two fronts, namely defeating terrorism and solving the Middle East issue. Whether he and others acknowledge it or not, both these issues are intertwined and solving one without considering the other is simply useless. Not only that, one can safely say that it is just impossible.

How many of his advisors and supporters would agree that 9/11 was a result of Middle East conflict? And that all this started with the creation of Israel within a sea of Arab land? Israel is now a fact of life people in and around the new state have to live with. But the problem is the way they choose to do that. No one seems to have bothered one bit as to what the new state means to thousands and thousands of Palestinians thrown out of their traditional home land. No.

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they did care, but in a very half hearted way, just to satisfy their conscience and fool the world that there is no real problem or unjust treatment of the people of Palestine. The fact is that Palestinians are languishing in jail in what had been once their own farms and gardens while yet others are refugees in surrounding lands. The birth of the resistance movement called Hisbullah now labeled a terrorist organization was the direct result of this absurd situation. U. S. as well as its supporters are aware that occupation of Palestinian land still goes on respite

The result of all this is that Arab nations are angry and support actions of rebel groups that engage in disruptive actions against Israel which though fruitless complicates the issue further. One need not be a rocket scientist to see the genesis of the anti-Israel movement and also the terrorist outfits such as Al Qaeda that were responsible for 9/11 attack. By going after Osama bin Laden and co. without solving the core problem would not bring a permanent solution to Middle East problem.

However, there seems to be a glimmer of hope I one were to go by a report appearing in the Sri Lankan newspaper 'The Island' of April 20 2010, under the caption 'Israel Defense Minister says occupation must end.' This report goes on to say that, he had said his country 'must recognize that the world will not put up with more of Israel rule over the Palestinian people.'

The report also points out that Eduard Barak's comments made on the occasion of Israel's Memorial Day, come 'against the backdrop of severe friction between the U.S. and Israel's hawkish government's impasse in peacemaking.' This was Barak Obama made a rather pessimistic statement that the U.S could not force Israel if it wasn't interested in making compromises necessary to end the conflict.

In his statement Israel's Defense Minister seems to accept that the growing alienation between them and the U.S. is not good for Israel. My feeling is that Israel is convinced that U.S. would back it at any cost. The problem the U.S must overcome is its unconditional support of Israel has made its task difficult as far as solving Middle East issue. Viewing Eduard Barak's words in this light one may entertain some hope of a settlement in the near future. This too is conditional on the more hard line P.M. Netanyahu relenting on the prob-