

US war plans

France, Belgium see no role for NATO

AS the global resistance to the US plan to go for a military strike against Baghdad is getting tougher, the pace of events has been accelerated by the fact that UN arms inspectors are submitting their report on Iraq to the Security Council.

For obvious reasons, France, Russia, China and Germany are still optimistic about a diplomatic solution being found. But the US and Britain have apparently decided that there is no alternative to a military strike. That is a point made clear by British Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon's observation that "Hans Blix might have to declare that Iraq was in non-compliance with the UN resolution."

Nevertheless, the report of Hans Blix and Mohammed El Baradei could be a turning point as far as the debate raging within the UNSC is concerned. If Iraq gets a clean chit, or anything close to that, the case for rallying behind the anti-war lobby will be strengthened greatly.

We strongly believe that peace must be given a chance through intense diplomatic activities on the part of the global community. France and Germany are proceeding in that direction, as they plan to put forward a suggestion to the UNSC that the number of arms inspectors be tripled and if necessary peace-keepers be deployed in Iraq.

War is something that the world can ill afford to bear with. Australians brought out the biggest peace rally since the Vietnam War in Melbourne to voice their concern over the looming prospect of another war in the Gulf.

Tackling HIV/AIDS in South Asia

All should join hands to stop the spread

THE sheer number of HIV/AIDS infected people in South Asia and the alarming rate of increase every year could be a warning signal for all the countries in the region. At least that's what UNICEF and UNAIDS have been trying to hammer into the minds of policy makers of these countries.

We support the UN bodies in calling upon the leaders of the region to 'speak out and break their silence and stop the stigma and discrimination' at a regional conference to prevent the disease from accelerating further.

In Bangladesh the menace has not taken a serious turn as yet, at least not according to the surveys, but that should not be a reason for us to feel complacent.

Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any).

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR

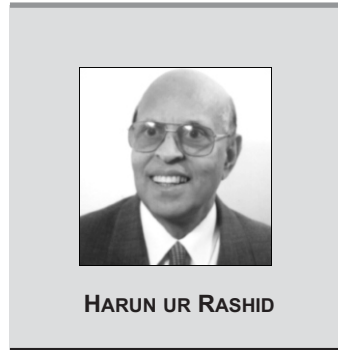
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Women's football and women's rights

One of the key educational issues in the discussion on the developing role of women and girls in society is how we can educate men and boys to keep up with the sort of young women that homes and schools are now producing!

As regards football - and, indeed, anything else that a strong-minded young woman wants to do - how do men learn to acquire the relationship and communication skills they now need to cope with these New Women? The only girl among the boys in my Year 11 has, for years, been devoted to playing football with her classmates - in long trousers and top, I hasten to add, agreeing entirely with Sakib Jamal ("Women's football", February 7)

Serious European split with US on Iraq



HARUN UR RASHID

THE Bush administration received a diplomatic jolt when France, Germany and Belgium vetoed the NATO proposal of dispatching weapons to Turkey. The US considered it to be a routine resolution to be adopted by NATO alliance to protect its member Turkey from possible onslaughts of Iraq in case of war.

US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld had to listen to the explanation of German policy by German Foreign Minister. In his face the Foreign Minister told Rumsfeld that Germany remained unconvinced by the presentation of General Colin Powell on 6<sup>th</sup> February against Iraq.

The US had already lined up about nine European continental countries including Italy and Spain which had issued a statement supporting US policy toward Iraq. The opposition of war by France and Germany prompted Rumsfeld earlier to call Germany and France as "Old Europe".

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Iraq has emerged as a counterweight to the US policy. Seventh, Franco-German proposal seems to reflect the attitude of Arab countries. Not a single Arab country except Kuwait supports war against Iraq.

BOTTOM LINE

Both France and Germany believe that the Middle East region does not need another war and Iraq can be disarmed without a war. The US policy on Iraq seems to be based on what the US economist Thomas Friedman said that "the hidden hand of the market will never work without the hidden fist -- McDonald's cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas, the first designer of the F-15 aircraft."

recent Franco-German summit marking 40 years of friendship, both countries agreed and publicly announced to do everything possible to avoid war. On 13 February Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder told the German Parliament that time was not over to peacefully disarm Iraq.

publicly say so. Eminent author and diplomat Galbraith's words seem to be chillingly relevant at this point of time when he said after observing the Cuban Missile crisis in 1962: "In reality ... the man who calls for caution, a close assessment of consequences, an effort to understand the opposing point of view and who proposes concessions, must have great courage. He is a real hero and rare."

rationale given by President Bush to ditch the Kyoto Protocol was that: "we will not do anything that harms our economy, because first things first are the people who live in America." Such logic does not seem to sit well in an increasingly interdependent world.

Barister Harun ur Rashid is former Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN, Geneva.

Hypocrisy: Many shades of gray

MEGASTHENES

HYPOCRISY has always been deemed a most abominable trait of human character. It was personified, in literature by Dickens' Uriah Heep. Hazlitt put it clearly and unambiguously: "The only vice that cannot be forgiven is hypocrisy. The repentance of a hypocrite is itself hypocrisy."

I had never thought in terms of a nexus of any sort between hypocrisy on the one hand and morality on the other, until recently in a well-reasoned column -- addressing in the main the issue of moral relativism -- a persuasive case for such a link was made. There cannot be hypocrisy without morality at the other end of the spectrum or continuum.

In layman's understanding hypocrisy is a discrepancy or gap between practice and profession. It may be problematic though to pinpoint precisely, in time and space, in the morality-hypocrisy spectrum, where morality ends and hypocrisy begins.

Shakespeare wrote of the devil citing "Scripture for his purpose". Does this in any manner detract one iota from the sanctity of Scripture? Does the devil, in fact, even earn a few merits, which he can surely do with?

Of Mahatma Gandhi, Albert Einstein had written: "Generations to come, it may be, will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon the earth". As leader of people and Mahatma -- an honorific he was never quite comfortable with -- Gandhi may have been without parallel or precedent. As a father, however, he would not have won too many awards. He never gave his sons the benefit of a formal education -- something he himself had enjoyed and which certainly contributed materially to his future work. Gandhi felt that for his sons to receive an education that was

rebuffed the overture; there were many Russian POWs in German custody and there could be no special treatment for his son. Stalin never saw his son again. An instance of high morality or a gross example of parental insensitivity? More than two decades back, the Duke of Edinburgh, while on a visit to India, spoke at a function about wildlife conservation, with emphasis on the tiger. Present among others at the function was the Rajmata of Jaipur, Gayatri Devi. The Duke was persuasive and articulate. Wildlife conservation is a cause dear to him. I was impressed by his advocacy and commitment. An Indian friend,

to decline George Washington's offer of appointment as Secretary of State and also Chief Justice. He was one of the foremost orators of his time and is perhaps best remembered today for a speech at the Virginia Provincial Convention in 1775, urging that the local militia be armed adequately for defence against Britain. The ringing peroration of his speech, "give me liberty or give me death", has an almost iconic resonance for freedom lovers and fighters, even outside the US and well beyond his era. Less well-known is the fact that he owned 65 slaves at the time of his death. This perhaps reflected the morality of his

wrote a "scientific treatise" entitled "Notes on Virginia", in which among other things he propounded his views on African-Americans: "Are not the fine mixtures of red and white the expression of every passion by greater or less suffusions of colour in the white race, preferable to that eternal monotony, which reigns in the countenance, that immovable veil of black that covers all the emotions of the other race?"

possibly, a small group of civil rights leaders in the US sought the aid of an influential Southern Senator for setting up a hospital for blacks in a southern city where medical facilities were woefully inadequate and the black population the worst sufferers. The Senator was enlightened and politically astute. He was prepared to help but made clear to the group that they should not be offended by the means he might be obliged to employ. At that time, in that State, one had to tread carefully in respect of race-related issues. Shortly afterwards the Senator addressed a meeting of important fund raisers or perhaps the media in that State and broached the hospital issue in an unusual manner. He was, he said, appalled when on a visit to a hospital in that particular city, he actually saw a young white nurse washing the fat behind of an old black man. He could not countenance this and felt that the answer was to have another hospital, predominantly for the use of blacks. The civil rights leaders got the hospital they wanted. The goal of the exercise was laudable and the method employed effectual. The Senator's method, I should thus place closer to morality than to hypocrisy in any morality-hypocrisy spectrum.

LIGHTEN UP

It may well be futile to seek consistency in human behaviour or attitude, even in a limited span of time. Emerson put it appositely and inimitably: "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds ... With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do ... Speak what you think today in hard words and tomorrow speak what tomorrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradicts everything you said today". The truth is we do not inhabit a Manichaeian world of absolutes, of black and white; for in between there will always be many shades of gray.

beyond the reach of all children would be incongruous. He had, in fact, urged all to abandon the "cited of slavery", his description of the educational institutions of British India, as part of the independence movement. Gandhi recounts in his autobiography that all his four sons, in varying degrees, felt aggrieved that they were denied educational opportunities. Was Gandhi in this respect an exemplar of morality or was it a display of grave deficiency as a parent? Few individuals could have been more unlike Gandhi than Joseph Stalin. And yet there was a similarity also between the two. Stalin's son was captured as a POW by the Germans. Feelers were sent to Russia about a possible exchange; important German officers in Russian custody, for Stalin's son. Stalin

who felt far more strongly about the issue, seemed less than impressed, almost blasé. Noting my puzzled look, he explained. The Duke had visited India on earlier occasions. He was well acquainted with Rajmata Gayatri Devi and would visit Jaipur, if possible, whenever he visited India. A major change was discernible, however, between his earlier visits and the present one. In times past the Rajmata would arrange tiger-shoots for the Duke, while now there were impassioned speeches on conservation. Perhaps one should see in this greater, if belated, realization, changing morality and pastimes rather than any hint of hypocrisy. In his time Patrick Henry was elected five times as Governor of Virginia. He was not enamoured of high office, I should think, as he was

times. More than two hundred years on, however, many would be tempted to see a tinge of hypocrisy also in Henry's inconsistency. Thomas Jefferson was the first Secretary of State, the second Vice President and the third President of the US. As the principal author of the US Declaration of Independence, his place in history was assured even if he had never held high political office. This almost sublime document, written in 1776, contains the edifying words: "We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, ... endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights... among these are... Liberty and Pursuit of Happiness". In 1809, Jefferson owned an estimated 185 slaves. Personally he was opposed to slavery but could do little about it at that time. In 1785 he

reason and imagination, it appears to me that in memory they are equal of whites, in reason, much inferior... and that in imagination they are dull, tasteless and anomalous". There is more in the same vein. Once again, simply the morality of his time, coloured perhaps by an almost subliminal prejudice, from which even a formidable intellect like Jefferson was not immune. Years back, I recall reading an interview of or article by, I think, Thurgood Marshall, who before his appointment to the Supreme Court and as Solicitor General was a civil rights activist. I do not recall accurately many details. The story is worth recounting, nevertheless, because it sheds light in concrete terms and in the modern context on any morality-hypocrisy discussion. In the decade of the 1950s

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Women's football and women's rights

behave towards them as fellow human beings i.e. in a manner they think of as 'proper'. I fear that the rising rate of acid attacks is evidence that too many men still think of women as those who should always say "Yes," to them, at a point in history when women are waking up to their right to say, "No!"

As regards football - and, indeed, anything else that a strong-minded young woman wants to do - how do men learn to acquire the relationship and communication skills they now need to cope with these New Women? The only girl among the boys in my Year 11 has, for years, been devoted to playing football with her classmates - in long trousers and top, I hasten to add, agreeing entirely with Sakib Jamal ("Women's football", February 7)

this young woman would tolerate, as a future husband, any young man who was not as communicative, participative and hard-working as she is. I sincerely hope that we are doing all we can to educate our boys up to such a standard.

Isn't it interesting that the debate that began referring to football has developed to involve so many aspects of Bangladesh life? Angela Robinson The British School in Bangladesh

INS List and the blame game

Needless to say that it was amusing to see Bangladeshis hurling blame at each others' faces as to who is to blame regarding the INS list. The US Congress has made it mandatory (both under the PATRIOT Act and the Homeland Security Act) for all foreign nationals to be registered

with the INS so that the Federal Govt can keep track of them. It is a security measure designed to prevent terrorist attacks of the likes of 9/11/01.

Hence it can safely be said that none is to blame. After all you can hardly expect Sheikh Hasina to hold sway over 435 Representatives and 100 Senators. Both of the statutes mentioned above have been considered a violation of civil rights of mainly immigrants. As a result foreign nationals would have to be fingerprinted and their whereabouts noted. As the foreign nationals have committed no crime (as far as we know) other than being foreign, this seriously impedes the legal status of the immigrant community.

Having said that, we must also realise that the post 9/11 paranoia and xenophobia affect most immigrant communities, not just Bangladesh alone. I would ask all the

expatriates and others to quit the blame game and concentrate on safeguarding the immigrant rights. Yahya USA

After the inclusion of Bangladesh into the suspected terrorist nations list, the foreign policy of Bangladesh has become a hot topic for many people. Historically weak and smaller nations always suffered whenever there was an international upheaval. The September 11 tragedy would have been a minor matter for the international community had the Petronas Twin Towers in Kuala Lumpur were destroyed by the terrorists. This global terrorist scare has become an international matter because America was hit. Bangladesh as a poor, weak and smaller nation has become an unwilling partner of this misinformation barrage.

In order to improve the situation, we need a matured political climate for our betterment at home and a good image at the international level. However, when the people of Bangladesh does not have any respect for their own politicians what else can they expect from other nations? Akbar Hussain Toronto, Canada

A case of bad faith?

Historians tell us that before the Hitler's forces marched into Poland on September 1, 1939 Hitler's special forces went to the Polish side and staged a fake attack against the Germans so as to make the German aggression look like a response. I don't know if anybody ever believed that the Polish were the aggressors. Such tricks, masterminded by the evil-minded Nazi warriors will be remembered for

what they were outright chicanery. Prime Minister Blair's democratic government's report on Iraq's intelligence network and its alleged support for the terrorist organisations available on the web page of 10 Downing Street has been accused of plagiarising from other published sources including an article by Dr. Ibrahim al-Marashi of Center for Nonproliferation Studies at Monterey Institute of International Studies at California. Apparently Dr. Marashi's article from which certain sections have been copied was written based on his research when he was a graduate student. In an interview with Reuters, Marashi stated that he was surprised and flattered saying, "Had they consulted me, I could have provided them with more updated information." US Secretary of State Mr. Powell referred to the British government

report in his crucial UN speech trying to drum up support for aggression against Iraq. So the matter is not simply a case of plagiarism; it is indicative of desperation on the part of the staunchest US ally to malign Iraq so as to mobilise popular support and legitimacy for the looming invasion. Now that the British government has admitted to the copying part it ought to take a hard look at its policies before trying to correct future "mistakes". Because the time is running out fast. Readers with internet access, please compare the following: The British Government Iraq dossier: http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page7111.asp Ibrahim al-Marashi's article: http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2002/issue3/jv6n3a1.html Habib Khondker Singapore