LATE S. M. ALI

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### **US** war plans

France, Belgium see no role for NATO

S 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." And President Bush has said he reserves the "right to go to war against Iraq even without an explicit UN mandate." Bush is also very unhappy with the stand adopted by France and other European countries trying to keep the diplomatic option alive. The situation has taken a sharp turn with France and Belgium vetoing a US request for activating NATO as part of the planned war.

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 antiwar lobby will be strengthened greatly. Even if the report goes against Iraq, its detractors should not conclude that there is no way to avoid war. Rather, they should examine different aspects of the joint peace move of France, Germany and Russia and work out how it can be made effective. The peace initiative should be accepted as the basis for resolving the crisis.

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. That will surely broaden the base of monitoring, verification and inspection.

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. Without question, an overwhelming majority of the world population would share their view and that is true about Americans and Britons also. Now it is up to the key players in international politics to realise that they should work for peace, not war, through accepting the primacy of the UN as the supreme body for conflict resolution.

#### Tackling HIV/AIDS in South Asia

All should join hands to stop the spread

HE 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. Though much lower than sub-Saharan Africa, the world's largest HIV/AIDS infected region, it would be impossible to ignore 4.2 million infected people in South Asia. In India, the menace has already spread to a gigantic state making the rest of the region more vulnerable than ever. What is even more worrying is that the number of young people, especially girls, infected with the virus has been going up with each passing year.

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. To this day, a person living with the virus is treated as an 'outcaste' in our society even if he/she got it unknowingly or for no fault of his/hers. Some HIV infected people have even expressed anger over the way some doctors refused to treat them or at times did not even tell them about the infection. Only education and proper knowledge about the virus and its spread could make us change the way we see it now. We have to take steps to eliminate the root causes for disease that are present in our society like poverty, gender inequality, illiteracy, sexual abuse, intravenous drug abuse, unsafe sex and, most importantly, denial of the disease, collectively.

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. Unless we take some urgent actions and put them into practice soon enough, it would be too late. The government says it has taken strong strategy and national plans, but it also admitted that the implementation is 'moving slowly.' We would like to see it accelerated so that we can protect our young people and let them live in freedom and security.

## Serious European split with US on Iraq



HARUN UR RASHID

HE Bush administration received a diplomatic iolt 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. What was a routine proposal became the most controversial one and the NATO Secretary General, Britain's Lord Robertson, had to admit it as a "serious problem" at hand, undermining the credibility of NATO itself.

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 6th February against Irag. This is probably the first time that a US senior official faced with the forceful opposition of war against Iraq by Germany

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". German Foreign

Minister's passionate outbursts in a BBC TV show to Rumsfeld appeared to be a reaction of Rumsfeld's views on Germany.

The fact that France and Germany oppose US aggressive policy on Iraq was demonstrated by their reported alternative proposal to disarm Iraq peacefully. Franco-German proposal had reportedly three elements: (a) the number of arms inspectors should be trebled. (b) presence of UN troops in Iraq and (c) the whole country should be declared a "no-fly" zone. At the ment of danger emanating from Iraq. They find Iraq has been much weakened since the Gulf war in 1991. To them North Korea seems to pose greater danger to global stability. They find that US policy is very selective towards Iraq.

Second, French President General De Gaulle in the 60s saw US dominance as the main threat to his country and took France out of NATO to keep France free from American influence. Since then, all French leaders have continued a tradition of staking claims towards

own policy. It is this spirit of independence that guides Germany, the third largest economy in the world. No democratic country likes to be pushed into accepting a policy that does not have the support of its people.

Fourth, both France and Germany genuinely believe that Irag can be disarmed peacefully. War is the last resort and time has not vet come for forcible action. They seem to believe that the US policy on Iraq is misconceived and they should seem to be comfortable to other powers. The world has become since 1990 much more fissiparous and interdependent economically and politically. Given the existing political environment, unilateralist policy of the US is seen as a display of arrogance and domination.

Sixth, US's policy of unilateralism does have damaging effects on multilateral regime. The US had withdrawn from the 1997 Kvoto Protocol on environment and the 1998 Rome Treaty establishing the International Criminal Court. The

Iraq has emerged as a counterweight to the US policy. Seventh. Franco-German pro-

posal seems to reflect the attitude of Arab countries. Not a single Arab country except Kuwait supports war against Iraq. The overthrow of Saddam regime by an overwhelmingly Anglo-American alliance seems to them different in principle from the liberation of Kuwait in 1991. No Arab country would this time pick up the bill for war expenses ( some say 200 billion dollars). Furthermore the greatest danger arises from war is the stability of the Middle East. And then militant groups might target Anglo-American interest as the region would be perceived as being unmistakably controlled by the US for oil resources Conclusion: It appears that France

and Germany do not object to America's objectives but over its methods. 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." It implies that objective of war is to promote commercial interests. The US administration provides security and the US corporate exploit natural resources of other countries. Right or wrong the US policy on Iraq is being perceived more about controlling oil resources of Iraq than danger emanating from possession of weapons of mass destruction..

Barrister Harun ur Rashid is former Bangladesh

# 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." It implies that objective of war is to promote commercial interests. Right or wrong the US policy on Iraq is being perceived more about controlling oil resources of Iraq than danger emanating from possession of weapons of mass destruction..

recent Franco-German summit marking 40 years of friendship, both countries agreed and publicly announced to do everything possi-

On 13 February Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder told the German Parliament that time was not over to peacefully disarm Iraq. Franco-German proposal, he said, received support from veto- carrying members Russia and China and more time should be given to the UN arms inspectors to inspect and verify the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

The question is why France and Germany are opposing the US policy? First, both Germany and France do not agree with the US's assess-

an independent French policy. French Philosopher Jean-Francois Revel summed up the mood of French people when he reportedly told French television: " We were once upon a time a great power, we are no longer. Europe is trying to build itself, we resent the US for having global power when we built the American "hyperpower" in the first place." In addition French leaders must take the public opinion into consideration. Three-quarters of French people want France to use its veto if the US proposes a resolution calling for war on Iraq.

Third, Germany also felt that the US called all the shots for the 50 vears or more for Germany. Time has come to show that Germany

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." It seems that Germany and France have been playing similar role of moderation and

publicly say so. Eminent author and

Fifth, the fact that US, being a lone superpower with greatest military strength, is able to shape the contours of politics in every part of the world without the UN does not

caution about war against Irag.

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. The Europeans responded to

rationale given by President Bush to

these moves with a mixture of anguish and pique. A public opinion poll conducted in early 2002 in France, Germany, Italy and Britain found strong and widespread opposition to Bush's foreign policy. Seventy per cent believed that President Bush made decisions 'entirely on US interests" without taking Europe into consideration. The Franco-German initiative on

Ambassador to the UN, Geneva.

possibly, a small group of civil rights

leaders in the US sought the aid of

## Hypocrisy: Many shades of gray

MEGASTHENES

YPOCRISY has always heen 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 wellreasoned 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. Some of the maxims of La Rochefoucauld would also suggest a tenuous such connection: "Hypocrisy is a homage which vice pays to virtue". Or, "Our virtues are most frequently but vices in disquise".

In layman's understanding lypocrisy 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 citina "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

Winston Churchill was as staunch an opponent of communism as is possible, all his life. And yet on learning of Nazi Germany's nvasion of Russia, he had observed to his Private Secretary, that his one purpose at that time was the destruction of Hitler: everything else was secondary. If Hitler were to invade Hell, he, Churchill, would make at least a favourable reference to the devil in the House of Commons. Morality, hypocrisy, expediency or simply the instinct of

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. 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 wellknown 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?' "The circumstance of superior beauty is thought worthy attention in the propagation of our horses, dogs and other domestic animals; why not in that of man"? "Comparing them by their faculties of memory,

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

spectrum. 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

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# LIGHTEN UP

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beyond the reach of all children would be incongruous. He had, in fact, urged all to abandon the "citadels 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

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

times. More than two hundred years

on, however, many would be

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

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,

reason and imagination, it appears

to me that in memory they are equal

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

### TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE

Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

#### 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!

All over the world, girls are taking better advantage of educational and social opportunities than boys, with the result that the number of girls who have a mind of their own, and some expectations of the personal and social behaviour they expect of young men, is outstripping the rate at which homes and schools are producing young men to match them! Large numbers of educated women, in many countries, are choosing to remain single, rather than marry boys who, in their opinion, cannot talk and generally

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) that women in shorts might be a bit much for this culture to tolerate. I do not imagine for one moment, that 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 Bangladeshi 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.

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 September11 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. Bandladesh 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 Hitlers'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

EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR

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 informa-

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 Irag. So the matter is not simply a case of plagiarism; it is indicative of desperateness 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/iv6n3a1.html **Habib Khondker** 

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