

## Thatcher Does it Again!

Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher may well be serving a warning for the whole of Europe or she may be just playing on the historical fear of her people of Germany. But her latest attack on the European Community (EC) on the ground that it cannot contain a country that was responsible for two World Wars has created waves. True, there is no mention in her speech delivered over the weekend of a reunited powerful Germany starting another war. Deliberately, we assume, she has not gone that far. At the moment, the main concern of Mrs Thatcher is about the possible refusal of Germany to subordinate its national interests in economic or foreign policy matters to those of the Community indefinitely. So, the spectre is one of an economic giant, sitting right in the middle of Western Europe, flexing its muscle and virtually dictating to other EC members.

Mrs Thatcher's anxieties touch on Germany mainly in the context of her opposition to the closely-knit structure of EC as proposed for some 30 member states. She remains in favour of a looser Europe in which individual nation states retain their freedom of action as against the "utopian" concept of a federation in which all member states follow the same work conditions, monetary and interest rate policies, and a common direction in external relations.

The position taken by Mrs Thatcher is a familiar one. But this time she has put forward her views at a forum of business leaders at The Hague in particularly strong terms and, indeed, at a rather awkward moment for her successor, John Major. The new Conservative Prime Minister has his differences with other members of the Community as well as with certain proposals for European integration. Again, on a related issue, Britain has been placed in a difficult position by a joint plan of France and Germany to set up a "Eurocorps" of 35,000 troops that may well grow into a European army, with only marginal involvement of other members of the NATO, including Britain. Despite these difficulties and differences with other EC members, Mr Major remains committed to the European integration, to placing Britain "at the heart of Europe."

There is inevitable speculation why Mrs Thatcher should go on embarrassing her successor and then, in the process, creating some doubts among the rank and file of the ruling party on the correctness of Mr Major's approach to European integration. No one can expect her to make a political comeback. She may just continue to be difficult and uncharitable towards her successor. But she will get a hearing from the British public on questions, such as those relating to European integration, which cannot be answered too simply.

One test comes later this week when the House of Commons starts the debate on the ratification of the EC Commission's proposal for European integration. With its 21-member majority and the offer of opposition parties either to abstain or to support the government, Mr Major should be smiling at the end of the debate — or the vote if there is one — without looking up at the distinguished visitors gallery where his predecessor may well be sitting, perhaps with a sulky look.

## Message of Peace

More than twentyfive hundred years ago on the bright night of Baishakhi Purnima, a prince was born to Suddhodan, the king of Kapilavastu, which was an elective kingdom at a stone's throw from Bangladesh. He did in early youth what Leo Tolstoy did in his advanced years — renounce the worldly cares to come to terms with unanswered questions in their minds. Siddhartha Gautam Buddha, the prince who abandoned his wife and new-born son Rahul and a certain election to kingship, did scoop up far more than Tolstoy from his renunciation. Billions upon billions of people have found solace and peace of mind from the Buddha's teachings. He continues to be one of the greatest influences on man's life and mind.

The power of the impact of his unsparing work for over fifty years of his eighty-year life — he walked twenty miles everyday over this period and never tarried for over three nights in one place which had to be roofless — is still borne by the subcontinental society where his established religion has shrunk but still holds out against being caste-riddled.

We Bengalees, specially of Bangladesh, have special ties with the great soul and count as one of our most glorious legacies the achievements we carved on world culture when Buddhism was the all-pervasive way of life for our whole people. From Gopal's election to kingship in 750 AD for over three hundred years Bengal prospered as the heart-centre of an empire extending up to Delhi and beyond, blossomed culturally as bright as it never had. During this Buddhist epoch there arose among the Bengalees the great civilisers of man like Dipankar Atish and Kumarghosh. Paharpur, or the then Sompur Vihar, served as a model for all South-East Asia, not only in architectural terms but perhaps more so in philosophical and intellectual terms. This land was indeed a great bastion of the Mahayana — the Greater Vehicle — which comes close to Catholicism in the great Christian schism. By the same token Bengal of the Buddhist epoch was one of the fountainheads and at once preservers of the great Sanskrit learning that from here spilled into Asia at large. Not only that, our Buddhist connection supplied the base of the Bengali literature in as much as all our earliest written high poetry was done more than a thousand years ago by Buddhist Siddhas groping their way into the mysteries of the universe and life.

In the lands of the East where Buddhism is pre-dominant, they have wonderful literacy rates notwithstanding other third world factors remaining constant — and that is tracked way back to Buddha's emphasis on reasoning and learning, literacy and debate and complete rejection of dogma.

Actually the process of rediscovering Buddha started with Rabindranath who in many songs and more than one of his dance-dramas celebrated the blessing that was the Buddha. We also had a lot to do on this line. The scope is not altogether lost. And we believe that communal harmony resulting from a perfect tolerance of religious difference would be a true and living monument to our legacy of the Buddha. *Sabbe Satta Sukhita Hontu* — happiness to all that exists.

THE recent demise of the cold war phenomenon in international politics and the concomitant end of the adversarial approach in East-West relations are traumatic developments that have forced major changes in the basic premises of international security. The area affected most by the developments is the unending nuclear feud between the erstwhile two adversaries — the US and the former USSR.

Now there is a reversing trend in the cold war dominated nuclear momentum. There has been, at least, a major nuclear disarmament treaty — the INF, concluded in 1987. The central strategic balance, so long desperately propped up by the two military giants as the control mechanism in international security, has clearly passed into history. But how is it going to affect the tendency of nation-states to acquire nuclear weapons to strengthen their national security? Can it be accepted as a pace-setter toward a de-nuclearized world in the future? Above all, what does the current developments mean in objective assessments?

First, a recapitulation of the traumatic developments is most imperative. To be objective, there has been a halt to the post — 1945 polarization of world politics around two ideologically and geopolitically hostile superpowers which concentrated their attention to seeking geostrategic preponderance in Eurasia. This has been followed by a delinking process of regional conflicts from superpower rivalry round the globe. From global viewpoint, regional conflicts are now less critical, although they may escalate or de-escalate within regional confines. Another important aspect of the developments is the shift of public political attention from military issues to non-military ones, such as global warming, environmental degradation etc.

Of particular significance is

## NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION

# Post-Cold War Developments Force Changes in the Premise

by Md Nuruzzaman

Of particular significance is the question whether the changes are basic in nature having far-reaching impact for future world security environment or these are simply eye washing events occurring in the world from time to time.

The question whether the changes are basic in nature having far-reaching impact for future world security environment or these are simply eye washing events occurring in the world from time to time. As the nature of the changes suggest, they appear more eye-washing than basic or real. Two specific arguments may be found ready to bolster this contention.

First, despite the changes the world still remains captive to a handful of western powerful states who, including the Russian federation, controls nearly 90% of world military might. The Third World states, excluding China, possess only 5% of world military prowess and they remain vulnerable to western domination as before. Second, the changes indicate an end to East-West confrontation while no break-through in North-South relations. The developed North still continues to ignore the causes of the impoverished South where the vast majority of humanity lives in endless sufferings. The world, therefore, despite the changes, remain unaffected in its post war values and orientation.

In the wake of the changes the issue of nuclear non-proliferation has gained new momentum set in by a series of announcements for nuclear cuts by the United States. Initially encouraged by Mikhail Gorbachev's arms control ini-

tiatives and later forced by the crumbling of the Soviet empire, US President George Bush has stated that the US would unilaterally eliminate ground launched short range nuclear weapons, withdraw tactical nuclear weapons from surface ships and attack submarines and remove from alert status many strategic systems. In an unprecedented move some of the powerful republics of the former Soviet Union, now regrouped under the rubric of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), have declared total elimination of their nuclear forces. Britain, France and China, however, are keeping themselves aloof from current moves towards a de-nuclearized world.

Some of the Third World countries, in contrast to the moves for elimination of nuclear forces, are still stepping up efforts to go nuclear. These countries contend that nuclear weapons can not be monopolized by a handful of states while keeping others deprived of the same. They stress upon a global ban on the production and deployment of nuclear weapons by any means whatsoever. India and Brazil are the two staunch advocates for a global nuclear ban. India rejected the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) of 1968 as if found the treaty totally discriminatory while Brazil termed it as a device for

imposing neo-colonialism, although the latter has recently entered an agreement with Argentina to avoid nuclear arms race in South America.

President Bush's denuclearization initiatives, and a host of other US laws that prohibits aid to any countries embarking upon producing nuclear weapons, seek to check nuclear weapons programmes especially in the Third World. This also relates to the American-defined concept of a 'New World Order' towards building a more violence-free world. Destruction of Iraqi nuclear potentials in the wake of Iraq's defeat in the Gulf War, stoppage of aid to Pakistan which is believed to have acquired nuclear weapons production capabilities and nervousness over North Korea's boasting nuclear programme indicate US penchant for monopolizing nuclear hegemony in the World.

Conversely, however, the Third World Security environment is turning hostile more and more. In the absence of a countervailing force, provided by the socialist USSR for the last four and a half decades, major Third World actors foresee unabated hegemonic domination emanating from the US that might impose freeze on their sovereignties. This is perhaps the reason why China fails to

accept the idea of a new world order with the US at the apex.

Most prominent Third World regional actors, nullifying the general post-cold war idea of seeking security through economic prosperity rather than in military preparedness, are fielding sophisticated conventional weaponry including ballistic missiles, and acquiring the capabilities to manufacture the same. In some cases, some countries are frantically trying to produce chemical and biological weapons while making sure the infrastructure to go nuclear. Iraq until the Gulf War was the best example in this respect.

Apart from the fear of hegemonic domination being more sharpened in the changed context, the complex and diverse nature of regional conflicts in the Third World, which mostly remain untouched by developments in the global order, would openly provide the major inputs to seek nuclear security umbrella in the future. The Third World abounds in political, economic, ethnic and military conflicts. National survival, in most cases, is often perceived at issue in confrontations. This has been the case between Israel and the different Arab states, as well as between India and Pakistan, the two Koreas, and Iran and Iraq.

Second, the upsurge of na-

nationalistic sentiments in the post-cold war era may be a prime cause for nuclear proliferation in sentiments spirals were the driving force behind the half-a-century long hegemonic struggle for world control between the US and the USSR, although there were ceremonial ideological rhetorics for world peace and stability. Other nations are equally washed by nationalistic feelings and sentiments. The desire to buttress political independence, assert national independence and ultimately provide a measure of deterrence to others work in the mind of every nation and propel its actions accordingly.

Nuclear proliferation in the future is, however, unlikely to be open as it was in the case of India in 1974. India wanted to be an open nuclear hero by letting the world know its Pokhran explosion in that year. However, the future nuclear powers are likely to follow the presumed Israeli model of unacknowledged nuclear deployment. This appears less risky in view of mounting pressures from other countries, especially the US-led western concert, to force abandon nuclear option. There is, however, the possibilities of open nuclear deployment if domestic pressures and regional instabilities compel so.

It may be noted that future nuclear proliferation may follow a chain of reaction process. Nuclear confrontations in different Third World regions are unlikely to remain limited to two parties. For example, in the Middle East, a nuclear Iraq would surely pit itself against both Israel and Iran. Similarly, the nuclear confrontation between the two Koreas may rapidly involve both Japan and the United States, as well as China and Russia.

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# How Rao Became Master of Party and Government

D K Joshi writes from New Delhi

Narasimha Rao became prime minister of India at 70 with no majority and was seen as a caretaker leader of the Congress Party. Less than a year later he has confounded the pundits. He has profoundly changed domestic and foreign policy and taken a firm grip on the party as well. And he has even turned the resignation of the foreign minister to his advantage.



NARASIMHA RAO  
Cleaning up India's Congress

PRIME Minister Narasimha Rao of India has emerged with a much enhanced national stature from a Congress meeting held in the temple town of Tirupati. In his home state of Andhra Pradesh.

The meeting marked the end of two decades of one-person rule and restored a balance in the Congress structure between north and south India. Rao has now established himself as a leader with the courage to revive democracy within Congress as well as liberalising the Indian economy.

After Tirupati, Rao has moved further up in the opinion polls and under his leadership Congress, now running a minority government, is likely to secure a comfortable majority if elections are to be held in the near future.

Rao is seen not as a leader by accident, as was the case with Rajiv Gandhi, but as a leader by right. One poll finding declared Rao's performance as prime minister better than Gandhi's.

The Congress elected 10 members to the 21-member Working Committee, its highest policy-making body. Ten others are nominated by the Congress president, but since Indira Gandhi consolidated her power in 1971 no organisational elections had been held. The dynasty — Indira Gandhi, her second son Sanjay and later Rajiv — controlled the party through handpicked ad hoc bodies.

Under Rao, a second line in the hierarchy emerged led by Minister of Human Resources Arjun Singh and Defence Minister Sharad Pawar. Both showed themselves capable of winning the support of party men outside their states.

It was the end of the personality cult, Rao said:

The conference produced almost no critics of government foreign policy. The decision to establish diplomatic relations with Israel was endorsed.

Only a short time before, Rao's foreign minister, Madhavising Solanki, had made an ignominious exit from the cabinet over the Bofors payoff. The compulsions that led to his resignation are not clear.

The Bofors scandal, which dates back to the days when Rajiv Gandhi was prime minister, has rocked Indian politics for years. Bofors, the Swedish arms maker, is said to have paid about Rs 560 million into Swiss bank accounts held by Indians. Critics say Congress cannot afford to have the names of the account owners known.

At a time when the Rao government was talking about seeking an inquiry and getting details of who received the payoffs, Solanki handed a note to the Swiss Foreign Minister asking the Swiss government to "take no further steps in this matter."

He told parliament pathetically: "This note, on the status of the court cases pending in India, had been given me by a lawyer. I don't recall his name. I do not have a copy of the note. I now regret I handed this note and caused embarrassment to me and avoidable misunderstanding."

Solanki has the reputation of being a skillful political strategist and manipulator. Friends and critics alike are baffled that a clever man could behave in such a stupid fashion on something as important and sensitive as the Bofors payoff.

He had risen to become chief minister in the treacherous school of Gujarat state politics. Rajiv Gandhi forced him to resign in 1985 because of communal riots. He came back in 1988, but lost out again a year later in the anti-Congress wave — which was mainly a product of the Bofors scandal

and the suspected involvement of Gandhi.

Eyebrow were raised when Rao made Solanki foreign minister last June. He had no inclination of apparent interest in international diplomacy, but he was a Rao loyalist and did not mind the Prime Minister taking foreign policy decisions on his behalf.

Solanki was ready to learn and meticulous in studying his briefs. He was becoming more assured.

Cleverly, Rao has used the Solanki episode to create the impression that he and his government will not interfere

with the Bofors investigation. He quickly told the Swiss to "totally ignore" the note delivered by Solanki.

He told parliament: "I want this House to believe me. I want the people of India to trust me. There will be no question of sparing any effort in getting at the truth. We will pursue this case without fear of favour or being influenced by anybody... no (business) house in the world can wield any influence on me or my government."

The Solanki affair has given Rao the chance to be seen as Mr Clean. If the Bofors names are disclosed and involve Gandhi and his friends this will help him to cleanse Congress and create credibility for his government.

If Gandhi comes out clean Rao can take credit for adopting tactics that cleared the Congress name.

— GEMINI NEWS

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## OPINION

### Will this Ever End?

Shameem Ahmed

Couple of years ago workers of a company with the help of a local political leader blocked the Dhaka-Chittagong Trunk Road near Foudherhat for over 48 hours. The reason? The workers were protesting the management's efforts to continue the supply of essential drugs to the market from their locked out factory. The following year agitating transport workers cut off the link between the northern region and the rest of the country. Two weeks ago feuding students of Nizampur College near Mirer Sarai in Chittagong set up a blockade on the highway for seventeen hours. On Saturday before last May 9, activists of a major political party blocked the Dhaka-Chittagong highway again at the same spot for over sixteen hours. The reason this time was no flimsy one. Awami League and Chhatra League leaders and activists were most brutally gunned down and a prominent leader kidnapped and assaulted in Fatikchhari allegedly by Jamaat Shibir and NDP gunmen and this blockade was in protest of that brutality. No civilised person, politically active or not, can turn his face away from such barbarism as enacted in Fatikchhari. These murders must be protested and condemned in the strongest terms and the law enforcing agencies and the government must be made to act. But the question remains must the innocent public, who are generally helpless spectators in such situation and to which they are not a party at all, be made victims of protests and agitation? Must innocent children and women be held hostage in scorching heat and be made to suffer for hours on the road for situations not created by them in any way? Surely the thousands of passengers and truck/bus drivers stranded on the highway everytime there was a blockade

perhaps the most corrupt head of state in the world. And no doubt it is the politicians who are today blatantly flouting democratic norms and practices by harbouring gunmen and ordering political killings.

Claims have been made often by those in power now that there has been unprecedented improvement in the law and order situation as it exists today. Yet we see a young man gunned down in broad-day light in a major and busy hospital of the country, student fronts of political parties freely exchanging gunfire everyday in the campuses, tendons and limbs of rivals being cut off by militant fundamentalists, illegal toll collectors merrily terrorising traders and businessmen and extorting money from them, hijackers robbing and killing housewives and school teachers in broad-day light, crusher trucks and buses daily crushing under their wheels anything and anybody that falls in their way, fish sellers lynching a teenage customer as a result of a row over the sale of a rotten fish, and roads and highways blocked and rail tracks uprooted at any pretext almost every week. And in this when there is a truly democratically elected government who has the legitimate and genuine support of the people.

And who not only has been resources in its hands to tackle these situations, but is committed to do so. But the question that creeps into one's mind is does the Government have the will and ability to use the resources at its disposal? And that is why the compelling question still remains — when will all this end if not now when autocracy has been defeated and democracy given a chance for the first time since 1971?

The writer is a business executive and member of CIVICWATCH, a citizens' watchdog body.

## To the Editor...

### Example for students

Sir, On April 28, the election of the Central Students' Union and Hall Students' Union of Bangladesh Agricultural Institute (College), Dhaka was held peacefully. All the students' fronts of the major political parties contested in the election in four different panels. The parties were — Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), Bangladesh Chhatra Union and Bangladesh Islami Chhatra Shibir.

The students of BAI once again proved that the foundation of real democracy is based upon fair and peaceful election. With great enthusiasm the students participated in the election and actively assisted the college authority to hold the election in a congenial and friendly atmosphere. Teachers felt proud of their students who have acquired certain degree of tolerance which is an indispensable factor for establishing democratic values in the society. No student of any political party created any hindrance towards holding a fair election. We hope that they will continue to keep on maintaining this attitude which will obviously serve as

an example for other educational institutions.

M Zahidul Haque  
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### Sutar Para High School

Sir, A school named "Sutar Para High A Hamid School" has been set up in Dohar Thana under Dhaka district. It has been done with the help of public labour and money. After Bangladesh attained her freedom, a few zealous and young social workers made a plan to found a school in the Sutar Para Union. Many discussions and rallies were held for this purpose in that locality. In keeping with the opinions of the initiators and the villagers, the proposed school was named, "Sutar Para Union High School".

Signboards with this name of the school, were placed near the roads. Necessary papers were made ready and subscription from people was collected. But the raised fund was not enough for the purpose. So, the name of the school was changed to "Dohar Sutar Para High School" in order to collect money from

the whole of Dohar Thana.

But the school which was founded at the cost of people's labour and money, was suddenly named as "Sutar Para A Hamid High School".

It is not just to name such a school after some individual rather ignoring the collective contribution.

We, therefore, appeal to the concerned authority to restore the name the school as "Sutar Para High School".

Lukman Hakim  
Nayatola, Dhaka

### Corruption

Sir, There is no way, even if sadly enough, to deny that corruption is a familiar phenomenon in every walk of our life. There is no sector where it doesn't exist. No nation can prosper with it. So we could not change our pitiable condition after more than two decades of liberation.

Maybe, at present it is practiced less than it had been during the former regime, but can we deny that no corruption has now in Bangladesh? Can't we get out of the disgrace?

Akbaruzzaman  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka