

# Agni II Missile and South Asian Security

After the nuclearization of South Asia in May 1998, its future depended on the critical choices made by the two core countries of the region. Should they go forward with full-scale weaponization by depriving their malnourished, hungry million from their legitimate right?

## Into the Dark Tunnel, Again

All our words of caution, appeals for calm, and pleas for reconciliation have — as we had feared — fallen on deaf ears. No amount of facts that hartals only destroy and in no way help the country move forward made even the slightest bit of difference to our politicians. Hence we are back into its dark tunnel with the threat that we are likely to enter it more in the coming days.

This paper's principled opposition to hartals is based on the view that when there is democracy in the country, and when governments are elected in due time through relatively free and fair elections, no issue can justify denying the people their fundamental rights of work, free movement and peaceful conduct of business. We believe that nothing, absolutely nothing, can justify the negative impact on our economy that hartal causes. Hartal, in our view, demonstrates bankruptcy of the political party or parties that call it. Meaning that when they fail to mobilise the people behind any particular cause, they call a hartal just to make their presence felt. It is also the easiest programme to organise. Even to hold a rally some effort and money need to be spent. But to call a hartal what one needs to do is to issue statements to newspapers and then sit back and let the street urchins do the rest, with some honourable exceptions of course. There is another reason that convinces us of the bankruptcy of this programme. It is always tagged with a weekend, or some national holiday. The mischief here is to induce people to observe hartals by making a 'long' weekend out of the regular two-day one.

When will it all end, for end it must? Our type of politics that neglects the fundamental concerns of the people just cannot last. Imagine the fact that since the restoration of democracy in '91, we have had a single extensive parliamentary debate on any of the crucial problems like population, illiteracy, malnutrition, women trafficking, arsenic and lead pollution, unemployment, rising crime... the list goes on. When our people's representatives do not talk about peoples' problems, then we must question as to why they are in politics in the first place? To seek what?

We reiterate our position that hartals will solve no problems and only further complicate the existing ones. Go back to the parliament and work through it. The potential of that great institution, with all its faults, remains vastly underutilised.

## Ill-gotten Wealth

No sooner had we published an editorial on a police AC's huge illegal wealth, than an organisation called Bangladesh Society for Enforcement of Human Rights (BSEHR) made sensational revelations about alleged illegal earnings of police officers in Bangladesh. We thank the BSEHR for its boldness to conduct a survey among eighty police officers of different ranks and salary scales that found them all corrupt with accumulated illegal wealth worth over twenty crore taka.

The survey conducted during the last six months revealed that police officers earned between 'six hundred and one thousand time more than their salaries through bribes and extortion'. This appalling situation may only be the tip of the iceberg. Imagine the volume of illegal money being held and spent by thousands of police officers across the country, let alone the illegal earnings of one lac-strong police force. An immediate investigation should be started by an independent body which should take into account all policemen and officers, including the CID, DB and SB personnel. Statement of wealth of all government employees should be made compulsory. The politicians should also submit such statements and the ministers must give an account of their assets to the Prime Minister's Office which should be updated every year.

Once again we reiterate that the proposal for such statements should immediately be revived and our politicians and ministers be advised by the PMO to submit such statements which will then be released to the press for publication. Similar proposals were made and accepted by the Prime Minister herself but the process seems to have stopped right there. The situation will deteriorate with the passage of time and unless something is done to arrest this tendency incalculable damages to the moral fibre of the society will be done. Some of the recommendations of the BSEHR should also be considered for immediate adoption.

## Quality Healthcare

Problems in the health sector continue to be a major public concern. A Service Delivery Survey was carried out in February and March this year as part of World Bank's review of the Health and Population Sector Programme (HPSP) covering 26,207 households in six divisions across the country. The survey reveals the wretched condition the country's public-sector healthcare facilities are in, thereby accentuating the need for immediate administrative attention and measures for redressal.

Inefficiency, shortage of specialists and trained nurses, scarcity of medicine and equipment are discouraging people to approach government-run healthcare establishments. Circumstances are worse in the rural areas, affecting women and children in particular. The state of the affairs in the "public" health sector needs immediate improvement.

Health sector inadequacies don't necessarily require exuberant sums to be overcome. Administrative weaknesses seem to be one of the main reasons why healthcare services are inadequate. Over-centralisation is another important bottleneck. It not only delays implementation but also breeds inefficiency. The worst part, perhaps, is that failures are being caused by cumbersome procedures and bureaucratic tangles which should have been addressed and rectified years ago. The HPHP has already submitted its survey report to the health ministry. The ministry, plagued by its bureaucratic inertia, should act and act fast on the survey findings, to uphold our right to quality healthcare.

EVERYBODY knows that there is no final word in politics, especially when it comes to state interactions. With all the wisdom and idealism at hand, one has to admit that as long as sovereign nation states exist, and exist as political animals, they would continue formulating and implementing policies solely guided by their core national interests. So why should the actions of either India or Pakistan be any different? And for little more than a half a century the two South Asian countries thought it best to be engaged in a confrontational paradigm, which they thought served that national security interests, rather than trying to narrow their differences, bridge the gaps and work out a constructive relationship which would have laid the foundation of a regional security system. Since the end of the cold war, however, there have attempts to reduce tensions and forge a closer link between the two in order to create an environment of regional peace and stability. But mostly they have symbolic rather than substantive. The latest one being the much trumpeted February 1999 "Bus Diplomacy" of Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee.

There were, however, many such euphoric occasions in the past as well. One does remember General Zia-ul-Haque's "Cricket Diplomacy" as well as the meeting of leaders like Rajiv Gandhi and Benazir Bhutto during SAARC Summit at Islamabad. But the impacts of those developments on Indo-Pakistan bilateral relations have been minimal. This time, however, the dimension was different. The leaders of these two countries were meeting after their newly acquired nuclear capabilities and in the backdrop of public sentiments (however feeble they might be) in both India and Pakistan in favour of better relations between the two. From this viewpoint, meeting between Vajpayee and Nawaz Sharif was more than welcomed and both leaders made a number of highly symbolic gestures. Symbols are important but they need to be combined with actions. Otherwise they end up being only hollow and rhetorical. Obviously, the region as whole was anxiously waiting for the follow-up. There were, however, some actions especially in the area of trade and people to people contacts but concrete and major steps were not yet taken. And expectations were that such bold and innovative actions from both sides would soon be forthcoming. Instead we have now Agni II.

It is ironic that soon after the "Bus Diplomacy" and only eleven months after Pokhran II explosion, which rocked the world with apprehensions and forever changed the security environment of South Asia, the BJP-led Government in India has once again revived the debates about the nuclear future of the region by launching Agni II, a new generation of nuclear-capable missiles. The incident has raised concerns in the United States about the possibility of another arms race in the region and the reactions in Pakistan have been one of disappointment and worry. A nuclear arms race in the region is something which neither country can afford, especially Pakistan. It is all the more ironic that such development has taken place at the heel of eight rounds of high-level talks between Washington's, Indian and Pakistani officials. Number of positive pledges were conceived during those talks: a moratorium on nuclear testing, promise of developing export control regulations, possibility of signing Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) by September 1999 and willingness to take part in the initial rounds of negotiations for the Fissile Materials Cut Off Treaty in Geneva by India and Pakistan. Out of all these arose hopes like a possible declaration of moratorium on developing export control regulations, possibility of signing Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) by September 1999 and willingness to take part in the initial rounds of negotiations for the Fissile Materials Cut Off Treaty in Geneva by India and Pakistan.

And now the remnants of "Bus Diplomacy" euphoria have gone out Indo-Pakistan relations with a big bang in the form of Agni II. Second, when there is lack of trust in any relationship there is every possibility of misunderstanding. With Agni II it would be more than applicable in case of India and Pakistan for a number of reasons. The scope of misunderstanding would be wide in the absence of India's and Pakistan's clear cut strategic doctrines about their nuclear capabilities and a blue print about their possible nuclear force structure. For Islamabad it might be easier. Its nuclear programme and use of its newly acquired nuclear capability is not that difficult to explain since it is a common knowledge that they have developed their programmes more in response to India's nuclear programme. Its only objectives are to create deterrence, if the war breaks out, against India's conventional force advantage. It is New Delhi who has to make clear what exactly are its nuclear strategic doctrines, its objectives for further missile development, its future force structure and the nature of their future deployment, i.e. if it decides to do so. Further widening of the gap could develop if BJP's

Vajpayee's "Bus Diplomacy" in the changed context? And what would be the consequences of Agni on the South Asian Security System? First, one might very well forget about the possibility of having any positive impacts of Indian Prime Minister's dramatic visit to Pakistan on the bilateral relations as soon as Agni soared across Indian sky. New Delhi may argue that it did stick to Lahore declaration by informing Islamabad and major powers about the impending test, which is indeed a positive development. But did India give any hints about its security needs for which it needed to go for further missile development? Or explain the inner motive of its nuclear policy? That is what friendly countries do. They talk about each other's security needs. Granted that they not yet that friendly. At best the ice had just begun to melt especially when New Delhi agreed to include Kashmir issue in their future bilateral discussion agenda. Then it was all the more needed that in order to stabilize the nuclear capabilities of both and create a sense of trust between the two there should have been more transparency with regard to their respective defence policies. Nothing like that transpired between the two. The "Bus Diplomacy" was supposed to lay the foundation of that kind of mutual trust. With the delay in concrete actions signs of skepticism were already in the offing. And now the remnants of "Bus Diplomacy" euphoria have gone out Indo-Pakistan relations with a big bang in the form of Agni II.



PANORAMA  
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armed India is put to effect. According to that ideology a nuclear armed India would not only be able to deter alleged Chinese threats but also would grant it place in the sun, the place it deserves. It is the only way that it could take its rightful place in international arena and play its rightful role. If that were so then to point finger to Chinese and Pakistani threats would be misnomer. Then the decision to go nuclear is more political than military. Obviously then it would call for larger nuclear force structure including navalised deterrent. In such eventuality would not then China feel compelled to have stronger defense ties with Pakistan further aggravating an already suspicious relationship? Lastly and most importantly, one has to assess the consequences of Agni II's psychological effects on an emergent new era of Indo-Pakistan relations. For more than half a century these two countries have build their defence against each other as they felt threatened by each other. Such deep sense of fear psyche is not easy to obliterate. Any defence

build-up by either country, as such, is rightly or wrongly viewed with certain amount of belligerence. One could, however, argue that making such far-fetched consequences of Agni II is uncalled for. What New Delhi wants is to have an absolutely non-provocative and localized nuclear force which would address its legitimate regional security interests and Pakistan would also be within its rights to do so. Washington understands and appreciates such legitimate national security interests of both India and Pakistan. But in the context of psychologically marred mutual relations, especially without any major breakthrough in resolving Indo-Pakistan bilateral issue launching of Agni II has done incalculable harm to the possibility of an emergent new era in Indo-Pakistan relations.

The incident, before the symbols demonstrated during the "Bus Diplomacy" like the visit of Vajpayee to Mirrat-e-Pakistan, which was signal that BJP has come to terms to the partition of 1947, were transformed into action, would now put the South Asian adversaries back to their previous cycles of mistrust and misperceptions. The damage would have been far less if some concrete actions like taking steps towards reaching accords on issues like demilitarization of Siachen Glacier in northern Kashmir, the barrage to be constructed by the state government of Jammu and Kashmir on the Jhelum River below Wular Lake, and a demarcation of the Indo-Pakistan territorial and maritime boundaries in the Sir Creek area between Gujrat and Sind, were taken. In that case Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's hands would have been strengthened in dealing with the bilateral volatile issues, which are regularly used for domestic consumption.

In this context what then would be lessons drawn from Indo-Pakistan periodic high level diplomacy? Would not the cynic's point be proven that they are nothing but pageantry meant for public consumption? This would be indeed unfortunate. But that is exactly what has happened. It has been like yet another opportunity missed. Obviously South Asia has been unable to draw inspiration from the examples of history when the adversaries, if they meant business, have acted

with positive actions and matched symbols with concrete steps. The glaring example being Egyptian Anwar Sadat's dramatic visit to Israel in 1977 in the midst of opposition from some sections of Egyptian society which was reciprocated by Israel's disengagement from Sinai and laid the foundation for peace process in the Middle East. Unless there is demonstration of such sagacity on the part of the leadership the entire process falls prey to cynical sections of each country's population. In case of India and Pakistan it is also no exception. In such a case, certain sections have been cynical about having durable peace between the two. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had to deal with domestic opposition in much more larger scale than his Indian counterpart. There are people abound in that country who believe in flexing military muscles rather than working for genuine peace which can be gained only through a mutually trusting relationship, discussions, negotiations and confidence building.

Unfortunately, launching of Agni II has struck at the very core of that kind thinking by new generations of India and Pakistan. This has been the most damaging of all things. The spontaneous jubilation by the Indians at Agni II test and similar reactions by the Pakistani at Pokhran II test underlines the dimension of that damage. It also demonstrates the hollowness of our leadership. As a consequence instead of peace dictating the Indo-Pakistan relations who could bring genuine stability in South Asia, an alarming arms race in South Asia has already begun. Islamabad has gone forward with the testing of Gauri II and has declared that it would soon do missile testing over the Arabian Sea. And public in both countries seem to be happy about their nuclear muscles. After the nuclearization of South Asia in May 1998, its future depended on the critical choices made by the two core countries of the region. Should they go forward with full-scale weaponization by depriving their malnourished, hungry million from their legitimate right? Or should their relations be guided by the search for genuine peace? Where does the security of the region lie? In the military hardware or in the peace and prosperity of the people? It seem like that the tottering government of India has already cast the die in favour of false vanity of being a nuclear power. And the possible results? A likely fractured South Asian Security System.

After once again robbing, murdering and raping thousands, uprooting millions, burning and destroying their properties, all the Serbs are required to give up is limited autonomy to the Kosovars, why should they be deterred? For a safer Balkans, NATO must defeat Milosevic completely before any peace negotiations. In lieu of NATO ground troops, NATO must equip and train the dedicated fighters of the Kosovo Liberation Army. And the Serbs must be forced to rebuild the houses they destroyed and relinquish control of Kosovo, which they can no longer claim morally. Without exemplary punishment for war-mongering Serbia, and the Serbs who committed atrocities in Kosovo, the Balkans will most certainly degenerate into a cycle of revenge killings.

## LETTER FROM AMERICA

### The Mind of Milosevic

Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed writes from Princeton

Without exemplary punishment for war-mongering Serbia, and the Serbs who committed atrocities in Kosovo, the Balkans will most certainly degenerate into a cycle of revenge killings.

maintaining in power is all that he cares about — whatever it takes. Milosevic has a fiendish plan, with three objectives. One, get the ethnic Albanians out of Kosovo. Two, destroy the Kosovo Liberation Army. Three, invite the ethnic Albanians back, but only to southern Kosovo. Keep the northern half of Kosovo, with Serbian historical sites, only for the Serbs. So far, his plan has worked flawlessly.

There are disturbing reports that Serb soldiers rounded up hundreds of young ethnic Albanian women, took them to the army barracks, gang-raped them and threw out their bodies like pieces of trash after murdering them. Shades of Bosnia. The Serbs know that they can rape Muslim women with impunity. The world is yet to know the fate of 700,000 ethnic Albanians who were trapped inside Kosovo after the Serbs closed the border to celebrate Orthodox Christmas. Satellite photographers indicate some of them may have ended up in mass graves. Shades of Bosnia, once again. The Serbs believe that they can rape and murder their way out of trouble. So far the world has exacted no retribution.

Milosevic also knows the western mind much more than the West would like to admit — especially their dislike of Muslims. Even after all that has happened, the New York Times still insist that Kosovo remains a part of Serbia. Forcible deportation of the ethnic Albanians onboard trains did not remind the Israeli leaders of the experience of the Jews during World War II. Instead, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu remains solidly pro-

Serb. Ariel Sharon wants Kosovo to remain Serbian, because he says, he does not want Bin Laden and Hezbollah to have a foothold in Europe. Let us look at Sharon's statement. Even Afghanistan does not want Osama Bin Laden! And Kosovo does? Netanyahu and Sharon know that any kind of preposterous statement they make about the intention of Muslims — even those being annihilated — will stick. The same argument was put forward against the creation of a Muslim-majority Bosnia. Milosevic has gauged, accurately, that the West wants all Muslim entities in Europe to be tiny — tiny Albania, tiny Bosnia and tiny half of Kosovo. On the other hand, the West is vociferous in demanding independence for the Christians of East Timor, who occupy half of a minuscule island in the Indonesian archipelago.

One of the reasons why boxing immortal Muhammad Ali beat the heavily favoured Champion George Foreman in their classic duel in Kinsasha, Zaire in 1974 was because, according to Ali, Foreman telegraphed his punches. This allowed Ali precious time to evade Foreman's deadly blows and get ready with his own counter punches. NATO has been telegraphing Milosevic their moves well before the hostilities began. Ground troops will not be used, so said NATO. This allowed Milosevic's thugs to terrorize civilians without any fear of NATO ground troops. NATO telegraphed the type of military/industrial installations that were going to be bombed, allowing Milosevic time to empty them. NATO is going to use tank and troop-de-

stroying Apache helicopters. But it's going to take about a month to get them near Kosovo. Therefore Milosevic speeds up his ethnic cleansing. NATO publicizes that the US is running out of cruise missiles; Milosevic smiles. NATO was absolutely right in rejecting Slobodan Milosevic's Orthodox Easter ethnic cleansing pause. Such nice religious folks, the Serbs! It is worth remembering that Milosevic did not order his troops to cease ethnic cleansing on March 27, which was the Festival of Sacrifice (Eid-ul-Adha) for the ethnic Albanian Muslims — one of the two holiest days in Islam. Instead, Milosevic's troops sacrificed Muslims on that day in their quest of a 100 per cent pure Serbian Kosovo.

Now that the bombing is be-

ginning to hurt, NATO should bomb the hell out of Serbia until Milosevic cries uncle! Further NATO should demand Milosevic's stepping down as a condition for a bombing pause. This evil man is responsible for instigating all the wars and ethnic cleansings in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo. With him remaining in power, the world can expect more of the same. By demanding his resignation while continuing to bomb, NATO can turn his own people against Milosevic. NATO can end its cause enormously by quickly naming Milosevic a war criminal, which is what he is.

The primary motivation behind Serbian intransigence is that they, as a nation and a people, have paid little price for the murderous rampage of their President Milosevic, their sol-

diers and their civilians in Croatia, Bosnia and now Kosovo. The end result of the Serb's murder and rape of thousands, and displacement of millions of Bosnian Croats and Muslims was the creation of the Bosnian Serb Republic via the Dayton accord, with 51 per cent of the land of Bosnia-Herzegovina!

If after once again robbing, murdering and raping thousands, uprooting millions, burning and destroying their properties, all the Serbs are required to give up is limited autonomy to the Kosovars, why should they be deterred? For a safer Balkans, NATO must defeat Milosevic completely before any peace negotiations. In lieu of NATO ground troops, NATO must equip and train the dedicated fighters of the Kosovo Liberation Army. And the Serbs must be forced to rebuild the houses they destroyed and relinquish control of Kosovo, which they can no longer claim morally. Without exemplary punishment for war-mongering Serbia, and the Serbs who committed atrocities in Kosovo, the Balkans will most certainly degenerate into a cycle of revenge killings.

## OPINION

### The Tarnished Image of Police

M A Bari

The police organisation anywhere in the world is an institution for maintaining law and order and internal security. The method of policing as inherited from the colonial days under the British government and thereafter during the Pakistani days are still being practised by the Bangladesh Police.

More than half a century has passed after the partition of India in 1947 and within these fifty years, a new independent state, namely Bangladesh, has appeared on the world map. Our independence was achieved through a sanguinary war of liberation about 27 years ago. Against this historical backdrop, we should pay attention to the radical changes that have taken place in the socio-political-economic condition of the land we live in. I would like to draw the attention of all concerned to the fact that the present-day Bangladesh needs a thoroughly overhauled police force to meet the challenge of the time.

Demographically speaking, the population of the newly born state has almost doubled. The communication of the country with other regions of the world by road, railway, waterways and air has exposed our people to the world at large. The internet communication facilities also are expected to increase enormously in near future. Under the impact of all this development, it is expected that efficiency and dedication to duty should be the prime quality with our police personnel. However, it is easy to aspire but very difficult to achieve. Be-

cause police force is not an isolated body of people but it is connected with, rather produced by, the society of a country. It is really ridiculous to expect grapes from a tamarind tree. It is an open secret that we are now passing through a very critical and confusing situation of our national history. There has been a general degradation in the values of life in all sectors — enlightenment, honesty, integrity, and social justice. Addiction to drugs, terrorism, hijacking, killings and other vices including sexual violence have increased beyond all proportions. Incidents of throwing acid and severing sinews have increased alarmingly. According to the latest survey the occurrence of rape has increased manifold.

## To the Editor...

### One-stroke decision!

Sir, Now it has become a matter of how many strokes or strikes (strike a firm decision on the head and drive it home). The DS 3-stroke editorial (Mar 9) on the government's one-stroke weak-kneed decision to phase out the 2-stroke autorickshaws in five years is the 'Joke of 1999'. Has anyone seen a one-stroke engine? This is what can be expected from a 'popular' regime which tries to remain 'popular' by any artificial. Let us sort out the administrative priorities, provided the political non-will does not intervene (to remain popular). Clear the roads of unlicensed drivers and vehicles. This will reduce the traffic jam by 50 per cent at once; including a large percentage of the unholly smoke and political and non-transparent smoke-screens

(how a smoke can be transparent?). Has the Administration got the guts to catch the violators of the law? Why there should be any political interference? Why mercy should be shown to those who break the law (The poor can commit no crime). Two-stroke engines may be banned with immediate effect from Dhaka and Chittagong cities in the first phase; effective after three months, for logistic adjustments, and starting with batches of serial registered numbers (batch by batch). This will allow sufficient time for withdrawing the vehicles from the two cities. The ban in the district towns may be phased into three periods, as the density of exhaust fumes is less in smaller towns. Alternative facilities or options (in phases) must be made available before imposing the ban. Public and independent technical agencies may advise

the government on other ways of using the old 2-stroke engines besides the usual use as the prime mover of automobiles, for reconditioned use in outlying areas outdoors, to complete the life span of the newer used engines. The crucial question is: what to do with the thousands of used 2-stroke engines? Some useful ways of alternative use must be provided as temporary option, during the change-over period. In a publicity campaign, the government has to get public approval why the phasing out period has to be for five years and not for two or three years. It is unfortunate that decisions are announced without proper debate in the parliament on such critical public issues. What are the views of the vehicle owners? What prevents them from making it into a political issue through hartals? A Zabr Dhaka