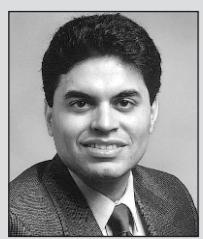


The stealth nuclear threat



FAREED ZAKARIA
writes from Washington

material (the core ingredient of a nuclear bomb) and to keep its nuclear programme transparent. The only problem is, Iran has recently announced that it isn't going to abide by the deal. As the IAEA's investigation got more serious, Tehran got more secretive. One month ago the agency condemned Iran for its failure to cooperate. Tehran responded by announcing that it would resume work in prohibited areas.

That's where things stand now, with

exchange with Israel. If Iran's programme went forward, at some point Israel would almost certainly try to destroy it using airstrikes, as it did Iraq's reactor in Osirak. Such an action would, of course, create a massive political crisis in the region.

In the face of these stark dangers, Europe seems remarkably passive. Having burst into action last fall, it does not seem to know what to do now that Iran has rebuffed its efforts. It is urging negotiations again, which is fine. But

production of a nuclear bomb, Europeans were unwilling to take any robust measures like the use of force or tough sanctions. James Steinberg, a senior Clinton official who organized this workshop, said that he was "deeply frustrated by European attitudes." Madeleine Albright, who regularly convenes a discussion group of former foreign ministers, said that on this topic, "Europeans say they understand the threat but then act as if the real problem is not Iran but the United States."

American policy toward Iran is hardly blameless. Washington refuses even to consider the possibility of direct talks with Iran, let alone actual relations. Europeans could present Washington with a plan. They would go along with a bigger stick if Washington would throw in a bigger carrot: direct engagement with Tehran. This is something Tehran has long sought, and it could be offered in return for renouncing its nuclear ambitions.

American policy toward Iran is hardly blameless. Washington refuses even to consider the possibility of direct talks with Iran, let alone actual relations. Europeans could present Washington with a plan. They would go along with a bigger stick if Washington would throw in a bigger carrot: direct engagement with Tehran. This is something Tehran has long sought, and it could be offered in return for renouncing its nuclear ambitions.

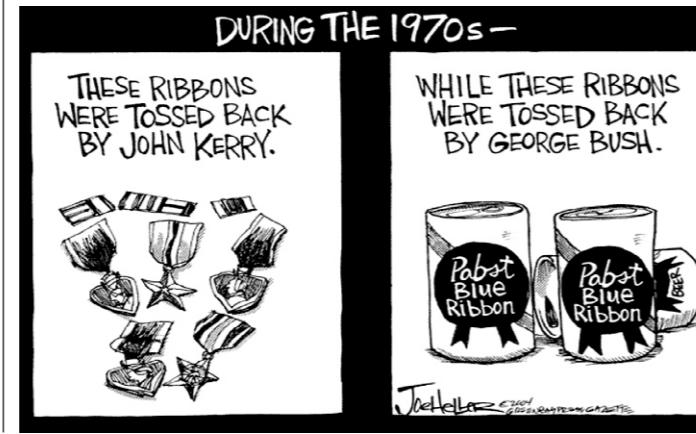
the clock ticking fast. If Iran were to go nuclear, it would have dramatic effects. It would place nuclear materials in the hands of a radical regime that has ties to unsavoury groups. It would signal to other countries that it's possible to break the nuclear taboo.

And it would revolutionise the Middle East. Saudi Arabia and Egypt would feel threatened by Iran's bomb and would start their own search for nuclear technology. (Saudi Arabia probably could not make a bomb but it could certainly buy necessary technology from a country like Pakistan. In fact, we don't really know all of the buyers who patronised Pakistani scientist A. Q. Khan's nuclear supermarket. It's quite possible Saudi Arabia already has a few elements of such a programme.) And then there is Israel, which has long seen Iran as its greatest threat. It is unlikely to sit passively while Iran develops a nuclear bomb. The powerful Iranian politician Ali Rafsanjani has publicly speculated about a nuclear

what will it tell Iran in these negotiations? What is the threat that it is willing to take?

Last month the Brookings Institution conducted a scenario with mostly former American and European officials. In it, Iran actually acquires fissile material. Even facing the imminent

Fareed Zakaria is Editor of Newsweek International. © 2004, Newsweek Inc. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission.



Indo-Pak rapprochement and beyond

TARIQ ALI

We have been observing with great interest that the two intractable adversaries of the subcontinent are talking about burying their hatchets. Talks are on between India and Pakistan, whose rivalries have attained mythological proportions and pale that existed between the French and the Germans for centuries. The talks feature a number of issues, some substantial and others confidence-building. The difference between the talks now and the many failed dialogues before is that this time, they are talking, not just to go through the motions, but to actually achieve results. The reasons for this sea-change in attitudes are many, not the least important of which is that the current world situation has made it a historical necessity.

The Hindu-Muslim mistrust, which has been the root-cause of this hostility, was in a large measure spawned under the aegis of the British around the beginning of the 20th century. Their intentions then, were by no means to create a separate state for the Muslim community, but to use the rivalries and angers that existed between the two communities as a convenient wedge to perpetuate their hold over the Indian empire. It is not that the Muslim mistrust was totally unfounded. Many Congress members themselves have admitted that although the Congress claimed to represent the common interests of the two communities, partition became inevitable because of the extreme myopia with which the Congress had dealt with some legitimate and other not-so-legitimate safeguards that the Muslims had demanded. It is also a twist of history that had the Second World War, which broke out in 1938, not disrupted the process of gradually granting Indians some form of home rule, leading progressively to independence, the

embryonic idea of Pakistan may not have been able to evolve into a full-blown demand. Pakistan, after its creation also forgot to roll back the aggressive slogans it had used during its creation. On the contrary, the palace intrigues of its civil and military bureaucracy was able to convince its rulers that a *lark-lejeng* posture would serve them best.

However, the ramifications of the global power equations in the aftermath of 9/11 are that all that saber rattling must change. And it is these new compulsions that may spark a breakthrough in the peace process between the two countries, ushering in new hopes for a peaceful and progressive South Asia. However, for those enamoured with the two nation theory, the peace process will spell disappointment because it

been regressing. Therefore, in the changed circumstances of today, the Islamic world has little option but to accept the paradigm changes that have occurred and march in-step with the rest of the world.

Although it is true that the west (in the context of this article) represented by the U.S. had no compunction in fanning the terrorist message of fundamentalism and Talibanism in their bid to dismember the "evil empire", they are in no mood today of tolerating another challenge to the supremacy which they have built over the last 600 years. And unsavoury, but true remains the fact that they will be able to find many willing co-operators in their bid to chastise what they view as the *enfant terrible* of the world today -- the Islamic world. No matter how loyally the Arab Sheikhs may have served the

South Asia is advantageously poised to play a pivotal role in the transformation that Islam must undergo--not in its basics, I have to add, but in its applications. South

Asia's own, in the next. Terror has been and is used by the west too, not only in the Abu Ghraib prisons, but in their own lands all the time, but their societies and systems are such that these acts do not go absolutely scot-free as has been the case in the Arab lands.

However, the good news is that this paradigm change that the Islamic world must go through is not as soul-wrenching as it sounds. We must not forget that Islam was able to evolve from its humble beginnings as a tribal religion into an international credo within a century of its founding because it was able to adapt itself to the various local environments.

South Asia is advantageously poised to play a pivotal role in the transformation that Islam must undergo--not in its basics, I have to add, but in its applications. South

Hindu or the Muslim genre, has banished that syncretic tradition into a distant dream, found only in Hindi film songs of yesteryears.

Pakistan will initially go through an intensely traumatic period in its transition to a reduced belligerency, and they must keep a sharp eye that this genie within its body politic is not allowed to come out. The beginnings of that trauma are already evident, as they start to deny safe havens to the Taliban and the Kashmiri insurgents and significantly, in the way that a component of their present government, the MMA is beginning to be harassed by their own establishment. It is in the interest of the Islamic world that Pakistan survives through these traumas. Both the countries will benefit immensely from scaling down on the weaponry and the size of their armies, but more than the economic benefits, a reduced army would deliver Pakistan from the curse of a government within the government which has dictated state policy and which has been the source of all their misadventures of the past. The world is entering a phase where the famous words, "it's the economy, stupid" are beginning to impact many nations including China and India and who knows what may burst forth as new interpretations to the concepts of statehood are explored -- it may be an interesting world indeed.

Reduction of hostilities will enable Pakistan to direct its energies for competing with India on the international business front. In fact, it may create the foundations for the Muslims of the South Asia to take a leadership role in the Islamic world. It will also enable Pakistan to take advantage of the industrial and scientific resources that India has acquired. Most of all, it will permit Pakistan to proudly claim as theirs once again all the things it had to leave behind in 1947-- its common history and its common cultural traditions. They will no longer have to bemoan their severance from the red stones of the Taj Mahal. Above all, it will give the millions of people who were wrenched from their homes in search of the promised land in 1947, new hopes, if not of going back but of a final destination.

It will also let the third country of the sub-continent, Bangladesh, take steps which are in the best interests of its economy, its people and its politics and which are driven by pragmatism, not dogma. It will strengthen Bangladesh's voice in South Asia and its collective voice will then be more than just a whimper in the world stage. It will, of course, strengthen the democratic institutions in the country and help to reduce the frills in our defence spending, because, after all, who are we fighting against? It will possibly open up employment opportunities for its population in the other two countries. Reduction of religious tensions in India and Pakistan will perhaps finally give a voice to the minority population in our country, who have had to lead a life of denigration ever since 1971 and who let us have the courage to admit--we have denied equal opportunities as citizens of this country.

Both India and Pakistan have a glorious opportunity now of sowing seeds of sanity in their societies -- where reason will dominate over emotions. The Kashmir issue is so sensitive in both countries that it is doubtful whether either of them would seriously want to bring it to the table now. If the breeze of sanity starts to blow, the people-to-people contacts which will ensue will make it easier for the politicians to eventually deal with the Kashmir issue.

certainly drives the penultimate nail into its coffin.

A diversion may be made at this point to look at how the 9/11 related realities will affect the Islamic world. The isolation that the world of Islam suffers today can be said to have originated from the time it abandoned the pursuit of science, learning and liberalism which had given Islam its golden age in the Abbasid period. The Islamic world has taken one backward step after another since then. From around the same time that the Reformation and Renaissance were guiding the western world towards the heights it has attained today, along the road of free thought, patronisation of the science and arts, experimentation with statecraft and above all, preventing the Church from interfering with the State, the world of Islam has

Western interests in the past, in the eyes of the west the indelible images of Islam are the images of beheadings and of a flawed system of social justice. They may have romanticised and paid lip service to the values -- but only as long as it was confined to the Arabian deserts. They are not to tolerate it when it is exported to their own backyards.

It was a miscalculation of gargantuan proportions when the fundamentalists thought they had gained enough strength to be able to purify the world with their Wahabi doctrine. In today's context therefore, it will be pragmatic for the Osama Bin Ladens and the Islamic world in general, to accept that even with hundreds of more suicide-bombings, they are not in a position to fight back. Not in this century, but perhaps, if it has carried out a Reformation

It is with this backdrop in mind, that

Asia can take pride from the fact that a large quantum of the research and development of Islamic thought and philosophy has taken place in the subcontinent. It also has another distinct advantage. It was not necessary in the monolithic Arab society to live in an atmosphere of concessions and tolerance with other communities.

The Muslims of South Asia have that advantage and can share their experience with the rest of the Islamic world. They must use it to their fullest advantage, for even the most diehard fundamentalist knows that in the world of tomorrow they will have to share their backyard with people from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. They also realise by now that there is no space left anymore for a theocratic state in that world.

It is with this backdrop in mind, that

without his stomach bulging-over from a river of gall. And this is in a country where I was witness in late-fifties to a group of class fivers who were asked what their aim in life was. One of the students raised his hand and said that his aim was to become a cook in the Nehru household and poison him to death.

If the normalisation does actually take place, the transition to a less belligerent posture could be more easily achieved in India, because it has a more diverse population, democratic traditions there are firmly rooted now and because its population is poised for reaping the economic benefits of a resurgent India. If it comes to a tussle between a better way of life and the Hindu rhetoric, Lakshmi appears to be set to win hands down. The most profound effect of normalisation will be on the political front in India, and it is conceivable that it could bring back to power once again in the next elections a coalition with a broad secular platform. If that happens, 10 years of religion relegated to where it belongs -- inside the individual home -- buoyed by its booming economy could well make the BJP's saffron message permanently irrelevant in India. That would be the ultimate nail in the coffin of the two nation theory.

The Kashmir issue is so sensitive in both countries, that it is doubtful whether either of them would seriously want to bring it to the table now. If the breeze of sanity starts to blow, the people-to-people contacts which will ensue will make it easier for the politicians to eventually deal with the Kashmir issue. Blots to India's democratic traditions, like the POTA will no longer be used and a Muslim will not need to auto-programme a discretionary brake on his tongue when he is criticising the system or campaigning for his community. It could also rekindle hopes that a mosque and a mandir having a common boundary wall, with both the "azan" and the "ghanta" pealing forth their respective messages in the evening air, can proclaim the syncretism that was not unknown in Indian society. It is sad that fundamentalism, be it of

Bangladesh is cheap!

DR. FAKHRUDDIN AHMED

DURING the writer's just concluded five-week sojourn in Bangladesh this July-August, once again the writer was reminded of how inexpensive most things are in Bangladesh compared to America. At several traffic lights at Dhaka, for instance, the writer was accosted with hawkers shoving pirated copies Bill Clinton's autobiography in the writer's face for less than Taka 200, approximately one tenth of what it costs here. Out of journalistic curiosity I asked a hawker to name the book. "My Life," he answered, and I am sure if I had queried him further he would have added, "Monica Kotha Aache, Sir!"

Transportation is the cheapest. We traveled from the Sonargaon hotel to Dhannmandi in a taxi for Taka 27 (less than one half of a dollar) and from the Dhaka University campus to Mohammadpur for only 60 Taka (one dollar) tips included! Restaurants are equally cheap. Ten of us dined in an excellent Chinese restaurant in Gulshan for only Taka equivalent of fifty dollars (5 dollars per person), which stunned my elder son traveling with me! Hotel and restaurant prices are more western like in Dhaka's top two international 5-star hotels, Sonargaon and Sheraton.

As I was to appear in Bangladesh Television's (BTV) current affairs programme "Laal Golap" (due to be telecast at 10:30 P.M. after the English news on Friday, August 13), I needed shirts and pants. I was advised to visit "Big Boss" in Dhannmandi. I purchased a couple of brand name shirts and a couple of Dockers trousers for 5-6 dollars each. In the US they would have cost at least five times as much. I also needed sweat shirts and pants. For that I visited "Banga Bazaar" near Dhaka University's Fazlul Huq Hall. A Reebok sweat shirt and pant cost only Taka 425, or about seven dollars. In the US it would have cost seven times as much. Much to the chagrin of my

relatives, I did not bargain, because I thought the prices were low enough for me already!

Bangladeshis have a way with words. We cut our hair at a barber shop named "Hairofics" for only Taka 50 (less than a dollar), including a head massage! In the US a haircut costs at least 15 to 20 dollars. Delighted, we gave the barber an equal amount in tips which he accepted without betraying his surprise and gratitude. Armed with the mighty dollar one can be very

generous in Bangladesh at a very little cost.

We found ourselves in the middle of the flood season. Although floods act as a natural source of fertilizer by depositing alluvial soil on most of the cultivable lands in Bangladesh which subsequently yield bumper crops, this year's flood, like that of 1998 and 1988 did much more harm than good. Right before our eyes, several areas of Dhaka City became submerged. We saw the full horror of the floods after we took off from Dhaka airport. Flood water seemed to be everywhere until we left Bangladesh's air space.

of a serial killer, I would relentlessly pursue the fast moving insect until I put an end to it. My relatives would then examine the squashed remains of the dead insect to see its parting gift to us - stripes (Dengu possibility) or no stripes (only malaria possibility). Those who contracted Dengu could never recollect the moment they were bitten, I was told. As the Dengu incubation period is between 7 to 10 days, we are definitely not out of the woods yet.

We also found ourselves in the middle of the flood season. Although floods act as a natural source of fertilizer by depositing alluvial soil on most of the cultivable lands in Bangladesh which subsequently yield bumper crops, this year's flood, like that of 1998 and 1988 did much more harm than good. Right before our eyes, several areas of Dhaka City became submerged. The newspapers did an excellent job of reporting the worsening flood situation all over the country and the accompanying human misery index with vivid pictures. We visited the embankment near Savar which protects most of Dhaka City. It may be recalled that before the embankment was constructed, in 1988 most of Dhaka, including the airport was under water during the flood season. We saw the full horror of the floods after we took off from Dhaka airport. Flood water seemed to be everywhere until we left Bangladesh's air space.

All of my years at Dhaka I had never visited two of the most famous historical monuments of Dhaka the Lalbagh Fort and Ahsan Manzil. Ahsan Manzil is the residence-office complex of Dhaka's Nawab family. This is where Nawab Salimullah hosted the likes of Lord Curzon (after whom Dhaka University's science complex "Curzon Hall" is named), and such meetings had a lot to do with the establishment of Dhaka University, East Pakistan, and finally Bangladesh. Ahsan Manzil has been restored due to the foresight of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the acquiring of the property during General Ershad's time and renovation work under the guidance of Dr. Enamul Haque. Ahsan Manzil too is the largest open space around the river Buriganga. The admission fee is Taka 2, and once again it was wonderful to see thousands of Bangladeshis visiting one of their most famous historic sites.

It has been a long time since I stayed for full five weeks in Bangladesh. All other recent visits have been much shorter and during winter. As I went around Dhaka and visited our ancestral home near Feni, I felt an intense sense of kinship with everyone. I genuinely sensed that the street urchin, the rickshawala, the men in fancy cars and the pretty girls in the shopping malls were a part of who I am. And I felt pretty good about

to the untiring efforts of Bangladesh's most famous archeologist, Dr. Nazimuddin Ahmed, between 1975 and 1980 the Lalbagh Fort was renovated and restored. In his booklet, "Mughal Dhaka and Lalbagh Fort," available at the Lalbagh Fort, Dr. Nazimuddin Ahmed describes the finest surviving specimen of Mughal Dhaka, Lalbagh Fort, (originally named Aurangabad Fort in honour of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb) as follows: "Rectangular in plan, it encloses an area of 1082 feet by 700 feet and in addition to its two gracefully lofty gateways on south-east and north-east corners and a subsidiary small unpretentious gateway on north, it also includes within its fortified parameter a number of elegant monuments surrounded by attractive gardens. These are: a small mosque on west, the striking mausoleum of Bibi Pari, the reputed daughter of Nawab Shaista Khan and the Audience Hall with 'hamman' of the governor to the east of the precinct. The main purpose of this fort, it seems, was to provide a defensive enclosure of the palatial edifices of the interior and as such, was a type of palace-fortress rather than a siege fort." The Lalbagh Fort is currently the largest open space in old Dhaka. As we were fortunate enough to tour the fort with Dr. Nazimuddin Ahmed himself, it was gratifying to see thousands of Bangladeshis taking a lesson in their cultural heritage at the theme-park setting of the Lalbagh Fort at a very nominal entrance fee of Taka 2.

We were also fortunate enough to tour the Ahsan Manzil by the river Buriganga in the company of Dr. Nazimuddin Ahmed. Ahsan Manzil is the residence-office complex of Dhaka's Nawab family. This is where Nawab Salimullah hosted the likes of Lord Curzon (after whom Dhaka University's science complex "Curzon Hall" is named), and such meetings had a lot to do with the establishment of Dhaka University, East Pakistan, and finally Bangladesh. Ahsan Manzil has been restored due to the foresight of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the acquiring of the property during General Ershad's time and renovation work under the guidance of Dr. Enamul Haque. Ahsan Manzil too is the largest open space around the river Buriganga. The admission fee is Taka 2, and once again it was wonderful to see thousands of Bangladeshis visiting one of their most famous historic sites.

It has been a long time since I stayed for full five weeks in Bangladesh. All other recent visits have been much shorter and during winter. As I went around Dhaka and visited our ancestral home near Feni, I felt an intense sense of kinship with everyone. I genuinely sensed that the street urchin, the rickshawala, the men in fancy cars and the pretty girls in the shopping malls were a part of who I am. And I felt pretty good about