

## Doomsayers and skeptics

KAZI ANWARUL MASUD

THE world is in a fix, uncertain about the foreign and security policies the next Bush administration would take in the next four years. The raging debate has been divided by James Mann (of John Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies) into two schools of thoughts: the Doomsayers and the Skeptics. Doomsayers would point out that the current Fallujah offensive, legitimating argument being of necessity to clear the way for the Iraq elections early next year advanced by the Allawi government and the US authorities notwithstanding, as incontrovertible proof that the team of Republican cold warriors would continue to hold sway over the Bush White House. They would also point out that the distinct possibility of Colin Powell's exit would "remove the last bulwark against complete neo-conservative control of the US foreign policy". The skeptics would argue that even if the second Bush administration were to expand its highly controversial policy of preventive war in Iraq to other areas to further war on terror and prevent nuclear proliferation it would face military, political, diplomatic and economic constraints rendering such pursuits infeasible. Besides, argues James Mann, the neocons did not control first Bush administration's policy towards China and Russia that conformed to the classic realist principles of Henry Kissinger and former National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft.

Perhaps Colin Powell gave the most authoritative narrative of second Bush administration's foreign policy goals during his most recent visit to Mexico. Powell reiterated that war on terror would remain a priority of the administration, others being consolidation of "success" in Afghanistan, fighting alongside Pakistan "to defeat the Al-

Qaeda and Taliban elements that are working in the frontier areas of Pakistan" (reconfirmed to the Pakistani Foreign Minister by Richard Armitage), situation in Iraq, unfolding drama in the Middle East (foremost being Yasser Arafat's health condition), and cementing strong transatlantic relations. Powell's failure to mention Iran issue could be indicative of adjournment of Bush first term policy in view of Franco-German-British negotiations with Iran while relating to North Korea the omission was

in its spirit, and in its movements". The Doomsayers concerns also resonate in the words of Alexander Hamilton that the "spirit of moderation in a state of overwhelming power is a phenomenon which has not yet appeared and which no wise man will expect ever to see".

It has been argued that Bush's running amok as a bull in a china shop in his first term was due to his inexperience with the complexities of the Presidency as he was only a governor of Texas before he became President. Such an argument

preemption replaced the doctrines of containment and deterrence that had served the world well for over fifty years.

It is claimed that Bush's victory over Kerry is due to strong backing from his party's conservative base, urban, Jewish, Catholic and female voters. Many voters cited "moral values" as the most important issue as opposed to economy, terrorism or Iraq. Though forty nine percent of the Americans voted for John Kerry one has to ask oneself as to whether the US has become a conservative

tism and libertarianism because of self-transmutation of their values making their hitherto purist conception a thing of the past. Problems could emerge if a conservative Bush administration disparaging forty nine percent opposition to it as incoherent and dispensable objection by a non-covenanted group embark on a crusade to impose upon the world a neo-conservative agenda with elements of Christian Right and Pentecostal movement forming its inherent parts then a clash of civilizations would be unavoidable. But if instead of pursuing imprudent policies Madisonian advice is heeded in that the formation of the government should not only be aimed to control the governed but also to control itself then Bush administration's proclivity to transgress the boundaries of international law based on self-induced conviction of moral imperative to accord legitimacy to conduct exceptional to international law might be kept in check.

If "legitimacy deficit" is a problem in some parts of the world then "legitimacy deficit" continues to be a problem of some of the actions of the Bush administration. To restore global confidence in the US leadership will take time and sincere efforts by the second Bush administration which would in part depend on the composition of the next administration and the leadership, now that both houses of the Congress are in Republican hands, demonstrated by President Bush.

Migration of Marxism to the land of no return (despite China and North Korea) has mercifully rid the world of ideological conflict and the end of the Cold War can be compared with the Thirty Years' War (1618-48) as the last of the great wars of religion. Global concern, therefore, is not so much about a possible virulent conflict between conserva-

perhaps due to as yet unformed foreign and defense team of the Bush second administration. One, however, should remind oneself of President Bush's unambiguous declaration in favour of six way talks with North Korea over John Kerry's proposal for bilateral talks.

However much the skeptics doubt the Doomsayers projections for the next four years it is difficult to foresee a complete transformation of Bush personality from a blind folded racehorse racing to go to a monkish patience and tolerance to see the other side of the coin. Indeed under Bush, writes Robert Tucker and David Hendrickson (Foreign Affairs Nov/Dec 2004) the United States has assumed many of the very features of "rogue nations" against which it has rhetorically and sometimes literally done battle over the years. They describe Bush policy in the words of Edmund Burke after seeing the French revolutionaries as "military in principle, in its maxims,

becomes untenable if one considers Franklin Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan, Woodrow Wilson, Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton and many others. Only those who are elected President for the second time or have been Vice President can claim familiarity with the labyrinthine intricacies of the Oval Office. Bush chose, according to Ivo Daldai (of Brookings Institution), not to follow Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman who could have imposed an imperium commensurate with American prowess after the Second World War but chose to create the UN, NATO and Bretton Woods system. Bush's choice to pursue military option ran counter to the four pillars that supported US legitimacy in the post World War II era, writes Tucker and Hendrickson, which were its commitment to international law, its acceptance of consensual decision making, its reputation for moderation, and its identification with the preservation of peace. Doctrine of

society. But then it would be fallacious to assume that only Republicans have been wedded to conservative values and that Democrats are awash with libertarianism. Daniel Griswold (of Cato Institute) has described America can two party systems as "like cold pizza for people who love individual liberty, free market and limited government. The two major parties seldom nominate candidates who pursue those principles in a consistent way. Neither the Republican George Bush nor Democrat John Kerry would ever be mistaken for a libertarian".

Migration of Marxism to the land of no return (despite China and North Korea) has mercifully rid the world of ideological conflict and the end of the Cold War can be compared with the Thirty Years' War (1618-48) as the last of the great wars of religion. Global concern, therefore, is not so much about a possible virulent conflict between conserva-

Kazi Anwarul Masud is a former Secretary and Ambassador.

make third world agriculture more productive but rather to generate profits" it does not mean that we should sit idle and not develop manpower and infrastructure in genetic engineering so that we are able to initiate our own research into developing transgenic crops in our country.

If we are always advocating fear and resistance, most of which is unjustified and biased, how can the right kind of public awareness be generated? An awareness that would be necessary to get public funding for such research? It does not take much to realise that without our own research base in such areas, we are bound to fall prey to MNCs. Negative opinion on GM technology can therefore be very damaging.

It is claimed that eating transgenic food in which new proteins are produced can give rise to allergic reactions or cause toxicity or is thought to alter the metabolism of the food producing plant or animal. For quite some time now Bt soyabean has been in the markets of the US and some other countries including perhaps Bangladesh (since there are no monitoring system in operation in Bangladesh it is quite likely that transgenic processed food may already have made way into our markets). Allergenicity due to such food would have been noticed at least in the countries where availability of such food is public knowledge. And also all the fear of toxicity and alteration of the metabolic pathway of the genetically modified organism (plants in this case) can also be attributed to crops improved through use of radiation.

With our ever-growing human population, we need to explore every possible avenue to help increase food production. Our farmers will readily embrace any technology as long as it is affordable and profitable. It would be unwise to throw away any valuable tool using philosophical arguments and claiming hypothetical risks. There had always been people who resisted new technology. If we look back into history we will find those few visionaries who saw the potentials of new technology and pressed ahead. For what they did often at great personal risk, we enjoy the benefits of technology today.

As in the mustard story, gamma radiation is used in such cases to bring about a desired change in the DNA molecule (a molecule that controls the uniqueness of the plant and all living beings for that matter) and then plants are selected for the acquisition of a particular trait. While selecting for a particular trait what we often overlook is the fact that many more changes would have been induced by the radiation. These changes at the DNA level can bring about other unforeseen changes. This is something our environmentalists conveniently ignore.

Would anyone who has any knowledge about the chemical composition of DNA, the genetic material, deny that causing changes in the DNA molecule using gamma ray does not constitute a genetic modification (GM)?

Why is it then we fear genetic modification only when this is induced by transgenicity? We get a transgenic plant when we introduce a foreign gene (a gene is a piece of DNA molecule that confers a particular trait) into the plant. We know of plants which grow in the marshy saline regions of the Sunderbans. These plants grow on saline land because they

have specific genes, genes which allow such growth. What if we identified those genes, isolated them from the saline tolerant plant, and put them in a plant that does not grow in salty coastal regions, like the afore-mentioned mustard or rice? Why would introducing changes in the DNA molecule by radiation be safer than putting in a gene from another plant? The later approach is more targeted and does not bring about random changes in the DNA molecule as happens in the case of radiation mutation.

With our ever-growing human population, we need to explore every possible avenue to help increase food production. Our farmers will readily embrace any technology as long as it is affordable and profitable. It would be unwise to throw away any valuable tool using philosophical arguments and claiming hypothetical risks. There had always been people who resisted new technology. If we look back into history we will find those few visionaries who saw the potentials of new technology and pressed ahead. For what they did often at great personal risk, we enjoy the benefits of technology today.

As in the mustard story, gamma radiation is used in such cases to bring about a desired change in the DNA molecule (a molecule that controls the uniqueness of the plant and all living beings for that matter) and then plants are selected for the acquisition of a particular trait. While selecting for a particular trait what we often overlook is the fact that many more changes would have been induced by the radiation. These changes at the DNA level can bring about other unforeseen changes. This is something our environmentalists conveniently ignore.

Would anyone who has any knowledge about the chemical composition of DNA, the genetic material, deny that causing changes in the DNA molecule using gamma ray does not constitute a genetic modification (GM)?

Why is it then we fear genetic modification only when this is induced by transgenicity? We get a transgenic plant when we introduce a foreign gene (a gene is a piece of DNA molecule that confers a particular trait) into the plant. We know of plants which grow in the marshy saline regions of the Sunderbans. These plants grow on saline land because they

are the vehicle that drives us through existence. Chances of angina or heart attack add to three-fold in cases of hypertensive (high BP) people. Blood Pressure (BP): What does it mean? Blood Pressure is the pressure of blood flow. Heart endlessly pumps blood through blood vessels to different parts of the body. The flow produces pressure against the vessel walls. Blood Pressure is a measure of this pressure. This value is affected by innumerable factors, the more important being the condition of one's heart and arteries. Arteries that are clogged affect the flow of blood circulation and limit the amount of blood to heart, following in strokes or heart attacks.

How is BP properly measured?

BP measurements are indicated by 2 numbers, e.g., 140/90 mmHg, 120/80 mmHg. The higher number is the systolic blood pressure (top value) and is the pressure in the arteries when the heart is pumping blood. The other number indicates the diastolic blood pressure (bottom value) and measures the lower pressure when the heart is at rest between beats.

But remember, one or two readings may not indicate the true blood pressure. By taking regular readings at a predetermined time each day, you will be alerted with any irregularities and early precautionary action can be taken against potential health problems. The World Health Organisation has set a classification or standard by which blood pressure, whether systolic or diastolic, is compared. This helps to decide whether your pressure readings are considered high or low. Then again, for children the numbers are different; and special tables are obtainable with child specialists.

Did you know?

No BP drugs or medicine can help (a hypertensive) if not accompanied by healthy eating habits and regular exercise. Don't forget, if you would like some more advice, pop into your local clinic/health centre/hospital and talk to the doctor.

Are we trying to kid ourselves by thinking that GM would lead to overexploitation of our land? Does it mean we are not overexploiting it now? That would definitely be wishful thinking. GM is all about bringing fallow land under agriculture like the saline coastal belt, or growing crops in flood prone or drought prone regions. This does not agree with overexploitation. Any debate on GM is good. General public needs to be made aware about both the potentiality and the dangers of this new technology. It is important to see which outweighs the other.

But wait a minute, is it not known that what gamma radiation does is introduce mutations

or changes in the genetic material? Then is this not genetic modification? Do I see any environmentalist protesting against it, resisting its release? I do not think any such thing will happen, because it never has. Even if there had been any protest it had never been strong enough to stop its use. Perhaps it had been realised that such technology was after all, beneficial. We have had been using radiation for crop improvement for quite a long time now.

Mr. Nazrul Islam, a journalist and an environmentalist did mention in his November 1 Daily Star article titled The Biotechnology Trap that some debate had been generated when nuclear technology was introduced. But this has subsided and now we are debating more vehemently about GM.

Tampering with the underlying structures of an organism -- by means of changing the genetic material that help make that organism may raise alarms in many. But have we ever thought about the consequences brought about by the use of radiation in getting a particular breed of a plant, a method that has been in use in our country for quite a long time now?

With our ever-growing human population, we need to explore every possible avenue to help increase food production. Our farmers will readily embrace any technology as long as it is affordable and profitable. It would be unwise to throw away any valuable tool using philosophical arguments and claiming hypothetical risks. There had always been people who resisted new technology. If we look back into history we will find those few visionaries who saw the potentials of new technology and pressed ahead. For what they did often at great personal risk, we enjoy the benefits of technology today.

As in the mustard story, gamma radiation is used in such cases to bring about a desired change in the DNA molecule (a molecule that controls the uniqueness of the plant and all living beings for that matter) and then plants are selected for the acquisition of a particular trait. While selecting for a particular trait what we often overlook is the fact that many more changes would have been induced by the radiation. These changes at the DNA level can bring about other unforeseen changes. This is something our environmentalists conveniently ignore.

Would anyone who has any knowledge about the chemical composition of DNA, the genetic material, deny that causing changes in the DNA molecule using gamma ray does not constitute a genetic modification (GM)?

Why is it then we fear genetic modification only when this is induced by transgenicity? We get a transgenic plant when we introduce a foreign gene (a gene is a piece of DNA molecule that confers a particular trait) into the plant. We know of plants which grow in the marshy saline regions of the Sunderbans. These plants grow on saline land because they

are the vehicle that drives us through existence. Chances of angina or heart attack add to three-fold in cases of hypertensive (high BP) people. Blood Pressure (BP): What does it mean? Blood Pressure is the pressure of blood flow. Heart endlessly pumps blood through blood vessels to different parts of the body. The flow produces pressure against the vessel walls. Blood Pressure is a measure of this pressure. This value is affected by innumerable factors, the more important being the condition of one's heart and arteries. Arteries that are clogged affect the flow of blood circulation and limit the amount of blood to heart, following in strokes or heart attacks.

How is BP properly measured?

BP measurements are indicated by 2 numbers, e.g., 140/90 mmHg, 120/80 mmHg. The higher number is the systolic blood pressure (top value) and is the pressure in the arteries when the heart is pumping blood. The other number indicates the diastolic blood pressure (bottom value) and measures the lower pressure when the heart is at rest between beats.

But remember, one or two readings may not indicate the true blood pressure. By taking regular readings at a predetermined time each day, you will be alerted with any irregularities and early precautionary action can be taken against potential health problems. The World Health Organisation has set a classification or standard by which blood pressure, whether systolic or diastolic, is compared. This helps to decide whether your pressure readings are considered high or low. Then again, for children the numbers are different; and special tables are obtainable with child specialists.

Did you know?

No BP drugs or medicine can help (a hypertensive) if not accompanied by healthy eating habits and regular exercise. Don't forget, if you would like some more advice, pop into your local clinic/health centre/hospital and talk to the doctor.

European right seeks to battle what they call the "enemy within".

## Arafat as I knew him



ARSHAD-UZ-ZAMAN

## THE HORIZON THIS WEEK

He has left this world and not seen the birth of a Free Palestine. He can rest in peace with the thought that from a fractured people he has galvanised a nation proud of its heritage. He has taught them to fight for their rights and no matter how long and difficult the journey, freedom to the people of Palestine will come sooner than we may think.



YASSER Arafat is no more. His dream of a truly independent Palestine remains unfulfilled. I had the good fortune of knowing Yasser Arafat, and work very closely with him for many years. He was the President of Palestinian Authority and most importantly occupied the hearts and minds of the people of Palestine.

I

first met Arafat in Rabat, where I had gone to attend the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) Foreign Ministers' meeting. I was Bangladesh Ambassador in Egypt. What struck me about Arafat was not only his trademark baggy trousers, loosely hanging jacket, keffiyeh and unshaven beard but his utter simplicity and straightforwardness. Although I was an OIC Foreign Ministers' Conference, the question of Palestine dominated it and there was an uproar about Egypt, which was expelled from the OIC for having signed a Peace Treaty with Israel.

In 1980 I joined the OIC as its Assistant Secretary General in Charge of Political Affairs, Legal Affairs and Information. Within the OIC Secretariat hierarchy I stood second to Habib Chatty, the Secretary General. I acted frequently as Secretary General. This was September 1980 and the fratricidal war between Iraq and Iran had started. The OIC was faced with the biggest challenge of its decade long existence for its two important members were locked in fierce, bloody battle. The OIC had a Summit meeting -- the first of its kind when Heads of State of the member countries met in front of the Holy Kaaba as Koranic verses rang out. The only absentee was Imam Ruhollah Khomeini, who took the stand since Saddam Hussein, the President of Iraq was the aggressor, he would not sit with him. The Summit decided to set up an eight-member Peace Committee composed of eight Heads of State. Since there was great sensitivity about inclusion of an Arab Head of State, it was decided to include Yasser Arafat alone, because Iran had a special feeling about Arafat's struggle for independence against Israel.

Iran had broken diplomatic relations with Israel and handed over its Embassy in Tehran to Arafat. Secretary General Habib Chatty and I represented the Secretariat and organised with the help of Saudi authorities the trip to Tehran and Baghdad trying to bring about a cease fire. Since I was involved with the arrangements I came in close, frequent contact with Arafat. My first impressions about Arafat were confirmed as a man of utter simplicity. He did me the unique honour of sending his Ambassador to Jeddah, where he had his headquarters. I believe it was in 1982 that Arafat and his close comrades-in-arms were surrounded by the troops of the Israeli military chief Ariel Sharon in Beirut, the capital of Lebanon. The Palestinians, whose headquarters was then Damascus, the capital of Syria, invited me to Damascus to show OIC solidarity with Palestine's struggle in Algeria. He promised to help her in my best.

On my return to Jeddah I learnt that Arafat was in Jeddah and I met him at his breakfast table (I had with him established fraternal relations with him) and told him that the daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Rahman had taken over the leadership of the Awami League and would attend the AAPS Conference in Algiers. He promised to help her in my best.

True to his word Arafat contacted Sheikh Hasina in Algiers and as told by Hasina to me in Jeddah, where she came as my guest on her return trip to Bangladesh, that Arafat had looked after her like her father and later invited her to visit Tunis, which had become his headquarters. I believe it was in 1982 that Arafat and his close

comrades-in-arms were surrounded by the troops of the Israeli military chief Ariel Sharon in Beirut, the capital of Lebanon. The Palestinians, whose headquarters was then Damascus, the capital of Syria, invited me to Damascus to show OIC solidarity with Palestine's struggle in Algeria.

Along with his struggle on the

Irresponsible art and tragic death

## Theo Van Gogh's Submission

By pushing society into chaos, Van Gogh's killer hoped to spark a conflagration between the Netherlands and its Muslim immigrants. Calmer heads must prevail in the days ahead. Muslims are now part of the European fabric -- they cannot be considered outsiders, nor should they be treated as such.

NAEEM MOHAJEMEN

IT is no longer possible to view *Submission* and give a "balanced" response to the work. No matter what our feelings about the effectiveness or irresponsibility of the film, director Theo Van Gogh's shocking murder is the unspoken shadow that now lies over any discussion of it.

Following Van Gogh's sudden murder on an Amsterdam street, the Muslim community condemned the killing loudly. Clerics clearly stated that, this was no way to conduct debate in civilised societies. Free speech must be valued and respected.

But these statements of disavowal were not enough for those on the Dutch right who would exploit this tragedy to further