

# EDITOR'S NOTE

## Transferring terror

Bulletin of the  
**Atomic  
Scientists**

**I**N JUNE 1993, PERVEZ HOODBHOY, A PROMINENT PAKISTANI physicist (and member of the *Bulletin's* Board of Sponsors) wrote a thought-provoking article for this magazine titled "Myth-Building: The 'Islamic Bomb.'" It's even more provocative today.

Although the West's "official line" was that all proliferation should be curbed, Hoodbhoy said, the West's unofficial policy was to stop only the Islamic bomb. And why, he asked, was that?

"Terrorism is given as one reason. Another is the threat of Khomcini-style Islamic fundamentalism . . . [using] the ultimate weapons of mass destruction in hope of reward in the Hereafter. A third reason, related to the second, is 'Islamism'—the fear that Muslim solidarity will lead to, in times of crisis, the transfer of nuclear arms from nuclear to non-nuclear Muslim countries."

Too wise to dismiss the West's view outright, Hoodbhoy argued that it was inherently unfair—no other bomb had been "labeled with another faith"—though he admitted that the offending term was itself of Muslim origin. The idea that an Islamic bomb should be owned collectively was a thought shared by Pakistan's Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Iranian ayatollahs, as well as other Muslim politicians and opinion leaders.

Ultimately, Hoodbhoy concluded, though, the "Islamic bomb" was a "meaningless notion," as was the idea that Pakistan's nuclear interests were anything but nationalistic.

WE NOW KNOW, HOWEVER, THAT A number of Pakistani nuclear scientists, either were—or soon would be—hard at work, dedicated to delivering the bomb to the *Ummah* (the entire Muslim community), and to the radical Islamist fringe.

As David Albright and Holly Higgins write in this issue (page 49), two

Pakistani nuclear scientists, one a follower of a radical pro-Taliban cleric, acted under cover of performing "charitable acts" to meet with Al Qaeda and agree to help it obtain nuclear weapons, a fact revealed not by the CIA or Pakistani intelligence, but by CNN's recovery of a trove of documents in Kabul. Two other Pakistani nuclear scientists with seeming links to Al Qaeda were "unavailable for questioning"; their government had whisked them away to a mysterious "special project" in Burma.

The picture gets worse. Albright sent us a copy of a sales brochure put together by A. Q. Khan, the much-heralded "father of the Pakistani bomb," who apparently used it to offer nuclear-related technology to Iraq and others (page 50). The question of Khan's hand in spreading technology was raised as early as 1995; the Pakistani government of course denied his involvement.

I was also shocked a few years ago to read that Nobel laureate Abdus Salam, founder of the U.N.'s International Center for Theoretical Physics in Trieste, had engaged in nuclear weapons work for Pakistan. Could this center, said to be dedicated to bringing modern science to developing countries, be transferring the wrong technology?

THEN AGAIN, AS DAN STOBER SHOWS IN his report on the "Nth Country Experiment" (page 56), it's not so hard to build a bomb. (A lot depends on how easy the materials are to come by.)

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