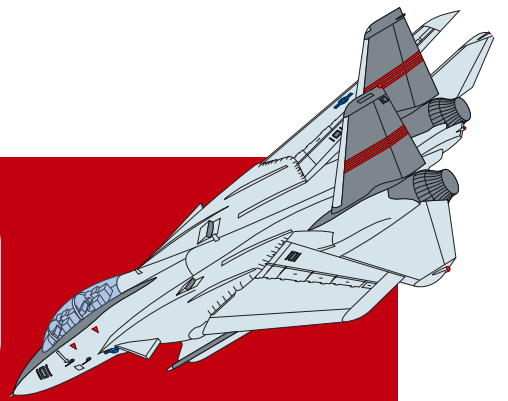
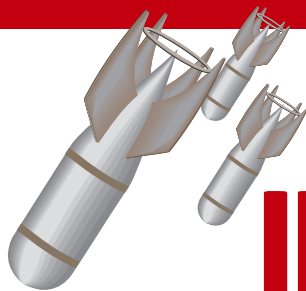


**WHAT'S SO  
FUNNY ABOUT  
PEACE, LOVE &  
ARMAGEDDON?**



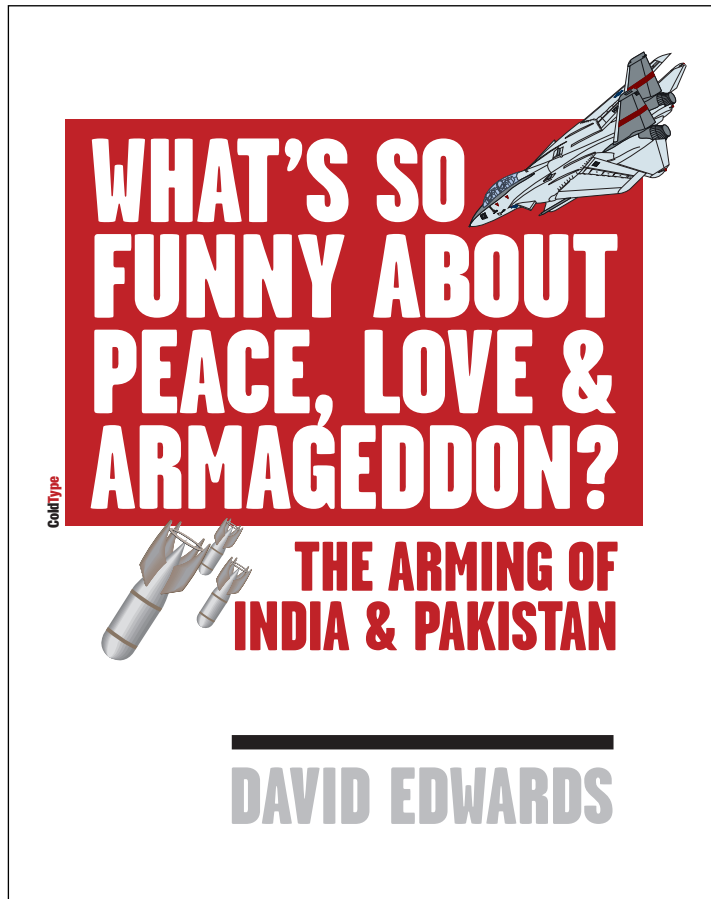
ColdType



**THE ARMING OF  
INDIA & PAKISTAN**

---

**DAVID EDWARDS**

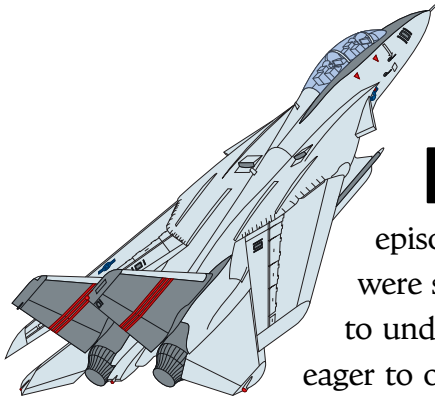


*David Edwards is co-editor of the  
London (UK) media watchdog MediaLens  
<http://www.medialens.org>*

© David Edwards 2005

**ColdType**

WRITING WORTH READING FROM AROUND THE WORLD  
[www.coldtype.net](http://www.coldtype.net)



## DO YOU BELIEVE?

At the beginning of every episode of the long running sci-fi series, *The X-Files*, viewers were shown the mysterious words “I want to believe.” We were to understand that one of the FBI investigators in the show was eager to overcome his scepticism, to be persuaded that aliens, goblins and suchlike really exist.

When it comes to the humanity and compassion of leaders like Tony Blair and George Bush, mainstream journalists also “want to believe”. In the 1997 Labour Manifesto, Tony Blair declared: “We will make the protection and promotion of human rights a central part of our foreign policy.” (‘New Labour Because Britain Deserves Better,’ <http://www.psr.keele.ac.uk/area/uk/man/lab97.htm>)

The press believed him. The Observer exulted in telling readers how the new government would push for “new worldwide rules on human rights” and implement “tough new limits on arms sales”. (Quoted, John Pilger, *Hidden Agendas*, Vintage, 1998, p.505)

Two years later, while bombing Serbia, Blair reaffirmed he was fighting for a “new internationalism” where “the brutal repression of whole ethnic groups will no longer be tolerated. For a world where those responsible for such crimes have nowhere to hide”. (The White House Bulletin, April 12, 1999)

Jonathan Freedland nodded sagely in the Guardian: “the prize is not turf or treasure but the frustration of a plan to empty a land of its people”. It was “a noble goal”. (Freedland, ‘No way to spin a war,’ The Guardian, April 21, 1999)

At the height of the bombing, an awestruck Andrew Marr wrote of Blair: “I am

## DAVID EDWARDS

constantly impressed, but also mildly alarmed, by his utter lack of cynicism.” (Marr, ‘Hail to the chief. Sorry, Bill, but this time we’re talking about Tony,’ The Observer, May 16, 1999)

As late as September 2003, after everything that had happened over Iraq, Timothy Garton Ash felt able to write of Blair’s “strong Gladstonian instincts for humanitarian intervention”. (Garton Ash, ‘Blair’s bridge,’ The Guardian, September 4, 2003)

Earlier this month, the Guardian once again reported that Blair was planning noble acts. Specifically, Labour planned to win back voters disaffected by the Iraq war with a manifesto pledge that included “a treaty to control the arms trade”. (‘Labour plea to anti-war voters - Aid pledges aimed at disaffected,’ Larry Elliott and Michael White, The Guardian, April 12, 2005)

It is interesting to test the rhetoric against some recent events.

### **Advancing The Doomsday Clock**

In March, the press reported that the United States had agreed to sell two dozen F-16 nuclear-capable jet fighters to Pakistan, a nuclear power. US Senator Larry Pressler commented in The New York Times:

“Pakistan... is a corrupt, absolute dictatorship. It has a horrendous record on human rights and religious tolerance.” (Pressler, ‘Dissing democracy in Asia,’ The New York Times, March 21, 2005)

Pressler suggested that the US ought instead to be supporting Pakistan’s regional rival, India. Indeed, Washington has reassured India that it has the administration’s blessing to buy F-16s or F-18s. India is considering a multibillion dollar purchase of fighter planes, including US-built or foreign-made aircraft. But anyway India is already receiving plenty of support elsewhere.

In September 2003, Britain’s BAE Systems announced the sale of 66 Hawk jets to India in a £1 billion package. This constituted 10 times the value of annual UK development aid to India.

The Hawks were to be used to train Indian pilots to fly more powerful jets, including 126 BAE Jaguar bombers being built under licence. The Ministry of Defence accepts that Jaguars are nuclear-capable. India, of course, is also a nuclear power.

The Hawks are more than just trainers. The jets can carry a 30-mm cannon, as well as 3000 kg of diverse weapons - air-to-air missiles, retarded and free-fall bombs, runway cratering, anti-personnel, light armour and cluster bombs.

## **PEACE, LOVE AND ARMAGEDDON**

Recall that the Indian government receiving these jets has fought three wars with Pakistan in the last 60 years. In December 2001, a major conflict again seemed likely after terrorists stormed India's parliament building in New Delhi, killing several people. India held Pakistan responsible, mobilised thousands of troops and came close to declaring war. The situation rapidly deteriorated to the extent that Pakistani journalist Ahmed Rashid wrote in the Daily Telegraph in May 2002:

“This isn't posturing - we're on the brink of a nuclear war India and Pakistan have had rows before, but never has a catastrophe seemed so likely.” (Rashid, 'This isn't posturing,' Daily Telegraph, May 31, 2002)

A month later, British officials urgently warned that too many Britons were ignoring pleas to leave India, “despite the danger of a war with Pakistan that could turn into the world's first nuclear exchange”. (Peter Popham, 'Britons ignoring please to leave "Have not grasped danger of war"', The Independent, June 5, 2002)

Later that year, the famous “doomsday clock” of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists was advanced two minutes toward midnight. Strategic analyst Michael Krepon described the final days of 2002 as “the most dangerous time since the 1962 missile crisis”. The major concern being “unstable nuclear proliferation” in regions including “the Indian subcontinent”. (Quoted, Bowers and LaFranchi, Christian Science Monitor, December 31, 2002)

### **Creating Wildernesses**

Britain's arming of India casts an interesting light on Blair's “strong Gladstonian instincts for humanitarian intervention”. The Independent wrote in August 2003 of the Hawks sale:

“The deal comes after intense lobbying by the British Government, with Prime Minister Tony Blair, Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott, Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon and Foreign Secretary Jack Straw taking it in turns to persuade the Indians to buy the jets.” (Clayton Hirst and George Fernandes, 'BAE to enjoy Indian summer with £1bn order for Hawk jets,' The Independent, August 3, 2003)

This was the same foreign secretary Straw who, in June 2002, had warned of ultimate disaster on the Indian sub-continent:

“If there is a conventional war there will be thousands of deaths and injuries and it will be very damaging.

“If there is a nuclear conflict it will be catastrophic - almost as catastrophic for the

## DAVID EDWARDS

country that launches the weapons as that which receives them because of the fall-out and the likelihood of a nuclear reply... At the very least hundreds of thousands of people will die and wildernesses will be created. As we know from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, many more people will die from radiation sickness.” (Straw, cited, Bill Jacobs, ‘Only cool heads will solve crisis,’ Evening News, June 10, 2002)

Later that month, the Press Association reported that Britain had continued to grant arms export licences to both India and Pakistan throughout the escalation of tensions. The 2003 annual report on arms exports - published by the Foreign Office, the Ministry of Defence and the Department of Trade and Industry - showed that sales of British weapons and equipment to India had almost doubled since 2001, up from £60m to £118m, while sales to Pakistan were £15m.

A year later, Straw was himself involved in the “intense lobbying” for the sale of weapons facilitating nuclear war - a level of hypocrisy that is almost beyond belief.

Britain, then, has been arming India with fighter bombers and nuclear-capable bombers in a region of the world that recently stood on the brink of nuclear war. Meanwhile, the United States is arming India’s nuclear rival, Pakistan, with dozens of nuclear-capable bombers of its own.

### **The Media Response**

On September 3, 2003, the BBC TV lunchtime and evening news reported the sale of the Hawks. There was no discussion of any conceivable moral issues surrounding the deal. No mention was made of how close India and Pakistan had come to nuclear war the previous year, despite the BBC having itself reported the crisis over several weeks in 2002. BBC journalists routinely described the Hawks as “trainers”, again without mentioning that they would be used to train Indian pilots to fly nuclear bombers. Richard Sambrook, then director of BBC news, told us:

“Unfortunately in a very short item we didn’t have the space to go into the history of [the Hawks’] use or the morality of trade in them.” (Email to Media Lens, September 5, 2003)

This is the BBC’s idea of a serious answer to a question regarding our government’s complicity in stoking a potential nuclear holocaust.

The Daily Mail was upbeat in focusing strictly on the business issues: “Hawk jets roar in with 800m deal from India.” (Daily Mail, September 5, 2003)

The Guardian provided the required emphasis in a piece entitled: “5,000 jobs safe

## **PEACE, LOVE AND ARMAGEDDON**

as India buys Hawks.” (David Gow, The Guardian, September 4, 2003)

The Morning Star, Britain’s only socialist daily newspaper, reported:

“Manufacturing union GMB welcomed India’s contract for buying 66 Hawk jets from Britain yesterday, noting that it was the result of its members’ ‘hard work and professionalism.’” (‘GMB welcomes Hawk jets contract,’ Morning Star, September 5, 2003)

Ironically, the emphasis, which excluded any reference to the moral issues, was a virtual carbon copy of that found in the Financial Times the following day:

“In the grand scheme of things, the Hawk deals are a drop in the ocean for a company increasingly reliant on its businesses outside the UK - particularly in the US and its lucrative service contract with Saudi Arabia - for its earnings growth. However, the good news... has seen the company’s share price almost double since February.” (Mark Odell and Peter Spiegel, ‘It’s good news now, not bad, from BAE,’ Financial Times, September 6, 2003)

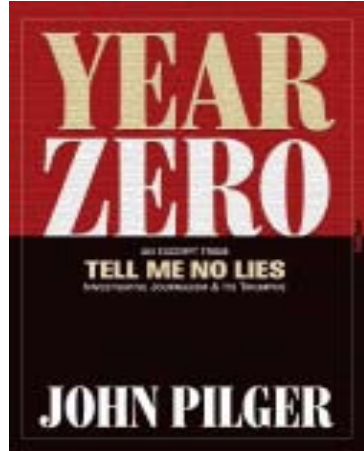
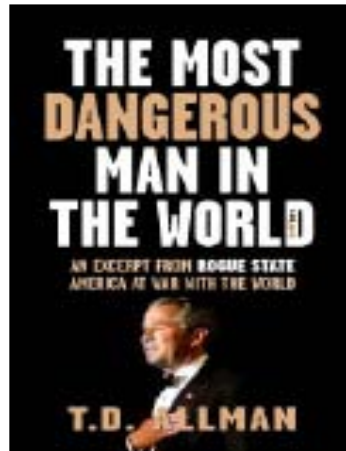
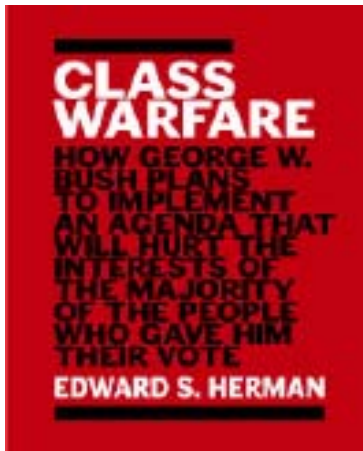
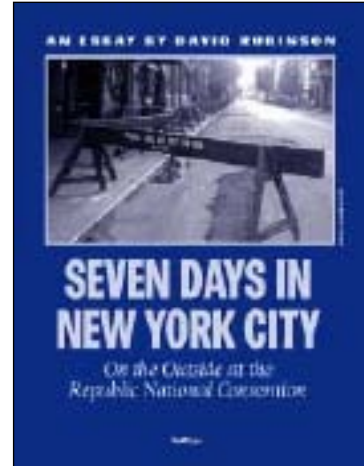
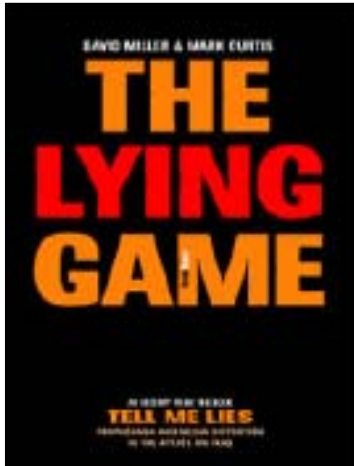
We have found a grand total of one editorial in all British national newspapers in September 2003 questioning the morality of the Hawks sale. This - a mild slap on the government’s wrist - appeared in the Guardian:

“The appropriate response to ‘tough neighbourhoods’ such as south Asia is for governments such as Britain to defuse the tension and promote dialogue, not an arms race... The government should accept that a more just and responsible policy on arms sales can achieve moral gains without economic loss.” (Leader, ‘Arms trade: Legitimate defence?’ The Guardian, September 13, 2003)

There were small nods in the direction of dissent in a handful of comment and news pieces, but nothing to seriously dampen the celebrations. A letter to the Financial Times, by David Mephram, Associate Director of the Institute for Public Policy Research, gave an idea of the obscenity taking place:

“A year ago, India and Pakistan stood on the verge of what many feared would be a nuclear war... By supporting this deal Britain will significantly strengthen India’s offensive capability and contribute to further tension and instability in the region. Instead, the UK should be working with others to urge India and Pakistan to de-escalate and demilitarise and to begin serious negotiations over Kashmir.” (Mephram, ‘Stoking up the rivalry between India and Pakistan,’ Financial Times, September 6, 2003)

# READ MORE POLITICAL ESSAYS AT COLDTYPE.NET



Download these, plus many more books, booklets, essays, newspapers and magazines – all in pdf format – all free of charge, at [www.coldtype.net](http://www.coldtype.net)  
(Click on this link to enter web site)

## ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING FROM AROUND THE WORLD