

Open Collar Interview № 71 with Dr. Tariq Rauf

EDITORIAL: The new guest of PIR Center's *Open Collar* Interview is Dr. Tariq **Rauf**, Director of SIPRI's Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-proliferation Program, Board Member of Atomic Reporters, and Member of the PIR Center Advisory Board.

This interview offers a comprehensive look into Dr. **Rauf's** early life in Pakistan, his university years, and his professional journey. It begins by reflecting on his childhood in a liberal and prosperous Rawalpindi and continues with his move to the United Kingdom to pursue a master's degree during Margaret Thatcher's era. The interview covers his academic focus on Soviet military interventions and nuclear issues, leading to his work at the Canadian Center for Arms Control and Disarmament. Dr. **Rauf** discusses the establishment of the Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security under Pierre Elliott Trudeau, emphasizing its role in addressing Cold War nuclear tensions. Additionally, he shares his experiences in nuclear diplomacy with the IAEA, handling politically sensitive issues like North Korea and Iran, and highlights the vital role of think tanks like PIR Center in nurturing future experts and maintaining dialogue during geopolitical tensions.



Dr. **Rauf** celebrated his birthday earlier this month. We sincerely congratulate him on his birthday and send him our warmest regards and best wishes from friendly Moscow.

The interview was conducted by Roman **Kalinin**, PIR Center Research Fellow.

«My mission is to say truth to power»

From civil skies to Military school and back

I had an enjoyable and privileged childhood growing up in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. In those days, Pakistan was a pretty prosperous country. It was more advanced than Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore. Also, it is very Liberal. So, I had many good experiences.

We were a tiny family, two parents and two children - me and my young sister. My father was a Chartered Structural Engineer. After training in England, he used to design and build cities and palaces and owned quite a bit of property in India. After 1947, when India and Pakistan became Independent, my parents were among those who were involved in the population shift and settled in Pakistan.

My mother was a homemaker, but she also went to University. Furthermore, she came first in the University among 10,000 students. So later, all the professors looked up to me and said, «Well, if you have such a brilliant mother, how come you are not coming first?»

When I was a young boy, I was interested in airplanes. I constructed models of airplanes made of balsa wood. Firstly, you should assemble them. And then you covered them with a particular type of wax paper. After you put the hardening agent in, the model is ready. It was even possible to buy a

small engine to fly these little planes out. Living in a spacious house, I could fly these little planes around the rooms.

The real planes were more captivating, for sure. Back in those days, there used to be the United Nations Military Observers Group between India and Pakistan on the borders of Kashmir.

Observers parked their airplanes in the rally at the airport. I got acquainted with some pilots who took me to the airport. Their Douglas DC 3 propeller planes had two radial piston engines, which must have been started once a week. So, a couple of times, pilots took me on a short flight just over the city. Keeping the plane in good condition would take 15 minutes or so.

Also, at that time, the first passenger planes were coming. This was the Boeing 707 - an incredibly famous jet plane. Pakistan International Airlines was the first airline in Asia to fly this. I had an opportunity with a friend to fly to Karachi, where his parents lived on this new jet. So, as a young boy, these are all quite exciting things.

I wanted to become a pilot, but my parents sent me to military school. This was tough physically because we were in a boarding school for five years. The competition was tough, and we had only 80 people in the group.

Every day, we dressed up in military uniforms. And we had military officers looking for us. The education was very qualitative, but I would not say I liked the military discipline. If somebody tries to order me around, I do not have a good reaction to it. So, that cured me of any interest in joining the military, whether it was the Air Force or some other branch.

After those five years, I returned to civil University for my first bachelor's degree. Only two people out of 80 did not go into the military. Those were my best friend and me, whose father happened to be a general in the army. All the 78 others started military careers. And I am still in contact with some of them. All have retired and living in various parts of the world.

War Studies, cultural experience and socialism during times of «Iron Lady»

After military school, I ran for a bachelor's degree at the University of Punjab. It is the biggest province in Pakistan, and the University has thousands of students. However, it is different from the campus of Moscow State University.

Each of the four provinces in the country has its own University. These universities are organized around the British Universities Oxford and Cambridge. The University is composed of many affiliated colleges. The University administration designs the syllabus and examination and issues the degrees. Hence, many colleges are all part of the University of the Punjab. The College that I went to was called Gordon College, which is one of the famous colleges there. At that time, I studied English Literature and Political Science. Those were my favorite subjects.

I did my Masters in England at King's College on War Studies after finishing my first bachelor's degree in Pakistan. Simultaneously, I earned a Bachelor of Honours degree in International Relations, Strategic Studies, and Economics at the London School of Economics.



I studied in London in an exciting political time. Those were the times of Margaret Thatcher, the «Iron Lady». The domestic situation in England was problematic due to many strikes by minors, postal workers, etc.

London School of Economics had a sort of socialist origin. There was a lot of sympathy for the workers, and the atmosphere was anticapitalist. Some of my closest friends became very radicalized. Some became Maoists, other Marxists. Even my friends from Pakistan from wealthy families who employed farm workers and miners started sharing socialist views. «When we go home, we will give our minors health care and helmets. We will give them a pension,» they said. But all that evaporated when they returned, and they took over their businesses from their parents. Eventually, they became greedy capitalists.

While studying at the London School of Economics, I became the editor of the London School of Economics newspaper and a magazine. The benefit of being editor of these two publications was that I would get free tickets to every film, every ballet, and every concert that opened in London. Thus, I had a vibrant cultural life, watching new movies, ballet, concerts, and dramas at no cost. This was a pleasant cultural experience.

Three years at the London School of Economics were the most rewarding in broadening one's horizons. Being in one of England's top three educational institutions, along with Oxford, Cambridge, and the capital city, gave me tremendous experience. Many influential people who came to London lectured at the London School of Economics. Among them are Prime Ministers, foreign ministers, and diplomats. Such an atmosphere enhanced our interest in international relations because we saw the practitioners coming to either deliver policy statements or speak with students. The professors were also very qualified. One learned more from this interaction than from textbooks.

I look at nonproliferation in a broader sense

I moved to Canada from London to study for my Ph.D. I had a fellowship there. At that time, the Ford Foundation in the United States gave a fellowship program called the Ford Foundation Fellowship in Dual Expertise. It no longer exists. However, at that time, if somebody had expertise in International Security and Arms Control, they would get funding to do their doctoral work on Soviet and East European Studies.

I was interested in the topic of the Soviet war in Afghanistan because it is a neighbor of Pakistan. Afghanistan shares an exceedingly long border, over 1,000 km. After the Soviet invasion there in December 1979, it became a natural subject of follow-up.



My King's College Master thesis was on the Indo-Pakistani Wars of 1965 and 1971. I was looking at military tactics, military organization, and military doctrines. So, the doctoral research continued that topic. But in this case, I was looking at the military organization of a nuclear superpower in two different theaters of operations. My Doctoral thesis was called «Patterns of Soviet Military Intervention.» I was looking at the organization of the Soviet Military forces, which invaded Afghanistan in 1979 and then left in 1989 when Gorbachev became the General Secretary. Soviet troops were also involved in some places in Africa. In Angola and so on, along with Cuban soldiers. Hence, I did a comparative analysis of the organization of the military units, the

command structure, the doctrine, and so on. I did research before the Internet age and had to go to the library to find books and journals. It was not that easy to find a lot of information at that time.

My interest in nonproliferation started after the May 1994 Indian nuclear explosion. Nuclear Issues are a part of International Security and Arms control. So, you asked me about my interest in nonproliferation, but I look at it in a broader sense. Nonproliferation is very much an American and Soviet term. It means other people getting nuclear weapons is wrong, but our nuclear weapons are good, which is still what they say. I look at it in the full context of disarmament and nonproliferation as a part of International Security, not nonproliferation per se.

My career in Nonproliferation and Disarmament issues started at the Canadian Center for Arms Control and Disarmament. It was an independent think tank established in Ottawa, the Canadian capital. The Center no longer exists, but I keep the signpost from its door.

The Canadian Department of External Affairs funded the organization. Nevertheless, we were completely independent. We were modeled like the Arms Control Association and the lines of PIR Center.

Canadian Center for Arms Control and Disarmament was small - about 8-9 researchers working impartially despite government funding. We were working on Canadian and international Arms Control and the government issues. The parliamentarians invited us to write briefs and give them briefings on global security matters. We made commentary in the newspapers and on television. Furthermore, we took policy stands on specific issues like the Strategic Defense Initiative, which was one version of the ballistic missile defense. We also did much work on Naval Arms Control and the Arctic.

Ottawa, Monterey and the IAEA

However, at one point, the Canadian government changed. This Center was established during the time of the father of the current Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. His father, Elliott Trudeau, was a famous Canadian politician and three-time Prime Minister of Canada.

Pierre Elliott Trudeau was overly concerned that the Reagan administration in Washington could initiate a nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union. Hence, he began what he called a «strategy of suffocation». It meant the suffocation of the nuclear arms race. With this idea, he went on a global tour. As a result, the Foreign Ministry of Canada was asked to support an independent think-tank. Thus, they created a government-funded think-tank, the Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security, reminiscent of the United States US Institute of Peace. It was 100% government-funded. Meanwhile, we were only 50% government-funded and raised our own money. After the change of government in 1995, both Centers lost their funding and ceased to exist.

I was with the Canadian Foreign Ministry for a short while, working on the indefinite Extension of the Nonproliferation Treaty in 1995.

In September 1995, I went to Monterey to take over the program from Ambassador Roland Timerbaev. While talking, I have a book about him behind my shoulder. In Monterey, Ambassador Timerbaev started a project called International Organizations and Nonproliferation, where we first met.

In 2001, Director General Mohamed ElBaradei hired me to be the head of the Geneva office of the IAEA. I actually joined the organization in March 2002. It was an exciting period.

Mohamed ElBaradei, whose book stands behind my other shoulder while we are talking, called that period «Diplomacy in Treacherous Times». He asked me to come to headquarters in Vienna to work in his office and be the Head of Verification and Security Policy and his Principal Advisor and Deputy on Nonproliferation and Disarmament matters. Hence, I transitioned from Monterey to the IAEA in March 2002.

At that period, The North Korean Nuclear file was already under process, as was the Iraq Nuclear file. The Iran Nuclear file started in August of 2002, and in December 2003, we had the Libya Nuclear file started. Later, in November 2007, we had Syria.



In addition to those issues, the Director General also made me responsible for the IAEA work on the Middle East Nuclear Weapon Free Zone and on establishing the IAEA low-enriched uranium reserve in Angarsk, Russia. IAEA additionally owned LEU bank in Öskemen or Ust-Kamenogorsk in Kazakhstan.

So, I had an exciting career at the IAEA in a position that put me at the right hand of the Director General. During my career in the IAEA, I devoted my efforts in IAEA to bringing NPT PrepCom to Vienna, setting up IAEA LEU reserves at the Siberian electrochemical Complex in Angarsk and Kazakhstan, and making a so-called uranium bank. I also spent two years, from 2002-2004, getting the Arabs and the Israelis to agree on the agenda of a forum on the Middle East Nuclear Weapons Free Zone, which was quite an achievement. However, the sides did not hold the forum for another several years until 2011.

I also faced many challenges, especially when countries politicized safeguards and verification issues. Many times, countries tried to influence or pressurize IAEA civil servants. IAEA is an independent, autonomous international organization. This means that working staff is not accountable to a particular state or their own. They need to be responsible for powerful countries that might pay more.

However, political issues are growing more challenging, starting from Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Libya's nuclear files. And relations between great powers deteriorated. At that time, some countries cited to influence international organizations to adopt policies or make statements that favor one side or another. I have a book here in the library written by Director General Mohamed ElBaradei called «Diplomacy in Treacherous Times» which tells part of the story of how it became challenging for independent technical organizations like the IAEA to maintain independence, authority, and credibility against powerful countries. The Director General has to be strong, independent, and perceived as independent. He also should empower the staff to maintain the highest ethical principles.

Why is Vienna a better place?

I have never missed the NPT Review conferences since 1987, including the last one in New York in August 2022. I also participated in the Preparatory Committee meeting for the next Review Conference here in Vienna in 2023. Back in the day, fortunately for me, the Director General of the IAEA appointed me as an Alternate Head of delegation. I am proud of my achievements in this position because even in 2005 when the Review Conference failed, I got the agreement that the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the next Review Conference would be held here in Vienna, not in New York.

The Nonproliferation Treaty has three pillars: Nuclear Disarmament, Nonproliferation, and Peaceful Uses of Nuclear energy. So, nonproliferation, verification, and peaceful uses have always been in Vienna, along with the IAEA. After the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organization came to Vienna in 1996, we also had one part of disarmament. Thus, it is logical to have NPT meetings here in Vienna. So, starting in 2007, the first session of the Preparatory Committee meeting for the next NPT Review Conference was held in Vienna.

I am also moving the Review Conference itself from New York to Vienna. Again, for the same reasons. Because New York has a highly political environment without expertise. People there have expertise in working on Security Council issues and various Committees of the General Assembly. There are six of them, and only the First Committee deals with Arms Control and Disarmament. Others relate to different issues. Hence, diplomats appointed to the UN Mission in New York need more expertise in NPT matters.

I consider having a Review Conference of the NPT for 20 working days in New York makes it very politicized. Last year, much time was spent discussing what was happening in Ukraine and the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. This question remains under one pillar of NPT, but it was raised politically throughout the conference. To a lesser extent, it was raised during Vienna PrepCom as well.

Here in Vienna, diplomats could come and see how verification works. They can go to the IAEA and see how it works from the inside. They can see how uranium and plutonium samples are stored and analyzed. They can visit the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organization to see how the international monitoring system works.

Siting in New York is all about politics. This business of NPT Conferences in New York started during the Cold War and had nothing to do with the NPT. European diplomats wanted to go to New York for cheap shopping compared to Geneva. New York diplomats wished to attend Geneva for a few meetings about culture, traveling, etc. However, globalization makes it possible to buy an iPhone for the same price in Vienna as in New York. So why would you spend thousands of dollars flying to New York and paying for costly hotel rooms? The cost of living in Vienna is much cheaper. Last year, while at the Review Conference, I stayed at one of the hotels near the UN. I do not want to name the hotel, but it is not a cheap place close to the UN Headquarters. So, in the middle of the night, mice came to my room. The receptionist told me to buzz off when I complained. You do not have that problem here in Vienna.

New York was an exciting city back then, but it is not anymore. Anyway, I do not want to run down any particular place, but this is one of my missions to continue to push to have NPT review conferences in Vienna.

A lot has changed since my first Review Conference in 1987. NPT meetings reflect the general international security situation. When big powers get along well, NPT meetings usually go in the same positive stream. At the same time, confrontation was reflected in the meetings as well.

There is a difference between NPT and United Nations meeting formats. NPT meetings are the meetings of State Parties to the Nonproliferation Treaty. Each member of the NPT has equal rights despite the size of its territory or nuclear arsenal. All states have the same vote. When smaller countries feel unfairly treated on other issues unrelated to the Treaty, NPT meetings are a field in which they can exercise their influence. Sometimes, they need to refrain from withholding their vote from the proposals of more considerable powers or impede reaching an agreement.

Despite the differences between Washington and Moscow during the Cold War, the two nuclear superpowers cooperated on nonproliferation issues. Neither side wanted more countries to get nuclear weapons. North Korea was an exception, which obtained the weapons in 2006.

Relations with Russia began to encounter more significant complexities during the Bush administration and later during the second Obama administration. It was reflected in the NPT meetings, where the atmosphere of cooperation and tolerance between the two delegations deteriorated. The climax point was during the Trump administration when Russia and the USA started attacking each other. It has never happened before. They used to attack each other on different issues and other forums, but on the NPT forum, they were more or less on the same page. The situation has deteriorated over the past few years, and cooperation between nuclear superpowers has broken.

Now, we see the rise of China accompanied by another competition called the confrontation of two near peers in the USA. The USA, thus, does not treat Russia or China as equal and regards them as challengers. Under the Obama administration, the USA was willing to accept the rise of China. However, starting from the Trump administration, the policy changed. The USA aims to prevent China from becoming number one or number two. Confrontation is in trade, politics, and Arms Control. Thus, it is generally believed that, among experts, we live in a more dangerous situation now.

I act as an independent person

After leaving the IAEA, I served in the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute for three years, leading the Disarmament and Arms Control program. Now, I am back in Vienna, and I act independently. I still attend NPT Conferences as a delegate to some friendly countries. I continue to give comments, lectures, and interviews.

And so, at this stage in my career, I have made it my mission to say truth to power. I point out the double standards and the hypocrisies that we see in international nuclear diplomacy. We will damage the entire system if we do not work on these issues in the principles matter. Some countries, through their police, have already damaged the international verification system of the IAEA by making it more challenging to fulfill verification procedures. Failure to address these issues in a principled manner may jeopardize the entire system. Some countries have already hindered the international verification system of the IAEA by imposing obstacles that impede the smooth execution of verification procedures and the IAEA mandate.

For instance, within the framework of the system, there is a fundamental principle stipulating that countries that are not in NPT should not receive the same benefits in peaceful nuclear cooperation as NPT non-nuclear states. All NPT State Parties, including the P5, unanimously agreed on this principle during the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. The commitment was further reaffirmed in 2000. However, one of the five permanent members of the Security Council made an exception for a country outside the NPT that had conducted nuclear tests. This exception allowed this country to access the same level of nuclear benefits as non-nuclear weapon states, such as Canada, Germany, Italy, Brazil, Argentina, and South Africa, which adhere to the NPT. This situation created a significant issue, allowing a non-NPT country to benefit from nuclear cooperation without being a signatory to the Treaty and without adhering to its Article VI obligations. Eventually, the IAEA was pressured to create a special verification regime for such a country, damaging the organization's credibility.

The most recent challenge arises in the realm of naval nuclear propulsion. In September 2021, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, as part of the AUKUS partnership, entered into an Agreement focused on equipping Australia with a fleet of 3-5 atomic submarines of the "Virginia" class. Under this Agreement, Australia is set to receive submarines equipped with nuclear propulsion



systems but without nuclear-armed missiles. This development has set a precedent that poses a challenge for the IAEA concerning the verification of nuclear fuel usage. I have dedicated several research works to explore and address this issue. In summary, my stance aligns with the viewpoint of Director General Mohamed ElBaradei, which emphasizes the importance of having uniform rules applicable to all parties involved. We cannot make exceptions for friendly countries nor create special rules for countries regarded as enemies. This is part of the

problem of the education and morality problem of leaders and diplomats in certain countries, which is unfortunately declining.

Taking a break from nuclear matters

I enjoy my extensive library, which predominantly contains nuclear-related books. To take a break from the complexities of nuclear issues, one of my favorite things to read is the poetry by the Arab philosopher Rumi and Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam. Those things help to clear my mind from nuclear weapons.

In spite of living in England during my Master's studies, I was not interested in English football, but there is another game called cricket, which is very much played in the former English colonies: India, Pakistan, Australia, New Zealand, and Sri Lanka. South Africa. We consider cricket the most intelligent game played with the bat and a ball. People do not press in funny costumes and tights like they do for baseball. Here you wear trousers. You are appropriately dressed.

A true test match can go on for five days. So, you can go to the cricket pitch and fall asleep, and the game will go on when you wake up. The score in cricket is hundreds of runs because each team has eleven players. The highest achievement for a batsman is to score 100 runs or more. Some do 200, even 300 runs individually, which means 500-600 for a team.

It would help to understand and enjoy the game if you grew up in this environment. Otherwise, the game will be dull because you must wait five days for a good result. The cricket field was near my house in Pakistan, so sometimes it was quite an exciting activity. I could walk there, return for lunch, and return with friends. It was a pleasure to watch the game, particularly in autumn and winter when it is not that cold, sitting out in a nice comfortable chair under the sun and sipping tea.

Another type of my hobbies is traveling. Being in the field of international security takes one to exciting places. I have been on a Northern trip above the Arctic Circle in Canada and traveled to Chile, South Africa, the bottom top of New Zealand, and many places in between. I have just returned from my second trip to Bishkek. The first one was in 1997. At that time, I traveled through all five Central Asian capitals with a draft of the Central Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone treaty. Ambassador George Bunn, a counterpart of Roland Timerbaev in negotiations on the Nonproliferation Treaty, had drafted that. In the 1990s, he retired and served at Stanford University near Monterey. The two of us made a draft, and I went to all five Capitals to negotiate it.

One of my cherished hobbies connected to traveling is exploring the world of gastronomy. I maintain a curated list of exceptional restaurants in different locales, where the cuisine is nothing short of exquisite. Sometimes, places are costly, but you only go to such places sometimes. So, I have a lot of good memories of my travels.

In lieu of a conclusion

I was lucky to work in the field that I studied in. Not everyone is, unfortunately, so fortunate or privileged. So, I am grateful for all the opportunities and those given to me over the past years. That is why it is essential to pass on this experience and knowledge to the younger generation and to try to help them «get breaks» in advancing their careers and expertise.

Research centers and think tanks are precious in this sense. I have had a pleasant experience dealing with colleagues from PIR Center. I want to remember which year I met Volodya Orlov, even before PIR Center was created. Then, since PIR Center was established, I had contact and cooperation with him. I even attended some PIR Center training sessions for young experts in the Moscow Oblast. Later, we worked on preserving the legacy of Ambassador Roland Timerbaev.



Maintaining such think tanks is crucial as they train the next generation of experts. These venues also serve as a platform for diplomats and practitioners, both current and retired, to engage in open discussions about these matters without the confines of their official government roles. However, perhaps the most vital role they play is in sparking interest and nurturing the skills of the upcoming generation. We do not have enough young experts working in this field. You can see that many young people are working on climate change issues, but not that many are working on Arms Control and Disarmament issues. A lot of the people in our field are pretty old, and we need to bring a new generation as the danger of nuclear war and nuclear weapons is still with us.

PIR Center and other centers and institutes like this have an essential function. It is vital that such institutes get proper funding and do not constantly have to struggle for funds, particularly in challenging times. Maintaining communication between countries and governments is of utmost importance, even when they hold differing views or find themselves in confrontations. Severing all contact is not a viable option. The practice of refusing to engage with someone solely based on their nationality is, in many ways, irrational. While it may be a government policy, it is an entirely different matter regarding interactions among students and researchers. Students, researchers, and academics need to remain in contact despite the policies of their respective governments. Unfortunately, in current times, we are witnessing a significant amount of polarization. As we approach a time reminiscent of the early 1950s, characterized by heightened confrontations and a reluctance towards dialogue, it becomes increasingly crucial for organizations like PIR Center to break free from this

pattern. PIR Center must nurture and sustain its relationships with partner institutes in other countries, particularly during challenging periods.

Even if traveling has become more difficult for political reasons like visas, we have platforms like Zoom, which is very climate-friendly because we do not consume carbon here. Thus, PIR Center and other institutions can play a significant role in bridging differences and bringing forward ideas that policymakers could take up to solve current problems.

Interview: Roman **Kalinin**

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Key words: Open Collar

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F4/SOR – 24/10/24