

'Nuking' U.S.-Pakistani relations

Ramtanu Maitra analyzes why the whole Indian subcontinent is at stake in the latest Capitol Hill foreign policy blunders.

On July 29, the U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations approved a recommendation to suspend fiscal year 1988 military and economic aid to Pakistan until Jan. 15, 1988. The aid is a part of a 1987-92 U.S. aid package to Pakistan of \$4.02 billion.

The subcommittee move is just one of the salvos and counter-salvos in the storm that has descended on the new aid package for Pakistan. The Symington Amendment, passed by the House in 1977, which prohibits U.S. aid to nations with nuclear technology programs that refuse to submit to the London Club's "international safeguards" convention, will expire on Sept. 30. In 1981, that amendment was waived, despite heavy pressure from the "non-proliferation" lobby, enabling Pakistan to receive a five-year \$3.2 billion economic and military aid package, a move that will have to be repeated next month under even less favorable circumstances.

The stage for this critical battle over the U.S.-Pakistani relationship—and the overriding strategic issues that hinge on it—was set by the recent exposé of a Pakistani trying to smuggle specialty steel, which can be used for uranium enrichment equipment, from the United States to Pakistan. This activated a gamut of congressmen and senators who are ready to put the aid package on the chopping block.

Ostensibly, the tough line adopted by the House subcommittee on Pakistan is to send a clear-cut message that the United States will not "encourage" its allies to develop nuclear weapons. In reality, as the sordid history of the vaunted Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and related anti-nuclear legislation documents, the pressure will only help to weaken the ally in question and its ties with the United States. Particularly so in the case of Pakistan—a nation which is confronting more than 120,000 Soviet soldiers across the border in Afghanistan and a growing militant Shia fundamentalist movement manipulated from across the border in Ayatollah Khomeini's Iran.

It is not just Pakistan that is at stake, but the subcontinent as a whole, with its large Muslim population and numerous pockets of Shia majorities. Pakistan has acted as a buffer for the entire region—including India—preventing both Khom-

eini's "Islamic Revolution" and the Soviets from penetrating deeper.

The geographical location of Pakistan and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, as well as the Khomeini takeover of Iran in 1979, have made the country a target for destabilization. While the Soviets and Iranians have been actively working inside Pakistan to whip up an anti-American movement, a kind of "grand alliance" against Pakistan has emerged in the United States that brings together the Israeli lobby, the anti-nuclear lobby, the Soviet lobby, and Eastern Establishment, along with the State Department's geopoliticians. They have seized the non-proliferation club to try to batter and control Islamabad.

A strange coincidence

On July 10, Arshad Z. Pervez, a Canadian businessman of Pakistani origin, was arrested. Pervez had been indicted by a U.S. grand jury in Philadelphia on a charge of trying to illegally export 25 tons of maraging steel from a Reading, Pennsylvania-based steel company to Pakistan. The steel was scheduled to be shipped to one retired Brig. Gen. Inam ul-Huq, who runs an import-export company in Lahore, Pakistan. The brigadier general, who has also been indicted by the grand jury, has "disappeared." The Pakistan government has vehemently insisted that it had nothing to do with the alleged crimes. Unofficially, many Pakistani sources state their conviction that the incident was a "setup" from beginning to end.

There is no doubt that Pakistan has been trying to develop the uranium enrichment facility that is a prerequisite for a weapons program—as well as an essential part of a fully independent program for light-water nuclear power reactor development. One leading Pakistani nuclear scientist, Abdul Qadir Khan, has said on more than one occasion that Pakistan has developed capabilities to make nuclear bombs, although the official Pakistani government policy is to refute such statements. Be that as it may, whether Pakistan has developed the bomb-making capability or not, there is no doubt more to the Pervez incident than meets the eye.

The Pakistani government has no reason to buy specialty

steel from the United States, when it is well known that all potential exporters are under quiet surveillance, at a time when the fiscal year 1988 aid package is in the House and the expiration of the Symington Amendment waiver is close at hand. Even if the Pakistani nuclear program needs 25 tons of maraging steel, that the government would involve itself in such an explosive venture at this time can be virtually ruled out. The weapons program allegations have been a constant source of difficulties in the U.S.-Pakistan relationship, as the government is painfully aware.

There is more to it. In an apparently unrelated case, also in July, two Americans were indicted by U.S. Attorney David F. Levy in Sacramento, California for conspiring with a Hong Kong businessmen to export sophisticated electronic equipment, which includes oscilloscopes, to Pakistan between July 1982 and August 1983. According to experts, oscilloscopes can be used to analyze the high-explosive component of a bomb that triggers the nuclear detonation. It was reported that the oscilloscopes were manufactured by Tektronix Company, an Oregon-based firm.

This orchestrated resurfacing of the "Pakistan bomb" issue had the immediate intended effect of unleashing a new round of condemnations of U.S. support to Pakistan and a concerted effort to terminate it for good. Congressmen in the orbit of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, AIPAC (see page 54, for the story of how the money passes hands) and the broader "Project Democracy" mafia are now asking for Pakistan's pound of flesh and also the blood. The strongest criticism has come from Reps. Stephen Solarz (D-N.Y.), Mel Levin (D-Calif.)—both with strong ties to the "Israeli" lobby—and Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman R.I. Claiborne Pell (D-Pell, an aristocratic liberal Eastern Establishment spokesman in the Senate, issued a diatribe in the Aug. 5 *Washington Post* accusing the Pakistani government of spreading "lies" and demanding: "It is time to get tough with Pakistan."

By early August U.S. Undersecretary of State and Project Democracy asset Michael Armacost was in Islamabad demanding that Pakistan President Zia ul-Haq open up Pakistan's nuclear facilities to U.S. surveillance, a demand which was politely refused as a patent invasion of sovereignty. Pakistan was warned by the State Department that it faces a cutoff of economic and military aid over the arrest of Pervez. Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs Richard Murphy, whose former deputy, Arnold Raphael, has just been sent to Islamabad as the new U.S. ambassador, told the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on July 21 that the administration is committed to stopping the spread of nuclear weapons.

In particular, Murphy vowed, the administration is committed to enforcing the Solarz Amendment, a 1985 provision to cut off all aid to countries illegally importing "nuclear-related" material.

On the altar of Yalta

There is method in the madness, as columnists Evans and Novak have labored to point out recently. Secretary of State George Shultz, they report, is pushing a doctrine that links an INF arms accord with Moscow to settlement of "regional matters," especially Afghanistan—the Yalta format. Pakistan President Zia, the syndicated columnists imply, may be a bargaining chip in this process. Evans and Novak cite diplomatic sources for the story of the attempt to use a congressional resolution attacking Pakistan's nuclear program to blackmail President Zia into holding back arms to the Afghan Mujaheddin, to soften the Soviet position on a political settlement.

The implications of sabotaging Pakistan aid can also be seen in the Persian Gulf crisis, where current U.S. policy is a refreshing and important departure from the "New Yalta" pattern. Pulling the rug from under Pakistan is one way to destroy the Gulf policy, where Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger has successfully fought for a strategy that can effectively check Iranian and Soviet adventurism and simultaneously begin the process of restoring trust in the United States among countries of the region.

It is not difficult to visualize what will happen if the U.S. aid is cut off. Mushahid Hussain, former editor of the *Muslim*, a news daily published in Islamabad and a channel between President Zia and a faction of the Khomeini government, spelled it out in a recent *Washington Post* feature. In case of an aid cutoff, Hussain said, "Islamabad could hit back by making up with the Soviets on Afghanistan, moving closer to Iran and China and defending its security through a region-based foreign policy rather than a policy tied to the apron strings of a distant Godfather."

Such rumblings have also been heard in Islamabad. On July 26, the *Muslim* called into question the country's "controversial" foreign policy vis-à-vis Afghanistan and the Gulf. Commenting on the prospect of U.S. warships visiting the Karachi port when "hostilities between America and Iran may break out in the Gulf any time," the *Muslim* said, "This will contrast sharply with Iranian friendly gestures when Pakistan was involved in wars with India in 1965 and 1971. American friendship may be a great asset for the regime but nothing would make up for the 'strategic loss' that the country is likely to suffer if, in the process of maintaining a special relationship with, the U.S. Pakistan loses its equation with Iran."

"Mr. Junejo has ruled out any change in the Afghan policy," the *Muslim* laments. "It is apprehended that due to the 'American connection' Pakistan's Gulf policy may also lose direction."

Visitors to Pakistan report that the level of anti-American sentiment is already at an unusual high. Withdrawal of aid will certainly spark a replay of 1979, when militants took over the American embassy, at best.