

# Saudi role in Asia a concern for India

by Ramtanu Maitra

The recent South Asian “fact-finding” tour by U.S. Senate Majority Whip Alan Cranston (D-Calif.) will be remembered for his forthright condemnation of both Iran and Saudi Arabia for helping to foment trouble in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. On return from the subcontinent, Cranston, a member of both the Senate Foreign Relations and Intelligence Committees, held a press conference in Washington where he stated that he had been told by knowledgeable and reliable sources that Iran is sending arms into Kashmir, and that Saudi Arabia is supporting the Kashmiri separatists financially.

Senator Cranston’s statement may have been startling to listeners in Washington; here in Delhi what startled them was only the fact that an influential American said it aloud. For more than a decade, particularly since the petrodollars provided the Saudi Kingdom significant financial muscle, Indian authorities have expressed concern, if not alarm, over the huge inflow of foreign funds from Saudi Arabia to whet the appetite of Islamic fundamentalists in India.

## Saudi money finances fundamentalists

Saudi money first became a subject of discussion when a large number of Hindu “untouchables” in Meenakshipuram, Tamil Nadu, embraced Islam in 1984. It was pointed out at the time that oodles of Saudi Arabian money was involved in this mass conversion, and many Indians raised the question whether such a free flow of funds could be allowed in light of the hostility that it engenders between Hindu and Muslim communities.

In the early 1980s, New Delhi had to step in and call off a conference by the Jamaat-i-Islami group scheduled to be held in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, when it became known that the Saudis and Libyans were pouring in huge sums of money to make it an international Jamaat “jambo-ree,” and were planning to use the occasion to set up new assets in Kashmir under the guise of spreading the good word of the Holy Koran. The Jamaat-i-Islami is an orthodox, fundamentalist Sunni organization.

More recently, intelligence reports based on interrogation of the Kashmiri militants who have entered India across

the line of actual control in Kashmir, reveal that Afghan mujahideen leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a well-known Saudi asset within the bickering Afghan freedom-fighter groups, has sent some Afghan guerrillas to fight Indian security forces in the Kashmir Valley. According to one report, Afghan and Kashmiri militants may attempt a “final assault” around Aug. 15, India’s independence day.

## Saudis embrace Beijing

These reports, in conjunction with Cranston’s revelations paint a disturbing yet still incomplete picture of the Saudi role in the region. The picture is filled out when the growing military and diplomatic ties between the People’s Republic of China and Saudi Arabia are put under the spotlight. The latest news from Riyadh confirms earlier speculation that Saudi Arabia and China are now ready to establish diplomatic relations, perhaps as early as August.

The courting of Beijing by Riyadh began years ago. In late 1986, a senior-level trade team from Saudi Arabia visited China despite the fact that Riyadh enjoys full diplomatic relations with Taipei, the capital of the Republic of China. The trade team was received by then-Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang. Since then, a number of high-level trade and economic delegations have exchanged visits, and the Haj pilgrimage to Mecca by Chinese Muslims from Xinjiang and Ningxia provinces has shown a dramatic 600% increase during the last three years or so.

More ominous from India’s standpoint is the growing China-Saudi link-up on military hardware. Following the late-1987 visit of Prince Bandar bin-Sultan to Beijing—one of many such visits by the Saudi ambassador in Washington who is considered a key player in formulating the Saudi-China-U.S. axis—Saudi Arabia clinched the arms deal which brought Chinese intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) with a range of 2,000 kilometers into the Saudi arsenal. It has since been revealed that the Saudis had begun negotiating with China for supply of the missiles as far back as September 1985.

## Israel blesses China-Saudi ties

Obviously, China, which has close military links with Israel, had to clear the deal with Tel Aviv. In any case, there is precious little in official statements of the Israeli Foreign Office to indicate that Tel Aviv is unduly worried by the presence of the Chinese missiles in Saudi Arabia. Ostensibly, the Saudis are worried about the Iranian threat, especially since the capture of the “kabah” mosque, the sanctum sanctorum of Islam, by Shiite elements in the early 1980s.

It is evident that the relationship between China and Saudi Arabia is not a “one-shot deal.” Prince Bandar’s subsequent trips resulted in improvement of relations between the two countries generally. One such trip resulted in the exchange of resident trade missions. It is no coincidence that the prospect of establishment of full diplomatic relations between

## Priest in Ukraine is synonymous with martyr

*Legal recognition of the Ukrainian Catholic Church of Byzantine rite (suppressed by Stalin in 1946), religious freedom, the right to open seminaries and to send seminarians abroad to church universities, all in a spirit of fraternal collaboration with the Russian Orthodox Church—these were the key topics discussed at the Vatican during the meeting held on June 25-26 between the Pope, Catholic bishops from Ukraine, and several sector heads of the Roman Curia.*

*Msgr. Sofron Dmyterko, 73-year-old bishop of the vast Eparchy of Ivano-Frankivsk, was jailed 1944-64 and 1973-75. He was interviewed in Rome by Maria Cristina Fiocchi.*

**EIR:** For the first time after half a century, the Ukrainian bishops have been able to visit the Holy Father. How did you find this encounter?

**Dmyterko:** It was very moving. The Pope wanted to talk with each of us individually, to know the history of our ordinations, to confirm our consecrations, to hear about the bishops who died in concentration camps, and know where they were buried. He showed fatherly love toward us; I would say he was moved but also happy. The meeting with the Pontiff took about an hour and a half. Then we went into the Synod hall to discuss the problems of our church.

**EIR:** How many Ukrainian bishops were consecrated clandestinely?

**Dmyterko:** Beyond the ten who came here to Rome, there may be a few more, but I don't know. There's no reason not to come forward.

**EIR:** There is talk of constituting a Catholic Patriarchate.

**Dmyterko:** For the moment we are awaiting the recognition of our church. But there is no doubt that we have the right to a Patriarchate. The Pope is not opposed, but all the conditions have to exist. It may take a few years.

**EIR:** You have been persecuted, and suffered in silence without ever giving in. What does it mean to live your priesthood in prison? to be a clandestine bishop?

**Dmyterko:** In 1946 our bishops, priests, and nuns were all sent to Siberia, to prison, or into exile. I, too, was arrested and put in prison, condemned to hard labor.

Then in 1973 I was arrested again. The Communists had found two homilies written for the mass: They judged them as propaganda against the system and put me in jail. I was together with 1,200 prisoners, who were all common criminals, assassins. At first they did not know I was a priest, then they saw me praying. Some of them started to respect me. Others began to hate me and wanted to kill me.

The conditions in jail were terrible, inhuman. The food was wretched, water was lacking, hygiene was terrible. Most of the prisoners were young and hungry. One day one of them got so hungry he stole a piece of bread, and the others discovered it and treated him so harshly that later he was found hanged. His name was Peter Drost, and his only crime was that he was hungry.

Sometimes I could celebrate mass in secret. One believer, a devout Catholic, brought me consecrated bread; they discovered him and accused him of being a clandestine priest, which was not true, and wanted to arrest him. All I could do was pray. I had a rosary, which they allowed me to keep, though every once in a while they threatened to take it away. I prayed for my jailers, and also for those poor brutalized people.

**EIR:** Are you happy to be going home? What will you tell your people?

**Dmyterko:** To keep their hopes up. I will say that the Pope is with us, he loves us, and he has confidence in us.

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the two countries emerged at the time Prince Bandar was enjoying Chinese hospitality with Prime Minister Li Peng and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen in Beijing.

In August 1989, Tawfig Khalid al-Madar, the first Saudi Arabian commercial representative, took up his post in Beijing. In December, a high-level Chinese delegation led by Zheng Hongye, president of the International Chamber of Commerce of China, visited Riyadh. Its 13 members were officials from the textiles, mineral, construction, chemical, hardware, light industries, and machinery sections of China's foreign trade department. Those aware of China's deceptive

categorization of its various ministries will have no difficulty in recognizing, in the last four sections, euphemisms for military hardware production.

These developments cannot make India feel comfortable. China has long been involved in instigating, training, and financing armed guerrillas within Indian territory for the purpose of creating chaos and destabilization. It has paid scant respect to India's concern about its own security. China's zealous courting of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, using both the Indian bogeyman and cheap Chinese armaments as bait, is a deliberate provocation of India.