

should produce ground-to-ground missiles. All Iranians support the production of these missiles; furthermore, there is no internal opposition with regard to Iran's nuclear ambitions." But, Schiff stressed that there is a debate on Iran's policy toward resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a debate that had not existed before. He further reported on an Iranian seminar on "Palestine From the Iranian Perspective," where Mohammed Raja Thajikh, an adviser to President Seyyed Mohammed Khatami, said that Iran must "operate here within a neutral context, capable of preventing a clash between ideology and national interests. The Palestinian issue must be deprived of its religious rubric so that it can be examined from a *realpolitik* standpoint suited to our policies." Schiff pointed out that Thajikh was highly critical of suicide bombings.

Schiff is signalling that some leading Israeli military and intelligence circles see the grave dangers of Sharon's schemes to transform the current war of words between Iran and Israel, into covert military operations that could lead to a real war.

The Israeli-Iranians

Exactly how Israel gets "weapons and intelligence" to the MKO might seem a bit of a mystery, but Sharon has his own "Iranian extremists," who are well equipped for the task. On top of this list is Israeli Defense Forces Chief of Staff Shaul Mofaz, who was born in Iran. Appointed chief of staff almost four years ago by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, he has been the major force in the military implementing Sharon's hard-line policies, and was the main mover behind the *Karine A* affair.

Another Israeli Iranian is infamous arms dealer and former Mossad agent Ya'akov Nimrodi. Also born in Iran, Nimrodi in the 1970s helped train the Savak, the late Shah of Iran's notorious secret service. An old crony of Sharon's, he became one of Israel's business tycoons by selling millions of dollars worth of weapons to Iran during the Iran-Iraq War. He gained unwelcome attention as one of U.S. National Security Council aide Lt. Col. Oliver North's chief arms suppliers, delivering weapons to the Nicaraguan Contras in the 1980s.

The MKO, despite its sponsorship by Iraq, has often been accused of cooperating with the Mossad. In addition to conducting cross-border raids into Iran from its military bases in Iraq, the MKO has claimed responsibility for assassinating Iranian officials. The most spectacular were the assassination of Army Deputy Chief of Staff Ali Sayyad-Shirazi in 1999 and former Justice Minister Assadollah Lajevardi in 1998. Despite being on the State Department's list of terrorist organizations, its operatives continue to function from the United States, Great Britain, and France.

The aim of Sharon's support for the MKO is not to bring this rag-tag organization to power in Iran, but to use it as a provocateur to ensure that moderate forces continue to be isolated, if not crushed. A moderate Iran, in Sharon's crazed view, is as "dangerous" as a moderate Palestinian Authority.

India Contemplates 'Limited War' To Stop Cross-Border Terrorism

by Ramtanu Maitra

Despite brisk diplomatic efforts by world leaders, the India-Pakistan border remains highly tense and there is a growing realization around the world, that India's resolve to stop the terrorism coming across the border from Pakistan may lead to war. Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes, who undertook a Jan. 17-20 trip to the United States, made the Indian objective clear, in a recent interview with the *New York Times*. He said that if Pakistan does not stop sending terrorists into the Indian-held part of Kashmir, India will be left with no choice but to go to war. Fernandes and India's top military brass have said recently that New Delhi is now fully prepared to meet the nuclear threat from Pakistan.

On Jan. 12, Pakistan President Gen. Pervez Musharraf delivered a very important address to the nation, laying down a hard-line approach for future dealings with the extremists and militants. He banned the Jaish-e-Mohammad and the Lashkar-e-Toiba—the two groups India had claimed were behind the terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament on Dec. 13, 2001. He also banned three other groups involved in sectarian killings within Pakistan. Prior to the speech, about 300 militants were arrested—although all were from Karachi, while observers point out, that the epicenter of terrorism that affects the Indian-held part of Kashmir is in Lahore and other parts of Punjab.

As one would expect, President Musharraf's speech was strongly disliked by the banned groups. But resentment was also expressed by a number of Arab countries, because of what they view as Pakistan abandoning its role as an Islamic state. On Jan. 16, the day U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell landed in Islamabad, a fire destroyed a 16-story government building in Pakistan's capital. According to the national daily *The Nation*, Pakistan's Interior Ministry kept its confidential records on religious and militant organizations in an office in that building. The records of recently banned religious organizations and *jihadi* outfits were also said to be there. There has been no official reason given why the building, along with all crucial documents, burned down.

Nonetheless, on the ground, many militants and extremists were taken in and screened. Their offices have been closed, and they have been told that Islamabad will not allow

them to re-start their organizations under new names. The bank accounts of these groups were reportedly frozen as well.

A Step in the Right Direction

These moves by Islamabad, belated as they were, have been widely welcomed around the world. But to many observers, including some in Pakistan, President Musharraf made no effort in his speech to resolve any of the problems that dog the Kashmir issue. To the chagrin of New Delhi, he kept the “terrorism issue” separate from the complaints lodged by India.

President Musharraf made it clear that these actions against the militants will not lead to any concessions to India on Kashmir, because “Kashmir is in our blood.” He told Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee bluntly, that if there were to be peace and harmony in South Asia, “The Kashmir dispute will have to be resolved peacefully through a dialogue on the basis of the aspirations of the Kashmiri people.” At the same time, the Pakistani President appealed to the world community, especially to the United States, to play an active role in resolving the Kashmir dispute for the sake of peace and harmony in the region. President Musharraf also turned down the Indian request to hand over 20 terrorists who had allegedly committed terrorist acts within India. He said that Pakistani nationals on the list would not be handed over; and as for all others, India would have to produce adequate proof. Pakistan, however, had allowed its citizen, Mir Aimal Kansi, who had been involved in the Jan. 25, 1993 shoot-out at CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, to be picked up from Punjab and tried in the United States.

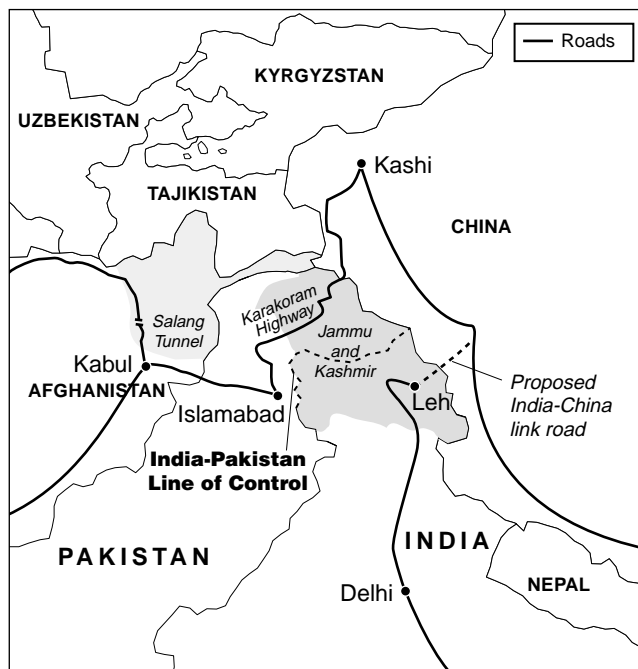
None of these formulations pleased New Delhi. India is allergic to any reference to a resolution of the Kashmir issue which calls for a dialogue “on the basis of aspirations of the Kashmiri people.” New Delhi considers this formulation tantamount to allowing a separate Kashmiri state, which, India claims, was not envisaged in the 1948 UN Resolution on Kashmir. India also believes that this is another Islamabad ploy to get the disputed issue into the hands of those who would like to see this strategically located area become a dependent, independent nation.

India is also adamantly opposed to any third-party involvement in the resolution of the Kashmir conflict. But, as some Indian experts point out, the situation is getting murkier. Writing for the daily *The Hindu*, C. Raja Mohan called the stand-off between India and Pakistan “the return of the Anglo-Saxons to the subcontinent.” Washington and London have already expressed their concern about a potential nuclear war between India and Pakistan, and want to mediate a dialogue. It is clear that Musharraf, in his Jan. 12 speech, had put the focus back on Kashmir. It is evident to India that the Anglo-Americans will keep a very close eye on India’s human rights record from now on, and will push for mediation to resolve the Kashmir issue.

But within India, a strong lobby of hard-liners, who have

FIGURE 1

The Afghanistan and Jammu and Kashmir Areas of Conflict



many adherents in the political and non-political arenas, would rather go to war with Pakistan than allow the Anglo-Saxons to again meddle in the Kashmir issue. Indian Home Minister L.K. Advani, who is in this category, was in Washington on Jan. 9-10 and met with President George Bush, Secretary of State Powell, and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice. He told them that while India likes President Musharraf’s stern position against the extremists and terrorists, it will watch what President Musharraf does on the ground.

India’s Tough Stance

Indian Defense Minister Fernandes is another one who is unmoved by the accolades that Western nations have heaped on President Musharraf’s tough anti-terrorist posture. Addressing foreign correspondents in New Delhi prior to his departure for Washington, Fernandes said that the Indian mobilization of 700,000 Armed Forces troops along the India-Pakistan border is complete, and any de-escalation will take place “only after cross-border terrorism is effectively stopped.” He also made it clear that India wants to settle outstanding disputes with Pakistan through peaceful bilateral negotiations, but if that fails, India “would explore other options.”

Fernandes said that New Delhi would give President Musharraf time to translate his announcement into effective

action to fight terrorism on the ground. Asserting that the Indian people are “fed up” with terrorist activities sponsored from across the border, Fernandes declared that the government’s resolve is “to end for all time cross-border terrorism.”

Earlier, Indian Army Chief of Staff Gen. S. Padmanabhan, admitting the existence of a highly precarious situation along the border, where almost a million troops have been amassed by both nations, said at a press conference that India is “ready for anything” and “there is scope for a limited conventional war.” “When two countries mobilize their forces and place them on the border, it is not normal. The situation can be comfortably described as serious,” he said.

“To say that there is a scope for a limited conventional war is a truism. Yes, it is there, but it all depends on the circumstances,” he said. He added that some terrorist training camps in Pakistan-held Kashmir are “within India’s reach” if it wants to strike. “When two forces are opposite each other, you are close to an actual war,” he said. But, he also said that the Army would not start a war through its actions on the border. “It is governments that have to set about the business of war,” he said.

Diplomatic Activities

Those hard-line statements by Indian authorities have triggered brisk diplomatic activities. President Bush has been on the phone with both President Musharraf and Prime Minister Vajpayee. Secretary of State Powell talked to many top Indian and Pakistani officials before heading for Islamabad on Jan. 15. Other important U.S. officials, including Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, will be in India soon.

China, meanwhile, has maintained a neutral position, demanding that both sides start working toward de-escalating the crisis. Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji, who made a state visit to India on Jan. 12-17, welcomed President Musharraf’s speech and said that China opposes terrorism in all its forms.

But, Moscow, a close ally of New Delhi, has taken more cautious note of President Musharraf’s speech and his subsequent acts. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Losyukov, in a meeting with his Pakistani counterpart, Aziz Khan, on Jan. 15, said that President Musharraf should follow up on promises to crack down on militants in that country to ease tensions with India. According to a Russian Foreign Ministry report, the minister said, “Moscow expects Islamabad to put into effect measures to stop the activities of the extremist organizations acting from territory controlled by Pakistan.” Earlier, Russian Ambassador to India Alexander Kadakin likened international terrorism to a “cancer.” He said in a statement issued in New Delhi that banning the cancer does not work. “If the tumor is incurable, which is the case, it can be removed only through surgery.”

Washington, on the other hand, is deeply involved in dealing with what Kadakin refers to as “cancer.” The United States has received a significant amount of help from Islamabad,

using four Pakistani airports as bases and placing troops along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in the ongoing Afghan war to clean out the Taliban—the now-ousted ruling power in Afghanistan (1996-2001) jointly created by the Americans and the Pakistanis. However, the outcome of the Afghan war indicates that Washington has not yet attained its objectives. The United States would very much like to deliver up the Arab terrorist Osama bin Laden, alive or dead, along with Taliban chief Mullah Mohammad Omar, preferably alive, to the American people as “revenge” for the Sept. 11 attacks.

It is widely acknowledged, although many rumors are flying, that both bin Laden and Omar have melted away inside Pakistan, and that without Islamabad’s help, these two fugitives will remain elusive. Washington is also aware that to demand eradication of all terrorists from Pakistan, including those whom Islamabad considers to be Kashmir liberation fighters, will make it doubly difficult for President Musharraf to hand over either bin Laden or Omar. In addition, any war between India and Pakistan, a limited conventional war or an exchange of nuclear weapons, disturbs the U.S. agenda. And a powerful faction in the United States is pushing to invade Somalia, Yemen, and Iraq to further its “war against terrorism.”

New Delhi, meanwhile, considers the present situation a golden opportunity to pressure Washington, in particular, to force Pakistan to give up cross-border terrorism. Advani told Indian reporters that the United States understands India’s concerns, and that there was no demurring voice during his talks with the American leaders. “Washington did not contest even a word of what New Delhi stated,” the Indian Home Minister said.

On the other hand, New Delhi does not believe that President Musharraf, left on his own, will ever lift a finger to stop cross-border terrorism. New Delhi concluded that the situation can be dealt with in two ways. First, by maximizing pressure on the Americans to force Pakistan to do the job; or, to go for a war to humiliate the Pakistani Army. The second option is not really an option, and it would not prevent cross-border terrorism in the short term. But some in New Delhi believe that yet another humiliation of the Pakistan Army, as in 1971, would force the Pakistani elite to change its views and settle on what should be a mutually beneficial relationship with India.

It is nonetheless evident that India will give President Musharraf some time before it decides to launch a limited conventional war. As one former Indian National Security Agency member pointed out, President Musharraf has displayed immense courage and taken very grave risks to his own life and regime by banning the terrorist outfits. His first and foremost priority has to be to consolidate himself against all domestic threats. He needs time for that. It is only after that, that he would be in a position to engage India or the international community on other issues, including Kashmir, the official said.