

Utopians Bringing On 'War of Miscalculation' in South Asia

by Mary Burdman

Warnings of the danger of war, and potentially nuclear war, between India and Pakistan, each one starker than the last, are emerging daily from Washington as of mid-May. There is real danger of conflict between these two nations, but the nuclear dimension is very much a Washington obsession, being used to exert pressure. It is reported from the Subcontinent that the Pakistani nuclear capability was actually taken down months ago—something the United States had warned would have to be done since the “war on terrorism” moved into the region in October. China also reportedly acted to neutralize Pakistan’s nuclear option. The war drive is *not* emerging out of South Asia; it is being generated by the ever-widening operations in *Central and South Asia*, of the “perpetual war” faction dominating U.S. policy.

Since Sept. 11, Washington, with its British ally, has launched a highly explosive conflict of “each against all” in southern Eurasia, home of over 1.2 billion people. The Afghanistan war was only the first move. This was to be the excuse for setting up a string of new military bases of the United States and its allies, in Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, and other countries—which encircle not only China, but also India itself.

Washington is out to achieve what Donald Rumsfeld’s Pentagon calls “full spectrum dominance,” through “high-tech” warfare, geopolitical balancing acts, and “deploying forward.” The Pentagon’s *Quadrennial Defense Review*, published on Sept. 30, 2001—but written before Sept. 11—fixates on what it claims is “a broad arc of instability that stretches from the Middle East to Northeast Asia.” This is Zbigniew Brzezinski, 25 years on.

In reality, the “perpetual war” crowd has generated the instability. Since the attack on the Indian Parliament last Dec. 13, tensions along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir, between India and Pakistan, have been at a maximum, and both countries’ armies on full alert. The six-year-old civil conflict in Nepal, strategically located between India and

China, has suddenly escalated; now the militant attacks in India have become the worst since the India-Pakistan “Kargil war” of 1999.

“Clash of Civilizations” efforts to wreck Eurasian cooperation go back to December 1998. Then-Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov had publicly proposed creating a Russia-India-China “strategic triangle” of cooperation. Response was muted, at first, from both India and China, but, as the potential grew, the geopoliticians barged in. In September 2000, Washington’s radical, Mont Pelerinite Cato Institute, broadcast its intentions to target India as America’s regional subordinate, and wreck the “strategic triangle” (see box).

But this unappetizing seduction has not been successful. There was renewed discussion of the “strategic triangle” in recent months, including the potential invitation to India to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, of Russia, China, and four Central Asian Republics, at the SCO’s June summit in St. Petersburg.

Cold Shoulder to Rocca

More important, Washington’s balancing act in South Asia has failed, triggering instability. The U.S. “diktat” to Pakistan—much touted in India—that the government of Pervez Musharraf must curb Pakistani militant infiltration across the Line of Control, and clean up the militant groups which India holds responsible for the assault on its Parliament, has had no result, and is now considered by many in Delhi to have been a hoax. Washington extracted these promises from Islamabad, so that it could use its territory and facilities to bomb Afghanistan—and move further into Eurasia. Pakistan now swarms with U.S. and allied military bases, special forces, and FBI agents.

On May 14, just as U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Christina Rocca arrived in India on her third visit to the Subcontinent in as many months, a terrorist attack in Jammu killed 32 people and injured some 50 more.

The timing of the attack was not lost on New Delhi, which made clear to Rocca that things had gone too far. As the *Delhi Business Standard* reported on May 16: "She came. She saw. But when she wanted to conquer, she found no one would meet her!" External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh met Rocca for barely 15 minutes at the Parliament (not at his office); the Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Brajesh Mishra was "out of town"—despite holding meetings at the Prime Minister's office; Defense Minister George Fernandes was in Jammu; while Home Minister L.K. Advani was preoccupied at the Parliament. Rocca did have a "chat" with Congress Party opposition leader Sonia Gandhi in the evening, then flew on to the Pakistani capital, Islamabad.

The United States is, however, upping the ante. The next deployment to South Asia will likely be a real heavyweight—Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, a leader of the Bush Administration's "perpetual war" faction.

Rocca had been dispatched to "defuse" tensions which

U.S. operations in the region are constantly fanning, including by repeatedly harping on the threat of nuclear conflict. Exemplary was the May 10 proclamation in the *Washington Post* by David Ignatius, that "the Indian Subcontinent is the only part of the world where nuclear war today is a serious possibility. U.S. and European officials . . . warn that all the ingredients are in place for a disastrous chain of miscalculation on the order of August 1914, when over-armed European nations blundered into World War I. . . . A nuclear war between India and Pakistan would mean loss of life on a scale the world has never before seen." Similar articles appeared in other U.S. and British press, including the sudden revelation on May 12 of a report by Clinton Administration senior adviser Bruce Riedel. One Indian paper noted it reads more like a "film script than a foreign policy critique"—it claims that in 1999, during the Kargil war in Kashmir, the Pakistani military was "preparing its nuclear arsenal" for use against India.

The danger that a "war of miscalculation" could break out, arises from the *breadth* of the "anti-terror" operations in southern Eurasia. Even the Pentagon now has to admit that the Afghanistan conflict is going to be a long one. Taliban or area warlords' militants are making constant rocket attacks on U.S. and other military installations; surging opium production is enabling the warlords to re-arm. Pakistan itself is highly unstable. This country of 156 million people was transformed, after Sept. 11, from being the reviled chief ally of the Taliban, to the biggest U.S. military/intelligence outpost in the region. Despite giving a rubberstamp to President Musharraf's recent referendum (see article this issue), Washington is now loudly complaining that Pakistan is not giving enough military support to operations against anti-U.S. militants in Afghanistan, and is refusing to go after the al-Qaeda fighters who have allegedly moved into Pakistan.

The Musharraf government is on tenterhooks. Christina Rocca gave an interview to the Pakistan daily *The Nation*, informing Islamabad that the Bush Administration would keep a strict eye on the coming October elections, so that "real democracy" would be restored in Pakistan. "America is taking a lot of interest," she warned. Violence is also escalating rapidly. On May 8, a highly professional car bomb—unlike the usual operations—killed at least 14 people, including 10 French naval advisers, in Karachi.

Conflict in Nepal

To the east, tensions are also high. The six-year civil war in Nepal, between self-proclaimed "Maoist" rebels and the monarchist government, is escalating fast. Close to 4,000 people have been killed in the conflict, and Nepal's tourism-dependent economy is shattered. The strategic significance of this situation is underestimated.

Impoverished Nepal lies between India and China, whose relations have been improving significantly. Nepal was, in the 1950s-60s, a staging ground for U.S. clandestine military operations into Tibet. Now, even as the fighting has worsened, with the government in Kathmandu staging helicopter and

Cato vs. South Asia Stability

EIR reported in September 2000, the Mont Pelerin Cato Institute's attack on the Russia-India-China "strategic triangle," proposing that India instead become a U.S. satrap for South and Central Asia. The attack by the Washington think-tank signalled a U.S. policy turn which has triggered growing instability and threat of war there. Cato author Victor Gobarev wrote, "The fundamental mistake made by U.S. leaders has been to underestimate India and its economic and military potential. How India uses its growing power can either enhance or seriously undermine U.S. interests. Mistakes in U.S. policy have contributed to India's drifting toward a Russia-India-China nexus aimed at preventing U.S. global domination. The likelihood of India's participation in an anti-U.S. alliance will depend on what New Delhi thinks about American geopolitical designs toward India and its national security interests."

The United States should accept India's world power status, as a nuclear power and permanent member of the UN Security Council, the Cato deception ran. "The main benefit to the United States of such a breakthrough in U.S.-Indian relations would be to prevent a dramatic adverse change in the current global geopolitical situation, which currently favors the United States. An assertive India could help stabilize the Persian Gulf and Central Asian regions. Even more important, India could become a strategic counterweight to China and a crucial part of a stable balance of power in both East Asia and South Asia."

other attacks on fortified rebel positions in western Nepal, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba paid a full week's visit to the United States during May 5-12, where he met George W. Bush, and then went to London for three days.

Washington has interests in Nepal—as does London, the old imperial power. In late April, at least 12 high-ranking U.S. military advisers toured contested areas of Nepal—the first time foreign military experts have been sent there. This followed Secretary of State Colin Powell's visit in January, when he promised “logistical support” to the Royal Nepali Army. Bush promised his “very happy” guest Deuba \$20 million in aid and military advice; U.S. interest is widely reported in setting up a military base, although Deuba is playing this down. The reaction by China would be very strong.

India's Quandary

India is in a difficult situation. It cannot, given the infiltration from the Pakistani side, end its “full alert” mobilization of 700,000 troops on the Line of Control. It also faces unceasing communal troubles in the state of Gujarat. These difficulties are only exacerbated by U.S. attentions. After decades of neglect, only at the very end of the second Clinton Administration, did Washington turn its eyes towards India. Under Bush, a steady stream of high-ranking visitors have proclaimed their interest, including Deputy Secretary of State Armitage, Defense Undersecretary Douglas Feith—Richard Perle's “alter ego” in the Bush Administration—and the State Department's Richard Haass. Finally, there was the pompous January visit of Henry Kissinger, who “invoked” the ideas of Lord Curzon, the British Viceroy who was the most extreme proponent of the “Forward School” ideology. Kissinger did not mention, that London abruptly fired Curzon in mid-term.

There is a murkier side to these delegates. Rocca herself was a Staff Operation Officer for the CIA Directorate of Operations from 1982-97—a highly tumultuous period in South Asia. She also authored Sen. Sam Brownback's “Silk Road Strategy Act” of 1999, which *excluded* India, China, and Russia from the Silk Road!

Armitage professed, in an interview with *The Hindu* in October 2001, that the U.S.-Pakistan policy on Afghanistan was in India's interests. On May 6, he gave another such interview, this time claiming that “cross-border infiltration [in Jammu and Kashmir] has gone down,” crediting “deliberate action,” and praising Musharraf's “intentions.” Delhi immediately contradicted these statements as to fact and substance.

Finally, at the U.S.-India Defense Cooperation Seminar held in Washington on May 13-14 and the following week, the U.S. side, led by Undersecretary Feith, stressed its desire to increase arms sales to India—except in critical areas of nuclear and missile technology. Feith did not hesitate to emphasize the “risk of war” between India and Pakistan.

However, New Delhi's cold reception of Rocca, should warn these imperial ideologues, that their operations may explode under their own feet.