

War-cries over the Asian subcontinent

by Ramtanu Maitra

Notwithstanding the high-profile peace missions to the Indian subcontinent by U.S. presidential emissary Robert Gates, German socialist leader Willy Brandt, and U.S. Congressman Stephen Solarz (D-N.Y.) during the last two weeks of May, tensions between India and Pakistan remain high. Now a new dimension, the specter of nuclear weapons, has emerged to add fuel to the crisis and, ironically enough, make war a distinct possibility.

Leaders of both nations deny that they have any intention to get involved in a war, and at the same time accuse each other of creating a "war psychosis." Tough words, bordering on threats, are being issued regularly from both capitals while the troops on either side of the border keep their guns trained on their opposite numbers.

Indeed, according to the Indian daily *The Hindu*, on May 22 India and Pakistan came close to armed hostilities along the border in Jammu and Kashmir. Reports indicate that the clashes were averted only when the Pakistani troops took "two steps back after advancing one step forward."

After this incident, on May 27 the *Sunday Times* of London printed a news item about Pakistani heavy trucks moving out of the highly secret Kahuta nuclear research establishment and proceeding toward military airfields. The same news item also referred to the existence of photographic evidence that Pakistan had equipped forward-based F-16s with special racks for carrying nuclear bombs, a story subsequently featured in the U.S. press also. It is an open secret that Pakistan has long been involved in producing bomb-grade enriched uranium at the Kahuta complex. But the story clearly implies that Pakistan's bombs are not only ready, but are being deployed to meet any eventuality.

A Washington plant?

The story prompted two different reactions in India. In the Indian parliament a senior opposition politician, perhaps to embarrass the government, demanded that civil defense facilities be built in key Indian cities lying within the range of Pakistan's F-16s. On the other side, a number of experts pooh-poohed the story, calling it a "plant" engineered by Washington to deter a surprise Indian attack.

Whatever purpose of the story may have had, if it was really a "plant," it has brought India face to face with the growing nuclear capability of Pakistan. It is generally assumed in New Delhi that Pakistan may have the capability

to put together a nuclear bomb, but that it will not cross the Rubicon and drop it on India. India, for its part, maintains that it would not initiate a nuclear strike since it would be a "betrayal of the human spirit." But, as Defense Minister Dr. Raja Ramanna, the former Atomic Energy Commission chairman and co-director of India's 1974 peaceful nuclear explosion, told Indian parliamentarians: If Pakistan poses a nuclear threat, India would "rise to the occasion." In other words, threats will be countered with threats and a nuclear attack with a retaliatory attack.

The warhawks in India—who have long believed that Pakistan is not yet a nuclear weapons state—got a boost from two recent observations made in the United States. On May 19 Sen. Daniel Moynihan (D-N.Y.) told the Senate that in case of a war with India, "the Pakistani forces would be defeated and destroyed." Second, as reported in the previously mentioned *Sunday Times* news item, in a recent briefing, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Colin Powell was informed of certain defeat for Pakistan in case of a war.

These two reports can be rightly construed as a message to the Pakistanis from Washington. In Pakistan, where Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto gave a rabble-rousing speech recently in Azad Kashmir, punctuated with cries of "*Goli, goli, goli, azadi, azadi, azadi!*" ("Bullet, bullet, bullet, freedom, freedom, freedom!"), apparently to inspire the Kashmiris against the Indian security forces, virtually the entire political spectrum—though each for different reasons—is involved in sloganeering and demanding a showdown with "infidel" India. The prime minister herself visited eight Islamic countries recently trying to secure assurances that they would come to Pakistan's rescue, in the form of arms and cash, in case of a war with India. Added to the official hype is the Pakistani media's relentless trumpeting of "atrocities" committed by the "bloodthirsty Hindus" of India.

Warhawks on the stir

But the Moynihan statement and Colin Powell story have had another effect. Coming on top of the near-civil war situation in Pakistan's Sindh province that has paralyzed the Bhutto government and put the army on the ascendency, and the assumption that Pakistan is not yet ready with nuclear bombs, these two reports have provided a favorable climate for the hawks in India to call for a preemptive strike on Pakistan. There are many telltale signs that the pressure on the government to listen to the hawks is mounting.

It is also evident that at least some in India wish to resolve the Kashmir problem by annexing the entire Kashmir, an idea strongly favored by the hawks. A letter to this effect appeared in the *Times of India* on May 28. Titled "Pak Banditry," and penned by a former Indian diplomat once posted in the United Nations, the letter argues for India's sovereignty over the entire Kashmir, and concludes that India's "legal right" to the whole of Kashmir has to be maintained. The former diplomat did not enlighten readers as to how this

South Asia's Achilles' heel

The source of terrorism on the Indian subcontinent is the arms-drugs smuggling nexus that has become entrenched in Pakistan since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and this, not Pakistani Premier Benazir Bhutto's instability, is the real stumbling block to peace, wrote Girilal Jain, former editor of the *Times of India*, in a weekly column recently.

This view, widely held among Indian government officials and other influentials but not often discussed in the media, echoes the observations made by Lyndon H. LaRouche more than a year ago in an interview from prison with Indian journalists. Indeed, Pakistan's earnings from narcotics are now put at \$18 billion annually—about 25% of the country's GNP and twice its annual budget—according to the Pakistani magazine *Newsline*. Most of the drug trade is linked to the Karachi-Peshawar axis.

This drugs-for-guns nexus is responsible for fueling the recent violent upsurge in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir and for sustaining the terrorist-secessionist

violence in India's Punjab state. Since 1980 India has become a major transshipment point for dope from the Golden Crescent areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

This same nexus has also contributed greatly to setting aflame the Pakistan province of Sindh, Prime Minister Bhutto's home state. The political battle between Sindhis and Mohajirs has been joined by Pathans and Punjabis and is fueled by guns and dope money. By some estimates there are more than 50,000 illegal Kalashnikov assault rifles circulating in Karachi. One report says they can be rented for \$45 per day. The city is bristling with gunmen and gang wars, and no longer governable.

Though no international media chose to report it and Bhutto herself declined to point it out, the ongoing rioting and disturbances in the city of Hyderabad that have already taken hundreds of lives began with a protest march by women with the Koran on their heads complaining of the acute shortage of wheat flour and water in the city. On May 22 the daily paper, *Dawn*, reported that hungry people were looting flour mills and grain and rice warehouses, and were being shot down by security forces. The city has been without water and electricity for days. Prime Minister Bhutto has bowed to IMF demands for vicious budget cuts and free market austerity measures.

“legal right” could be enforced.

Two things have given the hawks new momentum. First, there is the difficult situation that India faces in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. India claims stoutly that Pakistan has been aiding and abetting the Kashmiri secessionists for decades and has stepped up these operations lately. Whether or not the Pakistani involvement is as extensive and determined as India claims, the fact remains that the borders in Kashmir are extremely porous. Without an explicit change of heart in Pakistan, subversion from the other side cannot realistically be stopped. Suggestions have been made to intensify border patrols and mine the borders, but the cost and manpower involved is so large that it has not drawn any response from the Indian government yet.

It is also evident that there are not too many people left in the Kashmir valley who are willing to take on the terrorists on behalf of India. The movement for an independent Kashmir, rightly denounced by the Pakistani prime minister recently, has emerged as an active and central force, and it is apparent that the two nations have to put their best efforts together to blunt it. The independent Kashmir movement, spearheaded by the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) under Amanullah Khan, is based upon the old British design to balkanize India—the same way the Khalistanis in Punjab are pushing. Incidentally, the JKLF has its “brains” abroad, a fact which has become evident during Amanullah

Khan's recent sojourns in the United States and the Netherlands.

In order to deal with this cumbersome situation, the hawks are keen to “cut off Pakistani hands” to stop cross-border subversion. But beyond that, they have little to suggest. Meanwhile, most Indians agree that a war with Pakistan is not going to solve the smoldering Kashmir problem. The only solution to the Kashmir problem, which requires the full-fledged participation of both India and Pakistan, lies in making the present line of control in Kashmir a permanent boundary. But, so far, no such initiative has become visible in either India or Pakistan.

The second destabilizing factor, from which the hawks are trying to reap the maximum benefit, is the hush-hush nuclear weapons program undertaken by Pakistan. The exact status of Pakistan's nuclear bomb has been the focus of constant speculation, and the uncertainty on this matter has its own destabilizing effect under the present circumstances. If Pakistan has in fact already developed the capability, it should carry out a bomb test and lift the cloud of suspicion and gamesmanship that has gathered around it. In all likelihood, Washington would wrongly condemn such a test, but it could, ironically, blunt the talons of the warhawks and prevent a war in the region. Since Dr. Ramanna has promised that India would “rise to the occasion,” Pakistan will do well not to misread the signal, either.