

West takes aim at India's military

by Linda de Hoyos

India's existence as a regional military power in the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal has come under fire from certain factions in the West. Fears of Indian military "hegemonism" in the South Asia region come precisely at the point that Great Britain is attempting to make separatist agitation in Punjab and Kashmir an issue for the "international community" at the United Nations (see Aug. 23 *EIR*).

"India may be the next Iraq," stated a retired U.S. general, now ensconced at the Heritage Foundation, in an interview. "Why does India need a huge modern nuclear navy, a navy which is larger than anything in the area? I'll tell you why. They might want to attack Australia."

In addition to Pakistan, India's "traditional" enemy, this retiree also sees India as a threat to Japan. "That navy is good for threatening to cut Japan's oil lifeline. It's right astride the Japanese oil lifeline to the Mideast in the Indian Ocean. They would threaten [Japan]. 'You give us technology,' or whatever they want, on the terms they want, and if Japan doesn't do it, they threaten to cut the oil lifeline."

The general then exposed his underlying premise for this charge—the line of the Henry Kissinger 1974 National Security Council documents which state that the population growth of the underdeveloped countries is the biggest national security threat to the United States and its western allies. The general proceeded to explain: "Look at the map of the Indian Ocean. Then look at Australia. The problem is simple. There are going to be 1 billion Indians very soon, and Australia and that area is the only place they could possibly put 1 billion people. It is their vast population explosion. It is people, sheer numbers, which make India the most dangerous power in the world. They just need the land."

The view of India as a potential military enemy of the United States and allied countries erupted into public view in India at the end of March, when it was reported that a representative of General Dynamics had given a briefing to U.S. defense analysts at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, in which India was designated as the "target country." The idea was strenuously denied to Indian press by U.S. Rear Admiral Pendley, who said such a view "would indicate some sort of stark stupidity."

But the admiral did admit that there was speculation in

Washington as to whether New Delhi was moving toward a power projection navy with amphibious forces and strike carriers. "India really has not given a good reason for its naval development and where it is going," the admiral said.

As indicated by another general operating out of the Heritage Foundation, the separatist agitation against the Indian central government is seen as a positive development. "I'd favor a limited independence for all the nationalities. . . . That would also remove the threat of Indian military adventurism, which is a real threat. They have the bomb, you know." His colleague concurred: "India may break down into several different pieces. That is our only real policy option in the West."

IMF conditionalities

Pressures on the military are also coming from other, more powerful quarters. The International Monetary Fund, with whom India is negotiating for \$7 billion to alleviate its dire foreign exchange crisis, has made a 10% reduction in India's defense spending a condition for the loan. Military outlays above the "basic threshold of security can be designated an 'unproductive expenditure,'" the latest IMF study contends, as reported in the *Hindustan Times*.

The U.S. Congress has also denied some \$200 million in military assistance to India, until India agrees to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Given China's possession of nuclear weapons, India has no intention of doing so.

To underscore the general attitude toward India's existence as a regional power, India was conspicuously omitted from the list of invitees to a conference on Asian security held in May in Manila, Philippines. Organized by Philippines Foreign Minister Raul Manglapus, a man with close ties to Washington, the conference brought together the U.S., the Soviet Union, Japan, the People's Republic of China, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain, France, Germany, and all the Asean countries. India and Vietnam were not invited.

Within a limited scope, Washington is attempting to maintain military collaboration with India. But even this is suspect. One motivation is to ensure that if the Russian military again comes to the fore in the Soviet Union, that India does not become a military asset of a Russian thrust toward Asia.

Secondly, as the retired general at Heritage put it, the United States must play a "balance of power" game with India. "Remember what Britain did in the 1700s and 1800s?" the general asked. "We have to do that. They stood off to the side, and let France and Germany and the rest all rip each other up, and made their alliances to help that along and stay clear. 'Balance of power' they called it. That's what we have to do now. We have to stand clear, and let the European Community, China, India—these three huge power blocs—just deal with each other, and we try to balance it and keep one from coming out the top dog."