

Dualism of nuclear technology: The dark side

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ACCESSIBILITY of nuclear technology enhances the possibility of terrorist nuclear attacks. Nuclear proliferation has made it easier for the terrorist to possess deadly weapons, and international terrorism has made to make the whole nuclear deterrence issue irrelevant. The recent nuclear deal between US and India will facilitate the proliferation of nuclear weapons in South Asia where a large number of people are living in a state of poverty because nuclear technology has dual role, both good and bad.

Dual nature of technology

Technology is neutral when it is applied to enhance the chances of life and death. The more technology progresses, the greater its power is to not only improve life but also to devise ever more deadly methods of destroying it. This was illustrated by the terrorist attacks of 11 September, where 19 people used apparently benign technology to conduct death and destruction on two of the most prominent bastions of corporate and military might in the world, the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon. The real mystery is how one of the weakest states in the world can be behind a technological accomplishment that disgraced the most powerful state on the earth. This put forward the alarming question of how modern technology can eventually boost terrorist strength. The most significant aspect of the 11 September attacks is not the scope of the actual destruction, or the horrific number of casualties, but the awareness that the terrorist threat is much greater than anybody anticipated. This is due to two factors: one is that the loopholes in the world system which terrorists can exploit far exceed the measure taken so far to counter the threat; the second is that opportunities for terrorists to exploit innovations in technology for their own purpose have been

greatly underestimated.

Possible Strength of Terrorist groups through nuclear technology:

So far, terrorism's main field of action has been that of hijacking airliners. But the technological dimension is worth probing thoroughly, especially since the worst-case scenario of terrorists hijacking nuclear weapons can no longer be dismissed as a possibility. With the secrets of nuclear technology becoming more and more easily accessible, many countries are proliferating. These are the breeding grounds for nuclear terrorism.

True, technology introduces an ever greater amount of uncertainty as to the reliability of weapons of mass destruction in the hands of terrorists. But the rule seems to be that technological advances operate more in favour of terrorists than they do in favour of the anti-terrorist drive. This makes it all the more imperative for the anti-terrorist drive to focus on eradicating the root causes of terrorism through an overhaul of the entire world system rather than concentrating efforts exclusively on pursuing a specific group or groups of terrorists (Mohamed Sid-Ahmed: 2001).

Possible Nuclear Perils in South Asia

India and Pakistan share a fifty-year history of conflict and war. Major unresolved issues such as Kashmir remain. Further violent conflict and even war is distinctly possible. Many believe that it is very risky to the introduction of nuclear weapons into such a dangerous regional setting. So Indo-US nuclear deal makes the region more vulnerable.

It is difficult to construct a stable nuclear balance in South Asia. Numerous factors contributed to this concern. The nuclear forces on both sides may be small and vulnerable to pre-emptive or preventive attack. It is difficult to develop survivable command and control arrangements for nuclear forces.



Moreover, it is easy to mismanage nuclear relationships in ways that undermine stability, and the geographical proximity of India and Pakistan exacerbates the difficulty of creating a stable nuclear balance.

Any deployment of nuclear weapons raises the risk of accidental or unauthorized use. Several worries were paramount. First, new and unavoidably immature nuclear custodial systems may be especially vulnerable to accident or abuse. Second, fear of nuclear decapitation in South Asia may result in extensive pre-

delegation of nuclear launch authority, a practice that increases the risk of unauthorized use. There is an inherent tension between safety and stability; it is not possible to maximize both simultaneously. Third, the presence of nuclear weapons in countries with potential for domestic political instability is a matter of tension.

India and Pakistan may compete in the arms race within the limits of their means or, perhaps more likely, even beyond their means because of their nuclear capabilities. This "arms crawl" could hinder

economic development, undermine political stability, and harm relations between India and Pakistan. (Steven E. Miller 1999)

According to Ashis Nandy, one of the leading Indian social, cultural and political critic of, "Pakistan's lack of strategic depth along with New Delhi's nuclear and conventional superiority places strong pressure on Islamabad to adopt a doctrine of nuclear first use. A deployment will inevitably involve considerable decentralization of command and control move, which threatens to make it more accident-prone. As commanders at

the operational level work to prevent a decapitating attack of nuclear assets in the face of the intense crises, the chances for inaccurate decision making and unintended launch could arise. In the process of acquiring nuclear power you may not be dead physically, but you are already morally, socially and psychologically a corpse."

Implications of US-Indo Nuclear deal in South Asia

The 22nd July 2008 was the crucial day for the ruling Indian UPA Government as their Parliament (Lok Sabha) voted on a confidence motion in approving Indo-US nuclear deal. The Ruling Alliance won the motion but the fact that the nuclear debate would continue to remain is a controversial/divisive issue in the body politic of India.

The interesting fact to note is India's main opposition party- BJP and alliance - are also in favour of Indo-US Nuclear cooperation. It was during BJP's Government, the proposal for an Indo-US Nuclear Pact was first conceived by the two sides, though formally a mutual agreement was initiated during the ruling UPA Government in India (2004-5).

Ambassador (Retd) Mohammed Mohsin, former foreign Secretary, Bangladesh said that politically and diplomatically it is indeed a big achievement for India's ruling alliance in winning the parliamentary support to its policy. India is generally revered all over the world not only for its un-interrupted democratic governments but also for being the cradle for non-violence policy following Gandhian philosophy. But in the new millennium it seems India has opted to sacrifice its traditional Philosophy and opt for nuclear capacity both for weapons and energy, all these without signing the NPT. It is now to be seen if both the US and India can successfully conclude the deal before the Government changes in Washington.

It is interesting to mention, Pakistani Prime Minister, on the face of it, congratulated his Indian counterpart for the parliamentary victory. Similarly, it is possible that both the Russian Federation, a traditional ally of India, and China, for understandable diplomatic reasons, would not express any dissenting views, but for the time being would watch the further developments (though both of them are also major sources for uranium and nuclear technology).

Finally, the proposed Indo-US Nuclear Cooperation agreement is concluded; it would totally erode the meaning and value of the NPT. In other words, India would also rank with the five Big Nuclear Countries (as stipulated as pre-1967 Nuclear Powers in the NPT). Only time will tell what would be the situation of the other four Nuclear Powers (especially Russia or China may decide to conclude similar agreements with other non nuclear aspirant countries e.g. Iran, Israel, North Korea, Syria, Brazil and etc). All of these states expect to get aligned with the global economic benefits in relieving competitive demand in international oil markets; it will produce an economic bonanza in nuclear exports to India and other nuclear aspirant countries.

Nuclear wastes are difficult to dispose off. It is a matter of wonder how India would dispose off its increasing amount of nuclear wastes in near future without polluting the environment.

Dual stance of US

Bruce K Gagnon, coordinator of the US-based Global Network said that nuclear proliferation is dangerous. The US is telling Iran or North Korea against developing nuclear weapons. Even George Bush has described the weapons of mass destruction as evil. So it is wrong for the US to help any other country develop nuclear power because it would increase the risk of seeing development of nuclear weapons

proliferate and fall into new hands, which may trigger a nuclear arms race in South Asia.

India's traditional rival, Pakistan, indicated that it wanted a similar agreement. "Pakistan believes that we also have a claim, an expectation for international cooperation under safeguards for nuclear power generation," said Pakistani foreign ministry spokeswoman Tasnim Aslam. But the US declined to enter into a similar agreement with Pakistan, the other South Asian nuclear power. Obviously the US wishes to build up a strategic alliance with India, taking on board Japan, Israel and Australia (a major uranium supplying Asian country), mainly to build up a wall against China. Whatever may be the wishes of the US Power, the personal view of Ambassador (Retd) Mohammed Mohsin is it would remain a "pipe dream" for India to face up to China without taking on board the other South Asian countries, most of whom today enjoy and maintain close ties with China militarily, commercially as well as strategically. Needless to say India's policy of dealing with the neighbouring countries bilaterally and individually, while India professes multilateral relationship with the rest of the world.

Where to draw the line

There should be a limit on how far the United States will go to make friends. The world has had genuine success, under the NPT, persuading South Africa, Brazil, Argentina and Libya to give up their bomb-making programmes. It will be a harder sell in the future, knowing that the US has now winked at India's bomb, after winking at Israel's bomb. And it comes at a time of indisputable concern not only about proliferation, but also about the theft of nuclear materials, and terrorism. These are some of the major issues the world has to consider together collectively.

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US-Poland missile defence agreement: Implications

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ALTHOUGH after their first meeting in 2001, President Bush said the famous words that he had looked into the eyes of Putin and got "a sense of his soul." He subsequently pursued policies that Putin vigorously opposed. One of them is stationing elements of a missile defence system in Eastern Europe.

The 15 August signing of the preliminary agreement between the US and Poland to host part of Washington's controversial missile defence system on Polish soil, at the backdrop of the Russian-Georgian conflict, is seen by many observers to be at an inappropriate time. The US argues that the shield will prevent missile attacks by "rogue states", meaning Iran. Iran dismissed the claim and so did Russia.

The agreement will anger Russia, which is opposed to such missile defence system in Poland because Russia's argument is that the missile defence system in Poland threatens its own defences. Furthermore it claims the system upsets the regional security balance and could be used against itself. Moscow is now likely to target its own missiles at the Polish base.

This agreement has irritated Moscow and already Russia's Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, has cancelled his upcoming trip to Poland. Moscow does not want such an installation in a former Soviet bloc country.

At a news conference on 15th August, a senior Russian defence official Colonel General Anatoli Nogovitsyn suggested that Poland was making itself a target by agreeing to serve as host for the anti-missile system. Such an action "cannot go unpunished".

A curious timing of the agreement

The timing of the US-Polish agreement appears to be curious. Although it strengthens the commitment of the US in Poland, it angers Russia to a point where little room is left for the US-Russia relations to be back on track. The US needs Russia as Russia needs the US. The US needs Russia on Iran's nuclear ambition but if such worsening of relations continue between them, international peace and stability will be at a great risk.

The Secretary of State of the US Dr. Rice has been an expert on Soviet Union as she earned her Ph-D on the subject. She is fully aware that humiliation, marginalisation and ignoring Russia's vital interests will not pay political dividends for the US.

It is not understood why the Bush administration has been taking one step after another that angers Russia at the end of the administration. Furthermore, when the US is dealing with Russia on Georgia, the timing does not seem to be appropriate.

As for Poland, relations between Poland and Russia improved following the election of the government led by Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk late in 2007. Mr. Tusk even paid a visit to Moscow before Washington. It was believed that Poland under the Tusk government would not agree to install a missile defence system on its soil to annoy Russia.

Why change of policy in Poland?

It is noted that Russian relations with Poland has a long history, dating to the late Middle Ages, when the Kingdom of Poland and Grand Duchy of Muscovy struggled over control of their borderlands.

Over centuries, there have been several Polish-Russian wars, with Russians controlling much of Poland in the 19th century as well as in the 20th

century.

However, Polish-Russian relations have entered a new phase after the fall of communism in both countries around 1989-1993. Since then Polish-Russian relations have seen both improvement and deterioration, depending on various factors.

Russia and European Union need each other too. Europe gets one quarter of its requirement of oil and gas from Russia and Germany alone depends on Russia for 30% of its energy supplies. Russia is the EU's third biggest trading partner.

Likewise Russia depends on European market and technology. Half of all Russian exports go to the EU. Russia needs enormous investments to modify its pipelines and other infrastructure. Technology is abundantly available in Europe for Russia.

The European Commission estimates Russia will need to invest in excess of 700 billion euros (\$905 billion) into its energy sector between now and 2020. Furthermore, Russia's long-delayed effort to join the World Trade Organization could be realized through cooperation with the EU.

Last June, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana reportedly said: "The EU-Russia Summit will see the launch of negotiations for the new EU-Russia Agreement. In addition to EU-Russia relations, a number of international issues of common interest will also be discussed, in particular Iran and the Middle East, as well as the situation in Georgia and Moldova, and ongoing violence in Afghanistan".

Observers say Poland is a part of NATO and of the European Union. They do not understand why Poland is reshaping its foreign policy in terms of war and not peace and reconciliation. NATO will defend Poland in case of an attack and there appears to be no need to have a separate commitment of the US to protect Poland.

It appears that even now Poland perceives Russia as a bigger threat to its security than Iran. Poland believes that only the US can guarantee security for Poland. It is reported that under the agreement the US has declared it will come to Poland's assistance in the event of an attack from a third party. It has also promised to help modernise the Polish armed forces.

Crucially for Poland, the US has agreed to station a battery of Patriot missiles (96 in number) and US servicemen on Polish soil to beef up the country's short and medium-range air defences. Given the objectives of the European Union towards Russia, the US-Polish agreement is likely to impede smooth relations with Russia.

Russia's vital interests cannot be ignored. It wants proper role in international affairs commensurate with its power, size and influence. Observers believe that the European Union may not dance in tango with the US in alienating Russia, an European power.

Conclusion

A cold war is not likely to arise between the West and Russia because existing conditions are totally different from those in the earlier days. One is the degree of interdependence achieved, not just in ever increasing trade and investment but in the emergence of global communication, the interlocking of financial markets and the global organisation of production. Multilateralism is the order of the day.

Climate change, soaring oil price, inflationary tendencies in all countries, global economic slowdown, terrorism and nuclear non-proliferation are to be addressed by all states including the US and Russia. Collective ways of doing business is the most prudent way in the inter-connected world.

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Challenges for US in post-Musharraf phase

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GENERAL Musharraf may have gone but even in his exit he seems to have left more uncertainties and problems in its wake for Pakistan.

Strategically, the challenges for the United States are far more stupendous both in relation to Afghanistan and the future of United States Pakistan relations. The strategic and political challenges for the United States are daunting, chiefly, because United States policies towards Pakistan were Musharraf-centric, Pakistan Army-centric, and ISI-centric. As a result while there is no 'power vacuum' in Pakistan with a civilian government in place there is definitely a 'strategic vacuum' for the United States in Pakistan. The United States is unsure and uncertain whether the new political dispensation in Pakistan will cooperate in United States 'war on terror' and assist in stabilization of Afghanistan.

Reports indicate that United States has obtained assurances from the Zardari-Gilani combine that Pakistan would continue to cooperate with the United States. But then the United States would know better that General Musharraf too had made similar pledges.

Pakistan: The Immediate Uncertainties

General Musharraf's exit will not provide a magic wand to the United States to re-order Pakistan in the mould that it would ideally like to be. Nor would Musharraf's exit provide a magic wand to the top political leaders of Pakistan to transform Pakistan into a moderate, democratic and stable Islamic nation.

More than the political and economic uncertainties that hover over Pakistan, the challenges of Islamic insurgency, Islamic militancy and suicide bombings not only challenge the state sovereignty of Pakistan but also the very identity of Pakistan. This malaise has serious consequences both for Pakistan and so also for the United States overall strategic interests in that region.

Pakistan people's expectations are at an all time high especially on the economic front and it is debatable whether both Asif Zardari and Nawaz Sharif will be able to find time from their political chess-board games to alleviate the economic misery of the common Pakistani.

The immediate politically divisive issues which could cause serious political uncertainties between the two top political leaders are (1) Choice of the next President (2) Clipping existing Presidential powers (3) Restoration of the former Chief Justice of Pakistan and 60 other sacked judges (4) The National Reconciliation Order which granted impunity to Musharraf and Zardari. This issue is likely to break the ruling coalition as the latter has a

vested personal interest.

Optimistically, both Zardari and Nawaz Sharif can rise to the occasion and provide much needed unity amongst Pakistan's political parties. Then only democracy can survive in Pakistan. However, the pattern of past political developments in Pakistan point to the contrary.

Both these leaders would be aware that while the new Pakistan Army Chief has kept the Army aside in the Musharraf-civilian political leaders' battles, the Pakistan Army would not be averse to interfere once again to "clean up the political and economic mess".

Pakistan's top political leaders would also have to recognize that if future Pakistan Army military interventions are to be ruled out, now is the opportune time for them to forge national unity and bring Pakistan Army under firm civilian control. But it is a big political uncertainty whether Pakistan's political leaders can realize the urgency for such an unity.

Pakistan's economic mess needs an immediate clean-up to pre-empt wide spread demonstrations on economic issues. In the first few months of the civilian governments existence no substantial moves are visible.

Pakistan's most striking immediate uncertainty is whether the new civilian set-up would have the will to use power with unity of purpose to restore the writ of the Pakistani state in its frontier regions and also to act firmly against the Taliban and other Islamic Jihadist terrorist organizations which have sprouted all over Pakistan with the active connivance and support of the ISI.

The Pakistan Army as the only logical instrument to stamp out the internal security challenges to Pakistan is unlikely to do so as the Islamic militants, Islamic terrorist groups etc. have all been spawned by the Pakistan Army and the ISI under its control.

If that be so then the United States would be hard pressed to not only to ensure that its war effort in Afghanistan against the Taliban goes unimpeded but also to rein-in Pakistan Army and ISI's waywardness.

General Kiyani may be Washington's man but then so was General Musharraf.

US GWOT: Would Pakistan Assistance be active?

Analysis of this critical issue hinges on the consideration of some vital questions and the outcome of those questions. The following factors need to be pondered: (1) Pakistan Army and Pakistan as a whole have never viewed United States 'war on terror' as their own war on terrorism (2) United States 'war on terror' whether in Pakistan, Afghanistan or Iraq stands perceived as a war on Islam (3) Musharraf's rising unpopularity within Pakistan arose from a perception that he was an 'American Stooge'

(4) Taliban, Al Qaeda and other Islamic Jihadist organizations within Pakistan have grown only more stronger and potent in the last nine years despite Musharraf being in power (5) Pakistan Army is reluctant to undertake military operation in frontier regions.

Operating against the backdrop of the above issues the questions that arise on whether Pakistan's new civilian set-up can provide active assistance to the United States 'war on terrorism' are as follows (1) Would the Pakistani civilian government have the political will to provide active assistance to the United States against the prevailing mood in Pakistan? (2) Even if the Pakistani civilian government have the political will to provide active assistance to USA, would the Pakistan Army loyally implement the Governments decision and militarily proceed against the Taliban and other Islamic Jihadist terror organizations that it has patronized for long years?

Available indicators do not provide the optimism and promise that the successor civilian government of General Musharraf would either have the political will or the political control over the Pakistan Army to provide active Pakistani military or intelligence assistance to the United States 'war on terror'.

Need one point out that after nine years and 12 billion US dollars in aid to Pakistan by the United States, Mullah Omar, Osama bin Laden and Taliban continue to enjoy sanctuaries in Pakistan courtesy of the Pakistan Army.

Pakistan Army's Military Priorities Already Re-defined

Pakistan Army Chief, General Kiyani, without awaiting the exit of General Musharraf had already made clear in June 2008 that the Pakistan Army had redefined its priorities in relation to the US 'war on terror'.

This stands reflected in a recent Paper of this Author (SAAG Paper No. 2796 dated 5th August 2008) entitled "Pakistan Army Resumes Border Clashes: Political and Military Implications for India".

General Kiyani had made the following assertions which signaled that the Pakistan Army henceforth did not wish to play any role in United States 'war on terror'. • He had told US & NATO officials that the Pakistan Army would not retrain or re-group forces to fight counter-insurgency war along Pakistan's western borders with Afghanistan.

• Bulk of the Pakistan Army would be deployed on Pakistan's eastern frontiers with India.

In the above situation, it stands further reinforced that should the civilian government in Pakistan be even inclined to assist the United States in its military operations in Afghanistan, the Pakistan Army Chief has his own priorities.

The Pakistan Army Chief's assertions recounted above already find reflection in the

increased border clashes provoked by the Pakistan Army in Kashmir since June 2008. Is there some coincidence?

The United States could reasonably be expected to have factored the changed attitudes of the Pakistan Army in relation to supporting the US war on terror, but what the United States may not have factored-in is that Pakistan Army's most pressing priority is to regain or retain its control over Pakistan's foreign policy, Kashmir and Afghanistan. This stands analysed in the above quoted Paper of this Author.

US Military Options on Afghanistan

During the course of the present discussion, two things should have been clear by now namely, that (1) Pakistan Army's contribution to US war on terror on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border under General Musharraf was the very minimal, just enough to escape a rap on his knuckles by the United States (2) The new Pakistan Army Chief, General Kiyani had unambiguously asserted in June 2008 that the Pakistan Army would not retrain or regroup for counter-insurgency duties in support of the United States on the Afghan-Pakistan border.

The United States therefore, has serious strategic challenges in the conduct of military operations on the Afghan-Pakistan border in the post-Musharraf phase. It would be fair to assume that till the civilian government in Pakistan firmly establishes itself in Pakistan's governance, the situation for the United States will continue to remain fluid and uncertain.

The United States would therefore be faced with the unwelcome prospect of unilaterally initiating military strikes within Pakistan's frontier regions against Taliban and Al Qaeda strongholds which provide bases for Taliban attacks in Afghanistan. The United States could also be provoked into launching Special Forces ground/aerial operations against Taliban strong holds in frontier regions of Pakistan.

The United States in recent months has been prompted to undertake such strikes within Pakistan territory and may now be inclined to intensify such operations should Pakistan's new civilian setup may not be in a position to provide active assistance to counter the Taliban.

US Pakistan Future Relations

United States relations with Pakistan traditionally have been problematic in the last six decades. The basic problem is that Pakistan views its relationship with the United States on a single point agenda and that is how the United States can assist Pakistan to get the better of India strategically.

The United States on the other hand views Pakistan as a small strate-

gic speck on its global strategic radar. Pakistan's strategic importance to the United States therefore gets reduced to a given moment in time when it may have some strategic utility in the American global scheme of things. Beyond that all is rhetoric.

Currently, Pakistan's strategic utility to USA arose from its use in relation to US military presence in Afghanistan and the stabilization of Afghanistan. In the current game, Pakistan Army overplayed its hand and double-played its hand. The results are for all to see. USA is now even unwilling to consider asylum for Musharraf.

In terms of future perspectives it is difficult to fathom as to what strategic utility Pakistan or the Pakistan Army can provide to USA in its global strategic blueprint. The United States could strategically need Pakistan for its containment strategies against China but Pakistan is for all practical purposes a staunch Chinese ally and should Pakistan be forced to choose between the United States and China then Pakistan would choose China.

The residual strategic interest that USA may be left with in Pakistan is that Pakistan somehow remains stable politically and economically so that Afghanistan remains insulated from any Pakistani turbulence.

To that extent, the United States may use:

- US strategic and political coercive power to ensure Pakistan's domestic situation remains stable which may include restraining Pakistan Army within defined limits.
- Significant economic aid to Pakistan to assist it to ride out its economic mess and thereby preventing the Pakistani economic pressure cooker to blow the lid and cause political and social unrest.

Concluding Observations

The United States in the pursuance of its Musharraf-centric and Pakistan Army-centric policy formulations landed itself in a strategic muddle where both the above said entities were working at cross-purposes with United States core strategic interests in Afghanistan.

In the last two years or so hundreds of US and NATO soldiers lost their lives in Afghanistan as a result of direct acts of omission and commission by the Pakistan Army in not preventing Taliban ingress into Afghanistan.

For far too long US strategic formulations have given an exaggerated over-sized strategic importance to Pakistan in their strategies. The future of US-Pakistan relations could turn for the better if USA downsizes Pakistan to its true strategic worth in its formulations.

This is an edited version of the article.

Courtesy South Asia Analysis Group