

US should give Pak

By Rajan Menon and Anatol Lieven

The Indo-US nuclear deal reflects a profound American indifference to Islamabad's security concerns as well as the long-term effects it will have on Pakistani behaviour

THERE are sensible and foolish arguments against the US-Indian nuclear deal. The foolish ones are those based on a theological approach to nuclear non-proliferation. The serious ones relate to the nature of the new US-Indian "strategic partnership", and to wider US strategies in the region.

The argument that India must not be rewarded for developing nuclear weapons is a foolish one. In the real world, there is no more chance of India giving up its nuclear deterrent than there is of America, Russia or China giving up theirs. There are strong arguments, there-

North Korea and China, not from that of India.

All the same, there are deeply troubling aspects to this deal. Too much of the American motivation for it stems from misconceived obsessions with "balancing" against China and isolating Iran. Even more dangerously, the deal reflects a profound US indifference to the security concerns of Pakistan, and the long-term effects of India's nuclear programme on Pakistani behaviour.

American attempts to turn India into a US ally against both China and parts of the Muslim world misunderstand the nature of India's vital interests, and Indian determination to defend those interests. Rather than leading to a stable and close long-term American relationship with India, these US attempts may well collapse in a welter of unfulfilled hopes and mutual recriminations. Thus the United States should not expect automatic Indian support for its efforts to isolate Iran. India desperately needs access to Iranian energy, has

and China point in very different directions, and given minimally sensible diplomacy, do not threaten each other. That is especially true since the Chinese-Pakistani relationship has cooled because of Chinese fears of Islamist extremism. So India does not really have much to gain by joining an American-sponsored strategy of containing China, and in any case, being seen as a subordinate US ally would be deeply humiliating for many Indians. Instead, the dominant view in New Delhi at present is that rather than choosing sides prematurely, India will gain leverage with both Beijing and Washington by eschewing an alliance with either.

Pakistan developed its own nuclear deterrent as a response to India's, and if India develops its nuclear arsenal further, then Islamabad will see itself as having no choice but to respond. In the past, it was the desperate need to compete with India with far fewer resources that led Pakistan into dangerous nuclear smuggling. It is a truly vital US security interest to prevent this happening again in future. =

Here, the US-Indian deal really does send a dangerous signal - unless it is accompanied by a similar US deal with Pakistan, which is politically almost unthinkable given Pakistan's record and attitudes to Pakistan in the US Congress. An American refusal, however, will humiliate the Pakistani government, damage yet another vital US alliance, and strengthen extremist forces in Pakistani society.

When it comes to debate the US-Indian deal, therefore, the US Congress should insist that it be embedded in a wider American strategy towards South Asia, involving much stronger US moves to help solve the Indian-Pakistani dispute over Kashmir, and American assistance to both India and Pakistan for nuclear security, command and control and confidence-building measures. Congress should also use this opportunity to think seriously about US strategies in the rest of Asia.

The US-Indian nuclear deal won't make the sky fall, but its benefits are being oversold and its potential dangers overlooked.

COURTESY INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

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If India further develops its nuclear arsenal, Pakistan will see itself as having no choice but to respond. Thus the US should waste no time in offering Pakistan a similar arrangement. If it does not, Washington will end up humiliating Islamabad, damaging yet another vital US alliance and strengthening extremist forces within Pakistani society

fore, for the US to help India develop its nuclear industries and weapons in as responsible and safe as fashion as possible.

By contrast, trying to punish New Delhi indefinitely simply means spoiling the US-Indian relationship to no good purpose - because sooner or later other "legitimate" nuclear powers like France and Russia are bound to start selling India nuclear fuel and technology.

As to the US-Indian deal encouraging Iran and North Korea, their nuclear decisions were made long ago, and their future decisions will flow from separate domestic and strategic calculations. Future South Korean and Japanese decisions will likewise result from the behaviour of

close, multifaceted ties with Iran and won't sacrifice either to please America.

The US-Indian relationship could also go sour economically. While some Americans are enthralled by India's large market, others fear Indian competition just as much as they fear that of China, and see Indian call centres manned by Indians as the first harbinger of a potentially disastrous threat to key US service industries. Should the United States experience a severe economic downturn, there will be demands for severe protectionism directed at India as well as China.

As for using India as a strategic balance against China, this tends to ignore a little geographical feature called the Himalayas. The truth is that India

Pakistan nuclear deal

US deal doing more harm than good

By Philip Bowring

In principle, the US Congress should reject the deal. Not only does it undermine the non-proliferation agenda - it will make it harder for Pakistan to stay on America's side

AT the bilateral level, President George W Bush's visits to India, Pakistan and Afghanistan may be judged a success. But from a wider global perspective they may have done more harm than good to stability and US influence. Effective foreign policy is more than the sum of bilateral relationships.

For sure, the closer relationship between Washington and New Delhi has been long overdue, given India's commitment to democracy and pluralism and, more recently, the opening of its economy to foreign trade and investment. A new focus on India by US business and news media is just beginning to give a little more perspective to the still strong obsession with China. India has been flattered and its self-esteem has risen another notch.

Bush also made the right noises for consumption at home, as well as in India, about the benefits of open markets, in the outsourcing of services as well as manufacturing. Wary though they may be about aspects of US foreign policy, India's leaders are happy to be courted by an America looking for counterweights to the rising power of China.

In Pakistan, Bush was able to be seen reinforcing the position of his ally in "fighting terrorism". President Pervez Musharraf did his part by serenading Bush's departure with the announcement of a big slaughter of Taliban sympathisers in the Northwest Frontier Province.

All this may have been undone, however, by the centrepiece of the whole tour, the nuclear cooperation agreement with India, a nuclear power that has not signed the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty.

India's enthusiasm about this deal has probably assured that for now it will follow Washington's lead on the Iran nuclear issue. It may well also slow down India's plans to buy large quantities of Iranian gas. But handing nuclear cooperation benefits to India has seriously undermined the case for strong action to deal with the nuclear ambitions of

both Pyongyang and Tehran.

That can hardly go unnoticed in Beijing, whose cooperation is essential if Iran is to be seriously challenged by the Security Council, and which is the only power able to bring significant influence to bear on North Korea.

Enhanced military cooperation between the United States and India, including arms sales, is understandable given the strategic concerns of both. Many in the region may welcome India's emergence as a counterweight to China. But overt cooperation with India on the nuclear issue has irritated Beijing at a time when it has been trying to develop cooperation with India, particularly on energy security.

To others in Asia, the nuclear deal is a reflection of America's narrow perceptions of its own interests and, as with that other non-signatory of the non-proliferation treaty, Israel, further evidence of the double standards of the US position on non-proliferation

The US lurch towards India will have done nothing to strengthen pro-US sentiment in Pakistan. Nor will it make it any easier for Musharraf to stay in power while confronting pro-Taliban and Islamist sentiments. In addition, the US move will likely be seen, in the wider Islamic world, as yet another example of Washington's anti-Muslim tendencies

The lurch towards India will have done nothing to strengthen pro-US sentiment in America's old ally Pakistan, and will not make it any easier for Musharraf to stay in power while confronting pro-Taliban and Islamist sentiments.

In the wider Islamic world, meanwhile, the tilt towards India is likely to be seen as another example of anti-Muslim attitudes in Washington. That may be unfair, but perceptions matter. Similarly, Bush's failure to address India's and Pakistan's dispute over Kashmir suggests to

this same Islamic constituency that America is unwilling to put pressure on India.

India and Pakistan would both benefit from focusing on economic cooperation. But that will be more difficult for Pakistan if it feels that America is no longer even-handed. Pakistan will begin to look more towards its other old ally, China.

The nuclear deal also now confronts the US Congress with an awkward dilemma. In principle it should reject the deal on the grounds that it conflicts with the non-proliferation agenda and that Pakistan needs to be kept on America's side. But rejection would probably enrage India - which is hypersensitive to slights to its national dignity - without necessarily undoing the damage to America's other Asian relationships. COURTESY INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE