

How Washington missed the boat on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

by Ramtanu Maitra

In the week of Aug. 19, the government of India acted to veto the proposed Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty up for consideration at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, and on Aug. 23 blocked the treaty's transmittal to the United Nations for further deliberation. India's chief negotiator at Geneva, Arundhati Ghosh, called the transmittal "unjustified and extraordinary." For the officially recognized nuclear-weapons states—Great Britain, France, China, Russia, and the United States—India's veto of the test ban treaty was unexpected, and from all available accounts, the United States is displeased with the Indian role in the deliberations.

Washington's offer

During the months of deliberations and negotiations, Washington had offered India the deal that India may choose to abstain from signing the treaty, but must not block it. Insiders in India claim that Washington had also asked India, as a part of the deal, not to carry out any nuclear tests.

There were indications that Delhi was seriously considering a nuclear detonation to get the message across to Washington that the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) is unacceptable, simply because it loaded the dice in favor of the nuclear weapons states—the great powers of the unipolar world. Washington's offer, reports indicate, finally became acceptable to Delhi and no explosions took place on this south side of the Himalayas, although the Chinese, without opposing the CTBT, and while enjoying the status of a nuclear-weapons state, did just that. Washington wisely chose to ignore Beijing's provocation.

Simultaneously, Delhi stated that it would continue to press on its fundamental objective, which is global nuclear disarmament. This is not a policy initiated by recent Indian governments but goes back decades.

In 1954, after a U.S. nuclear explosion on Bikini Atoll, then Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru proposed the "standstill agreement" on testing. The test ban proposal, however, appeared as a separate agenda at the United Nations General Assembly in 1957 and has been deliberated upon for years. The proposal did not go any place because of the Cold War. Since the inception of the Comprehensive Test

Ban Treaty, India had maintained that the treaty must be accompanied with a time-bound commitment to nuclear disarmament by the nuclear-weapons states. India maintains this position today, because of the discriminatory nature of the treaty. Meanwhile, in 1974, India exploded a small nuclear device and has the scientific, technical, and industrial capability to produce and deliver nuclear weapons.

The Entry-into-Force clause

In this context, there is no question that Washington had rightly recognized that India had one of the biggest stakes in the treaty, although both Pakistan and Israel are both threshold nations. Pakistan linked its signing with that of India's. What sunk the deal between Washington and India was the introduction of the Entry-into-Force (EIF), a clause primarily designed by the United States to freeze the nuclear-weapons technology development of all nuclear-weapons states, including its own, in the draft. The draft treaty stated that the Entry-into-Force must have the signature of the five nuclear-weapons states and 35 or 40 other states. No specific nation, other than the five nuclear-weapons states, the draft indicated, need to sign the Entry-into-Force.

The Entry-into-Force clause was like opening Pandora's box, and Britain, India's most vocal critic, seized on it, followed by China and Russia. China stated that all threshold nations—such as India—must sign the Entry-into-Force and none of these threshold nations will be given the option not to sign. Britain and Russia agreed. India soon found out that it was not Washington that was calling the shots on the treaty, but Britain, China, and Russia. In response, India called off the deal and proceeded to block the CTBT.

As Michael Krepon of the Henry L. Stimson Center, a U.S. arms control think-tank, told reporters, there are "several nuclear weapons states that don't want this treaty to enter into force. . . . Britain, for sure, but even more than Britain, Russia and China."

Daniel Plesh of the British-American Security Council had a more pointed observation. He contended that the "British set this up brilliantly. . . . The Conservative government hated the CTBT. . . . The British are hung up on the post-

colonial idea that they can't sign up to something that restricts their nuclear weapons while an ex-colony (India) might be able to slip through."

The same experts claimed that if the treaty went through, China's large-scale upgrading of its nuclear weapons would hit a brick wall. China wants to carry out fresh tests to develop more accurate and potent nuclear weapons in the future, the experts claimed.

Despite this, the United States was still hoping that by offering a deal to India, it would be able to sneak in a global nuclear weapons freeze to which its fellow nuclear-weapons states would have to agree.

Who will threaten India now?

At the same time, the Indian veto would not kill the treaty if the five nuclear-weapons states are determined to get it signed in the form it exists or with fresh modifications. The Conference on Disarmament is a part of the United Nations, and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty can be brought back into the United Nations General Assembly to get ratified with majority support.

There could be a CTBT without India's signature. However, the factional line-up is now far clearer; earlier, Britain would have invariably supported the United States unequivocally on all issues concerning nuclear disarmament.

There is yet another faction emerging which wants to ram the treaty down India's throat and isolate India, and perhaps Iran, a backer of India's position on the CTBT. As one unnamed western diplomat was quoted in a news wire: "Obviously, there has to be one final big showdown with India rejecting the treaty. We may go through the formality of India rejecting the treaty publicly in front of the press and the gallery. This would isolate India, and maybe Iran, while showing the world the rest of the international community in favor."

On Aug. 16, U.S. State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns gave the message: "The treaty ought to be signed and those standing in the way of the treaty, ought to get out of the way of the treaty, because the treaty expresses the will of people all over the world to have five nuclear powers declare and commit in writing that they will no longer, at any point into the future, conduct nuclear tests on a zero-yield basis."

Burns also hinted that Washington is in no mood to entertain negotiations to change the text of the treaty that had been presented in Geneva.

Visiting Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Indian Foreign Minister Inder Kumar Gujral issued a statement that his country has already written to Washington to amend the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty draft again. He explained that a number of nations are now finding the Indian position justified and have conveyed their support to the Indian opposition. He, however, was unwilling to discuss what amendment of the treaty would be acceptable to the government in Delhi.

Travesty of Justice

French gov't moves against Cheminade

On Aug. 16, the political party, Solidarité et Progrès, whose president is Jacques Cheminade, issued a statement detailing the outrageous actions to seize the assets of the former Presidential candidate. On April 7, 1995, Cheminade, a close associate of Lyndon LaRouche, had completed the arduous requirements to appear on the April 23 ballot, an action which upset the traditional "rules of the game." In France, the Presidential campaigns are publicly funded, with the candidate receiving a FF 1 million advance when his or her candidacy is accepted, and the balance of the funding when the final campaign expense accounts are submitted.

Cheminade's supporters extended his campaign some FF 3.7 million in loans, expecting to be repaid from the proceeds of the public funding after the campaign. In a completely unprecedented action, however, the Constitutional Council rejected Cheminade's accounts, claiming that the loans were actually contributions, because some of them (about one-third) were non-interest-bearing! While Cheminade is now personally bound to repay the loans, the government is also demanding he reimburse the million francs.

On July 24, 1996, the government began the process of seizing Cheminade's personal property, and has attached his bank account. Cheminade's only "crime," has been to expose the international financial oligarchy running France and the world, reponsible for the cancerous destruction of the productive economy. The following is abridged from Solidarité et Progrès' statement.

1) On July 24, 1996, a process server from the Public Treasury announced that he would come to Mr. Cheminade's residence on July 26, 1996, in order to seize Cheminade's furniture on the grounds that he has not been able to pay the state back FF 1 million his campaign organization had been advanced for his Presidential candidacy.

2) On July 26, 1996, this process server did in fact come to his residence and, in his absence, inventoried for seizure and sale his scant furniture and books ("a period cupboard, a desk, a brown fabric bench, a large wicker armchair, some 500 books"). It should be pointed out that the "cupboard" does not belong to Mr. Cheminade.

3) The seized goods "may be sold" in public auctions as of Sept. 26, 1996.

4) On Aug. 6, 1996, the attachment of Mr. Cheminade's bank accounts was effected by the same process server on