

U.S. arms threaten balance between India and Pakistan

by Daniel Sneider, Asia Editor, from New Delhi

In a recent interview with *EIR*, Assistant Secretary of State James Buckley justified the proposed \$2 billion arms-supply package for Pakistan—including sales of F-16 fighter planes—on the grounds that it is necessary to guarantee the security of Pakistan against a threat from the Soviet Union and its forces in Afghanistan. A second aspect of this geopolitical view is that Pakistan will play a crucial role in providing security for the Persian Gulf region, including the possibility of bases or emergency facilities for the Rapid Deployment Force sometime in the future. Speaking to *EIR*, Buckley stated that “Pakistan occupies an extremely important piece of geography which is of extreme importance to the security of the Persian Gulf, in which we have a most immediate, direct self-interest.”

Objections voiced by Pakistan’s neighbor India that the arms package, and specifically the sale of F-16s, will “qualitatively” shift South Asia’s balance of forces and create a threat to peace have largely been dismissed in Washington as an unsubstantiated attempt by India to maintain military superiority in the region. Buckley repeated this argument by stating that while Pakistan’s “military capabilities have declined, the Indians have enormously improved their competence.” When asked about the impact of the arms deal on the Indo-Pakistani military balance, Buckley said, “There is no way that the type of equipment that we are proposing to sell to the Pakistanis could tip the balance in such a way as to encourage anybody to launch an attack on India without inviting destruction.”

However, research undertaken by this writer, including discussions with well-informed official and nonofficial sources in India and the United States, puts Buckley’s arguments at odds with reality. On the strategic level there is ample evidence that the Pakistani military leadership understands that the weapons received from the United States are intended *not* for defense against Afghanistan or the Soviet Union, but against India. There are far fewer illusions in Pakistan than there seem to be in Washington about the military and political efficacy of directly taking on the Soviet military establishment or even of “detering it” in any serious way.

As for the military balance, a close study will show

that rough parity exists on the India-Pakistan front, without even taking into account the fact that India is a much larger nation with nine times the population of Pakistan, and a potential global power.

In fact the U.S. decision to sell F-16s to Pakistan seems to be an escalation of the Carter administration’s efforts to create an “arc of crisis” along the Soviet Union’s southern border. If nothing else, it will fuel a dangerous arms race in South Asia that bears no gain to American strategic national interest. At the worst it sets the stage for an unstable, unpopular military regime in Pakistan to carry out an adventurist first strike against India. Add to that the F-16s’ highly sophisticated delivery capability and a Pakistani nuclear program with no objective other than the construction of a nuclear weapons capability, and one can only wonder about the

Figure 1
Comparison of Pakistani and Indian armed forces

Army	Pakistan	India
Personnel	435,000	950,000
Reserves	500,000	200,000
Corps headquarters	6 ¹	8
Armored divisions	2	2
Infantry divisions	16 ¹	17
Mountain divisions	—	10 ²
Independent armored brigades	4	5 ³
Independent infantry brigades	4	1
Independent artillery brigades	6	14

Source: International Institute for Strategic Studies, Military Balance Report, 1980-81.

Footnotes

1. More recent sources put it at 19 divisions and 8 corps headquarters.
2. These are deployed solely on the Chinese border.
3. More recent sources say 6.



On the Sino-Indian border: threats from Peking are still part of India's military equation.

thinking, or lack of it, that has led the Reagan administration to this policy.

Geopolitics meets reality

Large-scale shipments of U.S. arms to Pakistan is not a new policy. It was carried out extensively during the 1950s and the 1960s, particularly during the period of the regime of Gen. Ayub Khan. During that period, as today, the arms were provided, in the context of a U.S.-Pakistan mutual security relationship, for the ostensible purpose of defending Pakistan against potential communist aggression—including from China.

The arguments made today for arms transfers to Pakistan essentially follow this previous script—with the Soviet intervention into Afghanistan making more manifest the “communist threat.” While Pakistan is no longer a member of the CENTO and SEATO multilateral security pacts, and proclaims its status as a “non-aligned nation,” Washington is assured of a bilateral security tie which is implicitly understood to fit into overall U.S. policies toward, and deployments in, the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean region.

The problem occurs when geopolitics confronts reality. The American arms provided Pakistan over the past 30 years have been used against one “enemy”—India—in wars which have invariably been launched by Pakistan (although the 1971 war, because of Bangladesh, was a more complex affair). The arms have secondarily been used by the Pakistani army against another “enemy”—the Pakistani population itself as in the case of the repression of the 1973-77 Baluchistan rebellion.

The private argument by certain people inside and outside the administration that India is a “Soviet proxy” and therefore can be seen as part of the “communist

threat” only betrays a total ignorance of India, its history, and its leadership.

Most telling is the way the Pakistanis themselves view the use and need for American arms. The transcript of a speech delivered by Pakistani Foreign Minister Aga Shahi to a Pakistani audience at a seminar in Lahore, Pakistan on June 30 exposes the real Pakistani view as Shahi responds to criticism within the country regarding the new relationship with the United States.

Responding to fears of a Soviet response to the arms shipments, Shahi says: “This fear in your mind about the danger of an attack by the Soviet Union should be allayed. And the Soviets have categorically assured us, and this has been stated by President Brezhnev a number of times, that we should not take into account this possibility. *Any other attack, well this is precisely the reason why we want to get the arms quickly. We should be able to defend ourselves against an attack from any quarter [emphasis added].*”

Throughout the speech Shahi is eager to assure the audience, which contains prominent Pakistani political and military leaders, that the aim of these weapons is for defense, not against the Soviets, for whom he has only soft words, but to use against India. Indeed, at one point he makes it clear that if the Soviets were to attack, Pakistan will rely on U.S. intervention: “An attack by a superpower on another country in the region will not remain confined to the aggressor and the victim,” he says to applause. “The interest of the world community will become involved, particularly in this situation, and there is every likelihood of that becoming a main superpower confrontation.”

On the other hand, Shahi makes numerous anti-Indian remarks, some of them deliberately provocative.

At one point he declares that "we will never accept the Indian hegemony of [its] predominant position." In the calculated code words of South Asia, a pledge not to accept the acknowledged predominance of India is highly suggestive. Shahi concludes his speech by declaring: "Above all, we think that the will of the Muslim people of the *subcontinent*, which founded the State of Pakistan . . . after 14 centuries of Islam, is not weakened, is not dead, it will revive." For India, a secular state in which the Muslim population is greater than Pakistan's, Shahi has waved the red-flag claim that Pakistan represents *all* Muslims in South Asia.

The other point on which the Pakistani foreign minister's remarks are revealing concerns the Pakistani bomb-making efforts. While Buckley told the U.S. Congress that Pakistan has assured the United States that they will not make a bomb, Shahi tells a home audience that "we have given no undertaking to Mr. Buckley about explosion [of a nuclear device]." he argues that Pakistan is well aware that aid could be cut off again if Pakistan conducts a nuclear test, but "that is a matter for our judgment." Such talk lends credibility to recent speculation that Pakistani demands for rapid delivery of the F-16s (and their spare parts) are to ensure that the weaponry is in hand before the test takes place. Other reports exist of a secret test carried out on Chinese territory and therefore not immediately traceable to Pakistan.

The Indo-Pakistani military equation

Let us now turn to the Indo-Pakistani military balance itself, and the State Department contention that India enjoys overwhelming superiority and the U.S. arms transfers to Pakistan, including the sophisticated F-16s, will in no way alter the existing balance of forces in the subcontinent.

The studies which portray an overwhelming military superiority for India in numbers of soldiers, equipment, etc., are based on sophistry. India's apparently overwhelming edge in military manpower reflects the need to defend a much larger territory and population, longer borders, as well as the fact that the Indian army must deploy on two major potential war fronts, Pakistan and China, both countries against whom previous wars have been fought. The director of the Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses in New Delhi, K. Subrahmanyam, a former top Indian defense ministry official, told this writer that "our planning is based on a two-front war."

Indian forces are both stationed and equipped for specific deployment on either of these two fronts. Out of 27 infantry divisions, 10 are specially equipped and trained mountain divisions meant solely for deployment in the Himalayan mountains and foothills along the long border with China. According to India's retired

Air Chief Marshal P. C. Lal, approximately one-third of the Indian Air Force is also deployed in a number of airfields along the Brahmaputra Valley in northeast India, well out of flight range of the Pakistani border. Subrahmanyam states that the armies on the China and Pakistan fronts are equipped and supplied "to fight separately."

While Indian forces along the Chinese border are vastly improved from the conditions of 1962 when the Chinese were able to penetrate relatively easily into Indian territory, the Chinese have augmented their forces in Tibet and improved their logistics and air force capabilities; they are in a position to mount an effective attack.

Indian defense planners are taking into account the possibility of a joint Chinese-Pakistani attack on India. Though this may be remote, it is far more conceivable—

Figure 2
Comparison of Pakistani and Indian army equipment

	Equipment	Pakistan	Equipment	India
Tanks		2,351		2,750
	M47/48	240 ¹	Vijayanta	1,100
	T-59	981 ²	T-55/54	950
On order:	TAM	500 ³	T-72	700 ⁴
	M-60	600 ⁵		—
Armored personnel carriers		550 ⁶		717
On order:	M-113	600 ⁷		—
Light tanks		65		50 ⁸

Source: International Institute for Strategic Studies, Military Balance Report, 1980-81.

Footnotes

1. Other sources report 250 additional M-48s, acquired earlier from Iran and Jordan; 200 M47/48s have been reconditioned with more powerful engines and upgraded to 105-mm. guns.
2. Figures are updated from more recent sources; includes 50 Soviet-supplied T-55s; the rest are Chinese-made T-59s.
3. An Argentine-made medium tank equivalent to the Indian-made Vijayanta with same 105-mm. guns.
4. Seventy T-72s have been acquired for trials.
5. Reported number to be received from U.S.
6. More recent sources claim 978.
7. Six hundred M-113s on order from U.S. Recent sources put Pakistan with 782, India with 1,572.
8. The 50 are part of a stock of 176 older model PT-76 light tanks which sources report are mothballed and not in active service.

Note: **Pakistan** has French Matra and Magic, and U.S. Sidewinder air-to-air missiles; air-to-surface AS-30 missiles. **India** has ATOLL air-to-air missiles and also AS-30s. **Pakistan** has 6 surface-to-air missile (SAM) squadrons equipped with French Crotale missiles. **India** has SAM-6 Soviet missiles which are a generation earlier than the Crotale.

given the extensive past and current Sino-Pakistani military cooperation and its triangulation with the U.S.—than scenarios for a joint Indo-Soviet attack on Pakistan dished out by its military leaders to visiting U.S. scholars and officials.

It is revealing to compare the Pakistani deployment of its forces to that of India. As has been previously reported by American observers, ever since the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan almost two years ago, Pakistan has kept some 80 percent of its forces deployed on the Indian front. Both armored divisions are deployed there; and out of 16 infantry divisions (which some sources report have been raised to 19), two are on the Afghan border, and three are deployed for internal security purposes in the minority provinces of Baluchistan, the Northwest Frontier Province, and the Sind. The remaining 11 divisions are on the India front.

The other important aspect of troop deployment on the Indo-Pakistan front has to do with the position of those forces. Pakistani forces are traditionally stationed in forward positions, between the frontier and the Indus

River. This is the result of geographical factors—the defense line formed by the Indus River and the concentrations of Pakistani population relatively closer to the border—and more importantly because of a traditional Pakistani military doctrine emphasizing the importance of a quick first strike.

Indian army strategy, on the other hand, is considered extremely conservative, emphasizing an orthodox policy of defense in depth. Indian infantry cantonments are widely spread out and many of them are far from the border, although since 1971 there has been an effort to adopt a more forward-defense strategy.

The F-16 controversy

The most controversial aspect of the U.S. arms package for Pakistan is the supply of at least 100 F-16 fighter bombers, in its NATO version. Buckley has stated that this merely matches Indian purchases of replacement aircraft for its air force. This statement shows either abysmal ignorance or willful deception.

The Indian Air Force (IAF) has purchased, or will purchase, two types of aircraft to update its fleet—the Anglo-French Jaguar and the Soviet MIG-23 in its fighter and fighter-bomber versions. The Jaguar purchase—made by the previous Desai government—was to involve about 130 planes, including 40 outright flyaways, 45 to be assembled in India from kits, and another 45 to be manufactured in India. At this point, it has been decided to only go through with the first two installments, foregoing the manufacturing aspect. The MIG-23, according to Indian defense analyst sources, is to be eventually manufactured, as is the MIG-21, under license in India. One squadron of 16 planes has been provided for immediate test use by the IAF.

Comparing the F-16 with the Jaguar or MIG-23 is an apples-and-oranges exercise. The F-16 is a generation ahead—the most advanced aircraft in the NATO arsenal—and acknowledged to be ahead of anything the Soviets possess. It is a deep-penetration strike aircraft with a long range and tremendous engine thrust, capable of carrying a heavy bomb-load and delivering its ordnance with computer-guided accuracy. Above all, it has the most sophisticated avionics capable of jamming enemy radar and carrying out multiple battle functions in all weather conditions.

For India this means several things. The range brings targets as far as Bombay in the southeast and New Delhi to the east within range of Pakistani airfields. It is capable of reaching those targets and delivering its ordnance with a very high rate of success, particularly if equipped with laser-guided smart bombs. By its nature, and in the context of existing Pakistani military strategy, it is best suited for a first-strike strategy by the Pakistanis.

Indian defense experts like Air Chief Marshal Lal

Figure 3
Comparison of Pakistani and Indian air forces

Equipment	Pakistan	Equipment	India
Personnel	17,600	Personnel	113,000
Canberra B-57B	11 ¹	Canberra B-58	60
F-86	40 ²	Su-7BM	64 ²
		Hunter F-56	64 ²
		Marut HF-24	50 ²
Mirage III & V	55 ³	MIG-21	252 ⁴
MIG-19/F-6	174 ⁵	Canberra PR-57	18 ⁶
F-9	40 ⁵	Gnat	80 ⁷
		Jaguar	18 ⁸
		MIG-23	NA ⁹

Source: International Institute for Strategic Studies, Military Balance Report, 1980-81.

Footnotes:

1. Light bomber; essentially obsolete.
2. All obsolete and to be discarded.
3. Recent deliveries reportedly raise this to 107 with eventual total of 150; 55 is the 1980-81 IISS figure.
4. Soviet design; Indian made.
5. F-6 is Chinese version of Soviet-design MIG-19 with some improvements. Chinese are also to deliver 40 F-9 Fantans, their version of MIG-21 during 1981-82.
6. Photo-reconnaissance squadron to be replaced by MIG-25.
7. British design, Indian made; overdue for replacement.
8. 18 Anglo-French Jaguars now on loan from British RAF; 40 on order on flyaway basis; 45 to be assembled from kits.
9. One squadron presently in India according to more recent sources with eventual delivery of both interceptor and fighter-bomber versions and manufacture in India expected.

James Buckley says Dacca won't attack

The following is excerpted from a June 22 interview with Undersecretary of State for Coordination of Security Assistance Programs James Buckley. The interview was conducted by EIR's Stanley Ezrol. We delayed publication in order to print it alongside an in-depth military assessment.

Ezrol: What is your view of the reason for establishing a close relationship with Pakistan?

Buckley: Because Pakistan occupies an extremely important piece of geography which is of extreme importance to the security of the Persian Gulf, in which we have a most immediate, direct self-interest. Any strategy or planning which works toward safeguarding the Western world's access to resources in the Persian Gulf is enhanced if we have a Pakistan capable of inhibiting attacks on its own territorial integrity.

Ezrol: A number of people, including people who are generally friendly to the Reagan administration and its outlook, have characterized the regime in Pakistan as being an unstable one, at best. Do we have any fear that the sophisticated weapons which we intend to supply may either fall into the wrong hands or may be wrongly used by that regime?

Buckley: The answer is no. Number one, in one sense, a large part of the world is, quote, "unstable" in terms of any particular regime, because you may have political systems that inherently are not all that stable. Number two . . . remember, we're dealing with a nation, not a regime, and the alternative to an existing regime would be another regime having the same interests in national independence and territorial integrity. . . . To help the country that is militarily capable in terms of the quality and discipline of its individual soldiers, but equipped with World War II-vintage equipment, and to help modernize it and make its capabilities of defending itself credible, can only enhance the stability. . . .

Ezrol: Arms we have supplied to Israel are not always used in ways that we find most appropriate. What kinds of safeguards are we building into our agreement with the Pakistanis?

Buckley: Number one, we have the condition that these weapons are to be used for defensive purposes. Number

see a further dimension of the threat. Given its high cost, Pakistan will only be able to buy a relatively small number of F-16s, especially if compared to more logical replacement choices like the F-5E or A-4 Skyhawk. It does not make sense, Lal told this writer, to load F-16s with old-fashioned dynamite ordnance when a greater number of F-5Es could do just as much damage with the same ordnance. "You need a highly destructive weapon to go with it—a nuclear weapon," says Dal, although he admits the use of conventional weapons in the F-16s "could, in itself, be a disturbing prospect" for India.

India, on one level of response, is likely to more vigorously pursue its interest in the French Mirage 2000. However, the Mirage is a plane only in its test stages and not conceivably available for delivery to India before the late 1980s, whereas the F-16s are theoretically available now, or at least within one to three years. With Pakistan building a nuclear bomb that may be ready in less than a year, no competent Indian defense planner could afford to ignore the implication of this shift in the military balance of the subcontinent.

India's capability to construct a nuclear device was proven in 1974. But that explosion took place in the context of a large-scale civilian nuclear energy program—the largest in the developing world—and there is no evidence that India has chosen to follow that peaceful nuclear explosion with construction of deliverable nuclear weapons. The Pakistanis, on the other hand, by all reports, have a program which has no demonstrable link to any civilian nuclear energy program and can have no other purpose than to construct a nuclear weapon.

According to informed sources, an American academic expert on the Pakistani military recently returned from Pakistan, where he discussed nuclear planning with senior Pakistani officers. The Pakistanis reportedly argued that their security would improve with nuclear weapons, even if symmetry were maintained, and establish some form of mutual deterrence. In that situation, they reportedly said, they would, beneath the umbrella of this deterrence, wait for a weak leadership in India and in a "bold and brash move grab Kashmir."

Defense expert K. Subrahmanyam suggests a non-nuclear scenario of the same type. F-16s, equipped with laser-guided bombs could hit and close the Banihal tunnel on the only major road that links the Srinagar valley of Kashmir, known to be the major Pakistani target, with the rest of India. Only one other road exists, a circuitous route that would take many days to traverse under normal conditions.

Certainly if Indian defense planners draw that conclusion under the present circumstances, it would be surprising if they did not take steps to ensure symmetry with Pakistan on this front.

two, if that was an oblique reference to India, you've got some very practical considerations, despite the valor and the quality of fighting and so forth. Pakistan got licked by India in 1971; since then they've declined in military capabilities, while the Indians have enormously improved their competence. The Indians are a modern force; they are continuing to purchase the most modern types of equipment. There is no way that the type of equipment that we are proposing to sell to the Pakistanis could tip the balance in such a way as to encourage anybody to launch an attack on India without inviting destruction.

Ezrol: Are you ruling out the possibility of a Pakistani administration's acting irrationally?

Buckley: One can never rule that out of any human equation, but one has to operate as if people have some modicum of prudence; that people don't want to invite the slaughter of their citizens, the destruction of their own economy, their factories; especially a country like Pakistan that's doing its damndest to try to get itself on its feet. It would be a recklessly foolhardy act. . . .

Ezrol: I wonder how many people would really be satisfied with that answer.

Buckley: The alternative, of course, is to say, "Just survive the way you can; forget the fact that you've got some real problems on the northern border and that the Soviets have every incentive in the world to try to cause insurrections and strife in your western province, and peel off and declare the People's Republic of Baluchistan, giving the Soviets access to the Persian Gulf."

Ezrol: Secretary Haig has made remarks on the record, which the State Department has interpreted for the record to mean that we understand that the Pakistanis view India as a military threat to them. Do we believe that they will not use their weapons against what they perceive as a military threat?

Buckley: If you are the weaker, the significantly weaker, and have someone you perceive threatens you, you may want to be in a position to make an attack on you costly, but that is not the same sort of thing as suggesting that you are blindly going to go out and launch an aggressive first strike against someone, when the destruction of your people would be invited.

Ezrol: Would a combination of Pakistan and the People's Republic of China be overwhelmed by India's military force?

Buckley: Looking at the topography that they'd have to be dealing with, I'd have to get an expert DOD judgment, but I've yet to see one, and this is part of the things that you exercise when you go through this sort of assessment, but India is very good these days.

INTERVIEW

Cardinal Krol discusses the role of churchmen

We publish below the partial contents of an interview given to our editor-in-chief, Criton Zoakos, by Cardinal Krol, the Archbishop of Philadelphia, on Aug. 14, 1981. The Cardinal's endeavors on behalf of Polish food relief efforts, his own Polish ancestry, his personal affinity to Pope John Paul II and his considerable education and culture, we thought, were indispensable aids in providing a deeper insight of the Polish situation both for ourselves and for our readers.

We wish to thank His Eminence for granting us this interview despite his considerable misgivings about personal publicity. At one point, in deference to his sentiments on this matter, we considered publishing the interview anonymously. We opted against this idea, however, because it is still true that judgments that matter and statements that matter, do so not only because of their contents but also because of who it is that makes such judgments and statements.

Zoakos: Not only Poland's future, but stability in Europe and even world peace are at stake in the Polish crisis. What can you say about the Church's concern in this regard?

Cardinal Krol: As the late Cardinal Wyszynski often said, and as His Holiness Pope John Paul II has repeatedly explained, the role of the Church is to teach and to spread the truth of the Gospel, the principles of the Gospel, the principles of human dignity, the dignity of the human person to be free to determine his relationship not toward the state but toward God. Thus the role of the Church is to be at the service of man, at the service of man's dignity, as the Pope has emphasized in his encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*. Man is endowed by God with a destiny which endures and reaches beyond the grave. Man must therefore have the opportunity to live his temporal life in dignity so that he may not forfeit his destiny in afterlife.

This is Gospel Principle and it was clearly spelled out in the canonical and doctrinal work of the Second Vatican Council.

You will find a delightful highlighting of this in the teachings of Pope John Paul II during his visit to Poland