

India's stand on NPT: The bluster has given way to tacit acceptance

by Ramtanu Maitra and Susan Maitra

The warming up of relations between Washington and New Delhi in the post-Cold War days has had a decided effect on India's earlier rigid and self-righteous stance on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). As the day for a proposed indefinite extension of the treaty fast approaches, despite some stiff opposition from unexpected quarters, New Delhi is moving significantly closer to the U.S. position on the global freezing of fissile material production and is keeping clear of any further fuming and fretting about the discriminatory clauses embedded in the 1967 draft NPT.

A decided shift

The shift in India's position has been occurring slowly as New Delhi finally came to accept Washington's strategic concerns—military and economic—about the region in the post-Cold War era. Joint military exercises with the U.S. Army, coupled with increasing foreign investment in India from the West, provided New Delhi the needed “peace of mind” to sit back and work out a fresh policy which will mean neither signing of the NPT nor confrontation with the United States on the nuclear proliferation issue. The solution evolved in the form of India's support for the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the fissile material cut-off convention; there is little doubt that both nations have struck yet another harmonious chord in preventing further global nuclear proliferation.

The first major signal in this direction came in an interview with Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao reported by the Hongkong-based *Far Eastern Economic Review*. In that interview, Rao made it clear that his government has given explicit support to the CTBT, and that India is “more or less of the same view” as the United States on such a treaty. What Prime Minister Rao was referring to is the apparent Indian agreement to the American proposal to co-sponsor a fissile material cut-off treaty in the United Nations Disarmament Committee in Geneva, which is now preparing to begin negotiations.

The treaty will require all countries to refrain from producing highly enriched uranium and plutonium—the fissile materials—for weapons purposes and to place the peaceful use of such material under international monitoring, which

India had vociferously objected to in earlier days. The controversy at this point, one official explained, is whether such verification can be extended to past stocks or should be confined only to future stocks.

The test ban treaty

The cut-off treaty, according to some observers, will take the heat off India to sign the NPT and put the whole non-proliferation issue in quarantine. For the Rao government, the cut-off treaty circumvents the obvious political difficulties involved in signing the NPT after India has criticized it for more than 25 years. At the same time, it will serve the basic purposes of the Clinton administration. For instance, the cut-off treaty would ensure that India can maintain its nuclear arsenal, whatever its size, but cannot update that arsenal. Whatever that may mean to India's security, it would provide the Clinton administration a great deal of satisfaction that the warming of relations with India, and the high-powered trips by Secretary of Defense William Perry, Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown, and two visits by Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary, were not in vain.

John Holum, director of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, has already told the Associated Press in the course of an interview that India was one of the targets of the cut-off treaty, which would effectively put a lid on India's nuclear programs.

According to those observers who consider that the signing of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty is giving in to U.S. demands, the cut-off treaty is not non-discriminatory since it allows the nuclear weapons states to enjoy the leverage of maintaining a huge nuclear arsenal. In essence, they claim, the treaty would sanctify the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which India continues to refuse to sign because of discriminatory clauses. They also cite Holum's statement that the fissile material cut-off, in particular, is a valuable step because it is in the direction of ultimate adherence to the Non-Proliferation Treaty by the so-called threshold nations like India.

What has also been noted is that in anticipation of the CTBT, a seismic monitoring station has been put in place in Bangalore in India and another only recently in Pakistan.

What exactly the U.S. strategy is at this point vis-à-vis the nuclear issue in South Asia can be gleaned from U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Robin Raphel's recent congressional testimony.

U.S. strategy

A multi-prong strategy, which includes a declaration of a fissile material cut-off by the five nuclear weapons states (United States, Great Britain, France, Russia, and China) prior to the convention to extend the NPT and a call for the CTBT, will be buttressed by an indefinite extension of the NPT in April. If India joins the five nuclear weapons states to back a freeze of fissile material, it will no doubt be considered a triumph of Washington's nuclear diplomacy. But the Indian position on the CTBT and freezing of fissile material is as old as its opposition to the discriminatory clauses of the NPT.

From that angle, New Delhi has not in fact conceded much, so far.

There is also little doubt that India sees no reason to loosen its case on its principled position against the NPT. Pressure on India to join the NPT from Washington has tapered off significantly, which has helped the Rao government politically. What some others point out is that there always has been an unwritten understanding between the nuclear weapons states that India would not campaign against the NPT, and, in return, they would not press India to join. However, from time to time, this understanding had broken down and the Non-Proliferation Treaty was used by both sides to make some political statements and exert political pressure. There are indications that Washington is now going about in a circuitous way exerting pressure on the issue.

Despite Prime Minister Rao's statements, the Indian Foreign Office maintains that "until a satisfactory convention to prohibit the production of fissile material for weapons purposes enters into force, there is no question of India unilaterally capping it or accepting restrictions on the program for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy."

Peaceful nuclear program at stake

Notwithstanding these clarifications, what is at stake is India's nuclear program for peaceful use. The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, if and when it comes into force, will bring all of India's plutonium production, a natural by-product in India's power reactors, under the control of international safeguards. Considering the current role of the U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the matter raises serious concerns. On the other hand, the next phase of India's nuclear program calls for use of thorium; yet, it is likely that India will find much less maneuvering room to pursue the program. In addition, the nuclear weapons states, awash with highly enriched uranium and plutonium, will have nothing to lose with the signing of the cut-off treaty. One wonders what India will actually gain out of it.

War escalates against Rwandan refugees

by Linda de Hoyos

Bujumbura, the capital of Burundi, where the murderous Tutsi military is taking back political power under the benign eye of United Nations Commissioner Oud Abdallah, was the scene on Feb. 15-17 of an international conference to determine best how to induce refugees from Rwanda—now numbering approximately 2 million—back to Rwanda. The conference was jointly sponsored by the United Nations and the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees and the Organization of African Unity. There are approximately 500,000 refugees in Tanzania; 500,000 in Burundi; and slightly under 1 million in Zaire—a massive exodus caused by the Ugandan-backed invasion of Rwanda with the backing of British intelligence (see *EIR*, Oct. 28, 1994, p. 48).

The conference was held amidst a growing drumbeat in the western press that the Rwandan refugees must be forced home. The argument, as put forward in a commentary in the *Los Angeles Times* by former aid worker Mary Jane Marcus, is that the "humanitarian presence"—giving aid to Rwandan refugees—has had a "damaging effect on the prospects for peace and reconciliation." This is because the camps reportedly continue to be under the political control of the leaders of the former Rwandan government of the murdered President Juvenal Habyarimana, and because, according to her, these leaders were guilty of genocide against the Tutsi minority in Rwanda in the spring of 1994. The case has been most strongly stated by Alain Destexhe, secretary general of the group Doctors without Frontiers, who is demanding a U.N. military deployment into the camps to ensure that the perpetrators of the genocide are brought to account in a U.N. tribunal, and that the refugees are forced back home.

In a press conference at the United Nations on Feb. 6, Roger Winter, director of the U.S. Committee on Refugees, charged that the only reason Rwandan refugees stayed out of their country was the harassment and intimidation coming from members of the former Rwandan Army, who, he claimed, "force them to stay on as magnets for aid." The U.N. secretary general has a "duty to confront what has been the most organized, ruthless, and efficient genocide since the Holocaust," said Winter, demanding a U.N. force to clean out the refugees. Winter held the press conference jointly with the Rwandan Patriotic Front's (RPF) ambassador to the United Nations.

Politically, the RPF, formerly a section of the army of Uganda's unelected President Yoweri Museveni, will have