

other attacks on fortified rebel positions in western Nepal, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba paid a full week's visit to the United States during May 5-12, where he met George W. Bush, and then went to London for three days.

Washington has interests in Nepal—as does London, the old imperial power. In late April, at least 12 high-ranking U.S. military advisers toured contested areas of Nepal—the first time foreign military experts have been sent there. This followed Secretary of State Colin Powell's visit in January, when he promised “logistical support” to the Royal Nepali Army. Bush promised his “very happy” guest Deuba \$20 million in aid and military advice; U.S. interest is widely reported in setting up a military base, although Deuba is playing this down. The reaction by China would be very strong.

India's Quandary

India is in a difficult situation. It cannot, given the infiltration from the Pakistani side, end its “full alert” mobilization of 700,000 troops on the Line of Control. It also faces unceasing communal troubles in the state of Gujarat. These difficulties are only exacerbated by U.S. attentions. After decades of neglect, only at the very end of the second Clinton Administration, did Washington turn its eyes towards India. Under Bush, a steady stream of high-ranking visitors have proclaimed their interest, including Deputy Secretary of State Armitage, Defense Undersecretary Douglas Feith—Richard Perle's “alter ego” in the Bush Administration—and the State Department's Richard Haass. Finally, there was the pompous January visit of Henry Kissinger, who “invoked” the ideas of Lord Curzon, the British Viceroy who was the most extreme proponent of the “Forward School” ideology. Kissinger did not mention, that London abruptly fired Curzon in mid-term.

There is a murkier side to these delegates. Rocca herself was a Staff Operation Officer for the CIA Directorate of Operations from 1982-97—a highly tumultuous period in South Asia. She also authored Sen. Sam Brownback's “Silk Road Strategy Act” of 1999, which *excluded* India, China, and Russia from the Silk Road!

Armitage professed, in an interview with *The Hindu* in October 2001, that the U.S.-Pakistan policy on Afghanistan was in India's interests. On May 6, he gave another such interview, this time claiming that “cross-border infiltration [in Jammu and Kashmir] has gone down,” crediting “deliberate action,” and praising Musharraf's “intentions.” Delhi immediately contradicted these statements as to fact and substance.

Finally, at the U.S.-India Defense Cooperation Seminar held in Washington on May 13-14 and the following week, the U.S. side, led by Undersecretary Feith, stressed its desire to increase arms sales to India—except in critical areas of nuclear and missile technology. Feith did not hesitate to emphasize the “risk of war” between India and Pakistan.

However, New Delhi's cold reception of Rocca, should warn these imperial ideologues, that their operations may explode under their own feet.

Pakistan

Musharraf's Referendum May Benefit U.S.

by Ramtanu Maitra

On April 30, Pakistan's President and Chief of Army Staff, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, held a controversial nationwide referendum and claimed the Presidency of Pakistan for the next five years. President Musharraf seized power in October 1999 through a bloodless coup. It is likely that the legitimization of his power would help the United States in its campaign against terrorism in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

Washington's tacit approval for Musharraf to hold the referendum, which was opposed by most major political parties in Pakistan, on the grounds that it was unconstitutional, is a signal that the United States would lean heavily on him in the coming months in order to carry out its objective in Afghanistan. Although much has been said about the opposition to the referendum, since the process allows consolidation of political and military power in Musharraf's, there is no gainsaying that a large section of Pakistani citizens quietly supported Musharraf's quest for another unelected Presidential term. The fickleness of Pakistani politicians in the past has created a strong lobby within the country that supports the army rule.

Four Decades of Instability

The multinational corporations, which in the past had never been involved in local politics, were persuaded by the military establishment to support the referendum, with many taking out costly advertisements in the national press to champion the President's cause. It is likely that the referendum would lead to some sort of stabilization of the internal situation in Pakistan. At the same time, Musharraf's stuffing the ballot boxes to indicate a large turnout in his favor, has created wide-ranging cynicism and has sent a silent warning to the “legitimized” President.

History tells us that, since the days of President Iskander Mirza, the first Army Chief to seize power in Pakistan in 1958, nothing has ensured any stable rule in the country for an extended period. Neither Iskander Mirza, nor Field Marshal Ayub Khan, nor Gen. Yahya Khan, nor Gen. Mohammed Zia ul-Haq could stay in power as long as they wanted. None left voluntarily. Some were removed and at least one (Zia) was killed off. The same can be said about the civilian political forces. Except Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who did

complete a full term (1972-76) and was removed and hanged during his second term, all civilian leaders—his daughter Benazir Bhutto, and Nawaz Sharif, among others—were shown the door long before they could complete their duly elected terms.

Musharraf is aware of the volatility of both Pakistan's citizens and its army. More important, perhaps, is the fact that the process will further-weaken Pakistan's already-weak institutions, and may even corrupt them further.

Following the October invasion of Afghanistan to remove the Taliban administration, Washington has kept General Musharraf on his toes and has interfered in Pakistan's internal policies to stabilize him. India's mobilizing of 700,000 troops along the India-Pakistan borders has also helped the General maintain support from his powerful Army Commanders. Washington convinced New Delhi that the United States is eager to stop cross-border terrorism in the Indian border state of Jammu and Kashmir, and General Musharraf is a key element to make that happen. There is no question that either New Delhi had failed to recognize this American bluff, or was not in a position to contest it. Meanwhile, the cross-border terrorism continues unabated. This may create problems for Islamabad.

It is almost a certainty that in the coming months, President Musharraf will have to bend over backwards to satisfy the United States. The Americans have already established a number of bases within Pakistan, and it is widely acknowledged that Islamabad has given the Americans and British the green light to carry out military campaigns along its western borders to catch al-Qaeda and Taliban operatives.

Threat of a Civil War?

According to a recent critical article in the *Balochistan Post*, Musharraf faces the possibility of a civil war, especially in the tribal areas along the Afghan border, as he has created "a great mess" in this region. The "great mess" the *Post* refers to, is the permission the General has given for foreign and Pakistani troops to comb the "Tribal Areas" of western Pakistan for al-Qaeda and Taliban activists. The article also charged Musharraf with "implementing another agenda"—the agenda to break up Pakistan, if Pakistan cannot dissociate itself from Islam.

The *Post* claims this agenda has been put in place by people such as U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and the CIA director George J. Tenet. "It would be wrong if somebody believes that the war in the tribal areas would remain confined to the mountains. This tribal war is going to



Gen. Pervez Musharraf

spread for sure and it may even engulf cities like Islamabad and Lahore, not to talk about Quetta and Peshawar where there is already a great tribal influence. . . . Our miseries will multiply a thousand times when our armed forces face a split," said the *Post*, adding that the Army and Frontier Corps were made up of many tribes "whose villages are going to become a battlefield."

President Musharraf will also have to withstand, in the coming months, the American pressure to conduct "free and fair" elections in October 2002, to constitute a new National Assembly and hand over governance of the country to a political party, as Musharraf promised soon after he seized power in 1999. Islamabad must note that this is much more difficult than pushing through the referendum. If Musharraf cannot satisfy Washington on his "fairness" in the coming general elections, it is a foregone conclusion that the United States will exert more pressure in other areas. But it is also not clear how much "fairness" he himself can tolerate.

Following the referendum, Musharraf is now in a position to make constitutional changes which would place more power in his hands at the cost of democratic institutions, such as the Prime Minister's office and the National Assembly. He must note that all military and some civilian Presidents of Pakistan have used this *modus operandi* to centralize power. But ultimately, they lost the support of both the people and military, as they undermined all the institutions.

Election Dilemma

If the media reports are indications, President Musharraf will have his hands full in setting up the October elections. He has already made it clear that Pakistan People's Party chief Benazir Bhutto, and Pakistan Muslim League (N) chief Nawaz Sharif (whom Musharraf ousted in 1999) will not be allowed to participate in the general elections. Both former Prime Ministers are in exile, but threatening to reappear and lead their respective political parties, Pakistan's two largest. If President Musharraf has his way, he will not allow either of these parties to win in October. This may create a popular backlash.

The President, like most military dictators, is now in the process of forming his own political grouping. There is no doubt that a large number of political has-beens in Pakistan will jump onto this bandwagon and agree to play the second fiddle to satisfy the Army. The issue is whether Washington will agree to this variation of a "free and fair" poll. If it does, Musharraf will be home free, at least for a while.

But, if not, he will face a crisis. It is well nigh impossible for him to allow Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, both of whom were accused of looting and pillaging Pakistan's treasury, to come back and pick up where they had left off. It is a certainty that the Pakistani military will not agree to the return of these individuals. In addition, their presence in Pakistan may very well be a genuine political threat to Musharraf.