



*[Editor's note: PacNet 37 provided a positive assessment of the recent Indo-U.S. agreement. This response provides a decidedly different perspective.]*

## **U.S. makes a bad deal with India** by Robyn Lim

Even a supposedly realpolitik U.S. administration is not very good at it. The Bush administration, pursuing the chimera of alliance with India that it inherited from the Clinton administration, is merely helping the further unraveling of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). Washington is doing so by deciding to treat India, which has not signed the treaty, as a de facto nuclear weapons state. Now India is to gain full access to civilian nuclear materials and technology. Allowing India to sidestep the NPT will make even more intractable the problems of dealing with the nuclear weapons ambitions of North Korea and Iran.

India will balance against China, and does not need to be encouraged by the U.S. to do so. Nor should the U.S. have to pay any price for alignment with India, either in relation to the NPT or to Kashmir (where none has clean hands, including India which has used mass rape as a weapon of war).

It is hard to imagine a less reliable U.S. ally than India. For evidence of that, look no further than the way India plays footsie with Iran. Nor is India likely to allow itself to be used as America's pawn in relation to China.

The Indians, having backed the losing side during the Cold War, are also good at whitewashing history. Although India now professes to have been an innocent advocate of non-alignment during the Cold War, it was in fact Moscow's stooge. Few seem to recall now that India applauded the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as heartily as it had cheered Moscow's invasion of Hungary in 1956. India's main role in the nonaligned movement was to undermine support for the U.S., not least by challenging the U.S. lease from Britain of the vital Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia.

Currently, India has opposed the U.S. invasion of Iraq. It is still a major buyer of Russian military hardware. Moreover, India has its own ambitions in the Indian Ocean as its navy seeks to secure a larger slice of the defense pie, and that makes its smaller neighbors wary.

It is true that India, unlike China and Pakistan, has not proliferated missiles and nuclear technology. And that China is utterly hypocritical, professing to be a "good international citizen" while being an enthusiastic proliferator. But that is not the whole story.

As in Iran, for example, in India there is much spillover between civilian and military programs. India is not going to allow inspections of its military facilities. But much technology these days is dual use, and it would be naïve to think that India would never cheat because it is a democracy.

(How many democratically elected presidents of Pakistan, for example, looked U.S. presidents in the eye and lied blatantly about Pakistan's nuclear ambitions?) And let's not forget that various powerful interests in the United States are now keen to sell supposedly proliferation-resistant nuclear reactors, and will not be too finicky about dual-use technology.

In effect, India has succeeded in its long campaign of railing against so-called "nuclear apartheid" and is now being rewarded for doing so (even though India failed to secure U.S. agreement that India should be formally treated as nuclear weapons state under the NPT – if only because all five of the original nuclear weapons states including China would have had to agree, and that is hardly likely).

How, for example, can the U.S. justify its objection to China's selling Pakistan two new reactors when the U.S. is proposing to sell reactors to India? Moreover, India's nuclear industry, like much of the rest of the Indian economy, remains virtually closed to foreign investors. So it would be folly to expect much transparency.

And what of Japan, whose dismay at this shortsighted U.S. policy has been hard to conceal? While Japan's own nuclear policies are riddled with contradictions, it does not help matters for Washington to be adding another layer of contradictions. True, Japan remains content to rely on the U.S. for its nuclear security not because of blind faith in the NPT, but because Japan continues to believe in the efficacy of the U.S. nuclear umbrella. Moreover, the NPT is unraveling in large part because North Korea and Iran, in pursuit of nuclear weapons as means of regime survival, have been able to defy the so-called international community and get away with it.

Still, the NPT is part of a wider framework that helps keep Japan "nonnuclear." And Japan has always hedged its bets, as it must on such a bedrock issue of national security – for example by deflecting efforts by pacifists and socialists during the Cold War to enshrine Japan's so-called three nonnuclear policies in the constitution, which is very hard to amend. Currently, it serves no one's interest, including China's, for naïve U.S. policies toward India to be further undermining the NPT.

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