THE VIEW FROM INDIA AND PAKISTAN

Rodney W. Jones

The central issue of this article is how nuclear technology transfer to Asia can be used to advance U.S. foreign and security policy interests, including nonproliferation goals. Interest in this issue is undoubtedly higher today because the stage has been set for peaceful nuclear energy cooperation between the United States and the People's Republic of China. Reaching agreement with China on the legal terms of that cooperation was not easy, and the idea of that cooperation as well as the specific terms have been a matter of domestic controversy in the United States.

In fact, negotiating with China to establish an agreement for cooperation on peaceful nuclear development took more than a little political courage and required the administration to walk a tightrope. It succeeded in pressing its case with Congress, in the final analysis, because there were good nonproliferation policy reasons for engaging China in nuclear trade. There were also obvious risks that China might someday betray the terms of the agreement as they are understood in Washington, especially since some provisions are loosely drawn. But there are no important ventures without risks, and the balance struck made sense on various counts. The steps that China has taken away from an earlier policy that seemed to endorse nuclear weapons proliferation, toward an alternative that is much closer to prevailing nonproliferation norms, warranted support. Moreover, the real tests of that agreement are yet to come in implementation, where there will be room for U.S. executive branch resourcefulness.

My task is to discuss the problems of nuclear technology transfer and policy balance as these relate to India and Pakistan, two important Asian countries. The opening of U.S. nuclear cooperation with China is a useful point of departure, however, because it was acutely felt and closely watched in the subcontinent. There, the tendency is to read between the lines and lift out possible geopolitical implications that may have had little or no bearing on the U.S. debate.

There is another reason for approaching the subcontinent in light of the cooperation agreement with China. It has long seemed clear that a resolution of the conflict problems in the subcontinent, including those that

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revolve around nuclear proliferation would best be addressed in a larger, Asian regional context, one that includes China. The Afghanistan conflict, incidentally, adds to rather than detracts from such a rationale.

**IMPACT ON THE SUBCONTINENT OF NUCLEAR TRANSFERS TO CHINA.**

There are three points to bear in mind when trying to grasp the impact on leadership perceptions in India and Pakistan of the opening of nuclear cooperation with China. First, this U.S. opening with China is on an opposite course to that of nuclear relations over the last decade with India and Pakistan: U.S. nuclear exports to the latter once were permitted but are now virtually forbidden under U.S. law until a recipient party changes its policies. Second, the U.S. willingness to countenance nuclear trade with China seems, by certain local interpretations, to contradict the nonproliferation goals the U.S. stands for by recognizing, legitimating, and even “rewarding” a nuclear-proliferant power for going nuclear. Third, U.S. nuclear trade with China—however much it may be confined to “peaceful” channels—seems to be a strategically significant policy reversal. In the particular case of China, this policy lifts the longstanding postwar embargo by the West of all nuclear and most militarily sensitive trade with communist powers.

Indian and Pakistani perspectives are different, of course, on how U.S.-Chinese nuclear cooperation suits their respective national interests; presumably the alarm felt in New Delhi is not matched in Islamabad. But the perceptions in both capitals of the irony of U.S. nuclear cooperation with a communist power and of underlying strategic ramifications are not dissimilar.

The first and second points, which converge for India and Pakistan, are perceived to imply a double standard—or possible confusion of goals—in U.S. conduct of international nuclear cooperation. The rhetoric of leaders in either South Asian state may be exaggerated, but the fact that U.S. law (and the Non-Proliferation Treaty) makes a distinction between what may be expected of nuclear and nonnuclear powers in the application safeguards and other nonproliferation criteria rankles. What rankles most probably is not the U.S. willingness to trade nuclear technology with a nuclear weapon power (a proliferator) so much as U.S. unwillingness to trade nuclear technology with certain nonnuclear weapon powers (self-described as nonproliferators).

However confusing this may seem from a global nonproliferation standpoint, the problem posed for the subcontinent by regularized nuclear trade with China can be boiled down to a syllogism that Indian and Pakistani leaders fully appreciate as politically significant: if U.S. nuclear trade is