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Shill for American Capitalism

Obama's India Visit

by NORMAN POLLACK

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After delivering a State of the Union Address that put Obama, with his Ben-and-Rebekah shtick which served to personify/miniaturize US advanced capitalism, as though Dagwood and Blondie sitting around the breakfast table, he set off to India, awaiting the open arms of Prime Minister Modi, as pitchman for the American nuclear power industry. Compare at the outset the double standard with reference to Iran. (It invariably depends on whose ox is gored.) We do for India what we not only refrain from doing for Iran, but positively try to crush Iran to realize the Israeli-Saudi geopolitical power play in the Middle East. India is okay—the military-civilian distinction in the use of nuclear materials pushed by Bush and Condi in their visit ten years before is alive and well for one, declared anathema as applied to the other. But why the delay in execution? India during that time and for decades previously had been seen as one of the principal counterweights to China in the region, Japan being the other. And hence, do whatever it takes to keep India happy—except in one salient area of concern.

The hang-up in potential deals was analogous to what we find in straight-out US imperialism: America's insistence on what has been euphemistically termed status-of-forces agreements, usually signed, as was true of Iraq, under duress. In this case, whatever crimes committed by the US military (and one includes here as well, Blackwater "private contractors," a.k.a., mercenaries) would not be subject to punishment in Iraqi courts. The equivalent here, in the advent of a nuclear catastrophe of whatever kind, American companies would not, in India, be liable for

damages, civil or criminal. India resisted for ten years; under Modi it caved. No wonder the warm, developing friendship between the two countries; his embrace of Obama on the tarmac symbolically represents perhaps the sickest episode in India's history since 1947. What would Gandhi, and even Nehru, have to say about such an unholy alliance, India being sucked into America's plans to isolate, contain, and if possible dismember China—with Modi's counterpart, PM Abe recently freed from military restrictions in Japan's Constitution to press China from another direction.

Obama, as usual, does Bush one better, whether on successfully pushing American companies on India, or intensifying drone-warfare assassinations, or, relevant to both, shifting the US geostrategic posture from Europe to the Pacific, the pivot of military "assets" therein, accompanied by the Trans-Pacific Trade Partnership, complementing America's military moves. And India succumbs to his blandishments! I cannot speak for India's reasons, but manifestly it has signed up as America's ally in the New Cold War, perhaps in the perception that Russia cannot withstand American pressures and a new protector against China and to a lesser extent Pakistan is in order. Of course, Obama's "diplomatic" mission is disguised as the effort to secure a treaty on climate change, but (a) that's ludicrous given America's shabby record on the issue, and (b) climate change pales in significance, for US policy makers, compared with building the nuclear capacity of India (we'll see, unlike with Iran, how stringently monitored India will be in the use of materials for military purposes—something Bush earlier had accepted) as a chief deterrent of China.

Traveling with Obama, Peter Baker and Ellen Barry report in The Times's article, "Obama Lands in India, With Aim of Building Stronger Ties," (Jan. 25): "Negotiators were working to clear the way for American companies to build nuclear power plants in India. Mr. Obama's predecessor, President George W. Bush, sealed a civilian nuclear cooperation agreement with India, but it has been held up for years by a dispute over India's liability law. The Indian news media reported Sunday that the two sides had made progress toward a breakthrough that would be announced later in the day." Doubtless Obama would not have made the visit if issues of liability and criminality were not to be resolved in the companies' favor. And The Times itself appears jubilant:

"A breakthrough on the nuclear issue would provide both leaders a tangible achievement from the visit Mr. Bush reached agreement with India in 2006 to end a decades-long moratorium on sales of nuclear fuels and reactor components while India in exchange would separate civilian and military nuclear programs and open civilian facilities to international inspections."

Ergo, military facilities are accepted, legitimate, and because supplied with "nuclear fuels and reactor components," actively encouraged. Nuclear power politics has entered a new and still more dangerous stage. In the article, The Times explains why the delay over the years in reaching an agreement: "But the promise of a thriving nuclear trade between the powers never materialized because of an Indian law that would hold American energy companies liable for accidents. American companies sought more protection, while the Indian government argued that the American government should pressure the companies to invest anyway." Fat chance; that's

not how imperialism operates. If this were not fraught with such danger, abstractly, further nuclear proliferation, concretely, a decisive move contributing to continued US global hegemony, the issue might be passed over as simply the way American presidents always act, pushing exports, foreign investment, and in happy coincidence with the two, as is true here, the furtherance of military and strategic objectives. Yet it is so typical, as witness Halliburton, Boeing, in fact the entire “defense” industry—business-government mutuality to the point of structural integration (a critical factor in the systemic emergence of fascism, ideological trappings depended on to follow)—that I see the pattern, Obama carrying water for the same configuration of the military and intelligence communities on the one hand, mega-corporations favored by government on the other, as did those who came before him, as therefore confirming an ingrained policy-framework of war, intervention, and capitalist expansion. After India, whom else to buy off?