

NOTE

MONOPOLIZING TECHNOLOGY

Bharat Jhunjhunwala writes :

Iran has started its nuclear enrichment programme. This follows the nuclear explosions made by India, Pakistan and North Korea. These steps have been taken within the confines of international law. India and Pakistan had not signed the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). North Korea had legally pulled out of the same in 2003. Iran has the right to develop nuclear energy sources within the NPT. Yet the prominent world powers have imposed sanctions against India, Pakistan and North Korea after their nuclear explosions and are slated to do so against Iran presently.

The sanctions imposed against India failed. Rather they had the salutary effect of prompting India to make even more efforts at indigenous development of technologies which the developed nations were unwilling to part with such as the supercomputer. Sanctions are in place against North Korea for more than a decade yet that country has managed to make a nuclear explosion. The proposed sanctions against Iran are likely to have a similar ending because the nature of technology is like the water of the sea. Just as water spreads evenly across all oceans easily so also technology spreads across all lands given time. The Big Five are trying to artificially restrict the spread of technology and to keep their exclusive control over the same intact.

Kalam, in reply to a question on the impact of economic sanctions, says “I believe that Indians have always been able to successfully combat such challenges. Earlier, the West had imposed sanctions on us in the fields of nuclear and missile technology. That taught us to become self-reliant in these areas and today we do not need their help at all.”

In his book *Vision 2020*, President Abdul Kalam writes: “Just as there has been a racial element in human history, it would appear that this element is entering into the technological arena too. Developed nations feel that only they are capable of developing certain types of aerospace, missile and nuclear technology. But we should ignore this and go ahead with our technology development.”

The impact of sanctions depends upon the mental makeup of the target country.

A 1992 document of the United States Government’s General Accounting Office titled “Economic Sanctions Effectiveness as Tools of Foreign Policy Cultural characteristics of the target nation and international publicity can either enhance or weaken the effect of the measures. If the target nation has a strong shame and honor code, that is, if “saving face” is important-or if sanctions receive substantial publicity, sanctions may create a backlash in the target nation, particularly if harsh, comprehensive measures are used from the onset of sanctions.” The document goes on to point out that sanctions do not ruin the target nation’s economy. Over time, the targeted country can develop new suppliers and markets, although at increased cost. For example, South Africa’s apartheid regime, the target of multilateral boycotts,

replaced most lost exports in 2 years, but incurred losses from discounts on the prices of its products and the added transportation costs required to develop alternative markets. Sanctions can also raise costs for the sanctioning nation, including lost profits of forgone exports and financial transactions and additional expenses from purchasing more expensive imports from alternative suppliers. This last point is important in the context of India. The United States needs Indian software programmers and outsourcing outfits to remain competitive in the global economy. It seems this was one reason for the lifting of sanctions against India.

Nihal Singh reports that according to the International Atomic Energy Agency, 49 countries, other than the present nine, have the capacity to make the bomb. Brazil, South Africa and Japan have declared intention of reviving their nuclear programmes. The logical result of the tendency of technology to spread spontaneously and the ineffectiveness of sanctions is that nuclear technology will spread inevitably. ✍

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