

COMMENT

## LIVING WITH INDIAN BOMB

SECTION 123 OF THE US ATOMIC Energy Act of 1954 sets conditions on nuclear agreements with other countries. The present "123 agreement" makes an exception for India. This tells the world that India's readiness to co-operate has finally satisfied the US. It is now worthy of being sold nuclear fuel, reactors, and technology, even though it does not sign the non-proliferation treaty.

The agreement allows 8 out of the 22 existing reactors and a fast breeder reactor under construction to remain outside the purview of International Atomic Energy Agency inspection. So, India's nuclear weapons programme can continue. Even the penalty of the return of all material and technology supplied, in the event of non-compliance with IAEA safeguards or a new test explosion, of which much has been made by the parliamentary Left, has an escape valve. In violation of the aims of the Hyde Act, the "123 agreement" provides that the US government can exercise its discretion to arrange for such supplies to continue from countries like France, Britain and Russia. In any case, activation of the penalty is to entail compensation.

Why does the US suddenly find that it can live with the Indian bomb? There are several reasons.

The Indian bomb threatens neighbouring countries, most notably Pakistan and China, but the US is still far beyond the range of Indian missiles. So, without having to tolerate any imminent danger to its own security, the US sees the new pro-reform, pro-globalisation, pro-US India as its future beach head against China and a possible China-Russia-Central Asia axis on the lines of the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation, as well as a fast developing ally of Israel against Palestine, Iran and fundamentalism. The American Jewish Committee openly supported the proposed deal.

The Indian nuclear programme is self-reliant and actually unstoppable without military intervention. As it is going to continue anyway, so, apart from good business policy, it is sound military and diplomatic strategy to exercise a degree of control over the supply line of fuel.

India has opened her markets to US capital. From \$ 11 million in 1991, US FDI in India has soared to \$ 5 billion in 2005-06, a 450 times increase in 15 years. US capital wants its government to reward India, of course, in a manner which will increase her dependence on the US. A list of US companies which were lined up by the US India Business Council to lobby the US Congress to approve of the "123 agreement" includes General Electric, Ford Motors, Lockheed Martin, Boeing, and Aerospace Industries Association.

The deal wraps India more tightly in the embrace of US finance-capital and its strategic-military geopolitics.□