

China, Pakistan, and Nuclear Non-Proliferation

Written by John Hallam

Tuesday, 24 February 2015 16:38 -

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<http://thediplomat.com/2015/02/china-pakistan-and-nuclear-non-proliferation/>

Recent evidence regarding China's involvement in Pakistan's nuclear program should provoke international scrutiny.

By Rohan Joshi

February 16, 2015

China's confirmation that it is involved in at least six nuclear power projects in Pakistan underscores long-standing concerns over both the manner in which both China and Pakistan have gone about engaging in nuclear commerce and the lack of transparency around China-Pakistan nuclear cooperation in general. The guidelines of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), a 48-nation body that regulates the export of civilian nuclear technology, prohibit the export of such technology to states, like Pakistan, that have not adopted full-scope International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. Yet over the last decade, China has accelerated nuclear commerce with Pakistan while contending that its actions are in compliance with NSG guidelines, an argument that is not entirely convincing.

Today, China is not only a violator of global nuclear non-proliferation norms, but also presents the most convincing evidence of the non-proliferation regime's ineffectiveness. The pattern of its behavior on the nuclear front as it relates to Pakistan goes well beyond the scope of what may be construed as the state's legitimate ambition to be a leader in the supply of civilian nuclear technology.

Some writers blame the 2005 U.S.-India nuclear agreement as having been a catalyst to China-Pakistan nuclear cooperation. But this is a false proposition, since China's nuclear relationship with Pakistan, both military and civilian, precedes the U.S.-India nuclear deal by decades. Moreover, while the U.S.-India agreement was aimed at bringing India into the mainstream of nuclear commerce and global nonproliferation efforts, the China-Pakistan relationship is designed to operate effectively outside of the mainstream.

As Ashley Tellis, senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace noted in 2010, "...the Bush administration spent considerable energy from October 2005 until the final extraordinary plenary in September 2008—consulting with its NSG partners during

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eight meetings over four years...to finally secure the special waiver for India that exempted it from the constraining condition of full-scope safeguards. The current Sino-Pakistani nuclear transaction could not be more different.”

Pakistan’s own interest in nuclear technology dates back to the 1960s. In March 1965, Pakistan’s then-Foreign Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto declared in an interview with the Manchester Guardian that if India were to produce a nuclear weapon, Pakistan “should have to eat grass and get one, or build one of our own.” A few months prior to India’s “Smiling Buddha” nuclear test in 1974, Bhutto met with top Pakistani scientists to begin work on a Pakistani nuclear device, codenamed Project 706. Bhutto enlisted the services of the now-infamous AQ Khan, who stole blueprints for centrifuge technology and contact information of vendors that sold centrifuge components from his employer, a research laboratory in the Netherlands.

Back in Pakistan, AQ Khan began work on the development of Pakistan’s indigenous uranium enrichment capability at a gas centrifuge facility in Kahuta, near Rawalpindi. The first signs of Sino-Pakistani nuclear cooperation emerged in 1977. U.S. government officials noted China’s commitment to Pakistan to provide “fuel services” and that Chinese technicians visited at Karachi Nuclear Power Plant (KANUPP) to familiarize themselves with the operation of the reactor. By 1978, Khan was able to produce small quantities of enriched reactor-grade uranium at Kahuta.

China’s assistance ultimately proved to be pivotal in Pakistan’s pursuit of the nuclear bomb. In 1982, according to AQ Khan, China provided Pakistan 50 kilograms of weapons-grade uranium, enough to make two nuclear bombs, as part of a “broad-ranging, secret nuclear deal” between Mao Zedong and Bhutto. The following year, China reportedly provided Pakistan the complete design for a 25 kt nuclear bomb. A State Department memo at the time concluded that “China has provided assistance to Pakistan’s program to develop a nuclear weapons capability. Over the past several years, China and Pakistan have maintained contacts in the nuclear field...[w]e now believe cooperation has taken place in the area of fissile material production and possibly also nuclear weapons design.”

The U.S. Atomic Energy Act (1954) requires termination of U.S. nuclear exports if countries are determined by the president to be assisting non-nuclear weapons states in acquiring nuclear weapons capabilities. Although successive U.S. administrations were aware of Pakistan and China’s clandestine nuclear cooperation, they did not sufficiently press either China or Pakistan nor threaten to terminate nuclear

commerce with China.

China, for its part, continued to stringently deny any role in providing assistance to the Pakistani nuclear program. At a state dinner in Washington, D.C., Premier Zhao Ziyang declared, "We do not advocate or encourage nuclear proliferation. We do not engage in nuclear proliferation ourselves, nor do we help other countries develop nuclear weapons." But by 1985, Pakistan's Kahuta facility, as a result of technical assistance from China, had successfully been able to produce the quantities of highly-enriched uranium needed to build a nuclear bomb. For the first time since discovering Pakistan's nuclear ambitions and China's illegal assistance, the U.S. government refused to certify that Pakistan had not assembled a nuclear device in 1990, which resulted in the suspension of U.S. military and economic aid to Pakistan per the Pressler Amendment.

U.S. pressure, however, did little to constrain Chinese assistance to Pakistan's nuclear program, even as China moved toward becoming a signatory to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). In January 1992, barely two months before it acceded to the NPT, China announced the construction of a nuclear power plant in Pakistan. Concerns that Chinese safeguards were not tough enough to prevent a diversion of nuclear resources to Pakistan's nuclear weapons program resulted in the U.S. issuing a demarche to China.

China's appetite for proliferation remained undiminished even after it acceded to the NPT. In 1995, it allegedly sold Pakistan 5,000 ring magnets needed for high-speed gas centrifuges, while a U.S. intelligence report in 1997 held that "China was the single most important supplier of equipment and technology for weapons of mass destruction" in the world.

China's civil nuclear trade commitments with Pakistan have gained considerable momentum since Pakistan's nuclear tests in May 1998. The China-Pakistan Power Plant Corporation's Chashma-1 and Chashma-2 power reactors, which were under item-specific IAEA safeguards, were held not to be in violation of NSG guidelines as they were pre-existing commitments and thus "grandfathered" in at the time of China's induction into the NSG in 2004. However, China then entered into agreements in 2009 for the construction of two new 340 MW power plants (Chashma-3 and Chashma-4). There have since been reports of undertakings for the construction of additional plants in Chashma and Karachi.

Some in Pakistan have argued that these commitments date back to a 1986 agreement with China on cooperation in construction and operation

of nuclear reactors for an initial period of 30 years, and thus not in violation of NSG guidelines. This spurious argument, if accepted, implies that China can continue to commit to any number of additional nuclear projects in Pakistan without any repercussions. It is another matter that the actual text of the so-called 1986 agreement remains unreleased and shrouded in mystery, thereby preventing the international community from validating Chinese and Pakistani representations.

China has demonstrated remarkable consistency over four decades in acting in ways that undermine with impunity the global non-proliferation regime. Its nuclear deals with Pakistan – both military and civilian – were conceived and executed in secrecy. The recent news articles now confirm that China remains committed to a long-term nuclear relationship with Pakistan under its own terms. This is a pattern of behavior that is unlikely to change without the application of sustained international pressure to bring China into compliance with the commitments it has undertaken.

<http://thediomat.com/2015/02/china-confirms-pakistan-nuclear-projects/>

China Confirms Pakistan Nuclear Projects

Top official confirms extent of the growing Sino-Pakistan nuclear link.

By Prashanth Parameswaran

February 10, 2015

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A Chinese official publicly confirmed Monday that Beijing is involved in at least six nuclear power projects in Pakistan and is likely to export more to the country, media reports said.

In a press conference in Beijing, Wang Xiaotao, the vice-minister of the National Development and Reform Commission, said China “has assisted in building six nuclear reactors in Pakistan with a total installed capacity of 3.4 million kilowatts.”

Wang, who was unveiling plans for new guidelines for Chinese exports in the nuclear sector, also said that Beijing was keen to provide further exports to countries, which would presumably include Pakistan given previous reports and trends.

The Sino-Pakistan nuclear link has been well-known even though some specifics are often shrouded in secrecy. This is reportedly the first time that a top official has publicly admitted to such a scale of China’s cooperation with Pakistan.

Revelations about the growing Sino-Pakistan nuclear axis comes amid continuing concerns expressed by some that ongoing cooperation is occurring without the sanction of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) which helps supervise the export of global civilian nuclear technology. China is a member of the NSG and existing regulations prohibit members from exporting such technology nations like Pakistan which do not adopt full-scale safeguards.

China declared the first two reactors it already agreed to construct for Pakistan – the Chashma-1 and Chashma 2 – at the time it joined the Nuclear Suppliers Group in 2004, with the expectation that no new deals would follow. But in 2010, the China National Nuclear Cooperation announced it would export technology for two new reactors, Chashma-3 and Chashma-4 because it argued – rather controversially – that these projects were already grandfathered in under previous agreements rather than being fresh proposals.

News of other deals has since followed, including a November 2013 announcement that China would help build two reactors in Karachi and a January 2014 report about talks on three other reactors, which The Diplomat reported on here. Pakistani officials say this is part of broader plans to produce around 8,800 megawatts of electricity from nuclear power by 2030 and overcome crippling power shortages that plague the nation.

Pakistan has also previously sought to secure an exception within the NSG which would allow it to conduct nuclear commerce freely with

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suppliers. India had received one with U.S. support in 2008 and New Delhi is now seeking membership in the NSG. Both India and Pakistan are not members of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.