

CounterPunch

JUNE 16-30, 2009

ALEXANDER COCKBURN AND JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

VOL. 16, NO. 12

How the U.S. Has Secretly Backed Pakistan's Nuclear Program

By Andrew Cockburn

This is an expanded version of Andrew Cockburn's important world exclusive, which we recently ran on the CounterPunch website. Editors.

Hillary Clinton recently told *Fox News*, "If the worst, the unthinkable, were to happen, and this advancing Taliban encouraged and supported by Al Qaeda and other extremists were to essentially topple the government ... then they would have keys to the nuclear arsenal of Pakistan." Many will note that the extremists posing this unthinkable prospect were set up in business by the U.S. in the first place. But, very well buried is the fact that the nuclear arsenal has been itself the object of U.S. encouragement over the years and is to this very day sustained by crucial U.S. financial assistance and technical support.

Back in 1979, Zbigniew Brzezinski, intent on his own jihad against the USSR, declared that the "Afghan resistance" should be supplied with money and arms. That, of course, required full Pakistani cooperation, which would, Brzezinski underlined, "require a review of our policy toward Pakistan, more guarantees to it, more arms aid, and, alas, a decision that our security policy toward Pakistan cannot be dictated by our nonproliferation policy." In other words, Pakistan was free to get on with building a bomb so long as we could arm the people who have subsequently come back to haunt us. Asked for his views on Pakistan's nuclear ambitions, Ronald Reagan replied, "I just don't think it's any of our business." During the years that A.Q. Khan was peddling his uranium enrichment technology around the world, his shipping manager was a CIA agent,

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As a new edition of the shrink's bible looms Inside the DSM: The Drug Baron's Campaign to Pathologize Entirely Natural Emotional Responses

By Eugenia Tsao

Some years ago, a friend told me that he had been diagnosed with a major depressive disorder and that his psychiatrist had given him a prescription for Forest Laboratories' popular SSRI antidepressant Celexa (chemical name, citalopram hydrobromide; \$1.5 billion in sales in 2003). Knowing him to be a vociferous critic of the pharmaceutical companies, I asked whether he agreed that the origins of his unhappiness were biological in nature. He replied that he unequivocally did not. "But," he confided, "now I might be able to get my grades back up."

This guy was, at the time, a full-time undergraduate student who managed rent, groceries and tuition only by working two part-time jobs. He awoke before dawn each morning in order to transcribe interviews for a local graduate student, then embarked upon an hour-long commute to campus, attended classes until late afternoon, and then finally headed over to a nearby café to wash dishes until nine o'clock in the evening. By the time he arrived home each night, he was too exhausted to work on the sundry assignments, essays and lab reports that populated his course syllabi. As the school year dragged on, he had become increasingly disheartened about his slipping grades and mounting fatigue and decided, finally, that something had to be done. So he'd seen the psychiatrist and was now on Celexa.

It is worth reflecting on this anecdote, and others like it, as research proceeds on the upcoming revision of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V)*, a draft of which is slated for release in late 2009.

When perceived through the aseptic lens of statistics, diagnostic rates, and other seemingly objective metrics, the urgency with which companies like Pfizer exhort us to monitor ourselves for sadness or restlessness and to "ask your doctor if Zoloft is right for you" assumes a superficially unproblematic aspect. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, over 17 million American adults are afflicted with clinical depression each year, costing the national economy \$30 billion in absenteeism, inefficiency and medical expenses. Eighty per cent of those afflicted will never seek psychiatric treatment, despite the American Psychiatric Association's regular reassurances that 80-90 per cent of chronic depression cases can be successfully treated, and 15 per cent will attempt suicide. Suicide is, indeed, the third leading cause of death among American youth aged 10 to 24.

Implicit to the drug companies' messianic promises of health, happiness and economic productivity is a spurious parable of linear scientific progress: in spite of consistently inconclusive clinical trials, new psychotropic drugs are regularly marketed as improvements on old ones, ever more specific in their targeting of neurotransmitters, ever less productive of pernicious side effects. While revelations that put the lie to the industry's feigned beneficence have belatedly crept into the mainstream press in recent years, the extent to which our lives and livelihoods have been colonized by the reductive logic of pharmaceutical intervention remains breathtaking. As Laurence Kirmayer of McGill University has suggested, the millennial rise of a "cosmetic" psychopharmaceutical in-

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whose masters had little problem with allowing the trade to go forward.

For the sake of appearances, naturally, Washington had to retain the posture of an ardent anti-proliferator. So, unwitting portions of the bureaucracy labored on as if U.S. policy really was to prevent Pakistani acquisition of nuclear weapons. Hence the sad but by no means unique story of Richard Barlow, a CIA analyst who testified to a congressional committee about Pakistan's extensive nuclear-component smuggling network. Telling the truth while his superiors were blithely lying ruined his career at the Agency. Transferred to the Pentagon, Barlow pursued the same course and soon suffered the same punishment, not least because Dick Cheney, defense secretary in the elder Bush's administration, was pushing forcefully for a benign attitude to Pakistan's bomb program. After all, there was a lucrative sale of F-16 jet fighters at stake.

When customs agents plotted a sting to catch a key member of the covert Pakistani network charged with acquiring necessary components for "the Islamic Bomb," their quarry escaped thanks to a timely tip-off from a high-level State Department official.

Now comes word from inside the Obama government that little has

changed. "Most of the aid we've sent them over the past few years has been diverted into their nuclear program," a senior national security official in the current administration recently told me. Most of this diverted aid – \$5.56 billion as of a year ago – was officially designated "Coalition Support Funds" for Pakistani military operations against the Taliban.

As a former national security official with knowledge of the policy explained to me, "We want to get in there and manage [their nuclear program]. If we manage it, we can make sure they don't start testing, or start a war." In other words, the U.S. is helping the Pakistanis to modernize their nuclear arsenal in hopes that the U.S. will, thereby, gain a measure of control. The official aim of U.S. technical support, at an estimated cost of \$100 million a year, is to render the Pakistani weapons safer, i.e., less likely to go off if dropped, and more "secure," meaning out of the reach of our old friends, the extremists.

However, in pursuit of this objective,

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it is inevitable that the U.S. is not only rendering the warheads more operationally reliable, it is also transferring the technology required to design more sophisticated warheads without having to test them, a system known as "stockpile stewardship."

Conceived after the U.S. forswore live testing in 1993 as a means to "test" weapons through computer simulations, this vastly expensive program not only ensures the weapons' reliability (at least in theory) but also the viability of new and improved designs. In reality, the stewardship program has been as much a boon-doggle for the politically powerful nuclear laboratories at Livermore and Los Alamos as anything else, so outreach in the form of assistance to the Pakistanis in this area can only gratify our own weaponeers.

"If you're not confident that weapons are safe to handle, you're more likely to keep them in the basement," says nuclear command and control expert Bruce Blair, president of the World Security Institute.

"The military is always pressuring to deploy the weapons, which requires an increase in readiness." In 2008, Blair himself was approached by the Pakistani military seeking advice on means to render their weapons more secure. Their aim, he says, was to render their nuclear force "mature" and "operational."

Pakistan's drive to build more nukes is an inevitable by-product of the 2008 nuclear cooperation deal with India that overturned U.S. law and gave the Indians access to U.S. nuclear technology, not to mention massive arms sales, despite their ongoing bomb program.

The deal blew an enormous hole in the Non-Proliferation Treaty, but initial protests from congressional doves were soon smothered under human-wave assaults by arms company and nuclear industry lobbyists. The Israelis lent additional and potent assistance on Capitol Hill. Not coincidentally, Israeli arms dealers, promised a significant slice of the action, have garnered at least \$1.5 billion worth of orders from Delhi. (The respected Israeli daily *Haaretz* has highlighted Indian media reports that the bribes involved totaled \$120 million.) Nuclear power's handmaiden, the global warming lobby, was also a wellspring of ardent support, led by Rajendra Pachauri, the Indian railroad engineer who is chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which shared Al Gore's Nobel prize.) Even the Dalai Lama was drafted in to use his influence with impressionable members of Congress.

The consequent success in overturning a longstanding arms control treaty which in turn has led to the U.S. extending a helping hand to India's nuclear rivals in Pakistan, should only be seen as the wave of the future. Instead of foaming at the Iranian nuclear program, we should be standing at the ready to oversee their design of safer, more reliable nukes, and, after that, who knows? North Korea's bomb probably needs a helping hand too. **CP**

Andrew Cockburn writes about national security and related matters. His most recent book is *Rumsfeld: His Rise, Fall and Catastrophic Legacy*. He is the co-producer of *American Casino*, a feature documentary on the ongoing financial collapse. He can be reached at amcockburn@gmail.com.

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