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Policy Forum 08-12A: Afghanistan: The Slim Possibility of Peace and the Probability of a Longer, Wider, More Dangerous War - Richard Tanter

1. Defence Spending Reforms Nigh, John Kerin, AFR*, 2008-10-29

Defence Minister Joel Fitzgibbon says the federal government will adopt the majority of the recommendations from a review of the $100 billion defence purchasing and maintenance program in a bid to rein in project cost blow-outs and delays. And in a move that appears to put the minister on a collision course with the nation's military chiefs, Mr Fitzgibbon said he was determined to upgrade the role of the government's military weapons purchaser.
* Subscription required.

- Minister Wants ADF Ready for Operations, Patrick Walters, Australian, 2008-10-30
- Australia to Join US in Developing Army Vehicles That Offer Better Protect from Roadside Bombs, Patrick Walters, Australian, 2008-10-29

- IEDs and Counter IED Task Force, Australian Forces Abroad, Nautilus Institute

2. Afghans, Pakistanis Opt to Talk to Taliban Council Backs Dialogue with Insurgents, Shaiq Hussain, Washington Post*, 2008-10-29

Pakistani and Afghan leaders have agreed to make contact with insurgent groups, including the Taliban, in a bid to end bloodshed and violence in their troubled border regions. The United States, too, has of late indicated a greater willingness to allow talks, with the goal of peeling off more moderate insurgents from those considered irreconcilable.
* Subscription required.

3. Pakistan Summons US Ambassador Over Air Strikes, AFP, 2008-10-29

Pakistan on Wednesday registered "a strong protest" with Washington's ambassador to Islamabad over a number of missile attacks by US drones inside its territory, the foreign ministry said. "It was emphasised that such attacks were a violation of Pakistan's sovereignty and should be stopped immediately. The attacks also undermine public support for the government's counter-terrorism efforts" the ministry said in a statement.

4. Gates Calls for Modernization of US Nuclear Arsenal, AFP, 2008-10-28

US Defense Secretary Robert Gates has called for the modernization of the US nuclear arsenal to strengthen deterrence at a time when Russia and China are upgrading their nuclear weapons. "Currently, the United States is the only declared nuclear power that is neither modernizing its nuclear arsenal nor has the capability to produce a new nuclear weapon," he said.

5. Taiwan's Retreat from Alms Race Good for Pacific, Rowan Callick, Australian, 2008-10-29

Chequebook diplomacy - used by China and Taiwan to secure the recognition of the world's smaller nations - may be on its way out. It is good news for countries such as Australia that complain that this battle for diplomatic loyalty has too often derailed attempts to improve governance in developing nations. But it may prove bad news for corrupt politicians, including those in Pacific island nations, who have been the major beneficiaries.

6. West Papua: Inside Indonesia? Issue 94, Inside Indonesia, Oct - Dec 2008

This edition of Inside Indonesia marks an important anniversary, and explores the multiple faces of Indonesian Papua today. Authors include Richard Chauvel, who provides an overview of the recent politics of special autonomy in the territory and Muridan S. Widjojo, who offers a new framework to address the Papua conflict within the framework of the Indonesian state, arguing that Indonesia's present security approach to conflict resolution creates unnecessary and violent tension.

7. Australia Deserves a Voice in Reshaping the World, Allan Gyngell, AFR, 2008-10-30

Australia's case for membership of any new body is strong. But logic doesn't always win in out in international politics. If Rudd can help ensure that the Washington conference is not just a one-off effort to resolve an immediate crisis but becomes a pathway to a new forum for international engagement, Australian interests will be well served. But high levels of both statecraft and

diplomacy will be required.

8. Global Fund to Address Avian Influenza Remains in Deficit, Jakarta Post, 2008-10-29

A budget deficit is still hampering the global initiative to contain avian influenza from reaching a pandemic level. The chief executive of the National Commission for Avian Influenza and Pandemic Preparedness Bayu Krisnamurti, said that the actual deficit could be larger than the estimation as the total fund distributed from the $2.7 billion allocation had only reached 73 percent as of early this month.

9. Policy Forum 08-12A: Afghanistan: The Slim Possibility of Peace and the Probability of a Longer, Wider, More Dangerous War - Richard Tanter

Richard Tanter of the Nautilus institute writes that “by virtually every dimension, the war in Afghanistan is getting much worse for both the western coalition and for the Afghani civilian population.” “The strategic benefits are minimal to non-existent”, Tanter argues, “and the risks of a widening war alarming, and the moral and humanitarian consequences appalling”. Tanter argues that “strategic confusion, institutional inertia and self-interest provide most of the answer” as to why the US remains in Afghanistan. “Australia’s commitment shares the same strategic confusion, mixed with a diffuse paternalistic enthusiasm not too far distant from a nineteenth century imperialist ideal of civilising the natives.” Tanter concludes that “the US, and its allies, will leave, without any definable or honourable victory. The Afghans will stay.” If the current logic of expansion of the war engulfs Pakistan, “withdrawal and defeat will take place eventually, but later, and after an infinitely more catastrophic and dangerous war.”

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Richard Tanter,
Project Co-ordinator

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Nautilus Institute
608 San Miguel Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707-1535 | Phone: (510) 423-0372 | Email: nautilus@nautilus.org