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Nuclear Issues

1. "No First Use" Policy

Shaukat Qadir writes in an essay for the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies in New Delhi that deterrence is based upon the belief that one's opponent believes you will use nuclear weapons, and that the "no first use" policy is antithetical to deterrence. Qadir argues that both India and the PRC possess a crude strike capability, but as the time horizon for reacting to a strike is so short, the mitigation of threats should focus on the possibility of nuclear strikes through misperception or through accidental or unauthorized launch.

2. India Nuclear Policy

Gurmeet Kanwal, a Research Fellow at the Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses, writes that the isolation of India's nuclear weapons program from the military has undermined its credibility. Kanwal argues that this can be remedied through a consultative planning process and placing qualified military personnel in control of all aspects of nuclear weapons in the field, including security for the warheads and their delivery systems.

Commander Vijay Sakhuja, a Research Fellow at the Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses, reviews worldwide trends in the naval deployment of strategic nuclear weapons and the importance of nuclear-capable submarines to India's nuclear doctrine. Sakhuja argues for Indian development of a strategic nuclear submarine force to provide for a second-strike capability.

3. Pakistan Nuclear Policy

B. Muralidhar Reddy writes in Frontline Magazine that while Pakistan continues to favor deployment of a credible minimum nuclear deterrent force, Pakistan is also realizing the steps sought by the international community on the nuclear front. Especially economic issues, rather than political or military, have forced Musharraf's regime to reconsider the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty issue. Reddy states that Pakistan's nuclear program has developed strongly over the past three years, unconstrained by internal politics relative to India's program.

India

1. Defense Issues

An Indian MiG-29 fighter crashed near the Line of Control in Kashmir. Pakistan was informed of the search and rescue mission to recover the pilot's body.

Indian Air Chief Marshal A.Y. Tipnis briefed Defense Minister Jaswant Singh on the state of the Indian Air Force. Tipnis told Singh that the Air Force required more fighter squadrons and greater budgetary support for existing planes.

2. India-Iran Relations

India and Iran are to sign as many as five agreements during Indian Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee's visit to Iran. They are also to sign a joint statement that outlines the future of India-Iran cooperation, but energy security is expected to be the most important issue. India and Iran have discussed for some time the prospects for a natural gas pipeline from Iran to India, though Iran would prefer the pipeline to go overland through Pakistan.

India, Iran to sign five accords

As Iran and India agreed to extend to each other Most Favored Nation status for trade, India offered Iran a \$200 million credit for its economic development plan. They also agreed to increase cooperation to confront growing extremism and terrorism in the region. Indian Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee stated that Iran was critical of Pakistan's role in supporting the Taliban in Afghanistan, and that the two countries would take "effective steps" to tackle the issue.

Smita Gupta writes that a point of convergence between India and Iran has been India's objection to the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. However, they have differed over the course of a natural gas pipeline envisioned to connect India with Iran's supply, as Pakistan seeks to extract both taxes and supply from the pipeline should it travel through Pakistan. Gupta later reported that Iran respected India's resolve to not entertain third-party involvement in Kashmir. Gupta also stated that Iran supported India's stance on the Taliban in Afghanistan, which is supported by Pakistan.

The Taliban's Foreign Ministry responded to Indian Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee's comments by stating that Vajpayee was seeking to distract international attention away from Indian conspiracies with other countries to disrupt regional stability.

C. Raja Mohan writes in *The Hindu* that Indian Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee's visit to Iran, in conjunction with diplomacy targeting Saudi Arabia and Turkey, represents an ongoing effort to engage Islamic states. Mohan argues that India has shifted from an ideological approach to a pragmatic one, is seeking greater economic interaction with other countries, and is trying to strengthen ties with Islamic states supporting political moderation.

3. PRC Support for Afghanistan Policy

PRC Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue, when asked whether the PRC saw a role for India in bringing peace and stability to Afghanistan, stated that the PRC welcomed any efforts. Pakistan Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar, however, rejected a role for India, stating that India was not among those identified by the UN as participating in bringing peace to Afghanistan.

4. India-Pakistan Relations

While flying over Pakistan on his way to Iran, Indian Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee sent a message to Pakistan Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf expressing his "best wishes" for the peace process and the "well-being of the people of Pakistan." *The Times of India* reported that such messages are routine for country leaders, but that the particular India-Pakistan relationship makes this message special.

In his address to the Iranian Parliament, Indian Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee asked Pakistan to abandon violence, stating, "violence and dialogue can not go hand in hand." Vajpayee also recognized the contribution Islam has made to India, but said "dark forces" of violence and terrorism would not be permitted to cast a shadow on India's secular structure.

5. Clinton Visit

Former US President Bill Clinton finished his trip to India on April 10th, and press secretary Joe Lockhart indicated the Clinton may return again in December. Siddharth Srivastava wrote in the Times of India that Clinton has been disappointed by the slow progress of development in some villages and by the apathetic approach of the central government to earthquake rebuilding. Clinton had stated that India-US relations were on the right track and will likely improve.

6. India-US Relations

The Hindu reported that External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh's recently concluded meetings with officials in the US has been described in the Indian media as a positive indicator to the future of the India-US relationship. The US media has portrayed the meetings as a "robust interaction," albeit one that lacks strong definition. The Hindu states that Bush seemed to have portrayed India's role as being important to the global strategic calculus. However, India refrained from seeking a US-friendly role such as an alliance, preferring instead to pursue a "partnership."

After meeting with US President George Bush, Indian External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh was interviewed by the Times of India. Singh stated that India-US relations should not be dependent upon other relations the two have, and that their bilateral relationship would not be affected by the US-PRC relationship.

K.K. Katyal wrote in The Hindu that, during External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh's meetings with them, US officials in the Bush administration were focused on the pragmatic. Katyal states that in the past the US has sought to develop India as a counterbalance to the PRC, and that this is particularly salient with the US-PRC row over US intelligence gathering off the PRC's coast.

Afzaal Mahmood argues in The Dawn that Pakistan's hope for stronger relations with the US has been dashed by the Bush administration's pursuit of an active and pointed cooperation with India that is greater than under the Clinton administration. Mahmood states that the strengthening of US-India ties is being driven by strategic reassessments being conducted by the Bush administration, some of which are driven by the importance of the Asia-Pacific and the PRC's growing global role.

Stephen Cohen and Sunil Dasgupta, of the Brookings Institution, discuss US foreign policy under the Bush administration in the context of India and Pakistan. They review institutional changes in the US bureaucracy to better approach the region and identify the top US foreign policy goals in South Asia. They conclude that while the Bush administration will continue its tilt towards India, the presence in Bush's cabinet of advisors who last served in administrations more favorable to Pakistan means a relationship will be rebuilt with Pakistan.

V. Sudarshan writes in Outlook India that increased tensions in the US-PRC relationship provides India with greater leverage in its relations with the US.

7. Foreign Relations: Bhutan

India sealed the border with Bhutan around Assam after seven separatists were shot by Indian troops. Security forces are concerned that Assamese militants will disrupt scheduled elections.

Pakistan

1. Military Government

Former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto said that she was willing to consider a proposal to allow Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf to become president of Pakistan, insofar as Musharraf restored democracy. The Hindu stated that Bhutto is attempting to facilitate her return to Pakistan. Bhutto also stated her belief that India would prefer to work with an elected government rather than one not supported by popular mandate.

B. Muralidhar Reddy reported in The Hindu that Pakistan's Herald and Newline have recently described Pakistan Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf as the future President of Pakistan. Reddy argues that, because Musharraf has not complained and because he stated that he would not retire when his term ends in October, Musharraf clearly intends to take over the Presidency.

Hamid Nasir Chattha, convener of Pakistan's Grand Democratic Alliance, stated that his party would have no objections to any moves made by Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf to become president within the three-year deadline set by the Supreme Court. Chattha also stated that Musharraf's government should not extend past the three-year deadline and should not attempt to amend the constitution.

2. Pakistan-India Dialogue

The Pakistan Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas, Abbas Sarfaraj Khan, described as a "major breakthrough" the possibility that India's and Pakistan's foreign ministers may meet on the sidelines of the upcoming SAARC meeting in Kathmandu in May.

An editorial in The Dawn argued that the possible meeting of foreign secretaries at SAARC will be marred by the inability of the two sides to find appropriate issues to discuss. The editorial argues that India refuses to discuss Kashmir and also evades acting on agreements. It also argues that India's offer of talks with Kashmiris is likely a ruse to buy time for India to keep Pakistan out of the discussions while isolating Kashmiri militant groups.

3. Pakistan-Administered Kashmir

The Hindu is reporting that with elections due in two months in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, there has emerged a debate between the People's Party and the opposition Muslim Conference over how to respond to recent Indian peace initiatives. The Muslim Conference has advocated giving the process a chance to succeed while the People's Party has denounced the moves as meaningless.

Pakistani Ambassador to the US Maleeha Lodhi criticized the US for its stance on Kashmir, stating that the US unwillingness to play a role in Kashmir unless invited to by both countries effectively gives India a veto over peacemaking efforts in the region.

4. Pakistan-PRC Relations

M. Muralidhar Reddy writes in The Hindu that Pakistan is anxious over the US-PRC spy plane incident. Reddy argues that while Pakistan sees the PRC as an "all-weather friend," it is not prepared to harm relations with the US by openly supporting the PRC's position on this issue.

Pakistan Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar began a four-day trip to the PRC for consultations on issues of mutual interest, including the peace process with India, settlement of Kashmir, and nuclear restraint.

In an op-ed in The Dawn, Professor Khalid Mahmud argues that opinion leaders in Pakistan should move beyond the "India factor" in Pakistan-PRC relations. Mahmud argues that leaders must recognize that Pakistan should not impose unrealistic conditions upon the relationship should the

PRC choose to pursue better relations with India.

Kashmir

1. India-Kashmiri Dialogue

Former Defense Minister and president of the National Congress Party Sharad Pawar spent several days camping in Srinagar in Kashmir and meeting with separatist leaders to break the stalemate, including Democratic Freedom Party leader Shabir Ahmad Shah and APHC leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani. Shah reportedly told Pawar that Indian security forces were violating the ceasefire.

K.C. Pant, the Indian government's designated interlocutor for talks with Kashmiri groups, was reticent to discuss the timetable for the beginning of talks. Hizbul Mujahideen spokesman Salim Hashmi was critical of India's dialogue offer, stating, "Such offers of bilateral talks have been made in the past, but proved to be just a bluff used by the Indians to hoodwink international opinion."

The Times of India reports that K.C. Pant is proceeding with the talks without preconditions and is not speaking to the media on the issue, seeking to avoid the mistakes made in previous talks between the central government and Kashmiris.

K.C. Pant began discussions on Kashmir with former and current officials in the Kashmir State government and with leaders of political parties represented in the state assembly. Pant also met with a senior Kashmir police official and ministers of the central government. Pant ruled out participation by Pakistan-based militant groups, but implied that Kashmir-based militant groups could participate. Groups which were sent an invitation to participate also included constituent groups in the All Parties Hurriyat Conference.

Shabir Shah, president of the separatist Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party, said that he was prepared to participate in talks with the central government, but that the central government should also begin talks with Pakistan in order to achieve a real breakthrough on Kashmir. He stated that he was not advocating trilateral talks, but that all parties needed to achieve a consensus on Kashmir.

An editorial in The Dawn argues that it is too early to evaluate the Indian government's current dialogue initiative with Kashmiris, but states that there are positive signs because the agenda is broad and India has not stated any preconditions.

2. Militant Groups

All Parties Hurriyat Conference Chairman Abdul Gani Bhat met in New Delhi with the Pakistan High Commission for several hours in what was described as a routine meeting, but at which they were believed to have discussed the Indian government's offer of talks with Kashmiri groups. The APHC appears to have rejected the offer of talks, though Abdul Gani Lone described Bhat's statements as a "personal view." The Jamaat-e-Islami, a constituent of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference and of the Hizbul Mujahideen, has declined to state a position.

The All Parties Hurriyat Conference stated that only tripartite talks with India, Pakistan and the APHC will find a solution to Kashmir, and not "talking to a crowd," a criticism of the Indian government's attempt to start talks with Kashmiri groups. However, statements by Abdul Gani Lone indicate that there are some divisions within the APHC over how to approach India's offer of talks.

The All Parties Hurriyat Conference maintained its position that it would not meet for talks with the Indian government until its delegation has traveled to Pakistan to meet with militant groups and the government there. The Dawn reports that People's League party leader Sheikh Abdulaziz, also a member of the APHC executive council, would be traveling to Pakistan next week under a passport originally issued so he could attend a wedding.

All Parties Hurriyat Conference chairman Abdul Ghani Bhat stated that the executive council would meet to formulate an official response to the dialogue offer.

Sri Lanka

1. Peace Talks

The Sri Lankan government continues to discuss internally the demand by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) that the government rescind a ban on the LTTE before it will participate in peace talks.

2. Government Offensive

The Sri Lankan air force bombed LTTE bases, causing damage to the LTTE's naval forces.

3. Government Ceasefire

One day after the bombing attack, the government announced it would release ten LTTE fighters and observe a several-day ceasefire in honor of the Sinhala and Tamil New Year. The LTTE's current ceasefire is due to expire on April 24. Sri Lanka later accused the LTTE of taking advantage of the ceasefire by planting landmines.

Several days into the government's declared ceasefire, the LTTE began firing mortar rounds and small arms at Sri Lankan troops. The Sri Lanka Defense Ministry reported that government troops did not retaliate.

The independent ceasefires were further shattered as government and LTTE naval forces clashed near Chalai.

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