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India

1. NPT Review Conference and other Nuclear Issues

The monthlong Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) review conference began in New York on April 24. Representatives of most non-nuclear states expressed frustration at the unwillingness of the U.S. to reduce the size of its nuclear arsenal. In response, U.S. State Department spokesperson James Rubin said, "Every time there's a review conference, there are some countries who have the unrealistic notion that disarmament is something that happens overnight." An editorial in the Times of India said that, after Russian ratification of START II and the CTBT, the United States alone is hindering progress toward global nuclear disarmament.

Norman Wulf, the head of the U.S. delegation to the NPT review conference, acknowledged that India's perception of a security threat from China complicates efforts to persuade India to join the NPT.

India and the U.S. "achieved common ground" regarding export controls during mid-level discussions that are intended to pave the way for another round of nuclear and security negotiations between U.S. Undersecretary of State Strobe Talbott and Indian External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh. John Shalikashvili, U.S. special advisor for the CTBT, said that the India-Pakistan border is "the most dangerous place in the world," nuclearization of South Asia made the region "less secure than before" and these tensions could be reduced if "both countries sign the CTBT." He acknowledged that U.S. President Clinton could not convince his Senate to ratify the treaty. An analysis by Amir Mateen (in The News, Pakistan) argues that competing interests within the U.S. hinder the Clinton administration's ability to negotiate with India.

India's President, K.R. Narayanan, said that nuclear cooperation between India and France would be possible only after India signs the CTBT. [For more on Narayanan's visit to France, see the next section.]

2. India-France Relations

Indian President K.R. Narayanan met with French President Jacques Chirac and many other officials during a week-long visit to France. The two countries agreed to major new cooperative security initiatives. French Defence Minister, Alain Richard, will continue the dialogue when he visits New Delhi in May.

3. Security Planning

Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes said that India should play a larger role in the Indian Ocean, "not as big brother but as a responsible neighbor who cares and is concerned." Separately, the Naval Operations Directorate announced that several navy ships would hold unilateral and bilateral exercises with the South Korean and Vietnamese navies in the South China Sea.

Ajit Kumar Panja, Minister of State for External Affairs, alleged that Pakistan is assisting a militant group in northeast India, the United Liberation Front of Assam.

Analysis: Atul Aneja supports the Indian decision to integrate Naval, Air Force, and Army operations. However, he argues, India should develop a naval cruise missile rather than the short-range ballistic missile currently in production.

4. U.N. Security Council

India continues to seek support for the proposal that India become a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council. French President Jaques Chirac described India as a "natural candidate." Russia, Vietnam, Laos, Cyprus, Mauritius, Bhutan, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic have supported India's candidacy.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar said that representatives of both France and Great Britain told him that their countries would not support India's effort to become a permanent member of the Security Council; Great Britain has agreed to work with India on U.N. reform. U.S. Congressman David Bonior told the Pakistani-American Congress that India should not be given Security Council membership until it demonstrated its diplomatic ability to resolve the Kashmir issue.

5. Foreign Relations: Israel, Iran, Bhutan

Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes said that India plans to purchase unmanned surveillance airplanes from Israel. Pakistani Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar responded that Pakistan would respond to any new aggression and that "the Line of Control is already tense as the Indian troops daily resort to unprovoked firing. Further escalation would not serve the cause of peace and security in the region."

Pakistan's Petroleum Secretary, Abdullah Yousuf, said that his government approved a project to send Iranian gas to India through Pakistan. He said that the next step is for Iran to approach India with the gas transport proposal. Indian External Affairs spokesperson R.S. Jassal said, "There is no such proposal." He suggested that such economic cooperation ideas were intended to soften international public opinion by suggesting that "business is as usual" between Pakistan and India.

Bhutanese Foreign Minister Lyonpo Jigmi Y. Thinley began a three-day visit to New Delhi. Indian External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh proposed a series of security and water power initiatives, but insisted that the Bhutanese government remove training camps for militants that disrupt life in northeast India.

6. India-China Relations

India asked the Chinese government to explain why Sikkim is depicted on a Chinese government map as a separate territory. Minister of State for External Affairs Ajit Kumar Panja said that China's "failure to recognize Sikkim as an integral part of India is having an adverse effect on the process of building trust and confidence between our two nations."

In a 10-page "Frontline" article, M.S. Bhattacharjea highlights high and low points in the fifty-year India-China relationship.

Pakistan

7. Security Planning

Javed Jabbar, security advisor to Chief Minister Pervez Musharraf, said that Pakistan can defend itself against India as long as the ratio of Pakistani to Indian soldiers does not fall below 1:4. He also said that, although Pakistan's "finger is not on the nuclear trigger," nuclear weapons provide the ultimate security guarantee.

Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar stated that Pakistan would not allow international terrorists to set up camps on Pakistani territory. Security advisor Javed Jabbar assured U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Karl Inderfurth that Pakistan would urge the Taliban government to eliminate terrorist training camps in Afghanistan.

8. Foreign Relations: Japan, British Commonwealth

Sadaaki Numata, Japan's Ambassador to Pakistan, again linked resumption of Japanese economic assistance to a Pakistani acceptance of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

Commonwealth Secretary General Donald McKinnon said that Pakistan will remain suspended from the Commonwealth until Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf sets a date for "normal" elections in Pakistan.

Kashmir

9. Suicide Attack

Using a tactic that is common in Sri Lanka but unprecedented in Kashmir, a suicide bomber attempted to attack a suburb of Srinagar. Indian government security was bolstered immediately after the attack.

10. Pakistan Dialogue

Pakistan's security advisor, Javed Jabbar, said that India continues to refuse to participate in peace talks as proposed by Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf. Pakistani Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar said that Pakistan will not engage in an arms race with India, but that Pakistan would "make a befitting response to safeguard its own security and territory, if a need arises."

Analysis: Both Afzaal Mahmood (in Dawn) and a Dawn editorial argue that India's inflammatory rhetoric at the Non-Aligned Movement meeting last week and by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in New Delhi make India-Pakistan rapprochement virtually impossible.

11. Indian Domestic Pressure

Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Chairman of the All Party Hurriyat Conference, said that seemingly positive statements by Indian Home Minister L.K. Advani and defense Minister George Fernandes were "political gimmicks" and that India is not sincere about negotiating the Kashmir issue. Farooq Abdullah, Chief Minister of Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir, said that the Line of Control should be made the formal international border between India and Pakistan. He said, "The time has come when we should retain what we have and let the Pakistanis keep what they have."

12. Japanese Initiatives

On April 20, Japan's Ambassador to Pakistan, Sadaaki Numata said that, "Tokyo offers a venue for the resumption of Indo-Pak talks to address their differences including Jammu and Kashmir." C. Raja Mohan (in The Hindu) expressed the widely held Indian opinion that "India is deeply disappointed at Japan's continuing inability to adjust its policies to the new strategic realities in the subcontinent." On April 22, "Japanese diplomats" in New Delhi said that the Pakistani media misquoted their ambassador to Pakistan. The government of Japan has no desire to host a future dialogue between India and Pakistan.

Sri Lanka

13. LTTE Military Gains

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) took control of the Elephant Pass military base and forced the retreat of 20,000 government military personnel. Using supplies seized from the base, LTTE soldiers are moving toward Jaffna, the "capitol" of the Tamil movement.

14. International Initiatives

An Indian Foreign Office statement said that the conflict is "an internal matter of Sri Lanka, which would be best resolved by Sri Lankans themselves." Nonetheless, following the fall of the Elephant Pass military complex, former Sri Lankan Army Commander Hamilton Wanasinghe urged his government to seek an international peacekeeping force, saying that "desperate times call for desperate measures."

Mauritius

15. Naval Acquisitions

Mauritius' only warship, the 1,400 ton MCGS Vigilant, has been fully overhauled and is again seaworthy after three years in dry-dock. The ship will be used to police the island nation's Exclusive Economic Zone.

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Nautilus Institute

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

nautilus@nautilus.org