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Nuclear Issues

1. India Nuclear Safety

India tested a 250 km version of its Prithvi surface-to-surface missile. Prithvi is believed to be nuclear capable. M.V. Ramana's essay in the Frontline, an Indian magazine, argues that the reported move by India to deploy nuclear weapons increases the risk of nuclear accidents and opens up the possibility of accidental or unauthorized use of the weapons.

["India tests long-range version of Prithvi"](#)

2. Related News and Analysis

The three-week 5th Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention ended in Geneva without an agreement on a final declaration. The US President George Bush announced his intentions to withdraw from the Anti Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty that was signed by the Soviet Union and the US in 1972.

["Draft eludes meet on biological weapons"](#)

Kenton Kieth, the spokesperson for the Coalition has stated his belief that Osama bin Ladin and Al Qaeda has not been able to acquire or produce any type of weapon of mass destruction. However, a recent report in the Washington Times claimed that the interrogation of John Walker - a US national fighting with the Taliban and captured by the Northern Alliance- has revealed Al-Qaeda's plans to attack US with biological weapons.

["Osama has no weapons of mass destruction"](#)

Afghanistan War and Implications

1. Afghanistan: Current Situation

A number of Taliban who surrendered to the Northern Alliance died while being transported to a prison in sealed shipping containers. Reports in Pakistan press indicate that tribal militias in and around Kandahar have killed over 400 non-Afghan Taliban fighters. A report carried by the News, a Pakistani daily, suggests that the Taliban, unlike Al-Qaeda, have successfully avoided any significant loss of their fighters. According to a report by Rahimullah Yusufzai the US warplanes have in recent days bombed vehicles carrying civilians and flattened villages that have nothing to do with the Taliban or Al-Qaeda.

During his visit to Kabul, the UN special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi reiterated that the Northern Alliance would support the deployment of a UN mandated multinational force in Afghanistan. The UN mandated force might be deployed as early as December 22.

["UN rejects concerns over security force"](#)

Reports in the Pakistan press indicated that al-Qaeda fighter faced with combined air and ground attack are ready to surrender. The negotiations for the surrender, however, failed.

["US bombs Tora Bora as surrender deadline lapses"](#)

2. Afghanistan: Future Prospects

Spokesperson for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan Ahmad Fawzi acknowledged that the Bonn Agreement is not fully representative of all Afghan political factions and ethnic groups. Afghanistan's nominal president Burhanuddin Rabbani told a news conference that

"when we sent the delegation to the Bonn conference, we did not send them to sign an agreement, we just sent them to discuss and negotiate."

3. Humanitarian Crisis

Red Cross workers have been removing bodies of Taliban fighters from the area around Kandahar airport. A spokesperson for The World Food Program (WFP) has described the condition of about 22,000 people in Kunduz as "extremely difficult and rough". The Amnesty International has stressed the need for arrangements to protect the Taliban prisoner of war.

["Foreigners be provided protection, says AI"](#)

A spokesperson for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has asked Afghan refugees not to return to their homes because of the poor security situation in Afghanistan. There have been reports of Afghan refugees in Pakistan returning back to Afghanistan. Through various measures, including troop deployment along its border with Afghanistan, Pakistani government has prevented the anticipated inflow of a large number of Afghan refugees into the country.

["DPs begin returning to Afghanistan voluntarily"](#)

["Refugees influx effectively blocked, says official"](#)

The recent opening of the Friendship Bridge linking Uzbekistan to Afghanistan, as well as the Nijni Pyandj - Shirkhan Bandar River crossing between Tajikistan and Afghanistan was welcomed by the UNHCR. Writing for the Far Eastern Economic Review, Murray Hiebert describes the difficulties faced by various humanitarian aid agencies in getting emergency supplies to millions of Afghans.

4. Pakistan

Pakistan has voiced its support for an investigation into the killing of the Taliban prisoners at Qila--Jangi. The Pakistani government has also reinforced security measures along its border with Afghanistan to prevent the Taliban and al-Qaeda fighter from entering into the country. Pakistan's president Pervez Musharraf and the special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Afghanistan Lakhdar Brahimi met in Islamabad to discuss the Afghan situation and the setting up a multinational force inside Afghanistan.

5. India

Writing for the Asia Times, Sultan Shahin examines the effects of Indian-Pakistan rivalry in Afghanistan on India's relationship with the US.

["Afghanistan shadow over Indo-US ties"](#)

6. United States' Role

Hamid Karzai, Afghanistan's interim leader has asked the US not to repeat its past mistakes and to stay engaged with Afghanistan.

7. General Assessments

Writing for the daily Hindu, Daulat Singh explores the possibility that "Pashtun irredentism could rear its head again." Author and writer Ahmed Rashid argues that Afghanistan now has a stark choice: it can "either take a determined crack at nation-building with international help, or return to tribalism and warlordism."

["Afghanistan - a cauldron"](#)

Pakistan

1. Pakistan: Domestic Situation

According to Pakistan's Federal Minister for Education Zobaida Jalil, the government is "taking concrete steps to bring the Madaris in to mainstream education." In her essay for the daily Dawn, Ayesha Agha argues that "specific programmes operated by the bureaucratic machinery sitting in Islamabad" would not succeed in transforming madressahs into more modern schools. As a part of its attempt to address the issues of religious extremism, the Pakistani government might be considering the inclusion of religious scholars in provincial government set-up.

In an essay for the Asia Times, Nadeem Yaqub looks at the fate of thousands of Pakistani men who had crossed into Afghanistan to join the Taliban.

["Pakistani fighters face government's wrath"](#)

Pakistan's total external debt has reached over \$43 billion while the total public debt stands at about \$46 billion.

2. Iran-Pakistan Relations

Writing for the Asia Times, Nadeem Iqbal examines the possible benefits of friendly bilateral relations between Pakistan-Iran.

["New era in Pakistan, Iran ties"](#)

3. US - Pakistan Relations

Muralidhar Reddy's essay in the Frontline magazine looks at emerging differences between Pakistan and the U.S. on the operations in Afghanistan.

India

1. India: Domestic Situation

Armed militants, allegedly members of a Kashmiri separatist group, stormed India's parliament. Twelve people, including all the militants, were killed in the attack. The Indian parliamentary opposition has stalled the introduction of the controversial Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO).

["Suicide attack on Indian parliament"](#)

The "Kargil coffins scam" has led to demands for the resignation of George Fernandes, India Defense Minister. Purinama Tripathi's report in the Frontline magazine examines how George Fernandes' reinduction into the Union Cabinet has turned out to be a major embarrassment for the government.

["Now, 'Kargil coffin' haunts Govt."](#)

["Fernandes must quit: Sonia"](#)

["POTO introduction stalled in LS"](#)

A report in the Frontline magazine argues that the censorship of history textbooks by India's National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) represents an attack on the ideas of pluralism and tolerance by Hindu religious right.

2. US-India Relations

India and the US are scheduled to conduct joint naval exercises in the Arabian Sea. Writing for the Frontline magazine, John Cherian takes a critical look at India's attempts to forge closer military ties with the US.

["India, U.S. to resume naval exercises"](#)

Kashmir

1. Internal Situation

Yasin Malik, the leader of Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), believes that the current global political environment might force India and Pakistan to resolve their dispute over Kashmir. Analyst Praveen Swami suggests that the split within Hizbul Mujahideen - a militant Kashmiri separatist group - might improve the chances for peace in the valley. Indian political scientist Amitabh Matto argues that the historical notion of a composite, syncretic identity - Kashmiriyat - has not completely lost its power despite polarized relations between different religious and ethnic groups in Jammu and Kashmir. The violence in the valley, however, continued.

2. India and Pakistan

The All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) is debating whether or not to cooperate with the new three-man team established by the Indian government to set up peace talks.

Salman Haider's opinion essay in the daily Hindu argues that international attention to the Kashmir issue could help in the resumption of bi-lateral talks between Pakistan and India.

["Afghan shadow on Kashmir"](#)

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Nautilus Institute

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

nautilus@nautilus.org