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INDIA

1. CTBT and Nuclear Policy

External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh urged "greater economic, commercial, and defense engagement in Central Asia, the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean region, and Southeast Asia" as a means to reduce the risks of nuclear conflict. In indirect response to the United States, Prime Minister A. B. Vajpayee repeated India's position that the Nuclear non-Proliferation Treaty is discriminatory and that, "in any event, we cannot join the NPT regime as a non-nuclear weapon power when the fact is that we are a nuclear weapon power."

Indian governmental action on the CTBT during the coming Winter Session of Parliament seems unlikely. K.K. Katyal analyses the press statements following last week's meetings between Strobe Talbott and Jaswant Singh. Defense Minister George Fernandes said that last year's U.S. Senate vote against CTBT ratification "resulted in the treaty sliding into a coma" despite U.S. State Department Spokesman James Rubin's statement that the U.S. "does intend eventually to ratify the CTBT."

The RSS weekly Organiser published two analyses that are sharply critical of the CTBT. Air Marshal (ret'd) A. K. Mukhopadhyaya argues that nuclear testing is important because it will enable India to stay on the technological cutting edge, including applications that go well beyond defense issues. Seshadri Chari argues that implementation of the CTBT will further institutionalize U.S. global dominance, while India would be faced with additional conventional weapons demands and, since India is unlikely to sign the NPT, continued sanctions.

2. Security Planning

George Fernandes explained his understanding of nuclear deterrence: an atomic arsenal "can deter only the use of nuclear weapons, but not any and all war." He continued that India was prepared to fight a limited conventional war with Pakistan if circumstances warranted such a war. Kargil during Summer 1999 was such a circumstance.

Several analysts evaluated India's security planning. Afzal Mahmood in a Dawn (Lahore) op ed argues that India's "limited war" rhetoric, combined with its actual attacks on the Line of Control (LoC), have been aimed at a domestic Indian audience, yet they could lead to escalating international conflict. Also in Dawn, M.H. Askari argues that the Indian government's use of military symbols in its attempt to enhance national integration. The Times of India (New Delhi) editorializes that, regardless of Pakistan's response, India is trying to signal that Pakistan's proxy wars might indeed escalate into border clashes and limited wars. The responsibility for such escalation would rest squarely on Pakistan.

3. Foreign Relations

Indonesia's President Wahid, in a Times of India interview prior to his state visit to New Delhi, explained that his chief objective would be to broaden bilateral and regional commercial ties; he also

expressed concern at escalating nuclear rhetoric by both India and Pakistan. K.K. Katyal argues in a Hindu op ed that political ambiguities in Afghanistan and Pakistan, particularly in regard to their diplomatic approaches to Chechnya, have brought Russia and India together as tactical allies.

4. Military Technology

Despite U.S. objections, Israel and India are beginning negotiations over the sale of Arrow "anti-tactical missiles." The Bofors corporation of Sweden is expected to send a new self-propelled artillery system to India for field trials in May.

PAKISTAN

5. Judicial Oath Issue

Chief Minister Pervez Musharraf ordered each of Pakistan's 102 superior court judges to swear that they will discharge their duties faithfully in accordance with the Proclamation of Emergency of October 14, 1999. That proclamation stated, in part, that "the Chief Executive has . . . the power to amend the constitution." The Chief Justice and 6 of the Supreme Court's 13 justices refused to take the oath; six of Pakistan's 88 High Court justices also refused. Those who refused were dismissed. Among his first acts, the new Chief Justice postponed hearings on a set of suits challenging the constitutionality of the military takeover.

Aziz Munshih, Pakistan's Law, Justice, and Human Rights Minister, said that the new oath does not constitute martial law: "It is not martial law, it is protection law." Predominant opinion in both the Pakistani and international press disagrees. Absent judicial review, according to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, the oath enables the Chief Executive to re-write the constitution as he chooses. The Hindu (Madras) editorialized that "It is the bane of Pakistan's politics that the tolerance level of its rulers is zero. The result is that the country's democracy is condemned to be in perpetual suspension."

The U.S. officially criticized Pakistan when James Rubin, the state department spokesman, said that "this move undermines the integrity and independence of the judiciary in Pakistan. It is contrary to the path of restoration of civilian rule the general had pledged to follow when he took power in October."

6. Governance and Security Planning

In another move to centralize government administration, Chief Executive Musharraf restored the pre-1973 level of authority to the Federal Public Service Commission. [The first link below describes the revived FPSC powers in detail.] In the words of The News (Islamabad), the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, Pakistan's highest defense policy-making body, "took an important decision to allay the security concerns of the country . . . The decision obviously was not released because of security reasons."

Citing a Jan 18 Los Angeles Times op ed by Selig Harrison, the Times of India (Delhi) (and, one week later, The Hindu [Madras]) reported a tension within Islamabad's top army leadership between Musharraf and two other powerful generals "with long-standing ties to Pakistan-based Islamic fundamentalist groups": Lt. Gen. Mohammed Aziz, chief of general staff; and Lt. Gen. Mahmoud Ahmed, director of Inter-Services Intelligence.

7. CTBT and Nuclear Policy

Chief of Naval Staff Abdul Aziz Mirza expressed concern that the demonstration of nuclear weapon capability by India and Pakistan has made the region more dangerous. Javed Jabbar, special advisor to the chief executive, emphasized that Pakistan is fully committed to maintaining a credible nuclear deterrent and that the government will take its decision on the CTBT "in the best national interests."

8. Pakistan-U.S. Relations

Dawn (Lahore) quoted a Washington Post report that President Bill Clinton has not attached any preconditions to visiting Pakistan when he travels to South Asia in March. Two The Hindu analysts suggest that the visit is preconditioned by measurable Pakistani action against terrorists. Amit Baruah focuses on terrorist organizations within Pakistan, such as the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen. C. Raja Mohan focuses on external terrorist relations with organizations resident in Afghanistan. Pakistan Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar said that the government "will not compromise on national interests," whether or not Clinton visits the country.

9. Pakistan-China Relations

Pakistan's Secretary of Defense, Nasim Rana, received a delegation from the Chinese Institute for International Strategic Studies. The CIISS delegation visited Islamabad in the wake of Chief Minister Musharraf's state visit to Beijing two weeks ago.

10. Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations

Afghan Foreign Minister Wakil Ahmad Mutawakil traveled to Islamabad for talks with his Pakistani counterpart, Abdul Sattar. Sattar called for "urgent measures" for the establishment of peace in Afghanistan. Mutawakil said that the message was "well received," but that Afghanistan has "no intention" of expelling Osama bin Ladin. A lengthy Dawn editorial acknowledged that "public announcements were long on rhetoric and short on substantive matters," but continued to analyze ways in which Pakistan, Iran, and the UN are working to normalize relations with the Taliban-led Afghan government.

11. Pakistan-United Kingdom Relations

Following up last week's statement in the House of Commons by Peter Hain, British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook said this week that "the military coup in Pakistan has been so universally condemned precisely because it is out of joint with the times."

KASHMIR

12. Military Engagements

The Indian press reported on January 25 that Pakistan engaged in "heavy mortar firing in the Krishna Ghati and Pallanwala sectors." The Pakistan press reported on January 29 that Indian forces "again fired two rockets on the Pakistan village of Daalowali." India reportedly also is installing a "catwire" fencing system along the India-Pakistan border in Rajasthan and Punjab. The system triggers a signal following "any movement within a range of 25 km." Both Pakistani and Indian analysts agree that independent freedom fighters are intensifying their attacks on the Indian side of the LoC.

13. Pakistan-India Diplomacy

Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes said on January 24 that India was prepared to engage in limited war with Pakistan. Next day, Pakistan Foreign Secretary Shamshad Ahmed Khan said that "Pakistan has repulsed this attack [of Indian forces in the Chamb sector] and is ready to counter any offensive by the Indian forces along the LoC or elsewhere."

Pakistan Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar, without naming the Lahore Declaration, said that Pakistan is "prepared to implement" the February 1999 Pakistan-India agreement. Chief Executive Musharraf repeated that he was ready to meet Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee, provided that the "centrality" of the Kashmir issue was accepted.

14. International Dialogue

Pakistan High Commissioner Akbar Ahmad called upon Britain to "play a pro-active role in resolving the outstanding" Kashmir issue. Foreign Minister asked UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to send an envoy to Kashmir "in the wake of Indian attacks across the LoC." India's Acting High Commissioner, Sudhir Vyas, "firmly rejected" the charge that Indian forces had crossed the LoC. U.S. President Clinton in his state of the union address said that where the U.S. "can make a difference, we must be peacemakers."

15. Analysis

In a Times of India op ed, M. D. Nalapat argues that Pakistan is reviving a strategy employed during the 1970-71 Bangladesh conflict: "increase participation of official conventional forces so that they can serve as a spearhead for mercenaries." Dawn editorializes that the rising tensions at the LoC are both dangerous and counterproductive, for "if Kashmir is to be liberated from Indian occupation, common sense says that it must be done by political means." Shujaat Bukhari provides a detailed picture of the challenges of daily living in Kashmir on the Indian side of the LoC.

HIJACKING/TERRORISM

16. Responsibility for Hijacking

A January 25 New York Times article on the Indian Airlines hijacking initiated a week of partial interpretations and clarifications by the South Asian press. Dawn (Lahore) interpreted the article to conclude that Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HUM) committed the hijacking; the Times of India (Delhi) and other Indian newspapers interpreted the same article to conclude that HUM had official Pakistani support. On January 26, both President Clinton and a State Department official said that the U.S. has no evidence of Pakistani involvement. Next day, an Indian foreign ministry spokesman challenged Clinton's statement, saying that "evidence is emanating from Pakistan on a daily basis . . . Statements from the U.S. suggest that their assessment of the event and the attendant circumstances is not yet complete.

The third of three prisoners released in exchange for Indian Airlines passengers, Umar Saeed Sheikh, "officially" surfaced in Pakistan. Another of these former prisoners, Maulana Masood Azhar, said from Islamabad that, if India attacks Kashmir, 600,000 armed Kashmiris would respond in a Kashmir 'jihad.'

17. Terrorism

On January 27, U.S. state department spokesman James Rubin said that Pakistan still could be designated a state sponsor of terrorism. On January 28, Democratic Congressman Frank Pallone introduced a House Resolution that, if passed, would urge Clinton to make such a designation. The bill was referred to a House subcommittee. On January 29, Rubin clarified that Pakistan would be declared a terrorist state only if "direct and willful support" to terrorist groups could be established. India reacted "cautiously" to the U.S. statements, while a Pakistan foreign ministry statement said that "official Pakistani agencies do not provide any support to the religious organizations involved in the [Kashmiri] insurgency . . . there is no warrant for any [U.S.] warning."

The "terrorism" focus shifted from the Himalayas when a Nagaland guerilla leader was arrested in Thailand. A rival insurgency leader (both seek an independent Nagaland), Kitovi Zhimomi, applauded Thailand's action, warning that "the region could become another Chechnya if cross-border terrorism is allowed by neighboring countries."

"As a result of renewed support by the Pakistani army regime to Punjab militants," writes a Times of India reporter, "Two prominent Pakistan-based militant organizations (Babbar Khalsa and Khalistan Commando Force) have joined hands to carry out subversive activities in [Indian Punjab]."

On January 24, George Fernandes urged the international community to forge a "coalition against terrorism." A foreign ministry spokesperson repeated this call one week later. A Pakistan armed forces spokesperson responded to the first statement by describing "Indian acts of cross-border state terrorism" as "intolerable." To the second, Singh Governor Mohammed Azim Daudpota said that his government "would take every possible measure for the elimination of terrorism." Bangladesh and Nigeria expressed a willingness to cooperate with India. A Russian foreign ministry statement said that "Moscow is compelled to state that Delhi's accusations against Islamabad of engaging in cross-border terrorism are beginning to appear more and more well-founded." A Pakistan foreign office spokesman objected to the Russian statement, saying that it is "based on the unfounded Indian allegations which have already been rejected by the international community."

BANGLADESH

18. Bangladesh-India Relations

In preparation for a minister-level meeting on February 7, the Indo-Bangladesh Joint Working Group completed its sixth round of talks on January 27. Issues discussed included border disputes surrounding some 27,000 acres, visas and immigration issues, and terrorism.

SRI LANKA

19. Peace Initiatives

Leiv Lunde, Norway's Secretary for Development, Cooperation, and Human Rights, entered Sri Lanka to explore the possibility for a Norwegian initiative to end the conflict. Sri Lankan President Chandrika Bumaratunga made clear that, while she will participate fully in the peace process, there is "no question" of withdrawing security forces from their forward camps and bases.

20. Military Initiatives

In the faces of recent defeats in the army's campaign against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the Sri Lankan government has ordered new Bell 412 helicopters and mortar-tracking equipment from the United States. It has also announced plans to recruit 15,000 more army personnel, leading to debates as to whether conscription will be required to generate this many recruits.

For its part, according to a State TV report, the LTTE reportedly "executed" 14 civilians, branding them "informers;" an LTTE parcel bomb killed 10 and injured more than 50; and, in Dawn op ed., Pamela Constable highlights a series of ironies that help to explain why Sri Lanka is no closer to peace.

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