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Nuclear Issues

1. India's Nuclear Command Authority

India has announced a set of political principles and administrative arrangements to manage its nuclear arsenal. V.R. Raghavan (Hindu, India) applauds the formalization of "what was essentially a set of unstructured arrangements among senior member of the politico-military-scientific establishment." The Daily Times (Pakistan) welcomes the announcement and urges India and Pakistan to "keep the weapons, secure them, but move on to better relations." W.P.S. Sidhu (Hindu, India), however, argues that "while trying to present the case of being a responsible state with nuclear weapons, India might have, inadvertently, taken a strategic mis-step." In his two-part article, M.V. Ramana (Daily Times, Pakistan) suggests that the setting up of a Nuclear Command Authority is "another step in the process of handing over nuclear weapons to the military and allowing them to use them in prosecuting wars." According to a daily Dawn report, Indian army, air force and navy were reluctant to surrender their nuclear arsenals to the newly formed strategic command.
"Nuclear Command Authority comes into being"
"Nuclear building blocks"
"A strategic mis-step?"
"Indian forces brawl over N-arsenal leadership"

Ghulam Umar, a retired Pakistan army general, worries that "it is much more than minimum deterrence that India is aiming at." Shaukat Qadir, a retired Pakistani army brigadier, writes that the suggestion made in India's National Security Advisory Board annual report that India should reconsider its policy of no-first use might be just an instance of "coercive diplomacy."
"India's emerging nuclear posture"

2. Related News and Analysis

India conducted tests of its surface-to-air Akash and surface-to-surface Agni missiles. Pakistan ruled out any tit-for-tat response to the missile tests but pledged to continue upgrading its strategic assets. Pakistan also announced that it has upgraded the security of its nuclear facilities and employees.
"Akash test-fired"
"Agni missile test-fired successfully"

India is reportedly developing Agni-III missile with a range of more than 3,000 km. According to the Indian President Abdul Kalam, "in the current decade, India will see its own combat aircraft and advanced missiles, space launchers, satellites and aeronautical systems ..[while].. flight trials for BrahMos have already commenced." Shishir Gupta, (Indian Express) reports on India's various

missile programs. Continuing the annual cooperative practice instituted since 1991, Pakistan and India exchanged information about each other's nuclear facilities.
"Agni-III testing by year-end"

India and the US held two days of talks on missile defense. Shaukat Qadir (Daily Times, Pakistan) argues that "the acquisition of ABM (anti-ballistic missile) systems by India would upset the already delicate asymmetrical balance of the region." Raja Mohan (Hindu) believes that the development of missile defenses is "one of India's most important national security imperatives." India has signed a three billion-dollar deal with Russia to lease four long-range nuclear bombers and two nuclear-capable submarines. The Daily Times reports that France and India are set to sign an agreement worth $2 billion to build six Scorpene submarines in India and deliver 36 missiles from a European consortium.
"India-US missile talks conclude"
"Countering Pak.'s nuclear blackmail"
"Moscow, New Delhi sign N-bombers, sub deal"

Afghanistan

1. Current News

According to the daily News, Kabul is planning high-level changes designed to strengthen the Afghan president Hamid Karzai and put checks on the powers enjoyed by warlords.

Afghan intelligence officers have claimed thwarting a plan to launch rocket attacks on the US embassy, international peacekeepers and Kabul airport. The Daily Times reports on al-Qaeda 'training camps' along Pakistan-Afghanistan border. Afghanistan's Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah has stated that there is "the need for more focus by our neighbouring country [Pakistan] on the issue of our borders." An unconfirmed report in the daily News suggest that a "non-Pashtun ethnic group, comprising of victims of atrocities of warlords in northern Afghan provinces, has emerged on the scene to wage Jihad against the US forces and their Afghan allies." Kahlid Hasan (Daily Times) reports that the Taliban are using "low-tech" to move around and evade capture.

2. Analysis

In his essay for the daily News, Pakistan, General Miraz Aslam Beg, former Pakistan's chief of army staff, criticizes US-led war on terror and believes that "ethnic territorial division" of Afghanistan cannot be undone. Ahmed Rashid (Daily Times) examines "new battles for influence" in Afghanistan.

Campaign Against Al-Qaeda

1. News and Analysis

The daily News reports that Pakistani authorities accompanied by "English-speaking foreigners" raided at least three Madaris (religious seminaries) in Islamabad. The daily Dawn reports that the Pakistan army deployed at the western borders with Afghanistan to check Al Qaeda infiltrators has planned fresh operations. Investigators believe that an Australian man arrested in Karachi has close links with Al Qaeda. The visiting team of French investigators has reportedly expressed dissatisfaction over the investigations of the bomb blast in Karachi that claimed the lives of 14

persons, including 11 Frenchmen last May. The US has handed over 483 vehicles and 626 wireless sets to the Frontier Corps in Balochistan in the latest installment under a 73-million-dollar security assistance package for Pakistan.
"Australian has links with Al Qaeda"
"US gives vehicles for border patrol"

India-Pakistan Tensions

1. News

Pakistan and India expelled four staff members of each other country's consulate. Indian Army Chief General Nirmal Chand Vij has stated that his troops can be recalled at a short notice "as the score with Pakistan has not been settled." General Vij also ruled out any reduction of troops in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). In a radio interview, Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes stated the "if Pakistan has decided that it wants to get itself destroyed and erased from the world map, then it may take this step of madness [use nuclear weapons]." His comments were in response to General Musharraf's earlier comments about Pakistan's "unconventional" weapons.
"Four expelled in tit-for-tat move"
"Score with Pakistan not settled, says India"

According to a military spokesman, the Pakistan Army killed at least five Indian soldiers in artillery exchanges across the Line of Control (LoC). The daily Dawn reports that a number of people have lost their lives or have become crippled due to the landmines planted by the army along the border areas.
"Landmines at border areas posing threat to lives"

2. Analysis

The daily Hindu writes that the complete breakdown of diplomatic relations between India and Pakistan indicate that the two countries "are not interested even in the hope of a future where they might live together in friendship." The Daily Times believes that "any escalation in the rhetoric of war at the moment goes in the BJP's favour as it enters its most crucial phase in India as an opponent of India's secular order." Shireen Mazari (News) believes that a "politico-diplomatic game plan is being operationalised" by India. Mushahid Hussain (Nation, Pakistan) argues that India has "launched a new Pakistan-specific offensive following the conclusion of a year of coercive diplomacy."
"Escalating absurdity"

Pakistan

1. Domestic News

Natural gas pipelines in Balochistan have come under repeated attacks by tribesmen. The daily News writes that these attacks "brings into stark relief the internal insecurity that threatens vital national installations."

The Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) - an alliance of 6 religious parties - is planning to launch a campaign aimed at changing Pakistan's pro-US foreign policy. MMA also wants an end to FBI

operations in the country. Qazi Hussain Ahmed, chief of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), and the vice president of the MMA, told a rally in Karachi that "voting for the MMA will mean a slap on the face of the imperialist United States and its agents in Pakistan." The MMA has also formally demanded of President Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali to appoint new governors of its choice in the NWFP and Balochistan provinces. Rafi Ullah Shehab (Nation) argues that steps taken up MMA to Islamise the society cannot be "justified in the light of the teachings of Islam." The daily News reports that video shop owners in Peshawar have voluntarily destroyed "thousands of porno videocassettes, CDs and posters, following the directives of the MMA Government to eliminate vulgarity from the province."
"MMA wants its own governors"

According to the daily Dawn, there are about 20 million illegally held arms in Pakistan.
"Awash with guns"

Justice Sajjad Ali Shah (Nation) examines Pakistan's history of legal and constitutional crisis. A daily News report lists names of some of the serving and retired military officer occupying civilian positions in the current federal government. Nineteen brigadiers of the Pakistan army have been promoted to the rank of major general.

2. US - Pakistan Relations

US Ambassador to Pakistan Nancy Powell urged Pakistan to prevent infiltration across the LoC and end the "use of Pakistan as a platform for terrorism." The daily News finds Ambassador Powell's remarks "off-track." Imtiaz Alam (News) believes that Pakistan "can't continue with the militancy in any form and on any pretext."

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri wants Pakistan excluded from US National Security Entry-Exit Registration System (NSEERS) that requires temporary visa holders from select countries to register with the US Immigration and Naturalization Service. The US Attorney General John Ashcroft rejected Kasuri request. Pervaiz Cheema (News) believes that this policy has "dismayed pro-American elements in Pakistan and strengthened the anti-American sentiments." The Daily Times suggests that "genuine security concerns could have been met more effectively if the policy had been conceived differently and applied more efficiently."

India

1. India: Domestic Situation

Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani has indicated that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will go to the next round of state assembly elections on the issues of the Ram temple, common civil code and abrogation of Article 370 in J&K. The BJP has also predicted that the next electoral battle will be fought between "cultural nationalism'' (Hindutva) and "pseudo-secularism.'' BJP's position was echoed more strongly by the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, and the Shiv Sena chief, Balasaheb Thackeray. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has reportedly decided to honor 600 of its veterans or their family members who played a ''commendable role in saving thousands of Hindus from the clutches of Muslim goons'' during Partition. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) has reportedly prepared a list of 50 foreign missionaries it wants deported from India.
"Hindutva will liberate minorities: BJP"
"Don't be ashamed of Hindutva: Modi"
"We are not wavering: Thackeray"

"RSS invokes ghosts of Partition"
"Cooper on his way out, VHP compiles list of 50 to follow"

Manesh Rangarajan (Telegraph) argues that "within the sangh parivar [united family - a term used to collectively refer to various Hindu political parties] the gloves are coming off and there is a mood to proclaim the core ideology." The Hindustan Times and the daily Hindu also expressed similar thoughts. Articles by Harish Khare (Hindu) and J.N. Dixit examine Congress' options and challenges as it confronts the sangh parivar.
"Unconcealed aggression"
"The Congress after Gujarat"

Gail Omvedt two-part essay argues that "the subtraction of Hindutva from Hinduism has proved impossible for the defenders of secularism to make."
"Pseudo-secularism - I"
"Pseudo-secularism - II"

There have been some moves towards resolving the long-standing issue of autonomy for Nagas in extreme northeastern India.
"The Naga peace process"
"There's a road ahead but no one's quite sure where it leads"

The Indian government is planning to introduce National Identity Cards. The State Assembly elections to the four states of Himachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura would be held on February 26.
"National ID cards soon"
"Assembly polls in four States on Feb. 26"

Retired Rear Admiral Raja Menon argues that the aircraft carrier Admiral Gorschkov, recently acquired by India from Russia, is "meant for all the things that a regional power aspires to do in blue waters, and whose primary role is not limited to meaningless forays into each other's territory." The weekly Frontline published a biography of General Nirmal Chand Vij, India's new Army Chief.

2. Foreign Relations

India and Iran have reportedly signed a trade and defense accord. The development is welcomed by Jasjit Singh (Indian Express) while R.K Pachauri (Indian Express) believes the proposed gas pipeline from Iran to India can help in improving Pakistan-India relations. The Daily Times (Pakistan) sees the accord as potentially dangerous for Pakistan's national security. India and Russia have also signed the protocol on the procurement of military equipment.
"India, Iran moving towards defence cooperation"
"The friendship axis"
"The pipeline of peace"
"India, Russia sign protocol on arms"

Kashmir

1. News

Lashkar-e-Taiba, a banned militant group, has threatened suicide attacks on security forces' bases across the valley. The daily Indian Express writes that "the militants' renewed attempt to target

women in J&K needs to be urgently defeated." More people were killed in continuing violence in J&K.
"Terror's changing tack"
"25 injured in grenade blast in J&K"
"Top militant killed"

A new anti-insurgency force made up of local volunteers to combat militants is being planned for J&K. The Indian government has decided to withdraw the Border Security Force (BSF) from counter-insurgency operations in Kashmir and replace it with the Central Reserve Police Force.

The Chief Minister of J&K Mufti Mohammed Sayeed has reportedly been trying, with uncertain success, to get Indian government's endorsement for his 'healing touch' policy. As a part of this policy, the J&K police have set up a 24-hour telephone line to help people who want to know the whereabouts of their relatives picked up by security agencies.
"Mufti may seek PM's nod for 'healing touch' policy"
"Mufti tells Advani: Let's begin talking"

The Indian government released Syed Ifthikar Gilani, a Kashmiri journalist incarcerated since June 2002 and charged under the Official Secrets Act for possessing part of a published journal article. Galani has stated that his "case ought to act as a wake-up call for all journalists and concerned citizens as this could happen to anyone." Echoing Gilani's remarks, Kaplana Sharma (Hindu) writes that the case demonstrate that one does not "have to be a Kashmiri or a Muslim to worry. Anyone who dissents from the dominant order today is under threat." Sudha Ramachandran (Asia Times) argues that the "episode demonstrates the awesome power in the hands of the government to frame a person in the name of protecting national security." The Indian government has suspended the passport of the former Hurriyat Conference chairman, Mirwaiz Umer Farooq.
"Govt. drops case against Gilani"
"My case should be an eye-opener: Gilani"
"Who will apologise to Gilani?"
"Indian injustice: All in the name of security"
"Mirwaiz passport suspended"

2. Opinions

K.K. Katyal (Hindu) examines the prospects of converting the LoC that divides Kashmir between India and Pakistan into an international border. M.P. Bhandara (News) suggests that the Simla Treaty (that enjoins India and Pakistan to seek bilateral solution to the Kashmir dispute) should be scrapped and "the re-internationalization of the dispute" should be sought. Radha Kumar (Hindu) argues that "isolation allows the hard liners to go unchallenged" and suggests that "India should call on Pakistan and the separatists to help restore human rights in Kashmir" and work towards "a comprehensive ceasefire."
"LoC and its conversion as border"
"Kashmir: getting the UN involved"
"Setting terms for Kashmir talks"

Sri Lanka

1. Peace Talks

The fourth round of the Sri Lankan peace talks ended in Thailand. Anton S. Balasingham, chief

negotiator of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), has ruled out "disarming of our cadres or decommissioning of our weapons at this stage without a permanent settlement." V.S. Sambandan (Frontline, India) suggests that despite uneven progress at the peace talk both sides chose to "tread softly." D.B.S. Jeyaraj (Frontline) argues that the "the partial compromise at the fourth round with regard to high security zones hardly marks a resolution of the complex issue." V. Suryanarayan (Hindu) writes that "the LTTE has not so far spelt out the constitutional framework that will fulfil its aspirations... A long winter of uneasy cohabitation is ahead." The daily Hindu writes that dismantling of the high Security zones (HSZs) must be linked to the diminution of the LTTE's military potential. The fifth round of peace talks is scheduled to be held in Berlin between February 7th and 8th.
"LTTE rules out disarming cadres"
"Paradigm shift in Sri Lanka?"
"An incautious approach"
"Peace talks"

Nepal

1. Domestic News

Nepal's armed police force chief, his wife and a bodyguard were shot dead by suspected Maoists. A team of 49 military experts from the US is in Nepal to train soldiers to better fight Maoist rebels. Lok Raj Baral (Asia Times) suggests that "unless the row between the king and other parties is settled, any fresh negotiations with the Maoists seem to be a remote prospect." Bharat Bhushan (Daily Times) finds it "inexplicable why India is a mute spectator to the [Nepali] King openly inviting foreign powers to become players in what is essentially India's backyard."
"Nepal police chief shot"
"Maoist violence amid political confusion"

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