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India-Pakistan Conflict

1. News

Reports in the South Asian press indicate that Pakistan and India may be stepping slightly back from the brink of war. The daily News reports that President Musharraf has launched a new drive against extremists. The Pakistani government has also stopped funding 115 religious schools allegedly involved in extremism and militancy. Earlier, there were reports that Pakistan has moved nuclear warheads close to the Line of Control (LoC) between Pakistan and India. Pakistan has also reportedly started to shift its troops deployed along the Afghan-Pakistan border to its eastern front.

The daily Hindustan Times has reported that, according to unnamed 'senior defense officials', "Indian troops will remain at their present level of mobilization till elections in Jammu and Kashmir are held in October."

Kamran Khan reports in the daily News that "Pakistani military leadership under President General

Musharraf is "absolutely confident" that the freedom struggle in Kashmir has entered a crucial phase." The Pakistani government has called the report "misleading and false."

2. Nuclear Dangers

Pervez Hoodbhoy's essay in the daily Dawn argues that Pakistan's and India's nuclear affairs are "now being guided by wishful, delusional, thinking" and that the "most frightening delusion is India's trivialization of Pakistan's nuclear capability". Zubeida Mustafa's essay in the same daily argues that "nuclear capability we (Pakistan) created for ourselves four years ago hangs like an albatross tied round our neck." Writing for the daily Hindu, Jean Dreze find it "difficult to attribute a shred of rationality to the war preparations that are taking place in India." Achin Vanaik's essay in the daily Hindustan Times argues that "seeking security through nuclear weapons is nothing but hope masquerading as strategic wisdom."

3. Editorials (India)

The daily Hindustan Times urges the Indian government to "turn the focus from war to a diplomatic solution." A later editorial in the same daily states that "it is becoming clear that India's belligerent stand is beginning to yield results."

4. Editorials (Pakistan)

An editorial by the daily News urges the US to "undertake impartial mediation to prevent war." The daily Dawn believes that Pakistan "has done well" to accept the Russian suggestion of a meeting between President Musharraf and Prime Minister Vajpayee. Another editorial in the daily News applauds the Pakistan government for its recent test firing of surface to surface missiles.

5. Opinions/Analysis (India)

Shekhar Gupta (daily Indian Express) believes that India's "strategy has worked marvelously so far." Rajeev Dhavan (daily Hindu) argues that the Indian government cannot fight 'Muslim Jihad' in Kashmir while supporting 'Hindu Jihad' in Gujarat. C. Raja Mohan (daily Hindu) writes that "climbing down the ladder of military escalation" will be a difficult task for the Indian government. Balakrishnan Rajgopal (daily Hindu) suggests that now "may be our best chance of reviving "law talk" in international relations and more importantly, preventing the normalisation of war and total destruction." Praful Bidwai (daily Hindustan Times) criticizes the government of being "muddle-headedly about all manner of 'tough' options."

6. Opinions/Analysis (Pakistan)

Ayaz Amir (daily Dawn) writes that "more alarming than Indian intentions is the sense of drift at home." Maqbool Ahmad Bhatti (daily Dawn) believes that that Pakistan's recently concluded missiles tests were "a timely step that should make both Indian opinion and world leaders to take notice" that India's coercive strategy will not work. Shireen Mazari (daily News) writes that "it is becoming truly absurd now. As India has built up its aggressive stance, and conducted a virtual ethnic cleansing of the Muslims in Gujarat, the international community has either deliberately, or otherwise, chosen to ignore the systematic upping of the ante by India." Dr Akmal Hussain (Daily Times) suggests that "as President Musharraf delivers on his promise [to prevent Pakistani militant from crossing the LoC], international diplomacy must shift its focus by pressing India to start a structured process of dialogue with Pakistan for the resolution of the Kashmir dispute." Khaled Ahmed (Daily Times) surveys the news and analysis being carried by the Pakistan television and Urdu Press.

7. Kashmir

Writing for the Indian Express, Muzamil Jaleel argues that the leaders of All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) have the "stark" choice of either letting "the doves rule the roost or let the hawks take over." Another report in the same daily believes that the forthcoming Jammu and Kashmir elections "present a very real opportunity to court change - both for the nation and the Kashmiri people." Sadanand Dhume reports in the Far Eastern Economic Review that "New Delhi hopes to break the militants' back by leaning on Islamabad, and then quickly follow up by offering Kashmiris a slice of power by conducting fresh state elections." Writing for the daily Hindustan Times, A.G. Noorani argues that the elections will be "a farcical one-horse race 'free' enough to ensure Abdullah's perpetuation in power." A report in the daily Indian Express also expresses concern about the possibility of "free and fair" elections in the state.

8. Plans for peace

Writing for the daily Hindu, Admiral L. Ramdas and Arjun Makhijani suggest some concrete measures for reducing border tensions. The former Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral, has proposed an "ice breaking" meeting between Vajpayee and Musharraf on the sidelines of the upcoming international security summit in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

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