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Kashmir

1. Border Skirmishes

On February 26, the Pakistani press reported that the Indian army crossed the Line of Control (LoC) and killed 15 civilians in Pakistan-administered Kashmir. Pakistan's Chief Executive, Pervez Musharraf, condemned this "example of Indian state terrorism" and one newspaper editorial (Dawn) described the attack as a "Fiendish Slaughter." An Indian defense ministry spokesperson denied involvement in the attack, describing the allegation as "rubbish." Two days later, the Indian press reported that eight Indian soldiers were killed when they were attacked by a unit of the Pakistani army that had crossed the LoC. Pakistan described as "baseless" the allegation that members of its army had crossed the LoC. On February 29, both Pakistani and Indian press reports indicated heavy shelling across the LoC by units from both armies.

The Freedom Conference, an organizations that seeks Kashmiri independence, enforced a general strike in protest of extra-judicial killings by the Indian army in Kashmir. Shops, banks, and government offices were closed throughout Srinagar.

2. Pakistan-India Dialogue

In response to Indian Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee's Feb 21 statement, Pakistan Foreign Secretary Inam-ul-Haque said that Pakistan is willing to resume dialogue with New Delhi "on the basis of sovereign equality," but that Pakistan would continue to administer the northwest portion of Kashmir. Pakistan Ambassador to the U.S. Maleeha Lodhi said that the tone of Indian statements is now "a major stumbling block" to meaningful negotiations and underscores the need for third-party mediation. Indian Major General J.R. Mukherjee alleged that "the Pakistan military has taken direct control of transborder terrorism" in Kashmir in order to "attract American attention" to the issue.

Analysis: M. D. Nalapat (Times of India) argues that Pervez Musharraf is unable to negotiate meaningfully with India because he is severely constrained by competing interests within the Pakistani military. Shireen Mazari (The News) argues that all of the statements emanating from the Lahore meeting in February 1999 sidestepped the Kashmir issue. Mazari concludes that the current Pakistani position regarding relations with India, which place the Kashmir issue in the center of the agenda, holds greater prospects for resolving not only Kashmir but other outstanding disagreements as well.

3. International Diplomatic Initiatives

The International Court of Justice announced that, on April 3, it will begin a week-long hearing regarding a Pakistani plane shot down by the Indian air force on August 10, 1999. Pakistan seeks \$60.2 million in reparations, alleging that the plane was shot down in Pakistani airspace while on a routine training mission. India alleges that the plane traveled deep into Indian airspace before being shot down.

Russian Duma speaker Gennady Seleznyov said that the Kashmir issue should be resolved on the basis of the 1972 Shimla agreement. A Time magazine analysis suggested that Japan might effectively mediate the Kashmir dispute.

The U.S. State Department's annual global human rights report maintains that the Indian armed forces killed 10,727 militants in Indian-administered Kashmir between 1990-99. The report also acknowledges the Indian government position that, during the same period, militants killed 8,000 civilians and 2,000 security force members, and that another 2,600 civilians died in crossfire between Indian security forces and militant groups. An Indian foreign office spokesperson described the report as "an internal exercise of the U.S. government. We do not respond to it."

Analysis: Richard Haas, director of policy studies at the Brookings Institution, argues that India has much to gain beyond South Asia, but that, "ultimately, India will become a successful global actor only if it is a successful regional actor."

India

4. India-US Relations

Indian President K. R. Narayanan's speech to Parliament, prepared by the governing National Democratic Alliance coalition, included a framework for discussions with U.S. President Bill Clinton. The speech emphasizes Indian interest in cooperation with the U.S. on terrorism issues, but retains India's position of strategic autonomy and credible minimal nuclear deterrence. Various Indian and United States officials stressed a variety of potential areas of bilateral dialogue, including environment, nuclear issues, human rights, and, especially, economic development.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Stanley Roth acknowledged that "the strategic equation in South Asia" was discussed by U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott and his Chinese counterparts in Beijing. The report (in *The News*) explains that India might feel "offended that the U.S. consulted China before undertaking their India visit, but did not extend the same courtesy to India before Clinton visited Beijing. China reportedly urged the U.S., during President Clinton's upcoming state visit, to recognize India explicitly as a non-nuclear state.

5. India-China Relations

India and China signed a bilateral trade pact in which China agrees to lower general tariff rates for a range of agricultural, industrial, and marine products from 20% to 10%. China must sign similar trade agreements with each of the World Trade Organizations 135 members before it may formally enter the organization.

6. Security Planning

Indian Home Minister L.K. Advani said that "Pakistan, realizing it cannot win a conventional war against India, has taken recourse to proxy war through terrorists, subversives, and organized crime." In his message to Parliament, Indian President K.R. Narayanan urged Islamabad to "reverse its policy of hostility" toward India and called for enhanced international cooperation against terrorism. Sri Lankan Foreign Secretary Lionel Fernando reported that Sri Lanka has agreed to back India's draft comprehensive convention against terrorism at the United Nations.

7. Military Hardware

As a part of month-long military exercises, the Indian navy conducted joint maneuvers with the navies of France and Singapore. K. Subramanyam, chairman of the Kargil Review Committee, confirmed that India uses satellites and unmanned aerial vehicles to gain intelligence along the Kashmir Line of Control. Despite calls for austerity by Indian Finance Minister Jaswant Sinha, Prime Minister Vajpayee echoed Defense Minister George Fernandes' call for a sharp increase in India's defense budget. "India's naval exercises with France from tomorrow"

8. Government-Journalism Relations

The Indian government removed the February 14 *Time* magazine Asian edition from newsstands due to an interview with Gopal Godse, brother and co-conspirator of M.K. Gandhi's assassin, which

violated Indian laws that restrict speech regarding Gandhi.

Pakistan

[Ed. note: Internet searches of The News received the following message: "ATTENTION VIEWERS: You are requested to use the URL <http://www.jang.com.pk> only, in order to access The Jang Group web site. The URL <http://www.jang-group.com> has been suspended temporarily and as such does not represent Jang Group of Newspapers web site." All links to The News in this report point to the server in Pakistan.]

9. Nuclear Planning

Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar stated that Pakistani nuclear deterrence prevented three wars with India: in 1986-7, 1990, and 1999. Mr. Shabaz, the foreign ministry director-general of disarmament, said that a "no first use" statement by Pakistan would undermine effective nuclear deterrence.

Analysis: Rasul Bakhsh Rais (The News) argues that India and Pakistan must define "minimal nuclear deterrence" and take meaningful steps toward resolving the Kashmir dispute in order to safeguard their security interests without engaging in an arms race. A lengthy editorial (The News) outlines steps that Pakistan must take, privately and publicly, in order to implement an effective nuclear command and control system. Afzaal Mahmood (Dawn) argues that Pakistan must clearly and publicly state its strategic aims in order to eliminate the danger of a "haphazard or ad hoc nuclear response." Dawn also reprinted an op ed by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter (Washington Post) which argues that emphasis for nuclear restraint by India and Pakistan is somewhat misplaced. Rather, Carter argues, the U.S. should acknowledge that these and other countries are acting in the environment where, since 1995, the United States has repeatedly failed to live up to its own nuclear commitments.

10. CTBT

Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar again expressed his support for Pakistani signature of the CTBT. A joint session of small religious parties again expressed their opposition.

Analysis: Mahtab Ali Shah (Dawn) offers legal, moral, strategic, economic, and political rationales for signing the CTBT quickly.

11. Pakistan-US Relations

The U.S. State Department's annual human rights report criticized Pakistan's human rights record, which "deteriorated" under Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and "worsened" after Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf took control of the country. Major General Rashid Qureshi, Director-General of Inter-Services Public Relations, said that recent Indian actions in Kashmir were designed to deter inclusion of Pakistan in U.S. President Clinton's itinerary. Qureshi invited Clinton to come to Pakistan-administered Kashmir and evaluate the situation there for himself.

12. Domestic Politics

Analysis: A new book by Ahmed Rashid, "Taliban: Islam, Oil, and the New Great Game in Central Asia," suggests that Pakistan provided the Taliban government in Afghanistan with some \$30 million in aid during 1997-98. Rashid also argues that religious and political trends in Pakistan seem to mirror those in Afghanistan and that Pakistan also might experience a "Taliban-style Islamic

revolution."

Nepal

13. Maoist Insurgency

A four-year-old maoist rebellion is becoming increasingly violent and is moving from the countryside toward urban areas. The government has responded with force and has also limited public displays of support for the movement. Amnesty International criticized the government and reported that, since February 1996, more than 1,150 people have been killed in insurgent activity and police action.

14. Party Politics

The winter session of Parliament will open with a divided ruling party. Although the Nepali Congress (NC) won an absolute majority in the 1999 elections, leading to the first single-party majority rule since 1996, 58 NC members of parliament signed a petition of no confidence in their party leader and Prime Minister, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai. Hints that Bhattarai might resign as Prime Minister were muffled on February 28, when Bhattarai stated that the party was unified and prepared to face the opposition in Parliament.

Sri Lanka

15. Constitutional Accommodation

President Chandrika Kumaratunge said that her government would implement constitutional changes that would devolve powers to the northern and eastern provinces (LTTE strongholds) whether or not the opposition United National Party (UNP) supports the change.

16. Norwegian Mediation

Norway continued to take preliminary steps toward establishing a framework for talks between all parties. The process appeared to slow down when the LTTE insisted on "de-escalation" before talks could begin and when the UNP expressed opposition to proposed constitutional changes. Formal discussions will not begin until May, at the earliest.

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