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Nuclear Issues

1. India Nuclear Program

Indian Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee stated that, while India would not "use the nuclear option for destruction," it would not hesitate to use nuclear weapons to protect the safety and territorial integrity of the country. He also promised to protect the people from the negative effects of World Trade Organization regulations.

Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes stated that India began its nuclear program because of threats from the PRC that were not met by security guarantees from the Soviet Union or Western countries. He made these comments while releasing "The Pakistan Trap," a book with chapters by Indian defense analyst K Subrahmanyam and other experts. Subrahmanyam chaired the Kargil review committee and is convener of the National Security Advisory Board.

Indian External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh stated that India's concerns had been conveyed to PRC leader Li Peng about the possible transfer of PRC missile and nuclear technology to Pakistan. Singh said no agreements were signed, but that they also discussed the exchange of maps of the Line of Actual Control, terrorism, and other issues.

2. Pakistan Nuclear Program

Abdul Qadeer Khan, reputed to be one of the chief architects of Pakistan's nuclear program, stated that Pakistan could conduct further nuclear and missile tests. Conflicting reports indicate that Khan has been promoted from his position as Chairman of Kahuta Research Laboratories to the position of Special Advisor on science and technology to Pakistan Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf. He reportedly will share this new position with Ishfaq Ahmed.

3. South Asia Nuclear Dialogue

Amitabh Mattoo, Director of the Center for National Security Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University, stated that India and Pakistan should discuss nuclear issues, because it is no longer to eliminate nuclear weapons from South Asia and because the nuclear safety of South Asia should not be held hostage to the Kashmir issue. Mattoo also pointed to the need for Pakistan to recognize India's strategic interests beyond South Asia and for India to recognize that the cost of legitimizing the Musharraf regime by talking with it is less than the benefits from a dialogue that stabilizes nuclear deterrence in the region. Retired Pakistani Lieutenant-General Talat Masood emphasized the need for confidence-building measures and argued in favor of helping India maintain the ceasefire along the Line of Control as a means to normalizing bilateral relations.

India

1. Defense Budget

An editorial in The Dawn by Tanvir Ahmad Khan discusses the budgetary increases in Indian defense spending over the last two years. Khan argues that India is pursuing the Revolution in Military Affairs with Pakistan-specific capabilities. Khan further argues that Pakistan's military is being eroded from excessive socio-political roles at a time when it needs to focus on the imperatives of deterring a larger enemy.

Afzaal Mahmood writes in an editorial for The Dawn that this year's hike in India's defense budget, when combined with the previous year's increase, demonstrates that India is seeking to play an ambitious role in Asian strategic issues. Mahmood also argues that because Pakistan can't and won't compete with India in conventional weapons, it will become more reliant on its nuclear forces to act as a deterrent. Mahmood discusses Indian defense spending and its strategic interests inside and outside of South Asia.

2. Unilateral Ceasefire

Indian Home Minister L.K. Advani stated that Pakistan's response to India's unilateral ceasefire was inadequate. He said, "The only response Pakistan has given is to stop firing across the border," and he accused Pakistan of continuing to aid militant groups such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Jaish--Mohammad.

Manoj Joshi reports in the Times of India that Indian Army soldiers are complaining that the ceasefire conditions prevent them from patrolling areas outside their inadequately protected perimeters, and therefore open them to attacks by militants. Joshi is critical of the army for not taking these logistical issues under consideration in its decision to support the ceasefire.

Indian Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee reportedly hinted at the resumption of talks on the future of Kashmir, though he did not state whether such talks would be with Pakistan or with Kashmiri groups. He said, "We are starting talks soon. We'll talk to everyone... We are trying to push the peace process forward in Jammu and Kashmir." Discussing the vagueness of Vajpayee's comments, the Times of India stated that in the past, statements by the Indian government about its position had been misinterpreted as the establishment of preconditions for talks.

3. India-PRC Relations

PRC Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhu Bangzao declined to comment on India's decision to induct the Agni II intermediate-range ballistic missile into its armed forces, but said that the PRC doesn't "wish to see any kind of arms race in this region."

Indian External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh denied that a rift was opened in India-PRC relations when India granted refugee status to a high-ranked Tibetan monk last year. However, the PRC did warn India to not permit the monk to engage in anti-PRC activities.

4. India-Central Asia Relations

Meena Singh Roy, a Researcher at the Institute for Defense Research and Analyses in New Delhi, writes that Central Asia will become an important region in coming years because of its natural resources and instability, and that India, as an extended neighbor, has economic and geostrategic interests in the region. Roy describes the region's geographical significance, discusses the issues of religious extremism and trafficking of drugs and arms in the region, and the prospects for economic and energy interests. Roy's goal is to argue in favor of deeper cooperation between India and the republics of Central Asia.

5. Territorial Waters

The Indian government announced that it lodged protests with the US and Britain over violations of its exclusive economic zone by military ships. The US Navy survey vessel Bowditch was spotted 30 km offshore and the UK Royal Navy HMS Scott was spotted more than 90 km offshore, the Indian government reported, though its territorial jurisdiction extends only 12 km offshore according to international law.

Pakistan

1. Overview

The Times of India reported, based on reports in Pakistan's The News, that the result of the formalization of the split within the Pakistan Muslim League will coincide with the restoration of local assemblies to result in the installation of Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf as President of Pakistan.

The Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies in New Delhi published a briefing by Stephen Cohen, Senior Fellow at the US-based Brookings Institution, on his recent trip to Pakistan. In addition to discussing other topics, Cohen provides his assessment of institutions in Pakistan and provides a prognosis for the future likelihood of war in the region.

2. Missile Test

The Pakistan Navy successfully test-fired from its submerged Agosta 90-B submarine a French-made Exocet SM-39 subsurface-to-surface missile. It also test-fired another Exocet missile, the AM-39, from a Pakistani Navy Atlantic aircraft.

3. Pakistan-India Relations

US Congressman Jim McDermott, who recently visited India and Pakistan, stated that Pakistan should bring India to the negotiating table by condemning publicly the militant groups operating in Jammu and Kashmir.

A Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman stated that Pakistan was disappointed that the Indian government refused to grant passports to the members of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference seeking to travel to Pakistan to consult on the peace process and Kashmir.

4. Pakistan-Japan Relations

The Japanese Foreign Ministry announced that Pakistan Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar will travel to Japan. Sattar is to meet with Japanese Foreign Minister Yohei Kono and they will discuss the Taliban's destruction of Buddhist statues and other issues.

Kashmir

1. Militant Groups

Indian Home Minister L.K. Advani stated that the Indian government was ready to hold talks with

various Kashmiri groups, but would not seek a mediation role for the All Parties Hurriyat Conference.

All Parties Hurriyat Conference leader Mirwaiz Umer Farooq stated that the APHC had no intention of serving as a mediator between Pakistan and India. He further said, "Hurriyat will not share the platform with pro-India parties, like the National Conference."

2. Kofi Annan Visit

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan is in the middle of a trip to South Asia, where he is to visit Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and India, in that order. Some Kashmiri leaders criticized Annan for not scheduling visits with Kashmiri groups, through UN officials stated that Annan does not expect to be able to have a significant impact on resolving the Kashmir issue.

Annan met with Pakistani government officials, including President Mohammad Rafiq Tarar, and discussed various issues, including Kashmir.

While in Pakistan, he stated that a lasting solution to the Kashmir issue rests within the Lahore Declaration, and not with implementation of the UN resolutions on the Kashmir or on a human rights commission. The Times of India reported that this statement is supportive of India's position on the issue. Annan also stated that his office could play a role in the conflict, but that a third-party could only be of assistance if both India and Pakistan accepted a mediator.

The All Parties Hurriyat Conference expressed an interest in having a representative of the group meet with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in India and designated Abdul Gani Lone to be their representative. The APHC also stated its regret that Annan did not believe the UN could play a greater role in resolution of the Kashmir issue.

3. Recent Violence

Sources in the Indian security forces in Kashmir are reporting that there is a concern that the prolonged ceasefire will erode the effectiveness of their networks of informers, especially as militant groups made the informers their prime targets during the ceasefire.

Sri Lanka

1. Peace Process

After meeting with Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga and opposition leader Ranil Wickremesinghe, Norwegian peace envoy Erik Solheim traveled to London to meet with Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) chief negotiator Anton Balasingham. Solheim stated that the differences between the two sides appear to be narrowing.

2. Sri Lanka-EU Relations

Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga began a European tour, during which she is expected to request all European Union members to ban the LTTE.

3. LTTE Truce

The Sri Lankan Defense Ministry reported that the LTTE broke their unilateral truce by firing mortar

bombs and artillery towards military positions.

Afghanistan

1. Destruction of Buddhist Statues

The links below provide additional coverage of the Taliban's destruction of Buddhist statues in Afghanistan.

2. US-Pakistan Role in Taliban Creation

Selig Harrison, from the US-based Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, said at a conference that the US Central Intelligence Agency created Afghanistan's Taliban with the aid of Pakistan. Harrison said the CIA "told me these people were fanatical, and the more fierce they were the more fiercely they would fight the Soviets."

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