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Nuclear Issues: India and Pakistan

1. Regional nuclear analyses

A new report by David Albright, President of the Institute for Science and International Security, estimates that India in late 1998 had 290 kilograms of weapons-grade plutonium and 60 nuclear weapons. He estimates that Pakistan possesses 550 kilograms of weapons-grade uranium and 30 nuclear weapons. U.S. State Department expert Thomas Robinson said that there is "no real probability" of a nuclear war in South Asia even as another State Department official, Stapleton Roy, said that the U.S. expected both India and Pakistan to engage in future nuclear tests. A Pakistani analyst, Dr. Inayatullah, explores four India-Pakistan scenarios that might lead to nuclear conflict.

2. Regional Security analyses

The Indian magazine Outlook includes a variety of perspectives on how peace between India and Pakistan might best be achieved. Analysts include Sumit Ganguly, Aditya Jha, Talat Masood, Mirza Aslam Beg, Shankar Bajpai, Selig S. Harrison, K.P.S. Gill, Murali Krishnan, Janaki Bahadur Kremmer, and Mazhar Abbas.

3. India-Pakistan interactions outside Kashmir

The Indian press reported on March 6 that Pakistan has placed 10,000 troops along the marshy border between Gujarat (India) and Sindh (Pakistan). Reports on March 8 indicated that Pakistan has taken a defensive posture, including laying landmines and ocean mines. An Indian army officer explained, "you do not do this if you plan to attack."

India

4. CTBT

Indian Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee said again that India "would not come under any pressure" from the U.S. to sign the CTBT. An unnamed Washington source said that the current U.S. ban on arms sales to India would remain in place until India signs the CTBT.

5. Defense Budget

India's 2000-2001 budget, presented by Finance Minister Jaswant Sinha, includes a 28percent increase in the defense department allocation. A total of Rs 58,587 crore (US\$ 13.4 Billion), or 2.7percent of GDP, has been allocated to defense. Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee explained that the increase was required "in the wake of the deteriorating security environment."

Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf stated that Pakistan did not wish to pursue an arms race with India, but that security requirements would be met. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Tariq Altaf said that he is "afraid that we might see some military escalation" and a Foreign Ministry statement suggested that the budget allocation further demonstrates India's "hegemonic designs." Ambassador

Munir Akram, Pakistan's permanent representative to the United Nations, said that Pakistan would "respond resolutely" to any threatening signals from India.

U.S. Response: U.S. State Department spokesperson James Rubin James Rubin declined to comment on the record. Off the record, however, unnamed U.S. officials described the new budget as "a disappointing sign" and suggested that South Asia more cross-border conflicts are likely in the coming year.

Indian analysis: A Times of India editorial described the budget increase as "an unpleasant decision made inevitable by successive years of neglect." Shyam Bhatia argues (Deccan Herald) that India is trying to force Pakistan to choose between peace and poverty.

Pakistani analysis: A Dawn editorial suggests two negative aspects of the Indian budget: it intensifies an inter-state arms race, and it diverts funds from India's social sectors. The News editorializes that "India's proclaimed sense of insecurity is a masquerade for its quest for power and glory." Farruka Saleem (The News) provides a tabular comparison of the Indian and Pakistani militaries. He, along with Kamal Matinuddin (The News) urges the Pakistan government to make its budget choices on the basis of security requirements alone.

6. India-U.S. Relations

Clinton expressed support "in principle" for a permanent U.N. Security Council seat for India, but said that "New Delhi's decision not to comply with the UN resolution on Kashmir stands in the way of this claim becoming a reality." An Indian Foreign Office spokesperson said that it is inappropriate to link India's candidature for a U.N. seat and resolution of the Kashmir issue.

C. Raja Mohan (The Hindu) argues that the emerging process of high-level dialogue between India and the U.S. is as important to India's long-term interests as any particular agreements between the two countries. U.S. analyst Harold Gould (in the Times of India) urges the U.S. to follow through on recent signals that, he argues, properly castigate Pakistan--more than India--for aggravating regional tensions.

7. India-China Relations

India and China held their first-ever security talks this week. Mr. Rakesh Sood, Joint Secretary (disarmament) in the External Affairs Ministry, led the Indian delegation for the two-day talks in Beijing. The Chinese side was headed by the Director-General of the Asian department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Zhang Jiuhan. The meeting concluded with a strong statement from Mr. Jiuhan urging India to renounce nuclear weaponization.

The Tibet Information Network reported that the Chinese government detained the Karmapa's parents [ed. the Karmapa is the 14-year-old Buddhist spiritual leader who, in January 2000, traveled to India without permission of the Chinese government]. The Chinese government responded that the parents had not been "detained" but had been taken from their home in Lhasa to the town of Chamdo and are living "under protection."

8. India-Russia Relations

The Russian Duma ratified an extradition treaty signed in New Delhi in 1998 in advance of a state visit in May by the Russian president. An Indian foreign ministry spokesperson said the two countries would sign a "strategic partnership" agreement during the visit.

Pakistan

9. CTBT and Nuclear Policy: Analysis

M. Akram Zaki (in Dawn) argues that the CTBT has been getting too much attention. Pakistan should not consider the treaty until the U.S., China, and Russia have ratified it. Maqbool Ahmad Bhatti reports on a number of presentations given at a high-level conference on command and control of nuclear weapons in South Asia, sponsored by the Islamabad Council of World Affairs and the Institute of Strategic Studies.

10. Domestic Politics

Pakistan's Interior Minister, Moinuddin Haider, announced that he would work vigorously--and use military force, if necessary--to enforce Pakistan's new law forbidding public display of weapons in Pakistan.

The Indian press (Hindustan Times) reports that Pakistan is trying to assist the Hurriyat Conference's efforts to set up a common international lobbying organization called the Kashmir Liberation Army.

11. Pakistan-U.S. Relations

The White House announced that President Bill Clinton will visit Pakistan on March 25. Details regarding where the President will go, who he will meet, or what he will discuss were not disclosed. Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif alleged that "Western" pressures were partly responsible for Pakistan's military coup. White House spokesman Joe Lockhart rejected the allegation. General Anthony Zinni, who has visited Pakistan several times as commander-in-chief of U.S. central command forces, testified before a U.S. Senate committee that a presidential decision to isolate Pakistan would be "counterproductive to our long-term interests in the region." Following a careful geopolitical analysis, Manzur Ejaz argues that Pakistan's best chance for enhancing its global relevance would be to use Indian Ocean port access as a link between resource-rich central Asia. Even then, he argues, Pakistan will be a minor player, so its government "should come out of its delusions, get rid of its obsession with the United States and find ways to bring prosperity to its own citizens."

Kashmir

12. India-Pakistan Interactions

Analysis: M.B. Naqvi (in Dawn) argues that the nature of Kashmiri insurgency is changing. In addition to India-Pakistan conflict and independent freedom fighters seeking independence, a new element of small Muslim jihadi organizations are taking well-aimed shots at Hindu communities on the Indian side of the LoC and these communities are fighting back. Syed Sibtul Hasan Hazeen (in Dawn) argues that the United States has gained more from the continuing Kashmir conflict than either India or Pakistan which have both worked themselves into a negotiating corner. The conflict, he suggests, can best be solved by a "freedom movement" raised at the grassroots level in both countries.

13. International Dialogue

U.N. secretary general Kofi Annan accepted an invitation to visit Pakistan. Indian External Affairs minister Jaswant Singh said that no outside party would be allowed to "play the role of a mediator or facilitator" regarding the Kashmir issue. A 15-member British delegation visited Pakistan-administered Kashmir. The Organization of Islamic Countries will meet in Ankara, Turkey, in April. Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf, in a preliminary statement, described alleged Indian violations of the LoC and asked the organization to exert political and economic pressure on India to resolve the Kashmir issue.

Sri Lanka

14. Domestic Politics

A wide variety of Sinhala Buddhist organizations have launched a campaign against both the Sri Lankan governments constitutional changes and the Norwegian mediation process. Nonetheless, both government and opposition negotiators plan to attend a preliminary meeting on March 9. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam has called for preliminary talks with the government; they propose that talks regarding a prisoner swap precede general peace talks.

15. Sri Lanka-India Relations

The Indo-Sri Lankan Free Trade agreement came into operation on March 1. Sri Lankan exports to India, estimated at \$27 million in 1998, are projected to reach \$150 million or more by 2003.

Bangladesh

16. Foreign Relations: U.S., U.N.

Bangladesh Finance Minister Shah AMC Kibria announced that his government would raise two issues during President Bill Clinton's visit on March 20. He will seek U.S. extradition of the killers of Bangladesh founding father Mujibur Rahman (the killers are believed to live in the U.S.), and he will propose a bilateral free trade agreement with the U.S.. Bangladesh began its month-long Presidency of the U.N. Security Council on March 1.

Afghanistan

17. Foreign Relations: U.S., Pakistan, U.N.

Kathy Gannon (Associated Press, printed in the Times of India) provides a series of detailed vignettes that, collectively, describe the U.S. response to individual alleged terrorists associated with Osama bin Laden. The head of Pakistan's anti-narcotics force, Major General Zafar Abbas, recommended that the U.S. lift sanctions against Afghanistan. He argues that Afghanistan will not have to engage in the drug trade if other sources of hard currency are made available. The U.N., however, threatened additional sanctions against the Taliban government if the Afghan humanitarian situation does not improve.

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