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Nuclear Issues

1. NPT, ABT

The Hindustan Times reports that, after three weeks of discussions, the NPT review conference has failed to produce agreement on any major issues. China has refused to provide assurances against transfer of nuclear technology to third countries, notably Iran and Pakistan. In response, the U.S. threatened to reject 16 requests from U.S. companies to sell nuclear reactor technology to China. A law amended by Russian President Vladimir Putin now allows Russia to export nuclear power materials and technologies to officially non-nuclear weapons states even if those states do not allow the International Atomic Energy Agency to monitor their facilities. This amendment will enable Russia to export nuclear materials to India, Iran, and Cuba.

China's top arms negotiator, Sha Zukang, said that the proposed U.S. missile defense system might threaten the deterrence capability of China's current nuclear arsenal. For this reason, China might be forced to deploy more nuclear warheads in order to retain its strategic options. U.S. President Clinton will make a final decision on the missile defense system later this summer.

Analysis. M. R. Srinivasan argues that "Mr. Clinton needs to be reminded that it is not so much the number of countries that possess nuclear weapons as the total number of weapons lying around the world that constitutes a special danger." Stephen Schwartz, publisher of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, similarly argues that the U.S. is encouraging an expansion of nuclear weapons worldwide in two ways. First, it has rejected Russian initiatives that would reduce U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals from 3,000 each to 1500 each. Second, Schwartz argues that the U.S. proposed missile defense system provides incentives for countries to produce additional warheads in an attempt to overwhelm that system.

2. CTBT

The Times of India reports that both the U.S. and France conduct projects that are in violation of the CTBT. The article names the U.S. National Ignition Facility and the French Laser Megajoule Project in this regard.

3. Pakistan Nuclear Planning

Several Indian newspapers reported on an article in the Pakistan Observer, which said that India is preparing to test a hydrogen bomb and that Pakistan is preparing to test a plutonium-based bomb. M.B. Naqvi argues that South Asian nuclear escalation is "not only inherent and inescapable but was in fact taking place quietly on both sides, over the course of decades, in spite of disclaimers."

4. Indian Nuclear Planning

Stephen Cohen of the Brookings Institution reports that technical difficulties, disagreements over control of the weapons, inadequate early warning systems, and political considerations all have slowed the deployment of nuclear-armed air and missile forces. Indian Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee said again that India will maintain a credible minimum nuclear deterrent, adding that the country

will continue to work aggressively toward global nuclear disarmament. C. Raja Mohan (the Hindu) argues that Vajpayee's statement and especially that of External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh [see SANDNet, May 10] provide a framework for India to engage the NPT debate without participating directly in the NPT. Praful Bidwai argues that despite the considerable cost of nuclearizing India, in the form of development costs and sanctions burdens, the country is less secure because nuclear weapons do not deter smaller-scale conflicts and because strident ideologues now press their claims more aggressively.

India

5. Security Planning

As a part of its commitment to the international convention on chemical weapons, India created a national authority on chemical weapons. Members of this authority would participate on international inspection missions and monitor domestic production and transfer of toxic chemicals. An Indian Defense Ministry report expressed concern that Pakistan is continuing to modernize its armed forces "well beyond its legitimate requirements." Following last month's major fire at a munitions depot [see SANDNet, May 3], India avoided a second major mishap when a MiG-23 on a training mission crashed 50 meters away from a missile storage facility.

6. India-U.S. Relations

White House spokesperson Joe Lockhart said that U.S. President Clinton "made very clear on his trip how important India is, both as a trading partner and as a strategic security ally of the United States." U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen made a similar statement.

7. Military Hardware

India placed orders for three Russian battleships under a US\$1 billion contract to be completed by 2003. In response to a question in Parliament, Defense Minister George Fernandes said that India will "soon" acquire 300 T-90 tanks and several advanced jet trainer aircraft. The Defense News reported that the Indian army immediately plans to spend \$200 million to replace ammunition lost in a fire last month. The fire destroyed missiles, artillery shells of all types, including 155mm and 130mm ordinance, tank and personnel carrier ammunition, small arms ammunition, and mines and explosives. [Note. Estimates of losses from the fire range from \$300 million to \$1.5 billion.]

Pakistan

8. Security Planning

A Pakistan Interior Ministry official said that Pakistan will deport "thousands" of mercenaries from African and Arab countries who came to Pakistan to fight in the Afghan war. During a high-level seminar sponsored by Pakistani newspaper "The News," IMF representative Ahsan Mansoor, Punjab Finance Minister Shahid Kardar, and others said that nonproductive defense expenditures, and oversized military establishments were among the main reasons for Pakistan's chronic financial deficit.

9. Foreign Relations: Afghanistan

In what the Hindu describes as "a calculated shift in position," a Pakistan Foreign Ministry spokesperson has said that Pakistan is willing to work more actively toward a restoration of peace in Afghanistan as long as any such peace plan is "acceptable to the Afghan people." M.B. Bhandara argues that Pakistan's official support of the Afghan Taliban for the past five years has done Pakistan more harm than good because cordial relations have enabled training grounds to be established in Afghanistan for Pakistani terrorists who strike in Karachi and elsewhere. Afghan Interior Minister Maulvi Abdul Razaq denied the existence of such training camps.

10. Pakistan-U.S. Relations

Despite a Pakistan Supreme Court ruling that supports the Musharraf regime [see Pakistan: Domestic Politics, below], a U.S. State Department spokesperson said that "the court decision does not change U.S. policy. Pakistan-U.S. relations will remain strained and will not return to normal until democracy is fully restored." U.S. Defense Secretary William Cohen said that the U.S. wants to develop a "better relationship" with Pakistan despite differences on the issue of nuclearization. Shireen M Mazari (in the News) argues that the U.S. has come to realize that the direct "stick" approach has failed to affect Pakistani policy regarding democracy and nuclear weaponization and that the U.S. has no substantive "carrot" to offer Pakistan. She outlines a number of indirect diplomatic initiatives that the U.S. might attempt in the near future. Maqbool Ahmad Bhatti's two-part analysis (in Dawn) argues that the U.S. approach to global terrorism is not objective. Rather, it is linked to U.S. political and economic goals and perceptions.

11. Domestic Politics

A 12-member full bench of the Supreme Court validated the military takeover of October 12, 1999 on the basis of "necessity." Former Prime Minister Nawaz' Sharif's removal of Pervez Musharraf as Army Chief was declared void. The office of the Chief Executive, including its legislative powers, was upheld by the court. Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf was ordered to hold national elections by October 12, 2002.

Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf vested vast financial and administrative powers in the Chief Election Commissioners that, as Musharraf explained, will ensure that "all future elections at all levels in Pakistan are completely transparent, fair, free, and credible."

12. Drought

A drought appears to be gaining intensity in Pakistani Sindh and Balochistan and Indian Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab, and Andhra Pradesh. The Indian weather service predicts a "light" monsoon for the entire subcontinent after a full decade of "normal" monsoons. Links below provide a sense of current drought conditions in Pakistan.

Kashmir

13. Hurriyat Initiative

The All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) and the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (neither of which acknowledges the right of the other to represent "the Kashmiri people) both said that they were willing to consider dividing Kashmir. [The current Line of Control or some other boundary might be acceptable to them.] Indian Home Minister L.K. Advani said that a Kashmir dialogue could only be conducted "within the framework of the Constitution" and that "the question" of giving up

any part of the state, "which is an integral part of India, does not arise." Ajit Kumar Panja, Minister of State for External Affairs, claimed that Pakistan is encouraging the APHC to set up offices in London, Geneva, and other western capitals "to provide a cover for Islamabad's hostile propaganda against India."

14. India-Pakistan Dialogue

Pakistani Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf said that Pakistan is "in a position to effectively deter" any Indian aggression. Indian Defense Minister George Fernandez said that "there is no way Kargil can be repeated because [India is] much better placed than ever before."

Despite last week's ceasefire agreement, both Pakistan and India attacked their opponents in Kashmir.

15. U.S. Statements

U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott said that a durable peace in South Asia will require the emergence of "inclusive regional mechanisms" that promote integration and political reconciliation. Mohammad Yasin Malik, a senior APHC leader, confirmed that an APHC delegation met with a team of U.S. officials and discussed the Kashmir conflict. The APHC rejected a U.S. suggestion that it hold bilateral talks with India. [The APHC seeks a trilateral India-Pakistan-APHC dialogue]

16. Analysis

Kashmir analyses were the cover story for newsweekly "The Week." Sudha P. Rameshwari (in Outlook) analyzes the shift in the APHC position and urges the Indian government to take advantage of the opportunity for peace talks.

Sri Lanka

17. Overviews

Both Frontline and India Today featured extensive analyses of the Sri Lanka war.

18. War Fighting

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) attacked Jaffna, but were repulsed by a Sri Lankan government army that was recently resupplied by Israel and Pakistan (India pre-approved the Israel deal). The new arms are estimated to cost US\$800 million. Sri Lankan President Chandrika called for peace talks.

V. Jayanth (in the Hindu) argues that the lives of ordinary Tamils in Jaffna have been very difficult during the past five years, when the Sri Lankan army has controlled the city. Jayanth predicts that their lives will probably not improve if the LTTE regains control. The LTTE would force conscription upon Tamil youths and would not have the economic resources needed for effective social programs such as health and education.

19. Indian Policy Choices

Indian Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee ruled out any change in India's policy in the event of Jaffna's fall

to the LTTE. He did extend India's ban on the LTTE, which was put into place following the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in 1991. In a "calibrated show of strength," the Indian navy and coast guard conducted a daylong exercise near the Sri Lankan coast.

Pro-Government Analysis. Prem Shankar Jha, a senior Indian commentator who has steadfastly urged India to extend greater support to the Sri Lankan government, paints a grim picture of what life in Jaffna would be like if the LTTE gains control of the peninsula. P.K. Balachandran reports on editorials in the Sri Lankan press (which do not archive their internet editions). These editorials say that India is limiting its involvement in the Sri Lankan war because the government is relenting to pressure from pro-DMK parties. A.S. Paneerselvan argues (in Outlook) that national political pressures have forced the pro-Tamil DMK [distinct from the MDMK but also a member of India's governing coalition and head of the Tamil Nadu state government] has been forced to prevent Tamil refugees to travel from Sri Lanka to Tamil Nadu.

Pro-LTTE Analysis. Vaiko argues (in the Hindustan Times) that Tamil Eelam is inevitable and Indian support of the Sri Lankan government will inflame the passions of Tamils living in India. [Vaiko is president of the MDMK, a party that is a member of India's BJP-led governing coalition]

20. Other International Actors

A Norwegian delegation led by Erik Solheim arrived in Colombo for a weeklong visit. In addition to Sri Lankan government officials, Solheim spoke with Indian and U.S. representatives and supported the diplomatic efforts of those countries. The U.S. offered to mediate in the conflict. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhang Qiyue opposed foreign intervention in the war: "We are confident that the government and people of the country have the capacity to handle their own questions properly." Mariana Baabar argues (in Outlook) that, following arms sales to Sri Lanka, Pakistani Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf faces considerable pressure from within his government not to extend additional support.

Bangladesh

Bangladesh's home secretary M.M. Reza told his Indian counterpart that the government of Assam, a state in northeast India, has given sanctuary to anti-Dhaka tribal leaders. The Times of India reports that all of India's northeastern states are being used as arms markets for terrorists that attack Burma, Bangladesh, and within India.

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