

# **SANDNet Weekly Update, November 30, 2001**

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## **CONTENTS**

**November 30, 2001**

**Volume 2, #50**

### **Nuclear Issues**

1. Pakistan Nuclear Safety
2. Al-Qaeda and Nuclear Weapons

### **Afghanistan War and Implications**

1. Afghanistan: Current Situation
2. Afghanistan: Future Prospects
3. Humanitarian Crisis
4. Pakistan
5. India
6. Regional Developments
7. General Assessments

### **Pakistan**

1. Pakistan: Domestic Situation

### **India**

1. India: Domestic Situation
2. U.S.-India Relations

### **Nepal**

1. Nepal: Domestic Situation

### **Kashmir**

1. Internal Situation
  2. India and Pakistan
- 

## **Nuclear Issues**

### **1. Pakistan Nuclear Safety**

In an essay reprinted in the Pakistan daily The News, Mansoor Ijaz and James Woolsey have argued that the Bush administration should allow Pakistan to have technical devices that can enhance the security of Pakistan's nuclear weapons. The essay originally appeared in the New York Times.

### **2. Al-Qaeda and Nuclear Weapons**

Experts in terrorism believe that the possibility that Osama bin Laden might have access to a nuclear weapon or a nuclear device should be taken seriously.

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## **Afghanistan War and Implications**

### **1. Afghanistan: Current Situation**

Hundreds of Taliban captives were killed at a prison fort near Mazar-e-Sharif after an alleged rebellion. There have been unconfirmed reports that 67 Pakistani Taliban captured in Kunduz and jailed in a school by the Northern Alliance troops were killed when U.S. warplanes bombed the school building. The killing of the prisoners at Mazar-e-Sharif has raised concerns about the safety of Taliban fighters captured by the Northern Alliance.

There has been intense fighting around Kandahar, the last Taliban holdout. It is not clear whether or not the Taliban forces have retreated from Spin Bolduk, a small town outside of Kandahar. According to an unconfirmed report, the Taliban have lost about six thousand fighters in the war so far.

The Northern Alliance interior minister Younis Qanooni refused to support a planned march by Afghan women in Kabul.

### **2. Afghanistan: Future Prospects**

The United Nation sponsored talks on Afghanistan - being held in Bonn, Germany - have moved to a point where the delegates from different Afghan factions have agreed on the principle of forming a broad-based transitional government. It is, however, not clear if the Afghan delegates would agree to the presence of a multinational force in Afghanistan. The level and nature of Pushtun participation in the interim setup also remains unclear. Meanwhile, according to an unnamed senior U.S. government official, the Bush administration believes that the Northern Alliance leader Burhanuddin Rabbani is not a "viable" candidate to head a government in Kabul.

### **3. Humanitarian Crisis**

Christiane Berthiaume, the spokeswoman for the World Food Program, revealed that aid workers have located a group of several thousand displaced people in the northwest region of Afghanistan.

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These refugees have been living in the open in sub-zero temperatures, and with very little food. Meanwhile, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) has initiated an updated regional plan of action to deal with the Afghan refugee crisis.

Firdous Hassan, a spokesperson for the United Nations, told a press conference that 238,000 people trapped in Kandahar need immediate outside support.

The killing of Pukhtuns in Mazar-e-Sharif and Kabul has given rise to the fear that Pakistani Pukhtuns may attacks non-Pukhtun refugees living in Pakistan. In response to the threat, Pakistan government has started to shift some Shia non-Pukhtun Afghan refugees to more secure camps.

#### **4. Pakistan**

The Pakistani government has reiterated that it would not support the U.S. Marines or other ground troops that have landed at an Afghan airbase near Kandahar. Pakistan has also been moving towards establishing direct communications with the Northern Alliance.

Some members of the British troops in Afghanistan reportedly entered Pakistan's territory while searching for al-Qaeda members.

#### **5. India**

According to the Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, India is "making efforts" to have "maximum possible role" in the establishment of representative post-Taliban government in Afghanistan.

#### **6. Regional Developments**

The Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi has stated that his country is against the deployment of foreign troops in Afghanistan.

The Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa has warned the Unites States against attacking Iraq.

#### **7. General Assessments**

Writing from Afghanistan for the Asia Times, Pepe Escobar recounts the war in Afghanistan.

In his essay for the Dawn, Pakistan, scholar and writer Kaiser Bengali argues that the Muslim world needs to reconstruct its societies and states along "modern, social democratic lines."

Writing for the Pakistani daily The Nation, Pakistani journalist Mushahid Hussain suggests that Pakistan has frequently "miscalculated and misjudged American motives and interests."

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### **Pakistan**

#### **1. Pakistan: Domestic Situation**

According to Pakistan's Foreign Office spokesman Aziz Ahmad Khan, President Pervez Musharraf would soon announce a policy to "weed out" extremist political forces in the country.

In his essay for the Pakistani daily The Dawn, Shahid Javed Burki, presents an overview of the country's economic situation after September 11.

Writing for the Dawn, Pakistan, Siddiqa Agha explores the future of Pakistani Jihadis after the fall of the Taliban regime in Kabul.

Hasan Abbas's essay in The News, a Pakistani daily, looks at the history and the current state of Madrassas (Islamic religiously based schools) in Pakistan.

In his essay for the Pakistani daily The Dawn, Kamran Ali argues for the need for transition to democracy in Pakistan.

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## **India**

### **1. India: Domestic Situation**

The fight between Assamese separatists and the Indian troops continues despite talks of negotiations.

In his essay for the Indian daily The Hindu, S.S.Gill argues that the attempt by the ruling Bhartiya Janata Party to recast the school syllabus for social sciences "smacks of a highly racist and divisive outlook."

### **2. U.S.-India Relations**

According to reports in the Indian press, India and the U.S. have been exploring the possibilities of bilateral military cooperation.

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## **Nepal**

### **1. Nepal: Domestic Situation**

His Majesty King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev of Nepal declared national emergency as the violent conflict between the Maoist guerillas and the Nepali armed forces continues.

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## **Kashmir**

### **1. Internal Situation**

The continued sporadic fighting between various militant groups and the Indian armed forces has resulted in more blood shed in Jammu and Kashmir.

### **2. India and Pakistan**

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee has reiterated that India "will never accept another partition." Meanwhile, Indian officials invoked the controversial Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO) to seal off the house of an alleged Kashmir militant.

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Nautilus Institute

608 San Miguel Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707-1535 | Phone: (510) 423-0372 | Email:

[nautilus@nautilus.org](mailto:nautilus@nautilus.org)