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CONTENTS
October 16, 2003
Volume 4, #18

Nuclear Issues

1. Pakistan Nuclear Issues
2. Indian Nuclear Issues
3. US Reaction

Afghanistan

1. Taliban Resurgence
2. News & Reports
3. Opinions & Analysis

Al Qaeda & Pak-Afghan Border

1. Sweep of South Waziristan
2. News & Reports

India-Pakistan Tensions

1. Phalcon Deal
2. The Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) Summit
3. News & Reports
4. Opinions & Analysis

Pakistan

1. Law & Order
2. Sectarian Violence
3. US-Pakistani Relations
4. Sino- Pakistani Relations

5. Gulf -Pakistani Relations

India

1. News & Reports
2. Law & Order
3. Military Affairs
4. Sino-Indian Relations

Jammu & Kashmir (J&K)

1. News & Reports
2. Opinions & Analysis

Regional News

1. Sri Lanka
2. The Philippines
3. Nepal
4. Bangladesh
5. News & Reports

Nuclear Issues

1. Pakistan Nuclear Issues

For the third time in two weeks, Pakistan test-fired a nuclear capable missile, this time of the medium range surface-to-surface Hatf-IV (also known as Shaheen-1). Though this test-fire concluded the current, planned round of tests, Japan criticized Pakistan for ignoring the international community's efforts toward non-proliferation.

2. Indian Nuclear Issues

Rediff (US) reports on India's recent acquisitions and plans for building its nuclear infrastructure. T. S. Subramanian (Frontline, India) updates on the construction of India's Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor in Tamil Nadu.

3. US Reaction

US State Dept. official Richard Boucher said, "We urge Pakistan and other countries in the region to take steps to restrain their nuclear weapon and missile programs, including no operational deployment of nuclear-armed ballistic missiles." In response, India derided the US for "cluttering up what [the US] had to say by thinly disguised, unwarranted references."

Afghanistan

1. Taliban Resurgence

Forty-one prisoners tunneled out of a jail near Kandahar. A Taliban commander, Mullah Sabir, told

Reuters that the Taliban paid bribes of 100,000 afghanis ($2,000 US) to the prison authorities for each of the escapees. The governor of Kandahar said, "I am 100% sure there was cooperation between the prison security and the Taliban." The prison's superintendent has been suspended.
"41 key Taliban prisoners escape thru tunnel: More insecurity feared"

Reports vary about the US' release of former Taliban foreign minister Mullah Wakeel Ahmad Muttawakil. Afghan President Hamid Karzai and US Special Envoy Zalmay Khalilzad denied the reports.
"Karzai denies release of former minister"
The Taliban claimed responsibility for the death of several Afghan soldiers, an attack on a police station (in which 8 officers were killed), as well as the kidnapping of a local chief (and relative of the Ghazni governor).

2. News & Reports

After an internecine flare up in which over 80 militiamen were killed, the warring factions (Tajik Atta Mohammed's Jamiat and Uzbek Rashid Dostum's Junbish) agreed to a ceasefire.

News Central Asia (Turkmenistan) reports that Said Tayab Jawad, currently chief of staff to President Karzai, has been nominated as the new Afghan ambassador to the US. Pakistani authorities seized 1.2 tons of opium in Balochistan, which officials believe came from the Helmand province in neighboring Afghanistan. K.K. Katyal (The Hindu, India) writes about the obstacles and consequences of the United Nations-mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) extension into the interior provinces.
"Multi-national force to move to interior Afghanistan"

3. Opinions & Analysis

Several pieces update the situation in Afghanistan, since the war's beginning exactly two years ago. An editorial in the daily Jang (Pakistan) cites the rival warlords as Afghanistan's greatest challenge, while M.K. Bhadrakumar (The Hindu, India) makes the case that Afghanistan's political fragmentation stems from more than factional fighting. Kamal Matinuddin (Jang, Pakistan) argues that peacekeeping in Afghanistan is only a means, and not an end, to political stability. A report from the Council on Foreign Relations and Asia Society contends that without more international support for Karzai's transitional government, Afghanistan's security, stability, and economy are doomed.
"Uncertain times in Afghanistan"
"Council on Foreign Relations & Asia Society Task Force Report"

Al Qaeda & Pak-Afghan Border

1. Sweep of South Waziristan

Last week, Pakistani authorities killed 12 Al Qaeda suspects and rounded up 18 others in Operation Al Mizan. This week, law enforcement officials have begun a crackdown of tribes people harboring Al Qaeda and Taliban suspects, in the remote South Waziristan Agency, close to the Afghanistan border. The deadline set by Pakistani authorities for handing over 3 suspected tribesmen has passed, and under intense pressure, the local tribals did hand over two of the three wanted men. Ismail Khan (Dawn, Pakistan) reports of suspects successfully evacuating prior to the sweep.
"Tribesmen hand over two suspects"
"Suspects slipping away from Waziristan"

The Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA) dismissed the government's operations in South Waziristan as appeasement of the Bush administration. Two other party leaders castigated the government for acting hastily.
"MMA slams operation in South Waziristan"
"Centre's operation in tribal areas flayed"

2. News & Reports

In the fourth meeting since its inception in April 2003, a tripartite commission of Pakistani, US, and Afghan authorities met to strengthen coordination of anti-terrorism efforts along the Pak-Afghan border. The commission will meet again on November 15.
"Pakistan, US, Afghanistan to boost anti terrorism cooperation"

Pakistan arrested 40 Afghans who illegally crossed into the district of Chaman. A report from Dawn (Pakistan) claims that Pakistan has conducted nearly 150 operations against Al Qaeda, and handed over 450 suspects to the US government for interrogation. The Pakistani government has compiled a "Red Book" of information and photos about 99 of the most-wanted terrorists.
"40 Afghans handed over to Kabul authorities"
"148 operations conducted to catch Al Qaeda men"
"99 most-wanted terrorists on Red Book"

India-Pakistan Tensions

1. Phalcon Deal

Subcontinental tensions rose with India's acquisition of the jointly developed US-Israeli Phalcon radars for the Airborne Early-Warning Air Control System (AWACS), which are mounted on Russian IL-76 cargo planes. "Pakistan will take all possible measures to counter the threat posed by the advanced weapons acquired by India," Foreign Minister Khursheed Mehmood Kasuri said. Pres. Musharraf has commented that even though Pakistan is "sensitive over any country's defense cooperation with India...[Pakistan is] maintaining [its] own deterrence level of force." The Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) deemed the Pakistani politicians' visits to the US as a failure, evidenced by the completion of the Indo-Israeli deal.
"New weaponry aimed at neutralizing India"

2. The Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) Summit

The OIC has again rejected New Delhi's request for an observer status. Pakistan called on the forum to support its position on the Kashmir issue and claims that a resolution to this effect has been drafted, though there has been no independent confirmation. The OIC has invited hardliner Syed Ali Geelani to represent the recently-split All Parties Hurriyat Conference, instead of the moderate Molvi Abbas Ansari.

3. News & Reports

Prime Minister Vajpayee asserted India's military preparedness by recalling the 1971 war but he maintained that India is "not in an arms race with anybody." Indian Foreign Minister Yashwant Sinha criticized Pakistan for not doing enough to crack down on terrorism. Pakistani Information Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed termed allegations about a Pakistani training camp for infiltrating Kashmir as "a concerted propaganda effort of India, designed to malign the image of Pakistan and

undermine its efforts in combating terrorism."
"India not in arms race: PM"

A six-member Pakistani delegation of parliamentarians left for India as part of a peace mission. Also, the Pakistan Women Swimming Association will send a contingent to the Afro-Asian Games. In Chennai, India, a "peace boat" docked and brought peace activists who had been discussing the Kashmir conflict, including India's former chief of naval staff Admiral R. Ramdas, Kashmir Times Editor-in-Chief Ved Bhasin, Prof. Jaffar Ahmed from Karachi University, and Kashmiri lawyer Muhammad Altaf Khan.

4. Opinions & Analysis

In the Indian Express (India), Jasjit Singh concludes that with a growing threat from China and Pakistan, India needs "more, not less, conventional military advantage if [it is] to stay below the nuclear threshold and still deter aggression." An editorial in Jang (Pakistan) warns that "[t]he importance of national defense being self-evident, it would still be most unwise and futile to play a constant catch-up game with India." In the same paper, Mufti Jamiluddin Ahmad dismisses any apparent warming in relations as merely both countries going through their well-rehearsed motions.

Pakistan

1. Law & Order

In October 1999, General Musharraf took power of the Pakistani government, though retaining the title and function of the Chief of the Army Staff (a source of controversy in domestic politics). In the daily Nation (Pakistan), Mushahid Hussain explains that "Pakistan's political scene still looks murky, unstable and volatile." M. Ziauddin (Dawn, Pakistan) compares Musharraf's regime to those of three previous military rulers. Information Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed responded to criticism from the Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy by saying that Pakistan had gained respect and admiration of the Muslim community and the rest of the world due to Musharraf's policies. In an open letter to President Musharraf, Human Rights Watch condemns Pakistan's current human rights situation, to which a state spokesperson called the accusations "a travesty of truth based on unfounded allegations and hearsay."
"Musharraf's four years in power"

Najam Sethi (Indian Express, India) scrutinizes the proposed repeal of the Hudood Ordinances, and its effect on the international community's perception of Pakistan as an Islamic nation. In the Northwest Frontier Province (which is controlled by the Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal), companies have started including women on their advertising billboards, hoping the MMA will find the smaller size of the female images less offensive and allow them to remain.

2. Sectarian Violence

According to Syed Saleem Shahzad (Asia Times, Hong Kong), the assassination of Maulana Azam Tariq, Sunni extremist and parliamentarian, exposes the two elements of the anti-Shia movement in Pakistan: the political, Millat-i-Islamia Pakistan (MIP), and the militant, Lashkar-i-Jhangvi (LJ). In another article, Shahzad examines the circumstances of Tariq's murder and questions if it was truly sectarian in nature. Members of Tariq's party alleged that Sajid Naqvi, head of the Shia Islami Tehrik (IT), a component of the MMA, was involved in the assassination. Daily Times (Pakistan) reports that militant leader Qari Zia-ur-Rehman, founder of Tehrik Jihad-e-Islami, was also killed

along with Azam Tariq.
"The hammer poised to strike in Pakistan"

Ikram Sehgal (The Nation, Pakistan) argues that Pakistan needs to enhance its counterinsurgency infrastructure to truly take on terrorists. Rauf Klasra (Jang, Pakistan) traces some of the sectarian terrorists' lives in Afghanistan, where they could plan and operate freely. In the Daily Times (Pakistan), Abbas Rashid suspects the role of madrassas in educating children from poor families: he wonders, "what kind of education [do the madrassas provide]? To be fair one may also want to ask what kind of education is being provided by the great majority of public sector schools that are directly the government's responsibility." Interior Minister Faisal Saleh Hayat resisted calls for his resignation, based on the security lapse that led to Tariq's killing.

3. US-Pakistani Relations

In the Daily Times (Pakistan), Hasan-Askari Rizvi argues that Pakistan's anti-terrorism policies lack consistency: "Pakistani authorities periodically arrest Al Qaeda activists and hand them over to the US. However, they are not equally firm with Pakistani Islamic hardliners; some of them are known for their sympathy for and linkages with the Taliban and Al Qaeda." An editorial in Jang (Pakistan) warns that the US' spotlight on Iran's nuclear program could shift to Pakistan, irrespective of Islamabad's superior relations with Washington.

4. Sino- Pakistani Relations
Pakistan will conduct joint maritime exercises with China, its first with a foreign navy. The Pakistani Navy Chief is considering purchasing Chinese frigates, according to Jang (Pakistan). An editorial in the Daily Times cautions that Islamabad needs to watch closely the growing cooperation between New Delhi and Beijing.

"Pakistan, China naval exercise from 21st"

5. Gulf -Pakistani Relations

On return from his recent trip to the US, Prime Minister Jamali emphasized that Pakistan is "not recognizing Israel" and has "not even discussed this issue" with the US. In an exclusive interview with Khaleej Times (Pakistan), President Musharraf compared the Kashmiri and Palestinian struggles: "there is a degree of disappointment as to the [Arab] support [Pakistan] gets on the Kashmir cause," despite Pakistan's support for the Palestinian cause. Pakistan and Egypt established a joint fund of Rs. 60 million ($1 million US) for research in science and technology. Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz is scheduled to visit Pakistan next week.

India

1. News & Reports

The Uttar Pradesh government has sealed all routes leading to the contentious Ayodhya site, while police have arrested over 6,000 Hindu protesters who have tried to proceed. In the Indian Express (India), Radha Kumar proposes a solution to the Ayodhya temple dispute. Writing for the Center for the Study of Society and Secularism (India), Asghar Ali Engineer describes his recent visit to the contentious site; he witnessed that the "voiceless people of Ayodhya who have suffered for so long are now giving themselves an effective voice."
"All routes to Ayodhya sealed"

"5,800 arrested"

2. Law & Order

Deputy Prime Minister, L. K. Advani, acknowledged that the handling of the riot cases by the Gujarat government was "embarrassing." Thirteen of the twenty-one accused acquitted in the Best Bakery massacre case were re-arrested and six more surrendered.
"What happened in Gujarat could disturb anyone: Advani"
"Best Bakery case: more surrender"

According to police, the Mumbai blasts had been planned for almost 3 years; they were not necessarily in retaliation for the communal riots in Gujarat and might be tied to Lashkar-e-Taiba elements in Dubai.
"Dubai connection to Mumbai blasts?"

The Shahi Imam of New Delhi's Jama Masjid, Maulana Syed Ahmed Bukhari, angered many Muslims for his unapologetic comments with regards to Osama bin Laden and the September 11, 2001 attacks.

3. Military Affairs

India, Israel, and Russia signed an agreement for the $1.2 billion sale of Phalcon Airborne Early-Warning Air Control System (AWACS), which where jointly developed by the US and Israel and are mounted on Russian IL-76 cargo planes. Writing in Israeli business daily Globes Online, Dror Marom reports that the deal was barely profitable for Israel. Indo-Israeli joint exercises are on hold, according to Defense Minister George Fernandes.

India awaits the sale of the Russian aircraft carrier, Admiral Gorshkov, and hopes to complete negotiations in time for PM Vajpayee's visit to Moscow in mid-November.

A Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) facility was broken into and 19 computers were stolen. The Indian Air Force upgraded its station at Hasimara to counter the designs of China, according to the officer in charge of the station. India and Singapore bolstered their bilateral defense agreement.

4. Sino-Indian Relations

On the foreign ministry website, China has removed Sikkim from its list of official foreign countries, though a Hindustan Times (India) editorial contends that China has "merely acknowledged the reality on the ground." Two pieces analyze of India's role in the recent ASEAN summit and its meaning for the region's economies, and China's response to India abutting its economic power. The Daily Times (Pakistan) reports on China "softening" its position on Kashmir, given improved relations with India.

Jammu & Kashmir (J&K)

1. News & Reports

A proposal to convert the Siachen glacier into a peace park, mooted by some ecologists, seems to be gaining acceptance among environmentalists. The Times of India criticizes plans to build an amusement park in Srinagar. Pakistan protested the detention of two Kashmiri leaders: Musrat

Alam, chief of the pro-Pakistan political party Muslim League, was recently arrested in Srinagar, while the National Front's Naeem Ahmed Khan was detained early September. In an interview with Muzamil Jaleel (Indian Express, India), Chief Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed emphasizes the importance of engaging the separatist elements in talks with the Indian government.
"Support for `Siachen Peace Park' plan"
"Islamabad flays arrest of two Kashmiri leaders"

The Chief of the Army Staff has credited the Army's improved presence and weaponry for thwarting potential infiltration by militants. He stated that "[t]here is a presence of Al Qaeda militants in Kashmir." The daily Hindu as not ruling out the presence of Al Qaeda. Arun Joshi (Hindustan Times, India) reports that over 400 militants are ready to surrender, but the bureaucracy of finalizing the surrender policy protracts the process.
"New tactics paying off in J&K: Army Chief"
"Al-Qaeda presence not ruled out in J&K"

Five Indian soldiers, eight militants and three civilians were killed in a bomb explosion and shootouts around Srinagar. Indian defense officials claim that Pakistani nationals belonging to Jaish-e-Mohammad, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Harkat-ul-Jehadi Islami, and Hizbul Mujahideen were killed while trying to infiltrate the border. In one case, however, residents alleged that the police covered-up; civilians were killed in panic fire by troops when passing by the police camp. They said that there were no militants in the area at the time.

2. Opinions & Analysis

Muzamil Jaleel (Indian Express, India) reports on the risks and rewards of being a journalist in Kashmir. Writing for the Henry Stimson Center (USA), Michael Krepon reports on his trip to Kashmir, concluding that since "Washington [is] preoccupied elsewhere, the initiative in Kashmir now rests in the hands of the militants." In the Hindustan Times (India), Vir Sanghvi places hope on one scenario: "India and Indian democracy flourish and the Generals take Pakistan further down the tubes, perhaps the Pakistani people will tire of a covert war from which they gain nothing."

CM Sayeed approved a construction project to build 300 houses, possibly aside for Kashmiri Pandits. In regards to the repatriation of Pandits, Balraj Puri (Hindustan Times, India) observes: "The tendency to condemn the entire Muslim community of Kashmir for their current plight would only tend to remove the sense of guilt on the collective conscience of Muslims for their failure to protect the Pandits."
"A township for Pandits"

Sudha Ramachandran, Meenakshi Gopinath, and Sumona Dasgupta (The Hindu, India) share the results and conclusions about the women of Kashmir: "Crossing Lines with a Gender Lens: Interrogating the Dominant Narratives on the Causes of Conflict in Kashmir." The Economic and Political Weekly (India) provides and in-depth analysis of the import of Kashmir's "fiscal autonomy."
"They have a different view"

Regional News

1. Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka's Defense Minister stated that the ceasefire between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has given the Tigers a chance to strengthen themselves militarily, but

added that was the price of pursuing peace to end two decades of ethnic war. President Chandrika Kumaratunga accused Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe of failing to ensure "the security of the State and the Nation." A statement by the Sri Lankan President office also stated that the LTTE is "totally uninterested" in "devolved power in a democratic context." Prime Minister Wickremesinghe, however, reiterated that the LTTE's willingness to accept a system of interim administration to North and East areas would help achieve a permanent solution to the present crisis. The LTTE, meanwhile, concluded a five-day internal discussion focused on power sharing plans ahead of a final peace deal. The LTTE delegation is expected to travel to Norway to meet with the Norwegian facilitators of the peace process.

2. The Philippines

President Arroyo stated that the killing of escaped Indonesian terrorist Fathur Rohman al-Ghozi indicates that "terrorism will never get far in the Philippines." Arroyo also admitted that the Philippines is "an open target for terrorists from the Indonesia-based Jemaah Islamiyah (JI)." Earlier, Australian Defense Minister Robert Hill told a security conference that the Philippines faces the greatest threat of an attack by the JI.

The Filipino government has reportedly started to pull out its forces from Buliok Complex in Central Mindanao - once a rebel stronghold - at the request of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The daily Manila Times reports that "foreign terrorists conducting training" in areas reportedly controlled by the MILF have been told to remain incognito to avoid jeopardizing the peace negotiations between the MILF and the Philippines government. A MILF spokesman stated that he believes that the government is committed to the pursuit of peace in Mindanao through a political settlement.

Three New People's Army (NPA) rebels and a government trooper were reportedly killed in two separate clashes. The Philippines Star reports that the government and the communist rebel movement are "are inching closer to resuming peace talks."

3. Nepal

Nepali news sources reported continuing clashes between the army and the Maoists. Nepal's Minister for Information and Communications Kamal Thapa stated that his government is ready for peace talks, "but for this, the Maoists must give up violent activities first."

4. Bangladesh

Parliamentarians from 46 countries attending the 49th conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) in Dhaka criticized richer nations and international lending agencies for putting up barriers to market access and setting tough preconditions for loans to poor countries. The leader of the opposition Awami League Sheikh Hasina accused the government of barring her from the conference.

For the third successive year, Bangladesh was ranked as the most corrupt country among 133 nations surveyed by the Transparency International. Bangladesh is also one of 12 commonwealth countries without the freedom of information law. The Daily Star (Bangladesh) notes that "corruption, crime, price hike of essentials, government's indecision, excessive dependency on bureaucracy and administrative sluggishness have largely marred the achievements of the two-yea--old government of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia."

5. News & Reports

Nine out of ten members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) -including Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore - signed an accord aimed at turning their region into a European-style free trade zone by 2020. 18 states of the Asia Pacific region including Australia, Bangladesh, South Africa, India, Indonesia and Thailand are reportedly close to signing a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) aimed at tariff reductions in trade. Deputy Prime Minister Lal Krishna Advani stated that Maoist rebels, who last week tried to kill leader of the southern state of Andhra Pradesh, India, have links with Sri Lanka's LTTE.

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