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Nuclear Issues

1. Related News and Analysis

David Isenberg's essay in Asia Times suggests that Pakistan's recent missile tests might have been motivated by "fears that its neighbor [India] may adopt the "preemptive strike" policy. Maqsood Nuri (News, Pakistan) argues that India uses "some genuine and some contrived" arguments to "justify" its nuclear and missiles program.

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad believes that a US-led attack on Iraq will result in more "acts of terrorism, perhaps even nuclear terrorism."

Afghanistan

1. Current News

The International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan (ISAF) in Afghanistan has suspended daylight flights from Kabul airport as a security precaution. United Nations flights are also being diverted from Kabul to the US military headquarters at Bagram. Three US bases were reportedly attacked with gunfire and rockets in eastern Afghanistan. The daily Dawn reports that many US soldiers in Afghanistan are feeling frustrated at being unable to pursue members of the al Qaeda network and Taliban militia that have crossed the border into Pakistan.

Reports in Pakistani newspapers indicate continuing tensions and skirmishes between various warlords in Afghanistan. Sonia Bakaric (Daily Times, Pakistan) reports that many Afghan refugees who returned to their country are facing poor living conditions.

Campaign Against Al-Qaeda

1. News and Analysis

Four Afghan refugees, allegedly belonging to al-Qaeda, were arrested in a joint raid conducted by the Pakistani police and FBI agents at the Jalozai Refugee Camp east of Peshawar. B. Raman (Asia Times), former head of India's counter-terrorism division of the Research & Analysis Wing, believes that Jihadi may have plans to carry out "a well-orchestrated series of terrorist attacks against Western nationals and interests in different parts of the world as warning signals to preempt military strikes against Iraq." A report by Zamira Eshanova (Daily Times, Pakistan) examines the "threat of terrorist developments in Central Asia."

India-Pakistan Tensions

1. News

The Indian government has announced that it will withdraw troops from the international border with Pakistan, but has ruled out any reduction along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir. Sujan Dutta (Telegraph, India) reports that Indian "generals are caught between 7 lakh troops on the borders and a government that does not know what to do with its army." India has reportedly told the US that "there is no possibility of a dialogue [with Pakistan] in the foreseeable future."

2. Analysis

India former Foreign Secretary J N Dixit believes that India "must make preparations to resume dialogue [with Pakistan]. But it should be a step-by-step approach." Raja Mohan argues that India will lose political initiative if it keeps "refusing to talk at all" with Pakistan. K.K. Katyal (Hindu) argues that the recent elections in J&K and Pakistan will have a "close bearing" on the course of Indo-Pakistan relations.

Pakistan

1. Elections - Results

No single party or coalition was able to win a clear majority in Pakistan's recently concluded elections. Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA) - a coalition of six major religious parties - will, however, be dominant in Pakistan's Senate. President Pervez Musharraf has promised that he would hand over powers to the new prime minister on November 1. A large number of Pakistani women contested 205 seats reserved for them in the national and provincial assemblies.

The three parties that won most seats have each started negotiations with various parties and individuals in an effort to form the government in Islamabad.

Observers from the European Union have described "serious flaws in the electoral process." The Pakistani government rejected these charges as "just not true." The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan has also expressed concern at the "lack of fairness and transparency" in the electoral process."

2. Elections - Editorials

The Daily Times believes that "any configuration will have to factor in the MMA." Another editorial in the same newspaper criticizes the chief of the Jama'at-e-Islami, Qazi Hussain Ahmad for threatening a popular uprising if the MMA is denied the right to rule. The daily Dawn sees the emergence of MMA as the most significant result of the elections.

3. Elections - Opinions & Implications

Reversing his earlier hardline position, Qazi Hussain Ahmed, one of the leaders of the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), has stated that the issue of the presence of US military and security personnel in Pakistan is "negotiable." Frahan Bokhari (News) characterizes the post elections scenario as "an unfolding nightmare." M.K. Bhadrakumar (Asia Times) argues that the success of MMA "could, despite what was initially feared, work in favor of the war on terror in Afghanistan." Nusrat Javeed (News) point out that leaders of MMA are experienced, pragmatic politicians. Syed Saleem Shahzad's (Asia Times) essay suggests that the strong showing of religious parties will force "a

major shift in the country's foreign and internal policies." Mohammad Waseem (Dawn) argues that the elections results indicate "a fragmented political landscape."

4. Military Affairs

A 115-member contingent of US Army will conduct a two-week joint military exercise with the Pakistan Army. Kaleem Omar's report in the Daily Times looks at the collaboration between Pakistan and China in the development of various fighter aircrafts.

India

1. India: Domestic Situation

Bal Thackeray, the chief of Shiv Sena, has stated that only Hinduism should be "honored" in India. Pratap Mehta's essay in the daily Telegraph criticizes a recent ordinance issued by Tamil Nadu's Chief Minister Jayalalithaa that bans religious conversions "either by force, allurements or fraudulent means." In an interview with Indian Express, Udit Raj, the chairman of All India Confederation of Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe Organizations, argues that Dalits (untouchables) need to form alliances with other minorities. Purnima Tripathi (Frontline, India) argues that the Congress(I)'s decision to form a non-BJP front with other secular-minded parties for the elections to the Gujarat Assembly will have a "far-reaching impact on the nature and direction of national politics."

Kashmir

1. Elections - Results

The ruling National Conference (NC) in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) lost power in the state after winning 28 out of the 87 Assembly seats. The Congress and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) have emerged as potential candidates to form the government. The daily Hindu believes that the election results indicate "a strong anti-incumbency sentiment." Despite intense negotiations to put together a coalition government, Congress and the PDP have so far been unable to agree on who should be the next Chief Minister. The political parties have two more days to form a government before the state, under Indian constitutional rules, is placed under the Governor's rule.

An Indian Express report looks at reaction of All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) to the election results. APHC did not participate in the elections.

2. Elections - National Conference

Omar Abdullah, whose National Conference performed poorly in the elections, has resigned for his post of India's junior foreign minister. Muzamil Jaleel (Indian Express) notes that "nothing was more symbolic of [the] desire for change than the defeat of National Conference (NC) president and Chief Ministerial candidate Omar Abdullah" in J&K elections. In another article, Muzamil Jaleel talks with a beggar found on the streets of "hyper-elite Srinagar neighbourhood" where the Abdullahs live.

3. Elections - Analysis and Opinions

Prem Shankar Jha (Hindustan Times) argues that the Indian government should remember that "the

Hurriyat remains a significant force in Kashmiri politics because it is the lens that focuses Kashmiri nationalism and turns it into a potent force." Navnita Chadha Behera (Hindu) notes that the elections have thrown up "a new class of political leadership" that "must now try to segregate the political and territorial dimensions of the demand for azadi.." Muzamil Jaleel (Indian Express) argues that "the PDP's domestic agenda will ... give the Centre sleepless nights." Zubeida Mustafa (Dawn, Pakistan) urges the Pakistani government to "disengage from the armed struggle in the disputed state" and let APHC determine its own course towards the resolution of the Kashmir dispute.

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