

Hindu, 3 October 2008

U.S. Senate clears nuclear deal; Bipartisan support gets 86 votes for bill

Washington: The India-U.S. nuclear deal on Thursday secured the approval of the U.S. Senate which overwhelmingly voted a bill rejecting all the killer amendments and paving the way for its implementation. The landmark civil nuclear cooperation agreement, entered into between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and U.S. President George W. Bush in 2005, secured 86 votes while 13 Senators voted against it. The U.S.-India Agreement for Cooperation Concerning Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy (123 Agreement) got bi-partisan support after the killer amendments, moved by two Democratic Senators, were turned down

Hindu, 3 October 2008

Editorial: Do not operationalise 123

Given the riders that accompanied the passage of the U.S.-India Nuclear Cooperation Agreement through Capitol Hill, there is no reason for the United Progressive Alliance government to feel euphoric about Wednesday evening's 86-13 vote in the Senate. The 123 Agreement was always going to be subordinate to the Hyde Act and it was disingenuous of the government to argue the contrary. What made the text somewhat defensible was the balance of rights and obligations it could claim to strike within. That balance has been fatally disturbed by the White House and Congress entering reservations derogating from a number of its provisions. Those who argue that the bilateral deal is unaffected and that India cannot be bound by anything it does not sign miss the fundamental point: the U.S. has posted advance notice of its refusal to be bound by what it is about to sign. This means India must carry the burden of its obligations while being denied the clear rights the agreement gives it with respect to fuel supply commitments and the permanence of reprocessing consent rights

Hindu, 3 October 2008

Opinion: Different strokes of 'nuclear diplomacy'

By P. S. Suryanarayana India, now widely seen as a rising and responsible global player, has never been a party to the discriminatory Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). In contrast, North Korea, officially known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), is presently outside the NPT, after having been bound by it for a number of years. And, the United States is only now examining the pros and cons of removing the DPRK from the long-standing American list of 'rogue states,' or more precisely, 'state-sponsors of terrorism.'

Hindu, 3 October 2008

Opinion: Decoding the Manmohan Singh enigma

By Harish Khare Two rather revealing moments added to the still unfolding enigma of Manmohan Singh. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is back from his longest overseas trip. Engagements during such trips are minutely orchestrated affairs. Spontaneity, if any, is carefully planned. But there were still two rather revealing moments during the longish road trip which added to the still unfolding enigma of Manmohan Singh, the man and the politician. Both moments found Dr. Singh speaking without the restraint of a script, usually vetted by four or five aides who among themselves manage, as a routine, to suck life and liveliness out of any prose. The first unscripted moment came at the White House on September 25

Times of India, 4 October 2008

US offers India \$375mn defence deal

WASHINGTON: The Pentagon has notified the US Congress of its offer to sell India

CBU-105 Sensor Fuzed Weapons (SFW) worth \$375 million to help the "Indian Air Force to develop and enhance standardisation and operational ability with the United States". "This proposed sale will contribute to the foreign policy and national security of the United States by helping to strengthen the US-India strategic relationship," the Pentagon's Defence Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) told the US Congress on September 30, a day before the Senate approved the India-US civil nuclear deal

News, 4 October 2008

PM calls for India-like US nuclear deal

MULTAN: Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani said Pakistan will demand a civilian nuclear agreement with the United States after Washington signed such deal with India. The US Senate endorsed a landmark US-India nuclear pact, removing the final legislative hurdle for resumption of civilian nuclear trade between the two countries after three decades. Pakistan, the world's only nuclear-armed Islamic nation, is a key US ally in the 'war on terror' but it remains at the centre of global concerns over an international black market run by its top atomic scientist

Dawn, 4 October 2008

Biden, Palin at one on Pakistan 'danger'

WASHINGTON / NEW YORK, Oct 3: For Democratic vice presidential candidate Joseph Biden, Pakistan is the most dangerous country in the world, with nuclear weapons that can hit Israel and the Mediterranean. His Republican rival Sarah Palin also considers Pakistan dangerous, but sees Iran as the greatest threat to the world peace. Senator Biden also believes that the current economic crisis may force Democrats to reconsider their plans for increasing US foreign assistance which can also affect his proposal for a \$15 billion, 10-year package for Pakistan. The two vice presidential candidates clashed on Pakistan, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in their debate telecast live on Thursday night

Daily Times, 5 October 2008

EDITORIAL: US and Pakistan's nuclear weapons

The United States' Democrat vice-presidential hopeful Senator Joseph Biden has made an assessment of Pakistan as a 'dangerous' state and has thereby sought to trim the Democrat electoral pitch for maximum advantage. The disenchanted formerly Republican voter is now supposed to vote Democrat because the Obama-Biden team is aware of the 'dangers of terrorism and nuclear proliferation'. Talking about terrorism, Mr Biden said during his TV debate with the Republican candidate for vice-presidency, Ms Sarah Palin: 'I promise you, if an attack comes in the homeland, it's going to come...from Al Qaeda planning in the hills of Afghanistan and Pakistan. That's where they live'. While this was said to decry the Republican emphasis on Iraq as a source of future danger, the case made against Pakistan as the 'most dangerous place' in the world is a repetition of what the major magazines and newspapers in the Western world have already said

Indian Express, 5 October 2008

123 pact will be signed very soon, say Rice, Pranab

New Delhi, October 4: Asserting that there are 'no open issues' on the nuclear deal, the United States on Saturday said it will stand by its commitments in the 123 agreement with India and the Hyde Act and that the Congressional legislation will be signed 'very soon'. "The President will sign the legislation passed by the US Congress very soon. He wants to do it very soon. There are administrative reasons," US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told a press conference after talks with External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee

Daily Times, 8 October 2008

Opinion: Is this our War? y Ijaz Hussain

Ever since Pakistan joined the US-led war on terror in 2001, controversy has raged on whether it is our war or America's. When Pervez Musharraf ruled the roost, his government owned it while most political parties, including his own PMLQ, refused to. Despite this divide, the debate on the ownership of the war remained low-key. The devastating Marriott bomb blast has, among other things, revived this debate as never before. Whereas the Pakistan government has reaffirmed its ownership, opposition political parties and the public at large do not seem convinced. Given the shrill, passionate debate that has taken place on the issue in the media following the Marriott tragedy, the divide seems to have widened. Further, it has raised the question: why, if it is our war, has the government failed to sell it to the public?

News, 8 October 2008

Gates rejects defeatism in Afghanistan

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of Defence Robert Gates said on Monday that there was "no reason to be defeatist" in Afghanistan, and refused to rule out the idea of negotiation with insurgents willing to reconcile with the Afghan government. Gates, speaking aboard a plane en route to a visit with European ministers, indicated he will again press Nato allies to send more troops to Afghanistan during an alliance meeting in Budapest on Thursday and Friday. "We continue to see the need for additional forces in Afghanistan. I want to make sure that everybody understands that the increase in US forces are not seen as replacements for Nato contributions, but as reinforcement," Gates said

News, 8 October 2008

Opinion: Unwilling to shake off America's grip? By Shireen M Mazari

Clearly, it involves the US creating space within the tribal areas to move in militarily and eventually restructure the whole Muslim nuclear entity of Pakistan. Attacking civilians and thereby creating chaos and panic which would inevitably lead to a mass displacement and add to the pressure on the central government in Islamabad. Also, knowing full well after all if we can conclude that such killings will create more space for extremists and terrorists, one can assume the US analysts and advisers must have done the same that by unleashing a war against our tribals and abusing our sovereignty they will create more space for the terrorists; and thereby more reasons to further destabilise us from outside while we face increasing attacks from our home-grown terrorists. Let us not fool ourselves the US is no friend but a powerful enemy and its ultimate aim is to defang us in terms of our nuclear assets

Hindu, 10 October 2008

CCPA gives the go-ahead

NEW DELHI: The Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs on Thursday gave its approval for the 123 Agreement to be signed between India and the U.S. in Washington. Ahead of External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee's departure to the U.S., the CCPA met here in the evening at the residence of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to give the go-ahead. Mr. Mukherjee is scheduled to sign the agreement with U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on Friday evening (early hours of Saturday in India), concluding a process that began three years ago

Hindu, 10 October 2008

Opinion: Bush signing statement on 123 leaves flaws intact reality check By Siddharth Varadarajan

Flanked by Vice-President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman and a bipartisan sprinkling of top legislators from Congress, Mr. Bush made a brief statement on the occasion of the signing in which he sought to allay Indian concerns about the United States derogating from its obligations under the 123 Agreement. These concerns arose because of the statement the President himself made in a letter to Congress last month that the fuel supply assurances contained within the 123 represented a 'political' rather than a legally binding commitment

Indian Express, 11 October 2008

US, India sign civil nuclear cooperation agreement

WASHINGTON, Oct 10: The United States and India signed a potentially lucrative agreement on Friday that would allow India to buy U.S. civil nuclear technology for the first time in three decades. Overturning a U.S. ban on nuclear trade instituted after India first tested an atomic device in 1974, the pact will provide India with access to U.S. nuclear fuel, reactors and technology to generate power for its population of more than 1.1 billion people

News, 11 October 2008

Anti-Americanism hurts Pakistan more than US

It was a special moment in Pakistan's history when the military and intelligence chiefs briefed parliament on the war against terrorism. The in-camera briefing affirmed the supremacy of Pakistan's Constitution, which makes parliament with elected representatives of the people the chief decision-maker in the country. At the same time, it showed the importance of Pakistan's military to its security. But those who owe their political careers to a culture of military coups have expressed "unhappiness" over the "inadequacy" of the parliamentary briefing. They are seeking "strategic" knowledge about why we are fighting in Fata and for what objective as if the nation still needs answers to these elementary questions Anti-Americanism hurts Pakistan more than US

Hindu, 12 October 2008

India reiterates 'legally binding' nature of 123 pact's provisions

New York: Even as it signed a bilateral nuclear cooperation agreement with the United States on Friday, India sought to draw a line under assertions Washington has made about the 'non-binding' nature of its fuel supply commitments by declaring that the '[123 Agreement's] provisions are now legally binding on both sides once the Agreement enters into force.' The agreement was signed at the State Department in a formal ceremony for which External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee specially flew in. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice signed the Agreement on behalf of the United States

Hindu, 12 October 2008

India 'encourages' U.S. nuclear cooperation with Pakistan

New York: In a statement that marks a significant shift in India's public attitude towards the prospect of Pakistan entering into nuclear agreements with other countries, External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee said on Friday that he was in favour of the United States cooperating with Islamabad in the civil nuclear area. Asked at a news conference in Washington shortly after the signing of the 123 Agreement about his views on possible nuclear cooperation between Pakistan and the U.S. and China, Mr. Mukherjee said India would encourage greater use of civil nuclear energy by its neighbour. 'In respect of civil nuclear cooperation between Pakistan and the U.S., we would like to encourage civil nuclear cooperation - its full

use of nuclear energy - as we believe every country has its right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes

New York Times, 13 October 2008

General Says He's Hopeful About War Against Taliban

Published: October 12, 2008 KABUL, Afghanistan - Less than 12 hours after NATO troops in Afghanistan defeated an ambitious attempt by the Taliban to storm a provincial capital in the far southwest, killing dozens of the fighters, the top American commander in the country urged doubters Sunday to believe that the war against the Taliban would be won. The commander, Gen. David D. McKiernan, who leads more than 65,000 troops from about 40 foreign countries, including 33,000 Americans, said at a news conference in Kabul that there had been 'too many' reports in the media recently asserting that the foreign forces and their Afghan allies were losing the war

New York Times, 14 October 2008

As U.S. Gains in Iraq, Rebels Go to Afghanistan

By JOHN F. BURNS Published: October 14, 2008 KABUL, Afghanistan - American military successes in Iraq have prompted growing numbers of well-trained 'foreign fighters' to join the insurgency in Afghanistan instead, the Afghan defense minister said on Tuesday. The minister, Gen. Abdul Rahim Wardak, said at a news conference that the increased flow of insurgents from outside Afghanistan had contributed to the heightened intensity of the fighting here this year, which he described as the 'worst' since the American-led forces toppled the Taliban government in 2001. American commanders have said that overall violence here has increased by 30 percent in the past year and have called for more troops

New York Times, 15 October 2008

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Hindu, 20 October 2008

Opinion: How to wind down the Afghan war By M.K. Bhadrakumar

While the opinion among American politicians favours a vaguely Afghan variant of the Iraqi 'surge,' the silver lining is Washington's sheer unaffordability of an open-ended war in Afghanistan. Slowly, imperceptibly, it is becoming official American thinking that a United States 'exit strategy' in Afghanistan ought to involve reconciliation with the Taliban. U.S. Defence Secretary Robert Gates admitted as much recently. He said: 'There has to be ultimately, and I'll underscore ultimately, reconciliation as part of the political outcome to this [war]. That's ultimately the exit strategy for all of us.' True, he spoke with caveat s but his statement marked a beginning since it was made in the approach to a historic transition of political power in Washington

Hindu, 21 October 2008

Pacts with U.S., France include fuel supply assurances, says Pranab

NEW DELHI: The Central government has said the civil nuclear agreements signed with the U.S. and France include fuel supply assurances and the right to reprocess the spent nuclear material that would be imported in future. These agreements and the one with Russia later this year would allow India to build its strategic fuel reserves to ensure uninterrupted operation of civil nuclear reactors under the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards, according to a suo motu statement External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee tabled in the Lok Sabha on Monday. The Minister was unable to read the statement because of the din in the House.

News, 21 October 2008

Boucher's visit offers nothing except warnings

ISLAMABAD: US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher's visit to Pakistan had somewhat inconsequential impact on the bilateral ties of the two countries as the US official had come on a 'fact-finding' mission and to make an assessment of the outcome of the visit of President Asif Ali Zardari across the Karakoram. He has been talking tough on a number of counts and the reasons are quite understandable. No tangible announcement was made by him to redeem Pakistan from its current imbroglio except a warning on the account of hobnobbing with extremists. It was a glaring example of carrot and stick policy of Washington, a source said

News, 21 October 2008

Opinion: Talking peace with militants by Khalid Aziz

Since April of this year the military changed the method of fighting the insurgency in FATA and the NWFP. Prior to 'Operation Zalzalā,' which was conducted in the Mahsud area of South Waziristan from January to April, the military strategy was guided by a minimalist response. However, this led to poor results with declining morale among troops. It also created a perception in people's mind that the government was ambivalent in its approach. Although the Pakistani military has begun to challenge the supremacy of the militants in Bajaur and Swat, the policy needs to be refined to make it more robust. In Bajaur a difficult decision was taken to challenge the highly trained group of militants, many of whom, like Qari Ziaur Rehman, belonged to the Afghan Taliban movement. A large number of other Central Asian militants are also present here. Only a detailed investigation will shed light on how and from where such militants are able to enter Bajaur and Swat. Information suggests that such infiltration is occurring from Tajikistan and the Kunar and Nuristan provinces of Afghanistan. If that is so, one would like to know the reason why no counteraction is taken to block this route by Afghanistan?

Daily Times, 21 October 2008

Editorial: Getting Afghanistan together

President Asif Ali Zardari is supposed to have told the visiting US Assistant Secretary of State, Mr Richard Boucher, that the growing production of drugs in Afghanistan was having ill effects in Pakistan since the terrorists were now being funded increasingly with drug money. He said one reason terrorism had increased was Pakistan's interdiction of the drug routes in Pakistan, and if the war against terrorism had to be won the allied forces in Afghanistan must stop drug production in Afghanistan. This was important, he argued, because the battle in Pakistan was turning and local tribal lashkars were increasingly taking on the intruders

News, 22 October 2008

Editorial: Another cold shoulder

The US assistant secretary of state has, like the Chinese, remained unsympathetic to

Pakistan's pleas for an immediate cash injection to bail it out of economic crisis. Boucher told the top Pakistani leadership that the 'Friends of Pakistan' forum that Washington played a key role in setting up would offer 'strategic support' but would not put hard cash down on the table. This is not what Pakistan's managers want to hear. The tough words from Boucher, who had attended a preliminary meeting of the Friends forum days ago, leaves the country with almost no options but to go for what the finance adviser has called 'Plan C' a loan facility from the IMF. The fact that Boucher met Pakistan's top leaders, including the prime minister, the president and the finance adviser indicates how much significance was attached to his Islamabad visit. Indeed, this is expected to be the last trip to the capital by Boucher in his present capacity. The predictions coming in from Washington are that the career diplomat, who has handled South Asia for the Bush administration, will opt to bow out with it by the end of the year

New York Times, 22 October 2008

Airstrike Kills 9 Afghan Troops

KABUL, Afghanistan - The Afghan authorities said on Wednesday that an airstrike by coalition forces killed nine Afghan Army soldiers overnight in what the United States-led coalition said may have been 'a case of mistaken identity on both sides.' Gen. Zahir Azimi, the spokesman for the Afghan Defense Ministry, said the air strike took place at 2 a.m. in Khost Province in eastern Afghanistan. The strike killed nine soldiers and wounded three others, one seriously, he said. Other officials in the area said the attack may have been carried out by helicopter gunships

News, 23 October 2008

Opinion: Revisiting our US alliance By Soban Adil

Pakistan today experiences an increased level of conflict and a perception is being built to undermine its military capability. In this context, America's approach needs to be seen in the context of its long-term strategic interests in the region, which forces it to engage with Pakistan. However, to achieve this it pursues a policy of controlled chaos enabling it to keep the option of political and military intervention alive. In the case of Pakistan this shifting of conflict and creation of chaos serves the interests of most of the regional stakeholders and power-brokers operating inside Afghanistan. The coalition finds benefit in reduction of military operations on its side. Afghanistan finds it beneficial because the world's attention is diverted towards Pakistan. India is obviously happy, and so is Russia, while Iran is content since because its potential economic competitor Pakistan is handicapped by persistent security concerns

Hindu, 24 October 2008

Obama says India will be top priority

Chicago: A stronger relationship and a close strategic partnership with India will be a 'top priority' of a Barack Obama administration, the Democratic presidential candidate has said. 'The U.S. should be working with India on a range of critical issues from preventing terrorism to promoting peace and stability in Asia,' Senator Obama said in an exclusive interview to IANS on Wednesday. 'Joe Biden and I will make building a stronger relationship, including a close strategic partnership, with India a top priority.'

News, 24 October 2008

US drone attack kills 10 militants

PESHAWAR: Some 10 militants were killed and six others seriously injured in yet another pre-dawn missile attack by a US spy plane on a Madrassa and a house in

Danday Darpakhel village near Miramshah in the North Waziristan Agency (NWA) on Thursday morning. The militants died in the attack belonged to Ahmadzai Wazir and Mehsud tribes of South Waziristan and Dawar tribe in North Waziristan. The US aircraft fired four Hellfire missiles on Madrassa Sirajul Uloom and the adjoining house of former Afghan Taliban commander, Maulana Pir Muhammad, who is now part of pro-America Hamid Karzai-led government in Kabul

News, 24 October 2008

US military training programme for FC starts

WASHINGTON: A small contingent of US military instructors have begun a training program scheme aimed at turning the Frontier Corps into an effective counter-insurgency force, a US military official said on Thursday. About 25 US military personnel last week began training Pakistani counterparts at a location in Pakistan outside the troubled tribal areas where the Frontier Corps operates, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. 'It has started. It is a train-the-trainer mission,' the official said, emphasizing that the Americans would not directly train the Frontier Corps, but only their Pakistan Army instructors. The aim is 'basically to train the Frontier Corps in counter-insurgency warfare to make them more effective in the tribal areas,' the official said. Meanwhile, Pakistani officials in Washington said the government is planning to supply assault rifles to thousands of tribesmen willing to take up arms against the militants in the tribal areas.

New York Times, 25 October 2008

Afghan Bombing Kills 3 Coalition Troops

KABUL, Afghanistan -- The United States military said on Thursday that a roadside bomb had killed three soldiers from the American-led coalition fighting militants. A U.S. military statement gave no details of the nationality or the precise location of the attack in western Afghanistan, but said a fourth soldier was wounded in the incident

Hindu, 25 October 2008

Military solution in Sri Lanka very difficult: U.S.

CHENNAI: The United States is encouraging all parties in Sri Lanka to accept a political solution to the conflict without waiting for a military defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. In an interactive session at the University of Madras on Friday, U.S. Ambassador to Sri Lanka Robert Blake rejected Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa's view that political talks could come only after the LTTE was wiped out or disarmed. 'A military solution is going to be very, very difficult,' he said, citing Sri Lankan Army Chief Sarath Fonseka's statement that even if the Army occupied all of northern Sri Lanka, a residual guerrilla force of at least a thousand LTTE fighters would go underground

Dawn, 27 October 2008

Suspected US strike kills seven

ISLAMABAD, Oct 26: Suspected US spy drones fired missiles on Sunday into an alleged militant compound in a tribal area bordering Afghanistan, killing at least seven people, security officials said. The air strike in South Waziristan was the latest in a string of attacks on Pakistani soil that have raised tensions between Islamabad and Washington. The strike targeted a compound about 20km northeast of Wana, the main town in the tribal zone, the officials said. 'Initial reports say at least seven people were killed in the missile strike, which destroyed the facility,' one senior security official said

Daily Times, 28 October 2008

Pak-Afghan jirga for joint efforts against terror: Reconciliation, talks vital for lasting success: Qureshi

ISLAMABAD: Negotiations and reconciliation are necessary to succeed in combating terrorism and extremism, Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said on Monday. He said terrorism posed the gravest threat to Pakistan and Afghanistan and both countries should forge closer co-operation to eliminate the menace. 'This is the gravest threat to both countries and they need to co-operate closely to effectively counter and completely eliminate this curse,' he said while addressing the inaugural session of the Pak-Afghan mini jirga (jirga gai)

New York Times, 28 October 2008

Afghan Bomb at Meeting Kills 2 G.I.'s and a Child

KABUL, Afghanistan - A suicide attacker in a police uniform blew himself up inside a police station in the northern Afghan province of Baghlan on Monday, killing two American soldiers and an 8-year-old boy, Afghan officials said. The blast wounded several other people, including one American soldier, officials said. Baghlan is a relatively peaceful province, and there is said to be no active insurgency there. But it was the scene of one of the bloodiest suicide attacks last year, in which as many as 72 people were reported killed, including 5 lawmakers and more than 50 schoolchildren

Dawn, 29 October 2008

Islamabad and Kabul agree on contacts with militants

ISLAMABAD, Oct 28: The first Pak-Afghan mini-Jirga formally decided to hold talks with militants in their respective areas of control if the Taliban agreed to adhere to the countries' constitutions. However, the jirga dropped the condition that militants should first renounce violence. Both Kabul and Islamabad had earlier insisted that talks with the Taliban would be possible only if the militants laid down arms and renounced violence. But, the declaration adopted at the end of the mini-jirga only talked about 'urgent and imperative need of dialogue and negotiations with opposition groups in both countries with a view to finding a peaceful settlement of the ongoing conflict, upholding the supremacy of constitutions of both countries'

Dawn, 29 October 2008

US willing to hold talks with Taliban, says report

WASHINGTON/NEW YORK, Oct 28: The US is willing to hold direct talks with elements of the Taliban in an effort to quell unrest in Afghanistan, the Wall Street Journal reported on Tuesday, citing unidentified Bush administration officials. The Washington Post reported that Taliban leader Mullah Omar had shown openness to the idea of repudiating Al Qaeda, which encouraged the Bush administration to explore the possibility of holding direct talks with the militia. Jane's Defence Weekly reported that the Taliban had conveyed this message to representatives of the Afghan government during a meeting in Saudi Arabia last month

Dawn, 29 October 2008

Editorial: Superpower arrogance

WHETHER it is a member of the 'axis of evil' or 'a major non-Nato ally', the Bush administration does not seem to miss an opportunity to flaunt its military prowess and the unilateralism that has been its characteristic. With the presidential election only a week away, American forces on Sunday raided a Syrian town and claimed killing eight people, including what a US military spokesman described as 'one of the most prominent foreign fighter facilitators'. The raid would remind the world of the

Sept 3 attack by American troops in Fata, the first to come in the wake of President Bush's secret order, signed in July, authorising raids inside Pakistan, the 'frontline state' in the war on terror. The Sept 3 raid by American special forces that killed 20 people in Angoor Adda sent shock waves across Pakistan. Since then, even though an incursion by US troops has not taken place, the Pentagon has continued to launch missile attacks on suspected Taliban targets in Pakistan - 18 have been reported since September - with the casualties each time not necessarily being the militants

New York Times, 29 October 2008

Pakistan Protests U.S. Attacks

Published: October 29, 2008 PESHAWAR, Pakistan - The Pakistani government lodged a formal protest on Wednesday over American missile attacks on the Taliban and Al Qaeda in the nation's tribal areas and told the American ambassador the strikes should be 'stopped immediately,' the Foreign Ministry said. Ambassador Anne Patterson was summoned to the ministry two days after a missile strike by a drone in South Waziristan killed 20 people, including several local Taliban commanders

Daily Times, 30 October 2008

Editorial: Regional stakes in peace with the Taliban

The 50-member Pak-Afghan 'jirgagai' or mini-jirga has concluded its session in Islamabad on Tuesday with a call to initiate peace talks with the Taliban, 'including all who are involved in the conflict situation'. Two committees have been formed, one to ensure that the resolution of the 'jirgagai' is implemented, and the other to actually engage the Taliban in negotiations. The Afghan side, represented by former foreign minister Mr Abdullah Abdullah, has clearly changed its mind. It once used to denounce all efforts for peace talks with the militants made by Pakistan.

Daily Times, 30 October 2008

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News, 31 October 2008

Opinion: Obama is better by Yasser Latif Hamdani

Between a rock and a hard place, between the devil and the deep blue sea there are countless ways of describing the stark Catch 22 situation in which we in Pakistan are forced to see the current US election. On the one hand we have the charismatic and eloquent Obama, who most Pakistanis have taken a strong liking to because he promises a break with what are generally conceived by the common people here as pro-military dictatorship policies of the Grand Old Party. But Obama has also engaged in rhetoric that scares most Pakistanis. The idea of a US attack on the NWFP isn't so much an issue of sovereignty as of repercussions. Already Pakistan is facing the brunt of terrorism in the world with our lives and property insecure and our future uncertain. Added to our misery are the economic woes which have been exacerbated by the war on terror. Most Pakistanis also fear that the Democratic Party, at least since Bill Clinton's second term in office, has been moving decidedly closer to India, Pakistan's principal rival. This fear is only partially true and in the long run inconsequential