

was “eager to write the last chapter on the war in the South by obtaining John Garang’s heart and mind and signature to the Peace Agreement and integration into the political process, where disputes are settled by free and fair elections, not by guns and violence.” The ambassador went on to say that his government “would *welcome mediation towards that end by the United States, and has broached that idea at the highest levels of the United States administration*” (emphasis added).

If the Clinton administration seizes this opportunity to support the peace process, and broaden it to include the recalcitrant Garang, this can change the course of history in the African continent, contributing to reversing the process of destruction and death now rampant in the Great Lakes region. Defeating the British ploy in Sudan is a first step to defeating the British in the region, where the ongoing genocide and destruction of nations is being perpetrated. Cognizant of the strategic implications, London will do everything possible to prevent effective action from Washington. Thus, the trip of Sadiq al Mahdi, Garang, and Mansur Khalid to the United States.

Although not so decisive as American support, strong backing by Germany for the peace process would be important, and is feasible. The German ambassador in Khartoum reportedly also welcomed the peace treaty. Furthermore, a resolution was passed in the German Bundestag (Parliament) prior to the treaty signing, which endorsed the peace process in Sudan, and called on the Bonn government to intervene to facilitate further progress. It is, therefore, no coincidence that Baroness Cox herself would deploy to Germany, to carry on her propaganda war against peace. She will be there on June 20-22 for a conference sponsored by the Evangelical Academy, on the topic “Sudan: Between Human Rights Violations and the Search for Peace.”

A unique opportunity

There has never been a more propitious moment for peace in Sudan, nor has there been a greater opportunity, to defeat the historical ambitions of the British, to decimate the continent and rape it of its resources.

Those in Washington, D.C., in the Congress and the administration, who are morally committed to pursue the cause of peace for Africa, must exploit the opportunity provided by the visit of Garang, al Mahdi, and Khalid. They must be confronted with the hard facts of the peace treaty, which has been signed by political and military leaders of the rebel forces, representing the vast majority of the population of southern Sudan. The demands of Garang et al. for self-determination have been met in the treaty. In addition, an in-depth strategy for winning the peace has been mapped out and agreed upon, to satisfy the just demands of the Sudanese people, for economic progress, social repacification, wealth and power sharing, and representative democracy. There is no reason for any honest, peace-loving Sudanese to reject this treaty.

Promise of harmony on Indian subcontinent

by Susan B. Maitra and Ramtanu Maitra

With three months left before the 50th anniversary independence celebrations, India and Pakistan took an historic step in Male, in the Maldives archipelago located in the Indian Ocean, by agreeing to set up working groups to study problems that bedevil their bilateral relations. Prime Ministers I.K. Gujral of India and Mian Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan, both of whom hail from the Punjab of pre-partition days, announced their intent to institutionalize bilateral discussions, following their luncheon meeting at the Kurumba resort, where the heads of government of the South Asian nations met on May 12-14 to strengthen their relations.

Both prime ministers made clear that it is their personal trust and respect for each other that enabled them to come to an agreement. Without identifying specific characteristics of the working groups, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said that working groups will be set up on various subjects and would be identified by the foreign secretaries of the two countries when they meet, “perhaps by the end of this month.”

For a better future

The decision to improve relations between the two countries and move toward bringing unity and harmony to the subcontinent, is in line with recent developments which saw an improvement in India-Bangladesh relations. Since coming to terms on sharing the water of the Ganges River, India and Bangladesh have moved further toward developing transportation and electrical power distribution grids. If and when the India-Pakistan relations improve further, the southern tier of the India section of the Eurasian Land-Bridge will get a boost, and connecting Southeast Asia with Iran via the Indian subcontinent will become a reality.

The southern flank of the Eurasian Land-Bridge connects India through Pakistan and Iran and the Central Asian nations to Europe in the west. In the east—India’s linkage to Myanmar, and then southward to connect Singapore by land, through Bangladesh—a stretch of railroad linking Calcutta to Yangon is necessary to enhance the potential of the southern flank. Recent developments in bilateral relations between India and Bangladesh, and the prospect of Myanmar becoming a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations

(ASEAN) in the near future, have given a boost to the southern tier of the Eurasian Land-Bridge. However, it is the improvement in Indo-Pakistan relations which can make the southern flank of the Land-Bridge a reality.

Both India and Pakistan, victims of isolation and super-power machinations during the Cold War days, are desperately looking for a way out of the low-growth economy and poverty that overwhelm both nations. The International Monetary Fund- and World Bank-led monetarist economic policies have also kept these two large nations in shackles, by not allowing them to spend adequate amounts of money in developing infrastructure with the help of borrowed cash. Bilateral hostility, a legacy of the partition of the subcontinent and the Cold War, has prevented these nations from trading with each other and jointly exploiting each other's potentials. It is these economic exigencies which are now propelling the two nations to seek better relations with each other.

Economic realities

A leading Indian academic, Prof. S.D. Muni, in his analysis in the daily *Times of India*, pointed out that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, a leading industrialist in Pakistan, is fully aware of the "fast-growing demands of the Pakistani business community to normalize economic relations with India." A few weeks ago, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), the largest Indian chamber of commerce, and its sister organization in Pakistan reached an understanding to accord mutual accommodation to each other's goods and services.


Independent studies carried out by the Industry and Commerce ministries in Pakistan have shown that opening up bilateral trade will benefit Pakistan immensely. Official trade between the two countries is valued at just \$500 million, as against the unofficial figure of \$1.5-2 billion. According to some experts, if the tariff barriers between the two countries are lowered to an acceptable level, trade can soar to as high as \$4-5 billion within a short span of time. Experts claim that investment from within the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) may touch \$15 billion if the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) is set up within three years, as suggested.

Political machinations

However, it is also evident that economic compulsions alone cannot clear up the political fog and mist that envelop the two countries' bitter relations of the past. For instance, the Kashmir dispute, which is as old as independent India and Pakistan, has long been an international issue and a subject of three wars. All major powers, at one time or another, and some of them even today, find it convenient to take sides on the Kashmir dispute to evoke hostility between the two nations. Britain's Labour Party, which has just come to power, is notorious for its unsolicited promotion of independent

Kashmir, separated from both India and Pakistan. However, in recent days, Beijing's advice to Pakistan to put the Kashmir issue on the back burner, and Washington's pressure on both New Delhi and Islamabad toward a diplomatic engagement, created a stable ground on which the two prime ministers could act.

At the same time, there is a general realization within the South Asian community, bound together by the SAARC, a yet-to-be-effective organization, that the harmony of relations between India and Pakistan would serve all of them well. Speaking at the SAARC summit in Male on the same day India and Pakistan decided to set up working groups, Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga said: "The principal reality of our region is the significant asymmetry in size, resources, development, and power amongst us. Another reality is the uniquely central and pivotal position within our region of the largest member, India." Calling for "frequent, informal and confidential [as well as] free and frank interlocation amongst ourselves . . . with a view to clarifying doubts, dispelling suspicions," President Kumaratunga proposed informal and unrecorded exchange of views among all SAARC states. A similar view, which focussed on the relevance of a harmonious India-Pakistan equation to make the SAARC a success, was expressed by Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed, among others.



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