

Birth of a new state



If everything goes well, an independent new nation will emerge, today, 9th July 2011, in the African continent for which Bangladesh can take pride for her contribution in bringing a peaceful solution to the longest conflict in Africa. It is the South Sudan, which till yesterday was part of Sudan, the largest country in Africa. Bangladeshi Peacekeepers are working there to implement the UN mandate since 2005. Heads of 30 countries including UNSG will attend the ceremony of South's independence in its capital Juba. Of late more than 120 Bangladeshi troops have been sent to the state's capital Kadugli to turn its main base there into safe haven for refugees. Historically, Sudan has been viewed as a nation divided between north and south. Northern Sudan, with a predominantly Arab population and South Sudan, and the

southern part of the country, which is an autonomous region with a population of about 8 million of mainly African ethnic origin. The South has abundant untapped natural resources and is home to Christian and animist beliefs. The country has been beset by conflicts for more than decades that has cost the lives of 1.5 million people, and a continuing conflict in the western region of Darfur has driven millions from their homes. Sudan is the only country of the world where currently two UN missions are being conducted namely, United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) and United Nations African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). The ongoing fighting between North and South Sudan started in 1983 following the collapse of 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement. For more than two decades the Government and the Sudan People's Liberation

Movement/Army (SPLM/SPLA), the main resistance faction in the South, fought over resources, power, and the role of religion in the state and for self-determination. Over the years, there were many efforts taken by various stakeholders including the neighbouring countries, donors, international community and the parties themselves, to bring peace in the country which resulted in the signing of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) on 9 January 2005 in Nairobi, Kenya. The agreement provided for a high degree of autonomy for the South and an option for it to secede. While the parties recognized the unity of Sudan as a priority under the accord, they determined to set up a six and half year interim period during which interim institutions would preside over the country and international monitoring system would be established and operationalized. Accordingly, a unity Government was formed taking representation from the parties involved in the conflict. Mr. Omar Hassan al Bashir is the President of the country who heads the government while Mr Salva Kiir Mayardit has been appointed as the first vice president who is otherwise the leader of SPLM. Despite lot of hiccups and clashes between the parties during the interim period, the people of South Sudan unequivocally expressed their desire to separate from the Republic of Sudan on January this year, with almost 99 percent voting for secession. The South Sudan referendum went off smoothly and on time. It was a transparent process, and the results, officially announced in early February this year were accepted by the North. Although there is a triumphant mood amongst the people there, experts see enormous and difficult challenges ahead of both North and South Sudan. The status of Abyei and post referendum issues between North and South like citizenship, oil sharing, border demarcation, currency, debts are yet to be solved. Abyei, an area of 10,460 square kilometers, was a major combat zone. Its status was left unresolved in the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement. There are many stakeholders involved in the current crisis. The US has a keen interest in Sudan because of its strategic location on the Red Sea immediately south of Egypt, and it borders on seven other African countries. Newly discovered resources have made Sudan a country of great interest to the US corporations. It is believed to have oil reserves rivaling Saudi Arabia. It has large deposits of natural gas. In addition, it has one of the largest deposits of high-purity uranium in the world, along with the fourth-largest deposits of copper. China, a major ally of the Sudan's government, also has an important role to play. China has sunk \$10 billion into the oil sector. She has been buying huge amounts of oil from Sudan's land locked south which run through northern pipelines, linking China to both the parts of the country. In recent years, China has also supplied the government of North with large amounts of military equipment and lent it diplomatic support. In such a backdrop the US - China rivalry is a cause for concern for Sudan. Meanwhile, the US has been able to get a resolution passed by the UN Security Council on the deployment of 4200

Ethiopian peacekeepers for six months. This means there will be one more peacekeeping force in Sudan - one in Abyei, a Hybrid UN-African Union body in Darfur, UNAMIS, a force that monitors fulfillment of 2005 CPA, and a new unit soon to be deployed in the independent South Sudan. What makes the US to propose sending Ethiopian peacekeeping forces in Abyei? US-Ethiopian relations was established in 1903 during the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt. Ethiopia enjoyed the status of most favoured nation until the Italian occupation in 1935. Currently, Ethiopia is a strategic partner of the US in the Global War on Terrorism. So far 29 countries have announced their intention to recognize South Sudan upon independence that includes 4 UNSC permanent members, China, Russia, United Kingdom and United States. On the other hand Eritrea, Iran and Libya have opposed the idea of independence. Amongst the SAARC nations only India has announced its intention to recognize South Sudan. Though Bangladesh peacekeeping forces are working in Sudan since 2005, yet her decision to recognize South Sudan has not yet been made public. Despite the fact that Bangladesh has been participating in peacekeeping for more than 20 years yet she seems never to have looked beyond peacekeeping. It is time that Bangladesh looked beyond peacekeeping and participated in the reconstruction South Sudan. South Sudan can be a destination for overseas employment under the auspices of UN/International community. The writer has served as a UN military observer in Iraq in 1989-1990 and Contingent Commander in Ivory Coast in 2005-2006.

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Will Afghanistan stabilise after the US troop draw down?

ARVIND GUPTA and SMRUTI S. PATTANAIK

THE much anticipated announcement on the drawdown of US troops from Afghanistan came on June 22, 2011. President Obama declared that the US will withdraw 33,000 troops from Afghanistan by September 2012. Striking a confident posture, he assured his nation that the drawdown of troops was being undertaken from a "position of strength". In his assessment "the tide of war is receding ...in Afghanistan, the light of a secure peace can be seen in the distance." The decision to withdraw troops from Afghanistan will be a game changer. But, will it lead to more or less stability in Afghanistan? The indications are that the Taliban may have been emboldened by Obama's announcement. The Taliban have stepped up their attacks. The spectacular attack on the highly fortified Intercontinental hotel in Kabul on June 29 is a bad omen. Further, the desperate lack of governance in Afghanistan coupled with lax security, rampant corruption, high unemployment, weak institutions and rising civilian casualties in Western air attacks have encouraged the Taliban to project a success story. Another prominent feature of the emerging situation is that the US, Pakistan and Afghanistan, the three key players in this war, have divergent views and interests on counterinsurgency operations and reconciliation with the Taliban. The three are likely to pursue different agendas as the US troop drawdown begins. They are individually engaged in maximising their respective gains in the post-withdrawal phase. In order to hasten the withdrawal, the US is engaged in secret talks with the Taliban. The US hopes in putting together a political arrangement inclusive of the Taliban as it withdraws from Afghanistan in the next three years. Softening its position, the US has ensured that the Taliban are removed from the list of entities under UN sanctions. Only al Qaeda operatives remain on that list now. This is to induce the Taliban to break its links with the al Qaeda, renounce violence and recognize the Afghan constitution to participate in the talks. The US endeavours to talk directly with the Taliban has upset the Pakistanis. There is a possibility that, like in the past, Pakistan will try to scuttle US talks with the Taliban. In this context, it is worth recalling the words of Prime Minister Gilani who said, "Nothing will happen without us, because we are part of the solution". Pakistan regards Afghanistan as its rear-guard. Pakistan's Afghan policy is at variance with that of the US. The US raid that killed Osama Bin Laden, who was hiding in Abbottabad, has seriously strained US-Pakistan relations. The

Pakistan army has been publicly criticized for having failed to defend the country's sovereignty. After the unilateral Abbottabad operation, Pakistan has forced the US to withdraw 120 American operatives functioning in different capacities in Pakistan including those who were providing training for the Frontier Corps. Given its aid dependency, Pakistan will continue its dubious cooperation with the US in dealing with the Taliban elements at least in the short run. But, Pakistan sees in the US withdrawal a strategic opportunity to reestablish its influence in Afghanistan by rebuilding relations with the militants from whom it had distanced itself under US pressure. This is the prime reason for Pakistan's reluctance to expand the theatre of war to include North Waziristan where the Haqqani group is based. The withdrawal of the international commu-

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sides have openly sparred over Karzai's controversial re-election and on the sensitive issue of corruption. Karzai has also been playing to the domestic gallery and has even gone to the extent of hinting that the Western forces are 'occupier' forces. The US is unlikely to provide a blank cheque to Karzai unless he takes visible action against corruption which has fed into the insurgency. Despite strains in US-Afghan relations, the two sides are reportedly discussing a "strategic partnership". But, given growing public anger in Afghanistan against the mounting civilian casualties, which stood at 2,777 in 2010, Karzai, who is likely to seek another term in office, is in a quandary. On the one hand he desperately needs the US security and economic assistance, but on the other he cannot be seen to be too close to the US. To the domestic audiences he claims, "we have tied up US hands and feet with our conditions" in the proposed first draft of the Strategic agreement. At the same time he knows that he cannot impose conditions on the US as without the latter's support the Afghan government is simply not sustainable. President Karzai is negotiating hard to ensure continued military and economic assistance under the strategic partnership agreement with the US. Similarly, he is trying to engage with Iran, Russia and China bilaterally. Nation building in Afghanistan is no longer a declared aim for the US. The sole US objective is "not to tolerate a safe haven for those who aim to kill US citizens". How will the US ensure this as it begins to withdraw from Afghanistan? Pakistan has not proved to be a reliable partner. Terrorists continue to find a safe haven in Pakistan. Osama Bin Laden's killing has not changed this situation. The US has to realize that Taliban safe havens in Pakistan need to be dismantled. There are reports that the US may keep military bases in Afghanistan while withdrawing the bulk of its troops. It is anybody's guess whether keeping military bases in Afghanistan will diminish the threat to the US from al Qaeda/Taliban havens in Pakistan. Will it change Pakistan's behaviour? Unlikely! On the contrary, Iran Russia and China will be concerned at the US military bases in Afghanistan. The US troop withdrawal appears to be motivated by domestic US compulsions. The US is simply too tired to continue with the expensive war in Afghanistan. There is a danger that a hurriedly executed troop withdrawal may satisfy Obama's domestic compulsions but will leave the region in a deeper mess.



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nity from Afghanistan will confront President Karzai with many problems. Afghanistan is trying to open its own negotiations - without much success so far - with the Taliban in order to create multiple stakeholders in the future system of governance. President Karzai, who at one time accused Pakistan of fomenting terrorism in Afghanistan, now describes Pakistan as Afghanistan's conjoined twin. Afghanistan has also formed a Joint Commission with Pakistan in January 2011 for holding direct negotiations with the Taliban. The Joint Commission includes the representatives of the army and security agencies on both sides. The Afghan High Peace Council, which is headed by former President Rabbani, continues to do much the same thing but operates separately. The simultaneous existence of two commissions to engage with the Taliban is a recipe for confusion. President Karzai's relations with the Western countries have deteriorated sharply. The two

Dagan Speech



KHALED KHALEFE

THE Monthly Review-- Haifa-In an unexpected series of declarations Meir Dagan the former Chief of the Mossad surprised the Israeli Political System by attacking its national security judgement concerning a possible attack of Iran. He stated that Israel must accept a nuclear Iran, and that an attack on the reactor of the Islamic Republic of Iran would be a very foolish idea, with little likelihood of success. In his speech Dagan argued that it would be hard to predict the regional implications of this attack on Israel's security. He reiterated that if anyone seriously considers a strike he needs to understand that he is dragging Israel into a regional war that it would not know how to get out of. Major General and Minister Yosi Peled criticized the Dagan declarations arguing that Israeli politicians and representatives have to keep calm and maintain the policy of ambiguity, and not to give direction of thought to its enemies. MK Israel Hasson (Kadima) and a former Deputy Head of the Shabbag tried to understand Meir Dagan by claiming that he is sure that Dagan knows more than others about direction, and motivations of Israeli decision makers. At the same time with his experience he is trying to warn against any possible strategic mistake, which might be pursued toward Iran. Meir Dagan's hidden legacy of his closeness former Israeli Prime Ariel Sharon lies in hundreds of covert actions and assassinations for which neither the Mossad nor the Government of Israel will ever claim responsibility. Currently, with his blunt attack on the Israeli political system, Dagan is urging it to refrain from the same actions that he might have taken when he was the Chief of the Mossad. Last year's assassination of Mahmud Al-Mabhouh has thrown the spotlight on Meir Dagan, as one of Israel's most shadowy person who according to Abu Dhabi officials conducted the Mabhouh's assassination. In his public appearances since leaving office in September 2010 it seems that he has become more moderate and less aggressive by calling on the Israeli leadership to act swiftly and implement a political initiative to get Israel out from the political stalemate and its political isolation. Amir Oren the Chief Correspondent for security affairs of Haeretz told the Monthly Review that the three veteran security personnel Dagan Ashkenazy and Diskin have no confidence in the current Netanyahu -Barak Government. This is important because it means that those people who in the past conducted the most sensitive operations and who know better than most people how the Government has to act in political matters have lost confidence in the current government. Oren argues that first of all we have to take this issue in a proportion; this is a domestic Israeli debate which maybe aims to warn the Iranian leadership and give the impression that Israel might conduct an offensive attack against Iran. Everything is possible said Amir Oren to the Monthly Review. The writer is member Arab Centre for Foreign Relations.



Meir Dagan