

Ties with India: what if...

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By Shahid Javed Burki

PAKISTAN today — also India, albeit to a somewhat lesser extent — would have been in a very different place had three things happened differently. One, had the partition of British India not resulted in a thorough ethnic cleansing of what is today's Pakistan, the country today would be a multi-cultural and multi-religious society, tolerant of a variety of different views, particularly on religion.

But the bloodshed that resulted from the way British India was partitioned had unanticipated demographic consequences. It resulted in the movement of some 14 million people across the newly defined border between India and Pakistan. As many as eight million Muslim refugees arrived from India to find new homes for themselves in Pakistan. Six million Sikhs and Hindus moved in the opposite direction. In the 1940s, the area that now constitutes Pakistan, Muslims accounted for slightly more than two-thirds of the total population. Today Muslims account for nearly 97 per cent of the citizenry.

Two, the British could have done a cleaner job of partitioning their Indian domain by incorporating all the princely states into either India or Pakistan. There was no need for ambiguity in this area. The same principle that was applied to divide the provinces and districts of India — the Muslim majority areas going to Pakistan and all other remaining with India — should have been used for assigning the princely states to the two successor countries. This, for whatever motive, the British did not do. The decision to let the princes decide their future laid the basis for the Kashmir problem. The Kashmir issue was to bedevil relations between India and Pakistan for more than half a century.

Third, the Indian administration need not have attempted to economically smother Pakistan the moment it was born. The first generation of Indian leadership, disappointed though it was at having failed to preserve the unity of the country they had inherited from the British, could have been more generous with Pakistan. By reconciling itself to the partition of British India, it could have created a different set of opportunities for Pakistan's leaders.

Instead, India put Pakistan under an economic squeeze right after the two countries were born. This squeeze had two aspects. One, India was unwilling to give Pakistan its full share of the "sterling balances," the debt that was owed by London to its colony for the financial support the latter provided Britain

about which President Pervez Musharraf wrote in an article contributed recently to *The Washington Post*. I have coined the verb "to Muslimize" to deal with two different phenomena in Pakistan's history.

The first accompanied the partition of British India; which resulted in Pakistan becoming a predominantly Muslim state. The second is occurring at this time as several Islamic groups in the country attempt to force Islamization on Pakistan's economic, political and social structures. It is useful to recall that the movement for the creation of a separate homeland for the Muslim population of British India was opposed by two of the three major Islamic groups that were active at that time.

Maulana Maudoodi's Jamaat-i-Islami as well as the Jamiat-ul-Ulemai India opposed the idea of Pakistan on the ground that it did not conform to the teaching of Islam as they interpreted it. They did not see any role for separate nation-states in the Muslim *ummah*. By creating a separate state for the

be an economy drawing a larger part of its gross domestic product, exporting a significant part of high value crops to India. The two countries would have proceeded to structure their production systems according to their respective comparative advantages.

Had commerce continued with India, the Pakistani economy would have had larger component of trade in its gross domestic product than is the case at this time. It would have also invested more in improving the country's physical infrastructure — roads, railways, irrigation — that it inherited from the British.

Lahore would have become the centre of commerce in the subcontinent with networks of roads connecting India with China, Afghanistan, Central Asia and Iran. With so much commerce flowing through the city, Lahore would have also become the cultural hub of South Asia.

Had India and Pakistan begun to relate with one another on friendly terms, other countries in the region would have also benefited. The country that suffered the most

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from the ill-will between these two countries is Afghanistan. India played the "Afghan card" from the very start. It built its relationship with that country on the sentiment prevalent there that the British were wrong to divide the Pushtun areas into two parts. This they did by drawing the Durand line that cut across the tribal areas in British India's northwest.

Afghanistan had always resented that action by the British and wished to correct it once London vacated India. If the entire Pushtun population could not be incorporated

into Afghanistan, then the second best solution, in Kabul's view, was to establish a new state called Pushtunistan. Both Kabul and New Delhi promoted that idea to put Pakistan on the defensive. At the same time, Pakistan continuously looked for opportunities to loosen India's grip on Kabul. This became possible after the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan to establish a communist regime in that country.

Pakistan's involvement in the war against the Soviet Union occupation ultimately led to its support for the establishment of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban provided sanctuary to Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda network. It may be a bit of a stretch to closely link the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, on the United States with the dynamic unleashed by the way the British partitioned India. But such a link can be plausibly established.

Easy relations between India and Pakistan might also have preserved Pakistan in the form it was originally created. The resentment of the people of East Pakistan against the economic policies of the government

Had Kashmir been embedded in Pakistan

omic squeeze right after the two countries were born. This squeeze had two aspects. One, India was unwilling to give Pakistan its full share of the "sterling balances," the debt that was owed by London to its colony for the financial support the latter provided Britain in the Second World War.

Two, India refused to accept Pakistan's position not to follow New Delhi's decision, along with other members of the Sterling Area, to devalue its currency with respect to the American dollar. Pakistan's decision to keep the value of its currency unchanged was not welcomed by Delhi. "India will not pay Rs 144 of its currency for one hundred Pakistani rupees," declared Sardar Vallabhai Patel, a prominent leader in Jawaharlal Nehru's cabinet, and with these words suspended India's all trade with its neighbour.

Where would Pakistan, India and South Asia be today had these three things not happened? What if the partition of the subcontinent of British India had not resulted in such a massive transfer of populations between the successor states of Pakistan and India? What if the Kashmir problem had not been created by the way the British chose to partition their Indian empire? What if India had reconciled itself quickly to the creation of a Muslim state on its northwestern and north-eastern borders?

We can speculate about all these possibilities in order not to be fanciful. In these speculations we will find some policy seeds that can be planted in the soil of South Asia to produce a better future for the 1.5 billion people of this vast subcontinent.

Had Pakistan not been so thoroughly "Muslimized," it would not be facing today the problem of Islamic extremism — a prob-

Janata Party's programme of Hindutva — was checked by the Muslim and Dalit minorities. Similar constraints would have been imposed on Pakistan's political development.

Had Kashmir been embedded in Pakistan in 1947 — something that should have happened given the fact that a vast majority of its population was Muslim — it would have produced a number of happy results, not only for Pakistan but for all of South Asia. It would have made it possible for India and Pakistan to work together for promoting economic development for the welfare of the citizens of the two countries. There would not have been so much focus on military expenditures in the two countries. Pakistan's dealings with the outside world would have been less concerned with neutralizing India than working for arrangements to promote its own economic development.

If India had not forced a trade war on Pakistan in 1949, Pakistan would have industrialized less rapidly than it did. Pakistan, deprived of even the most basic goods of consumption, launched a programme of industrialization. It invited the private sector to invest in consumer industries and provided them with rich incentives to enter these activities. Had India not forced Pakistan's hand by declaring a trade war, policymakers in Karachi would have not moved to develop so quickly the industrial sector. Most likely, they would have looked to Pakistan's well-endowed agriculture to generate growth for the new economy.

If trade had continued between the two countries, there would have been much greater incentive for Pakistan to invest in agriculture rather than build a largely inefficient industrial sector. Pakistan today would

be plausibly established.

Easy relations between India and Pakistan might also have preserved Pakistan in the form it was originally created. The resentment of the people of East Pakistan against the economic policies of the regimes in Karachi and Islamabad that were dominated by policymakers from the country's western wing had little to do with difficult India-Pakistan relations. Nonetheless, had Pakistan been spared the need to invest so heavily in building its military strength, it might have been less prone to be ruled by the military which was dominated by Punjab. Had the military not intervened, Pakistan might have succeeded in putting together a political structure in which Bengal would have had a prominent voice. In other words, with good relations between India and Pakistan, the latter may have succeeded in developing a robust political structure for itself.

But the most important impact of friendly relations between India and Pakistan would have been in the area of economics, particularly for Pakistan. Friendship with India would have added anywhere between 1.5 to 2 percentage points of growth to the Pakistani economy. Compounded over 57 years, Pakistan's GDP today would be some two to three times its present size had the Indo-Pakistan relations not deteriorated into total hostility right from the time of the birth of the two Asian giants.

In sum, both countries — more Pakistan than India — have paid a very heavy economic cost for continued hostility. But that is now in the past. For the future, there is every reason to argue that it is in Pakistan's economic interest to forge a lasting peace with its neighbour to the south.