

A Siachen Peace Park: The Solution to a Half-Century of International Conflict?

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Letters to an Author

A Siachen Peace Park: The Solution to a Half-Century of International Conflict?

By Aamir Ali, MRD, Vol 22 No 4, pp 316–319

From Gerardo Budowski

Senior Professor, Department of Natural Resources and Peace, University for Peace, San José, Costa Rica

I was pleasantly surprised to read your excellent paper on the proposal of a peace park in Siachen.

At the past IUCN General Assembly in Amman a few years ago, there was an improvised meeting chaired by Maurice Strong to design a whole program with IUCN, WWF, the South African based Peace Parks Foundation, and other stakeholders. Hence I have circulated your paper to different members of the University for Peace (UPeace), including, of course, Maurice Strong as chairman of the UPeace Council.

As an elected former Director General of IUCN (1969–1976) and presently member of 3 of its commissions, I am particularly interested to localize areas where there are present or future armed conflicts, or where conflicts were prevalent in a not distant past. I have also been advocating that not only trans-boundary parks, but also other areas qualify to capitalize on potential land areas for island countries like Australia, Cuba, Malta, etc.

From Agostino Da Polenza

President, Ev-K²-CNR Committee, Bergamo, Italy (adp@montagna.org)

I read your article about the “Siachen Peace Park” in *Mountain Research and Development* with great interest. Its contents struck a deep chord with me, not only since I have climbed both Mount K2 and Mount Gasherbrum, but also for having

organized scientific research programs in that region with the great Italian explorer and researcher, Prof Ardito Desio. You may be interested to learn that in 1988 Desio and I prepared a project for a “Karakorum K2 Ecosystem Conservation Project” that was presented to the Government of Pakistan.

Today, as President of the Ev-K²-CNR Committee, I continue to lead Italian and international research programs carried out in the Karakorum and Himalayan regions, in cooperation with the Italian National Research Council and Universities. Currently, I am in the process of organizing a scientific mountaineering expedition in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the first ascent of Mount K2, with the Italian Government and the contributions of other Italian organizations and institutions. It has occurred to me that this jubilee celebration could easily become an important opportunity for attracting needed attention to a diplomatic initiative in favor of peace in a region that is home to the most beautiful mountains of the world.

For all of these reasons, coinciding with the timely publication of your excellent article, I have decided to contact you. It is my impression that together we could promote a strong initiative in favor of a “Peace Park,” captivating public opinion and involving scientists, cultural organizations, mass media, and decision makers.

From Nazir Sabir

Nazir Sabir Expeditions, Islamabad, Pakistan

Thanks for your excellent article on Siachen Peace Park. The Siachen Peace Park idea is now very much a project IUCN is espousing, and I'm aware of the efforts by Kapadia and his team on it. I am in touch with them. But as things stand just now, I don't see any possibility of significant progress. Sadly, I'm afraid Siachen would remain a hostage to Indo-Pak Kashmir policy as has

been the case ... looking at the political will on the top level.

From Steve Thompson

Glacier Program Manager, Northern Rockies Regional Office, National Parks Conservation Association, Whitefish, MT, USA

I write to express my deep appreciation for your excellent article in *Mountain Research and Development*... I found what I believe is one minor error in the article. I believe La Amistad National Park straddles the border of Costa Rica and Panama. Another peace park, Si a Paz (literally “Yes to Peace” in Spanish), is located on the Nicaragua–Costa Rica border.

Your advocacy for Siachen has a growing base of support around the world. I speak of it in my public presentations and media interviews about the growing international peace park movement and the world's first peace park, Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park straddling the United States–Canadian border. My audiences take hope from the fact that citizens in India and Pakistan are seeking innovative solutions to difficult political problems. For me, that is what peace parks are all about: places where hope conquers fear and where cooperation overcomes distrust.

We are celebrating Waterton-Glacier's 71st year as a peace park. Again this September, citizens and government officials from both nations will meet at the annual “Hands Across the Border” ceremony to renew our vows of friendship, cooperation, and peace. At the same time, we applaud the improvements in park management and environmental protection that the peace park movement has allowed.

The proposed Siachen Peace Park brings alive the recent wise words of Nelson Mandela: “In a world beset by conflict and division, peace is one of the cornerstones of the future. Peace parks are a building block in this process, not only in our region, but potentially in the entire world.”