CURRENT POLITICAL DYNAMICS IN ASIA: ISSUES, DEVELOPMENTS AND THREATS

ABSTRACT

The author examines the current political dynamics in Asia and the potential threat situations jeopardising the regional security. The article looks at proliferation of nuclear weapons and the North Korean and the Iranian nuclear cases. It studies the international pressures, diplomacy moves and the Iranian reaction and the EU and American perceptions. The Taiwan issue and territorial dispute of the South China Sea and the problem of Kashmir between Pakistan and India are discussed. The regional radical terrorism networks under the Islamic guise are also examined.

Key words: security threats in Asia, proliferation of nuclear weapons, North Korean and Iranian nuclear cases, Kashmir dispute, Taiwan issue, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Islamic terrorism

Ključne reči: pretnje bezbednosti u Aziji, širenje nuklearnog oružja, slučaj Severne Koreje i Irana, sukob oko Kašmira, problem Tajvana, ratovi u Iraku i Avganistanu, islamski terorizam.

The regional political dynamics of Asia have changed drastically in the past few years. Currently, the Asian region was faced with a number of potential security threat situations including, but not limited to, proliferation of nuclear weapons, South China Sea territorial dispute, the Taiwan issue,
regional Islamic terrorism networks, and the festering problem of Kashmir between Pakistan and India.

1. THE NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROLIFERATION ISSUE

Undoubtedly, the biggest threat facing the region is the proliferation of nuclear weapons. What are the effects of the proliferation of nuclear weapons? It was not easy to answer the question because of the paucity of relevant literature. Today, we are living in a world of transition where the old paradigm of international politics has decayed, while the new one is yet to emerge. Most of the previous experiences with nuclear weapons were at the inter-state system or the state level. For example, concerns of the global community about the threat posed by certain countries in acquiring nuclear weapons. The study of international terrorism was also limited to the Al-Qaeda network and few others. The threat of proliferation of nuclear weapons involved a complex nexus of non-state actors, global smuggling groups, technology acquisition strategies, global terrorist networks like the al-Qaeda, and some pariah states like North Korea. Thus the potential role of numerous non-state entities has added a further dimension to the nuclear weapons proliferation issue in the contemporary period. Fundamentally, the problem of nuclear weapons proliferation was as much political as it was technical. This was a prime illustration of the globalization of politics, as witnessed never before in history. It was a complex nexus of politics and the actors involved both state and non-state. This complexity is often referred to as the “proliferation puzzle”.

The globalization phenomenon has had an unintended consequence. Countries aspiring to acquire nuclear weapons can do so in relatively less time and effort. North Korea was a case in point. The spread of nuclear weapons capabilities to states like North Korea and possibly Iran in the future and also non-state organizations like Al-Qaeda was the most dangerous aspect of the contemporary situation. These developments threaten the regional security. A new age was emerging raising newer risks of nuclear weapon proliferation. These were nervous times and hard choices have to be made. The proliferation may lead to greater conflict as some countries may use military force against would-be proliferators in order to stop them dead on their tracks. Consider the fact that in the new Global War on Terror these new preemption security strategies give many countries far greater scope for action. In 2003, the preemption strategy doctrine was actually evoked by the United States against Iraq, and the country occupied. There was no evidence
of Iraq having weapons of mass destruction, as claimed by the United States. The United States in its war on terrorism is focusing attention at the sub-state level also. For example, the fight against the Taliban and al-Qaeda remnants on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border lands. Another likely effect of the spread of nuclear weapons was that their presence would make matters worse not better for the existing state system as it would disrupt it. The greater the numbers of nuclear weapons present in the region, the higher the chances of their use, both intentional and unintentional. Another likely affect of their spread was the tightening of the global nonproliferation regime. The role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) – the United Nations watch-dog agency- in implementing a safeguards system may grow. Similarly, the agency’s inspection system though infringing on state sovereignty will yet grow more intrusive. Reforms are now underway to make nuclear programs more transparent. Member countries are now being asked to provide the agency with intelligence information about nuclear operations. The system of export is being improved. The Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) is forsaking economic gains in the name of nonproliferation. In the future, the nonproliferation regime is likely to be strengthened. This would be a welcome move in which Pakistan would cooperate wholeheartedly.

a) North Korean Case

Earlier, North Korea was a pariah state bent upon manufacturing a nuclear bomb. It had exploded a nuclear device last October. The world quickly condemned the test. Much earlier, North Korea had promised the United States it would mothball its plutonium producing nuclear industry in return for economic, political and diplomatic benefits. Later, it set up a separate scheme to produce nuclear weapons. The agreement unraveled. Subsequently, North Korea left the NPT. Earlier, China, United States, South Korea, Russia and Japan had been sufficiently concerned to participate in a six-party talks held in Beijing to address the North Korean nuclear issue. Meanwhile; North Korea tested a nuclear weapon. Even China quickly condemned the test and had called for “punitive efforts” against North Korea. This was part of the new internationalism approach embarked by China. Obviously, nuclear weapons should not proliferate in the already tense Korean peninsula. For the time being diplomacy is at work. The United States looked to China to stop North Korea being its closest ally. The United States has also sought China’s cooperation to adhere to arms control and
nonproliferation arrangements. Meanwhile, North Korea has asked for assistance to be delivered first and the United States, as expected, has balked on the demand. Pakistan hopes that eventually North Korea will give up its nuclear program. Pakistan will fully cooperate with all other countries to fulfill its responsibilities to strengthen the nonproliferation regime. If the dispute is not resolved through peaceful means, then the United States might be tempted to use force. A military strike by the United States against North Korea would destabilize the region. Therefore, the failure of the six-party talks is unthinkable. Today, North Korea had promised to give up all nuclear programs in exchange of oil, energy and security guarantees. The news was welcomed by the United States and IAEA, among others. But the United States insists on verifiable compliance before the assistance is given to North Korea. The pledge might be the path of the return of North Korea to the NPT and the invitation of international inspections back into the country.

b) The Iranian Nuclear Issue

Firstly, we state a simple premise that perceptions matter a lot. It is only people who formulate and conduct foreign and security policies. Looking at it another way, states are only abstractions or sophisticated social constructs. Understanding perceptions, or for that matter misperceptions, is therefore necessary. The logic of international politics was based on perceptions of reality. Simply put, there was no common reality for all actors on the world stage. In other words, it was not the same for every body. We can perceive reality only through our ideological lenses or frameworks. These different worldviews shape our understanding of what is happening. The particular stance taken on an issue depends not only on the ideological framework but also the politics of the period. Hence the problem of conflict resolution. Having said this, let us examine the Iranian nuclear issue and what seems to be an escalating crisis on our hands. The Iranian case was extremely important to us in Pakistan for obvious reasons.

First, a very brief history of recent developments to help understand the Iranian case. It had been widely reported that Iran has had nuclear ambitions for some time. It was during the Khomeini period (1979-1989) that the Iran’s nuclear program first began and gradually grew on all stages of the nuclear fuel cycle. Then, Iran had started construction of the Bushehr reactors with the assistance of Russia. By 1995, Iran was procuring dual-use technology from Western sources, which indicated to some that it was
pursuing nuclear weapons. By 2002, Iran had established a heavy water production plant and a uranium enrichment facility. The present crisis began in 2003 when the IAEA, in a surprise, move determined that Iran had for almost two decades concealed its nuclear activities, in breach of its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Iran is a signatory to NPT and therefore has a right to a civil nuclear program. The IAEA declared that sensitive technology facilities were being developed in Iran and it had not been transparent with its nuclear-related facilities and import of nuclear material. Critics of Iran got the smoking gun they had wanted all along. They jumped at the opportunity now presented and began to argue that there was a history of past efforts at concealment in Iran. It was alleged that Iran had indulged in black market shopping and other suspect activities and had established a growing ballistic missile development program. The IAEA called on Iran to suspend all enrichment activities and declared that Iran was in violation of NPT technical safeguard measures. Later, the IAEA reported that Iran had nuclear equipment supplied by the black market sources, chiefly the A. Q. Khan network.

However, the Musharraf government maintained that Pakistan had never proliferated and it will never do so as robust legislative and administrative structures are in place to discourage its occurrence from its territory. Pakistan was not responsible for nuclear proliferation in South Asia. In fact, Pakistan had been forced to respond in May 1998 to ensure a credible deterrence. Meanwhile, Iran had promised to suspend the uranium conversion activities for an interim period. But in August 2005, Iran broke the UN seals at its uranium conversion plant and resumed the conversion of uranium. It had breached its NPT obligations by this action and was in violation of a deal reached with the EU trio of Britain, Germany, and France. The IAEA demanded that Iran halt all nuclear fuel work but it refused. Ever since, the Iranian nuclear program has been a matter of great concern to the West. Earlier, the IAEA had expressed fears that referring Iran to the UNSC now for possible sanctions over concerns that Iran wants to build nuclear arms would split its members. The IAEA wanted to give more time to Iran by setting a new deadline for it to halt sensitive work.

The United States and EU were rallying support for a tough resolution calling on the IAEA governing board to report Iran’s secretive nuclear program to the UNSC for sanctions against Iran. Finally, on Sep. 24, 2005, the IAEA passed a resolution requiring Iran to be reported to the UNSC over a failure to convince the agency its nuclear program was entirely
peaceful. The IAEA approved the resolution despite earlier Iranian threats to begin enriching uranium, if the UNSC passed any sanctions against it. Later, the Iran was reported to the UNSC. Both China and Russia, which had earlier strongly opposed the EU’s proposed resolution, abstained in the UNSC vote. Surprisingly India, which had earlier opposed the EU resolution, voted for it. Only Venezuela voted for Iran. The foreign minister of Iran immediately called the resolution an illegal, illogical and a political act. Iran also threatened to halt spot checks by the IAEA on its nuclear sites. The stage was set for a confrontation with the United States and EU.

Meanwhile, Iranian leadership’s rhetoric was not helping matters. Later, Iran announced that it had the capability to enrich uranium which led to urgent calls by American neo-conservatives for preventive United States air strikes. However, wiser counsels urged restraint. It was correctly pointed out that Iran remained several years away from having a nuclear arsenal. Meanwhile, the matter is in the UNSC where the United States was trying to get it to intervene to stop Iran from what it considers as the defiance of the international community. The United States called on Iran to abide by UNSC resolutions and its obligations under the NPT. Iran had warned that it would sever relations with the IAEA if sanctions were imposed. The IAEA had been investigating Iran for more than three years and had reported to the UNSC about Iran’s uranium enrichment work. The UNSC had set up a deadline in March 2006 for Iran to freeze the enrichment work.

The United States and its close allies are opposed to Iran’s nuclear program, despite it unequivocal commitment to developing nuclear energy exclusively for peaceful purposes and in conformity with the safety regulations of the IAEA. Time and again, Iran had also declared that, as stipulated in the NPT, it was committed to non-proliferation and the elimination of nuclear weapons and will continue to abide by its obligations under the NPT and also work for the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons as well as other weapons of mass destruction. Officially, Iran had consistently denied any ambitions to acquire nuclear weapons. It has reiterated that it would never use atomic technology to make bombs and does not intend to produce nuclear weapons because of its Islamic laws and that it does not even need nuclear weapons. Recently, Iran claimed that it had mastered the fuel cycle, but was committed to the peaceful use of this technology within the framework of the NPT, international laws and in cooperation with the IAEA. Iran had consistently reaffirmed its right to possess the full nuclear fuel cycle. Earlier, Iran had outlined four proposals,
including an offer to engage in serious partnership with private and public sectors of other countries in the implementation of its uranium-enrichment program. Iran had consistently insisted such work was only for peaceful purposes and a right it enjoyed as a signatory of the nuclear NPT.

Iran was correct here. It also correctly questioned the legitimacy of Israel’s nuclear arms. Why would Iran want a nuclear bomb? There are a number of reasons why it may want one. May be, it is the Iranian feeling of deep insecurity resulting from its particular historical experiences. Earlier in 1951, the United States had ousted the populist government of Mossadegh and installed the Shah on the throne of Iran. The Shah was a brutal, egomaniac, pro-Western king who much destroyed the Islamic identity of Iran. The regime was corrupt and also ruthless. The Iranian people suffered under the Shah’s rule. The United States had given him considerable support through his long rule and had a very profitable relationship with Iran. The Shah was obsessed with modernization and attaining regional power status by building a formidable military. The United States did not sell Iran expensive weapon systems that it never needed, nor even had the capacity to use. The people had enough of the Shah and his American protectors. Finally, the Shah was overthrown in 1979 in a populist revolution led by Imam Khomeini. This Islamic revolution is considered as one of the great revolutions in the history of the Third World. Since the beginning the Islamic revolution has been intensely opposed by the United States. The United States still does not recognize the Islamic republic. The regime of Saddam Hussein, with considerable American support, committed aggression against the new republic in 1980. The Iran-Iraq war lasted eight years in which millions died and the Iranian economy was ravaged. The Khomeini regime was devastated as a result of the war. The regime resolved to acquire military strength so that it never feels vulnerable again. Thus, perception of acute perpetual insecurity explains why Iran may want nuclear weapons.

Secondly, Iran was situated in a region that is unstable. Therefore, acquisition of a nuclear capability makes sense. While the United States castigated Iran’s nuclear efforts yet it maintains a silence on Israel’s nuclear weapons. Ever since 9/11, the Bush administration had indulged in rhetoric denouncing Iran as an “outpost of tyranny” and as one of the “axis of evil”. The encirclement of Iran with United States military power has presented Iranian rulers with a pronounced and imminent threat. For Iran the United States was still a state whose antagonistic attitude cannot be neglected and
whose power cannot be ignored. Therefore, the Islamic regime looks toward the nuclear bomb as the ultimate guarantee of American good behavior.

Iran aspired for leadership of the Muslim world. It was an ancient nation and had a strong nationalism to match. Iran is also very ambitious. The crisis in relationship between Iran and the West was not just about nuclear weapons. The real cause was much deeper. Iran was determined to reshape the Middle East in its own image. It seemed to be deliberately provoking a “clash of civilizations” with the United States. Iran was brandishing its Islamic credentials, when it opposed Israel with which it has no direct dispute. The new leadership in Iran was a far stronger enemy of the United States. The previous regime was perceived to be corrupt and the old guard of clerics seems to be on the way out. President Ahmadinejad was the first non-cleric to become president since 1981. Meanwhile, the Iranian defiance of the West was increasing. In August 2005, Khameini, supreme leader of the republic, announced that in contradiction to the United States Greater Middle East plan, Iran had one of its own. President Ahmadinejad’s rhetoric had become intense. He claimed that the United States was in its last throes, while Iran was rising and was destined to supersede it. The geopolitical dominance in the Middle East was the incontestable right of Iran. The Iranian president announced that the country was ready to share nuclear technology with Muslim countries. In a UNGA address on September 17, 2005 he had accused the United States of conducting a “nuclear apartheid” and that it was guilty of nuclear proliferation. President Ahmadinejad had warned that if countries tried to impose their will on Iran through force then it will reconsider its entire approach to the nuclear issue. President Ahmadinejad said that Iran had a right to possess the full nuclear fuel cycle. Iran then signaled its resolve to never bow to Western demands to dismantle parts of its nuclear program and was ready to face the consequences. Iran was adamant in maintaining a tough stance at the United Nations. Iran’s nuclear program has been a matter of international concern ever since the discovery in 2003 that it had concealed its nuclear activities for 18 years in breach of its obligations under the NPT.

The EU remained skeptical of any Iranian plan of enriching uranium. Earlier, Iran seemed to have support in the IAEA. Brazil, India, Indonesia, and South Africa believe that there was no evidence that Iran was violating the

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3 *Dawn*, September 17, 2005.
NPT. Malaysia had said that all countries had a basic and inalienable right to develop atomic energy for peaceful purposes. Countries belonging to the Non-aligned Movement (NAM) had noted that while the West repeatedly questioned why oil-rich Iran was building nuclear power plants it never asked Russia, also oil-rich, the same question. Despite the fact that it possessed the world’s largest natural gas reserves, Russia had built a number of nuclear power plants.

United Nations Security Council Sanctions against Iran

Earlier, India, China and Russia were balking at the American push to refer Iran to the UNSC for possible sanctions. They backed Iran’s right to a peaceful nuclear technology under the NPT. Although enriched uranium can serve as the fissile core of nuclear weapons, Iran insists it wants the technology only to generate power. Still, years of growing international mistrust over Iran’s goals led to the first set of U.N. sanctions in December 2006 and to the additional UNSC penalties in March 2007. The UNSC demanded in Resolution SC 8792 that Iran should suspend uranium enrichment by 31 August, or face possible diplomatic sanctions. The UNSC adopted resolution 1696 (2006), under Chapter VII, by a vote of 14 in favor to 1 against (Qatar). The text was the first UNSC resolution on Iran in response to its nuclear program, reflecting the determination of the Council. The resolution said:

“Iran suspend all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, including research and development, and gave it one month to do so or face the possibility of economic and diplomatic sanctions to give effect to its decision. ...called on Iran to without further delay take the steps required by the IAEA Board of Governors in its resolution GOV/2006/14, which it said were essential to build confidence in the exclusively peaceful purpose of the nuclear program and resolve outstanding questions. It, meanwhile, underlined the international community’s willingness to work positively for such a solution and encouraged Iran to reengage with the international community and IAEA.”4

The United States official said that “Iran had defied the international community by continuing its pursuit of nuclear weapons, and that demanded a strong response from the Council. The pursuit of nuclear weapons was a direct threat to international peace and security, and demanded a clear

statement by the Council in the form of a tough resolution. It sent an unambiguous message to Iran, namely to take the steps set out by the IAEA Board of Governors, including full and sustained suspension of all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities. Iran should understand that the United States and others would ensure that financial transactions associated with proliferation activities would be impeded.5

Iran’s representative asserted that its peaceful nuclear program posed no threat to international peace and security, and, therefore, dealing with the issue in the UNSC was unwarranted and void of any legal basis or practical utility. According to the Iranian representative The sole reason for pushing the Council to take action was that Iran had decided, after over two years of negotiations, to resume the exercise of its inalienable right to nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, by partially reopening its fully safeguarded facilities and ending a voluntary suspension. Iran’s right to enrich uranium was recognized under the NPT, he said. And, upholding the right of State parties to international regimes was as essential as ensuring respect for their obligations. Those regimes, including the NPT, were sustained by a balance between rights and obligations. Threats would not sustain the NPT or other international regimes, but ensuring that members could draw rightful benefits from membership, and that non-members were not rewarded for their intransigence, did. Yet, today, the world was witnessing a dangerous trend. While members of the NPT were denied their rights and punished, those who defied the NPT, particularly the perpetrators of the current carnage in Lebanon and Palestine, were rewarded by generous nuclear cooperation agreements.6

The representative of the United Kingdom said Iran’s nuclear activities and its history of concealment had raised pressing questions about whether that country’s program was as it claimed – solely for peaceful purposes. He was deeply concerned over Iran’s failure to cooperate fully with IAEA. After more than three years, the Agency was still unable to conclude that there was no undeclared nuclear material or related activities in Iran, including activities with a possible nuclear military dimension; that remained unanswered. The international community had shown great patience and given Iran many opportunities to show that it had no intentions to create nuclear weapons, but, unfortunately, Iran had not taken the necessary steps to

6 Ibid.
build confidence. Nevertheless, he said, his country remained committed to working towards a negotiated solution.

On 6 June Javier Solana had presented Iran with a new set of far-reaching and imaginative proposals for a comprehensive agreement, offering a way forward, one that would give Iran everything it needed to achieve its stated ambition of developing a modern civil nuclear-power industry. That included, among other things, support for building light-water power reactors, as well as legally binding assurances relating to the supply of nuclear power material, for which it would not have to depend on a single foreign supplier. The proposals would also offer Iran, among other benefits, significant trade benefits, including with the European Union. When Mr. Solana had presented the proposal, he had made it clear that it was essential for Iran to take the steps required by the IAEA Board of Governors, namely, full suspension of all uranium enrichment and reprocessing activities, including research and development, to be verified by the Agency. If Iran suspended enrichment, the United Kingdom would be prepared to suspend further activity in the Security Council, he said. Continuation of enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, including research and development, would allow Iran to develop know-how to produce fissile material, which could be used for the production of nuclear weapons. The proposal had suggested a procedure to review the moratorium once confidence in Iran’s intention had been restored. He was deeply disappointed that Iran had given no indication that it was ready to seriously engage in that proposal or take the necessary steps signaling its readiness to begin. A full suspension was required to help build confidence and create the atmosphere of trust necessary for negotiations. Those talks could not succeed if Iran continued the activities, which were a main source of international concern.

A Security Council resolution, which made mandatory the IAEA required suspension, was significant. Should Iran refuse to comply, he would work towards the adoption of measures under the Charter’s Article 41. Should it implement the decision of the IAEA and the Council, and enter into negotiations, he would be ready to hold back from further action in the Council. He reaffirmed that the proposal conveyed to Iran by the six countries on 6 June remained valid. The choice was now Iran’s. He urged and encouraged it to implement the steps required by the IAEA Board and the Security Council.7

7 Ibid.
In December the Council had imposed a more limited set of sanctions on Iran over the nuclear issue. That resolution, also adopted unanimously following weeks of intensive diplomacy, contains a list of persons and entities involved with Iran’s nuclear and ballistic missile programs that are subject to a freeze on their financial assets. Today’s resolution expands that list with an Annex containing additional persons and entities also subject to the measures. Iran’s nuclear program had been a matter of international concern ever since the discovery in 2003 that it had concealed its nuclear activities for 18 years in breach of its obligations under the NPT.

Meanwhile, a report in the international media claimed that by the end of this year, Iran would be able to enrich uranium to level that it would no longer be possible to attack its nuclear sites. Any strike on a site with enriched uranium will have serious radiation fallout… any attack on Iranians may have to be carried out before the end of the year… while Iran was still several years away from making nuclear weapons, by the end of the year Iran would have enriched weapons-grade material in sufficient amounts to trigger a nuclear catastrophe if hit… Iran was attempting to produce a critical mass of enriched uranium before the end of the year. Any attack after that would risk triggering fallout that could kill civilians over large distances and make parts of Iran uninhabitable. The same consideration figured in the timing of Israel’s attack on Iraq’s nuclear reactor in 1981.8

On March 24, 2007 the UNSC unanimously Adopted Resolution 1747 (2007) Eventually, the UNSC resolution passed in March 2007 imposed a new set of sanctions against Iran to follow measures adopted in December. They included: a ban on all arms exports; a freeze of assets abroad belonging to 28 people and people and organizations involved in Iran’s nuclear and missile programs, including members of the Revolutionary Guards; and a curb on financial loans to the Iranian government.9 The UNSC also promised further steps if no compliance was reported by IAEA in 60 days.

Following adoption of the resolution, the United Kingdom’s representative, reading out a statement also on behalf of China, France, Germany, Russian Federation and United States, affirmed that the proposals presented in 2006 “remained on the table” and included cooperation with Iran

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on civil nuclear energy, legally binding guarantees on the supply of nuclear fuel and wider political security and economic cooperation. In that spirit, he proposed further talks with Iran to see if a mutually acceptable way could be found to open negotiations, affirming his commitment to a negotiated solution that would address the international community’s concerns. He, meanwhile, deplored Iran’s failure to comply with the earlier resolutions of the Council and IAEA, and called again on Iran to fully comply with its obligations.10

Iran’s rejection of the 2006 offer, the United States speaker said, had sent a “deeply troubling signal” to the international community. Nonetheless, the United States, too, was ready to resolve the issue through negotiations. The Iranian leadership’s claim that the Council sought to deprive Iran of its right to peaceful nuclear energy, he said, was simply not true. Many other Governments around the world, including some represented on the Council, enjoyed national civilian nuclear energy programs without any difficulties, demonstrating that there was no incompatibility between a country’s right to a peaceful nuclear-energy program and its non-proliferation obligations. The unanimous passage of today’s resolution had sent a clear and unambiguous message to Iran that the regime’s continued pursuit of a nuclear-weapon capability, in violation of its treaty obligations, as well as its obligations as a United Nations Member State, would only further isolate Iran and make it less, not more, secure.

Iran’s Minister for Foreign Affairs, Manouchehr Mottaki, said: The Security Council was “being abused to take an unlawful, unnecessary and unjustifiable action against the peaceful nuclear program of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which presents no threat to international peace and security and falls, therefore, outside the Council’s Charter-based mandate”. Pressure and intimidation would not change Iranian policy. If certain countries had pinned their hopes that repeated resolutions would “dent the resolve of the great Iranian nation”, they should have no doubt that they had “once again faced catastrophic intelligence and analytical failure vis-à-vis the Iranian people’s Islamic revolution”. Even the harshest political and economic sanctions were too weak to coerce the Iranian nation to retreat from their legal and legitimate demands. Iran’s nuclear program is completely peaceful,” he asserted. Iran had taken unprecedented steps and offered several serious proposals to allay any possible concern in that regard. There had been no

doubt, from the beginning, nor should there be any for the Council, that all those “schemes of the co-sponsors of the resolution are for narrow national considerations and aimed at depriving the Iranian people of their inalienable rights, rather than emanating from any so-called proliferation concerns”. In order to give that scheme a semblance of international legitimacy, its initiators had first manipulated the IAEA Board of Governors to vote against Iran. Then, they had taken advantage of their substantial economic and political power to pressure and manipulate the Security Council to adopt three unwarranted resolutions within eight months. He invited the concerned parties to “come back to the path of negotiation based on justice and truth”.11

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His country was pleased that the Council had once again unanimously taken action against what was “clearly a grave threat to international peace and security”. The Iranian leadership’s continued defiance of the Council in failing to comply with resolutions 1696 and 1737 required that the Council uphold its Charter-mandated responsibilities and take action. While he hoped Iran responded to today’s resolution by complying with its international legal obligations, the United States “is fully prepared to support additional measures in 60 days, should Iran choose another course”, he warned. He said the Council was meeting today because of the decisions of Iran’s leadership. Their actions included more than 20 years of deception of IAEA; namely “a nuclear program hidden from the international community, in violation of the NPT – a program that is emerging from the shadows slowly and incompletely, only due to the efforts of international inspectors and outside groups”. Quoting from the latest IAEA Director General’s report, he said that, without the necessary cooperation and transparency, the Agency “will not be able to provide assurances about the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in Iran or about the exclusively peaceful nature of that program”. The unanimous passage of today’s resolution sent a clear and unambiguous message to Iran that the regime’s continued pursuit of a nuclear-weapon capability, in violation of its Treaty obligations, as well as its obligations as a United Nations Member State, would only further isolate Iran and make it less, not more, secure. It was not only appropriate, but the responsibility of the Council to act, and it had done so carefully and deliberately. Yet, its two latest resolutions had been ignored by Iran, which called the Council’s decisions “invalid” and “an extra-legal act”. Iran had also vowed that the “new resolution won’t be an obstacle in the way of Iran’s nuclear progress”.

Sadly, he said, Iran continued to defy the will of the international community, the Council’s decisions and its international law obligations. For that reason, it was entirely necessary for the Council to have adopted “stronger” measures to persuade the regime to make its country more secure by abandoning its pursuit of nuclear weapons. Should Iran choose a different path, today’s resolution made clear that the Council was prepared and willing to adopt additional measures. Indeed, in the face of Iran’s continued defiance, the United States expected that the Council would continue to “incrementally increase pressure on the Iranian regime”. Meanwhile, Iran’s Foreign Minister, Manouchehr Mottaki, rejected the resolution as “a politically
motivated scheme to deprive the country’s people of their rights”. He said that “pressure, intimidation will not change policy”.

On March 25, 2007 the UN Secretary General called on Iran to comply with Security Council. He called for the country to take steps to restore trust that its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes. The Secretary-General noted “with satisfaction” that the UNSC had acted unanimously in adopting Resolution 1747, which imposed a ban on arms sales and expanded the assets freeze against Iran. He called on Iran “to fully implement the resolution’s provisions and to urgently take the necessary steps to restore the international community’s trust that its nuclear program is peaceful in nature,” according to the statement. “The Secretary-General believes that a negotiated solution would strengthen the international non-proliferation regime and hopes that dialogue will resume on this issue of paramount importance.”

While the new measures were relatively modest, they send a further signal to Iran about international feeling over its nuclear ambitions. Iran insisted its nuclear efforts were directed purely towards civilian power uses. Iran remained defiant and announced on March 26, 2007 that it would partially suspend co-operation with the IAEA in response to the UNSC vote. It would – by revoking a pledge to inform it of any plans to build new nuclear facilities. That could theoretically make it easier for Tehran to construct a secret uranium enrichment plant that would be safe from any Israeli or U.S. attack. The resolution reaffirms that:

Iran must take the steps required by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors, which has called for a full and

sustained suspension of all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities; and ratification and implementation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty’s (NPT) Additional Protocol granting the IAEA expanded rights of access to information and sites, as well as additional authority to use the most advanced technologies during the verification process. States are called on “to exercise vigilance and restraint regarding the entry into or transit through their territories of individuals who are engaged in, directly associated with or providing support for Iran’s proliferation sensitive nuclear activities or for the development of nuclear weapon delivery systems. Any such persons should be reported to the Council’s Iran sanctions committee. A designated list of individuals banned from travel is annexed to the resolution, but its provisions apply to others not listed who are involved in Iran’s nuclear weapons program. The resolution imposes a strict import/export ban on Iranian weapons, deciding that “Iran shall not supply, sell or transfer directly or indirectly from its territory or by its nationals or using its flag vessels or aircraft any arms or related materiel, and that all States shall prohibit the procurement of such items from Iran by their nationals, or using their flag vessels or aircraft, and whether or not originating in the territory of Iran. States must also “exercise vigilance and restraint” with regard to any battle tanks, armored combat vehicles, large caliber artillery systems, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships, missiles or missile systems destined for Iran. Except for humanitarian or development aid, States and international financial institutions should not provide funds to Iran, according to the resolution. All countries have 60 days to report to the Iran sanctions committee on steps they have taken to give effect to the resolution. The resolution also aims for a diplomatic breakthrough, expressing the Council’s conviction that if the IAEA can verify that Iran has suspended its uranium enrichment and reprocessing, this would lead to a negotiated solution that guarantees Iran’s nuclear program is for exclusively peaceful purposes. Underlining a willingness to work positively for a diplomatic solution, the Council encourages Iran, “to re-engage with the international community and with the IAEA.” Under other provisions of the resolution, the Director-General of the IAEA is to report back to the Council within 60 days on Iran’s nuclear program. The Council will review Iran’s actions in light of that report and will suspend the sanctions “if and for so long as Iran suspends all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, including research and development, as verified by the IAEA, to allow for negotiations in good faith in order to reach an early and mutually acceptable outcome.” The measures
will be terminated once Iran has complied with all Council demands. However, if Iran does not comply, the Council will “adopt further appropriate measures” aimed at persuading Teheran to comply with its resolutions and the requirements of the IAEA, the resolution warns. Today’s text also recalls an IAEA Board of Governors resolution adopted last year which states that “a solution to the Iranian nuclear issue would contribute to global non-proliferation efforts and to realizing the objective of a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction, including their means of delivery.”

International Pressures, Diplomacy Moves and the Iranian Reaction

After the adoption of resolution 1747, Iran’s Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki immediately rejected it as “illegitimate”, maintaining Iran’s longstanding claim that the country’s nuclear program was entirely peaceful and therefore outside of the UNSC’s brief. Mottaki charged that “the sanctions were not being imposed in response to the nuclear program but were rather schemes of the co-sponsors carried out for narrow national considerations aimed at depriving the Iranian people of their inalienable rights.18 Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had said that: “the latest sanctions would nothalt the country’s uranium enrichment even for a second. As they stem from the hostility by some powers against Iran...It is not a new issue for the Iranian nation. Enemies of the Iranian nation have made a mistake this time, too.”19 The United States on March 26, 2007 had criticized Iran’s partial suspension of cooperation with the UN nuclear watchdog agency, calling it a “step in the wrong direction” while reports in the international media said that any military strike on Iranian nuclear installations will have to be carried out before the end of the year. US State Department deputy spokesman Tom Casey told reporters in Washington that despite the UN-sponsored sanctions announced on Saturday, the so-called five plus one group is still willing to engage Iran if it shows flexibility on the uranium enrichment issue. The group includes five permanent members of the UNSC and Germany who are willing “to engage in negotiations with the Iranians should they choose to go in that direction,” Casey said: “Unfortunately, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad seems intent on taking Iran down the wrong path.”20

18 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
Thus, not only Iran rejected the sanctions but also announced a partial suspension of cooperation with the IAEA. Immediately after the adoption of the UNSC resolution the United States, France and Britain jointly urged Iran to fulfill UNSC demands. EU’s Solana met the Iranian Larijani and repeated the main demand of the five UNSC members plus Germany that Iran must freeze enrichment before any talks begin. Solana had also spoken of “the willingness to create the conditions for the negotiations to resume.” It was reported that Larijani was very unhappy with the UNSC resolution but had still accepted the Solana’s invitation for further contacts. Solana and Larijani had been the principal negotiators on the issue of Iran’s nuclear program. The EU was eager to continue talks with the Iranians as part of a “twin-track” approach – gradually imposing tougher sanctions if Iran refused to halt enrichment while offering economic and political advantages on behalf of the six powers if it falls into line.

Meanwhile, the United States urged the Iranians to choose negotiations over confrontation. Iran said it remained interested in negotiations, without, however, addressing the demand for an enrichment freeze. The presidents of Russia and China also increased the international pressure on Iran over its nuclear program, calling on the country to abide by UNSC resolutions on the issue. The joint statement agreed during talks between Vladimir Putin and the visiting Hu Jintao in Moscow, comes two days after Russia and China joined other UNSC members in voting for new sanctions against Iran. Diplomatic efforts also continued elsewhere, with the EU reiterating an offer to resume negotiations and officials in Iran also stressing their desire to keep talking. The Russian and Chinese leaders said their nations were ready to “search for a comprehensive, long-term and mutually acceptable solution to the Iranian nuclear problem”.

“Russia and China also urge Iran to undertake all necessary and constructive steps to carry out the appropriate resolutions of the United Nations Security Council and the IAEA”, the declaration said. Both nations believed the crisis should be resolved “exclusively through peaceful means and negotiations”, the statement added.21 Russia and China both hold a veto in the Security Council, and had thus far resisted a US-led push for much harsher sanctions.22

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21 “China and Russia urge Iran to toe UN line”, Monday, March 26, 2007
22 Ibid.
The EU and American perceptions need to be examined in brief. In the aftermath of 9/11, the Bush administration articulated the “Axis of Evil” policy. The United States continually talked about the threats posed by Iraq, Iran and North Korea. These three countries were castigated as “rogue states” that were bent on acquiring WMD. The United States would take pre-emptive action to protect itself from threats “before such dangers had progressed to a stage at which they would prove difficult, if not impossible to eliminate”. Thus the perception of threats had changed for the United States. Largely, the Doctrine of Pre-emption, as it came to be known, was a response to 9/11. The doctrine and the resulting National Security Strategy of 2002 were seen as a “comprehensive blueprint” to meet America’s security needs. Some of the goals of the strategy were related to security while others pertained to democracy building and economic growth in the Middle East. Specifically, the United States pledged to prevent its enemies from threatening it with WMDs. Iran was also included in this list of United States enemies. The doctrine was actually invoked against Iraq, and the country occupied by the United States in 2003. Eventually, it was the repeated public identification of states like Iraq, Iran and North Korea as presenting clear threats to American interests at home and abroad through the development of WMD and sponsorship of terrorism that gave the teeth to the new strategy. The strategic goal of the American Global War on Terror was to rid the world of rogue states seeking nuclear weapons and supporting terrorism. The United States military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq. The United States and the EU argue that although Iran is acquiring nuclear fuel, it does not possess any power plant to utilize it. This alone set alarm bells ringing in the West. The United States and the EU suspect that Iran was acquiring the wherewithal of nuclear weapons. They were wary of Iranian intentions and argue that the NPT could break down if the Iranians get their own way. The United States and EU demanded that Iran abandon its uranium enrichment technology in return for trade and other incentives. This abandonment was seen as the only objective guarantee that Iran will never acquire nuclear weapons. The EU and United States pressured the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) clamp down sanctions on Iran. President Bush did

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24 Ibid., 47.
25 Ibid., 50.
26 Ibid.
acknowledge the Iranian right to a civil nuclear program, but questioned why
the oil-rich nation needed one. President Bush has vowed action on Iran and
informed that he would try to rally China and Russia behind possible UNSC
action. Bush said that the world had to ensure that Iran did not get the nuclear
weapon and that it was very significant for the world to grasp that Iran with
nuclear weapons would be “incredibly destabilizing”. Therefore, the world
powers must cooperate to prevent Iran from acquiring the means to develop
a nuclear weapon.27 Meanwhile, the United States had claimed that it had a
broad agreement from both developed and developing countries that
international pressure must be brought on Iran to stop nuclear fuel work that
could be weapons-related. The world community was also in agreement that
Iran must suspend its sensitive nuclear fuel cycle activities and cooperate
fully with the IAEA. It had been over two years since France, Britain and
Germany (commonly called the EU3) had tried to persuade Iran that it
needed to abandon its enriched uranium fuel program to convince the world
that its atomic ambitions were peaceful.

Previously Russia and China were expected not to back any military
strike against Iran. Russia and China have significant trade ties with Iran and
had previously used the threat of their veto power to push for less stringent
sanctions against Iran. Russia was building Iran’s first nuclear reactor at
Bushehr costing $1 billion.28 Thus, Russia had much to gain from Iran’s
plans to develop atomic energy. Previously, Russia had long been an
opponent of referring Iran’s program to the UNSC. China, which needed
Iran’s vast energy resources for its own booming economy, also had
previously opposed the Western drive against Iran. Also, both countries had
once feared that a UN referral would cause the standoff over Iran’s program
to escalate into an international crisis. India also needed energy badly for its
development and was trying very hard to acquire Iranian gas and oil.
Because of pressure of the United States India became lukewarm over the
gigantic $7-8 billion India-Pakistan-Iran pipeline project. The project’s
future was now doubtful. These countries were not expected to support any
United States or Israeli military action against Iran primarily because of their
vested interests. But things changed later. All three countries - Russia, China
and India – seemed to turn against Iran. In March 2007 Presidents Vladimir

27  The Nation, September 14, 2005
28  George Jahn, “EU renews offer to Iran on nuke talks”, Associated Press, Internet:
March 27, 2007.
Putin of Russia and Hu Jintao of China said in a statement that their countries were ready to “search for a comprehensive, long-term and mutually acceptable solution to the Iranian nuclear problem.” They also emphasized the dispute should be resolved “exclusively through peaceful means.” China and Russia joined the rest of the UNSC in voting to expand sanctions.29

**The Current Regional Political Situation**

Very recently, a diplomatic row erupted amidst the tension over the UNSC sanctions. The Seizure of 15 British sailors and marines by Iranian forces in March 2007 had threatened a major fall-out on eve of the expected vote by UNS on imposing fresh sanctions on Iran.30 For weeks now tension has been building between Tehran and its critics in the West, both on the ground along the Iran-Iraq border area and over Iran’s controversial nuclear programme. The US Navy had been building up its strength in the Gulf, with the arrival of a second aircraft carrier battle group. The muscle-flexing has been accompanied by warnings from Washington that the Bush Administration is still prepared to use force to stop Iran building an atomic weapon.31 Later, the Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran’s supreme leader, gave warning that he would not hesitate to hit back if attacked. He described any UN moves as “illegal actions” and said Iran “can also carry out illegal actions and we will do that”.32

Meanwhile, British commanders serving in southern Iraq stated that Iran was arming, financing and training Shia militias responsible for attacking British forces… attacks tended to peak at the same moment that diplomatic action was taken against Iran. We haven’t found any ‘smoking gun’ but certainly all the circumstantial evidence points to Iranian involvement in the bombings here in Basra, which is disrupting the city to a great extent.33

The region’s political situation had an obvious bearing on the Iranian nuclear case. The situation in the Middle East had become very complex, to say

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29 Ibid.


31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.
The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have had unintended consequences. Iran seems to have gained as a result of recent developments. After four years of the war in Iraq many are convinced that it was not going well for the US and the stalemate in Iraq has bought valuable time to Iran. It had benefited from the defeat of its enemies in Afghanistan and Iraq. The regime emerging in Iraq was Shiite not Sunni, which happened to be the best possible outcome for Iran. The expulsion of Syria from Lebanon had left Iran as an influence in the country. The earlier United States insistence on democracy had annoyed Saudi Arabia and Egypt, the two traditional allies of the United States, and the rivals of Iran. Notwithstanding Iranian claims, it was reasonable to assume that Iran wanted to acquire a nuclear weapon. The question to be pondered was: what are the likely consequences of such an act? If Iran was to actually acquire nuclear weapons then most likely there would be widespread regional destabilization, in which the opponents of Iran would seek antidotes to Iranian nuclear capability. A nuclear Iran would certainly terrorize Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Turkey. There might even be a nuclear spiral in the region. It is in the national interest of neighbors and other regional powers to prevent Iran from acquiring the nuclear weapon capability. But, what can be done to stop Iran from the nuclear path. In the third week of March 2007 the UNSC had agreed on a new package of sanctions against Iran for its refusal to suspend sensitive nuclear work. The five permanent members of the UNSC and Germany had apparently agreed on the new sanctions resolution in the last week of March. Undoubtedly, this UNSC resolution would be widely seen as a victory for Western efforts against Iran. At the heart of the dispute is Iran’s programme of uranium enrichment, which the international community has demanded that it halts, suspecting that it could be a cover for building fissile material needed for an atomic warhead. The Iranians had insisted all along that they plan to push ahead with their nuclear efforts regardless.

Meanwhile, the French Defense Minister Michele Alliot-Marie said that one cannot completely rule out military intervention, but represents a real risk… the risk of a kind of solidarity developing among people in the Muslim world towards Iran and creating a gulf between the Muslim world and the rest of the world that together we have been able to prevent after the September 11 attacks. We first have to do our utmost diplomatically to drive Iran to abide by its signatures on non-proliferation treaties and international norms.\(^35\)

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As suggested by the French Defense Minister in the third week of March 2007, the path to diplomacy must be certainly exhausted before anything else was tried. The more pertinent question on everyone’s mind was: If all failed, would the United States or Israel use force to try to stop Iran from going nuclear? Given the great animosity of these two countries towards Iran, it is not impossible that either the United States or Israel may actually use force to stop Iran from going nuclear. What shape and form can this action take? Most probably the United States or Israel will conduct a limited air strike on the suspected nuclear facilities only. This would be similar to the Israel’s attack in 1981 when it destroyed Iraq’s Osirik reactor. The United States does not contemplate regime change or occupation of the country, however. It was well aware that such a move would be detrimental to its larger Middle East interests. Therefore, any military intervention can only be of a very limited nature. Definitely a repeat of Afghanistan and Iraq is not on the cards. However, even a limited military action against Iran will still destabilize the region further. It may end up by radicalizing the Muslim activists, especially the Shiite. Definitely any thoughtless and knee-jerk action would prove harmful. The region will descend into turmoil if Iran is targeted. The Middle East was already a hotbed of radicalism and further Western military action on another Muslim country was not going to help matters. The United States had about 150,000 troops in neighboring Afghanistan and Iraq, and Iran had numerous ways to retaliate against a military strike by the United States or Israel. The United States should not dismiss Iran lightly. Iran was an ancient nation and has always played a prominent role in Islamic history. It was also one of the two Islamic nations that had never been colonized by the West. Iran was centrally situated in the “Islamic arc” which stretched from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean. Also, Iran had one of the strongest militaries and economies in the region. Iran possessed one-tenth of the world’s proven oil reserves and the second largest natural gas reserves in the world, after Russia. The implications of the use of force against Iran were therefore very grave.

Meanwhile, Iran was playing on Western fears of yet more instability in the Middle East, and wide concerns that already-high oil prices can surge even more. It is also backing on China and Russia sticking to it in the event of a showdown with the United States. Iran perceived that the United States was trying to intimidate it for achieving its greater objectives in the Middle East.

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36 Dawn Economic and Business Review, September 12-18, 2005, IV.
It can be assumed that Iran wanted to acquire a nuclear bomb. When will it acquire the bomb? The estimates range from a few years to a longer time frame. The London-based International Institute of Strategic Studies claims that Iran could take five yrs to build a bomb. The United States thinks it will take Iran longer. Israel thinks Iran could build the bomb faster. Meanwhile, it has been reported that Iran is “dangerously close” to the development of an indigenous nuclear fuel cycle. It is believed that this would enable Iran to develop a nuclear bomb without much outside assistance.

The Solution to the Iranian Nuclear Problem?

The Iranian nuclear issue must be handled in a prudent manner. What should be done to avert the Iranian nuclear crisis from escalating? What can the United States do to pacify Iran at this time? We must seek a peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue. India was also firmly against nuclear proliferation and seemingly wants the issue resolved diplomatically. It goes without saying that at this stage it would be prudent for all regional powers to do whatever it takes to avoid a new confrontation in the Gulf region. Pakistan was already playing a quiet behind-the-scenes role of mediation between the United States-EU and Iran. It believed that a continuous engagement with Iran is vital to solve the dispute. The North Korea model of a multilateral forum of prolonged negotiations needs to be repeated in the case of Iran. It was important that diplomacy be given a last chance. Here Pakistan could play a crucial role. Pakistan could assist in engaging Iran in a multilateral negotiation process with the assistance of Russia, China, India and some Islamic countries like Turkey, Malaysia and Indonesia. Iran has already sought Pakistan’s help in defusing the crisis. It might be still possible to convince Iran that nuclear weapons were unnecessary. A face-saving mechanism must be put in place for Iran to back down. Despite the conviction in the West that Iran is bent on acquiring a nuclear weapon, a benefit of the doubt is given Iran for the time being. Finally, it bears repeating that negotiations are the key to a successful outcome of the crisis. Diplomacy was the only realistic option available for now. It must be tried fully, before all else. The Musharraf government was convinced that it would be unwise to deter Iran from pursuing its peaceful nuclear program by using force for this purpose, as hinted by the United

States, as it would be critical to regional peace and security. A military strike against Iran may perhaps delay the pursuit of its nuclear program but would harden its resolve to pursue it more vigorously. The United States should, therefore, avoid a perilous armed conflict with Iran on this issue and make an earnest effort to resolve the matter amicably through diplomatic means.

If Iran was denied access to technology it intends to develop for peaceful uses it would leave many members of the NPT questioning whether their being a party to the treaty is worthwhile. President Bush should, therefore, change his existing stance on Iran’s nuclear program if he wants to save the NPT which represents the only binding commitment in a multilateral treaty on the goal of nuclear non-proliferation. Pakistan rejects any notions of sanctions or use of force against Iran. We respect Iran’s right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy under IAEA safeguards. Pakistan was opposed the use of force, which would aggravate the already troubled situation in the region. Pakistan had clearly stated its support to a negotiated solution of the issue. We call on all sides to show flexibility on the issue. Friendly countries may make efforts to reach an amicable resolution of outstanding issues through patient dialogue.

The United States should immediately start direct talks with Iran on the nuclear issue. Instead, it continues with its Iran-bashing policy that is evidently further hardening anti-United States feelings in Iran. This was a negative development that could lead to undesirable consequences.

2. THE TAIWAN ISSUE AND TERRITORIAL DISPUTE OF THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

Both the South China Sea and the Taiwanese issues are mainly centered on the rise of China as a regional power. In a nutshell the Taiwanese dispute can be understood as a long-standing territorial dispute of immense significance to mainly China. Historically, Taiwan has always been a part of the Chinese empire. In 1949, after the communist revolution’s success, the defeated Kuomintang had fled to Taiwan. The United States quickly came to back it against communist China, which has long claimed Taiwan as a renegade province belonging to it. Were it not for the United States backing Taiwan, China would have reoccupied the island. China is wary of a full-fledged secession of Taiwan. Meanwhile, China is fielding posture aiming to deter outside intervention in Taiwan, specially during any crisis. China has adopted a more activist strategy to deter Taiwan moves toward independence
that will stress diplomatic and economic instruments over military pressure. The diplomatic position of China is accepted by all countries of the world barring about a dozen, mostly very small countries in Latin America in search of Taiwanese financial assistance. China’s leaders prefer to avoid military coercion. It would initiate military action if it felt that course of action was necessary to prevent Taiwan independence. Pakistan hopes that a negotiated solution to the Taiwan solution emerges in which the island is reunited with the mainland China.

The South China Sea was another long-standing territorial dispute involving China, Japan, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Brunei. The problem is essentially of overlapping claims on possession of sea. The South China seabed is believed to possess vast oil deposits. Therefore, it was claimed by all these countries and tensions have flared over exploration or exploitation of sea-based resources. China has had skirmishes with several of these countries in the past. As with other territorial disputes, different countries claim the same area, which makes the problem difficult to resolve amicably. An agreement to establish a loose code of conduct regarding disputed territories in the South China Sea had been reached between ASEAN and China. ASEAN and China have also established the scope for cooperation for security matters. China as formally renounced the use of force and has committed itself to resolve disputes through multilateral consultation. Such positive developments would help solve the disputes of the region. China’s emergence as a major player has significant implications for the region. The region should welcome the rise of a peaceful and prosperous China. The United States, which was opposed to China not too long ago, was welcoming the rise of a peaceful and prosperous China. This was an important development. But at the same time, the United States as well as Japan, were seemingly concerned about the swift buildup of China as a world power.

The South China dispute may become prominent because of China’s increasing demand for oil and gas. China became the world’s second largest consumer and third largest importer of oil in 2003. This dependence on overseas oil and natural gas is playing a role in shaping China’s strategy and policy. Such concerns factor heavily in the future of the Asia-Pacific region. Resource concerns, among others, have already played a role in increased Sino-Japanese tensions over the disputed East China Sea. Resultantly, Japanese relations with China had deteriorated. Given China’s huge energy needs, it is not likely to give up claims in the South China Sea. There has
been speculation that China might use force to settle the matter in its favor. If China were to enforce its claims than a conflict can erupt with wide regional repercussions. However, China had had made progress in recent years toward settling these long-standing territorial disputes. Pakistan hopes that these matters are resolved peacefully through forums such as the ARF. China-Pakistan had close cooperation and comprehensive partnership in political, economic and defense fields with China. Pakistan and China were strategic partners for maintenance of peace and stability in the region.

3. THE ISSUE OF TERRORISM:
THE REGIONAL RADICAL TERRORISM NETWORKS
UNDER THE ISLAMIC GUISE

Contemporary terrorism undertaken under the guise of Islam remains a serious concern and threat in the region. It is the very nature of the Islamic terrorism phenomenon which makes it so dangerous. The Islamic network is transnational possessing a range of fighting capability. While Al-Qaeda no longer had centralized control and directed structure; it does have regional sympathizers of like-minded groups like Jamaah Islamia, Abu Sayyaf group, and the Moro Islamic Liberation front. Entities may interact with each other secretly to achieve the common objectives. Essentially, these are small groups of like-minded radicals who though associate with each other are not necessarily located in established formal structures. The Al Qaeda may have been defeated but it should not be seen as a defeat of Islamic radicalism. The Islamic radicalism phenomenon is very complex. Paradoxically, a mushrooming effect may be taking place as the known Islamic radical organizations like Al-Qaeda are decapitated. What is the nature of the Islamic radical phenomena? Firstly, an understanding of the nature of the globalization phenomenon is required. This phenomenon affects us all, including the radicals. The world had changed in the last decade or so. Globalization has benefited many countries rise into prosperity, like in the Asia-Pacific region. The globalization phenomenon has also clearly had some unintended consequences. Several activities, including the criminal drug trade, terrorism, and traffic in nuclear materials, have also been globalized. The financial liberalization that seems to have created a borderless world is also helping international terrorists and criminal networks, and thereby creating numerous problems for poorer countries. The terrorists and criminals love the Internet, the global communication and business infrastructure, and the massive integrated transportation system.
build around the world in so many regions, like Europe and the United States. Paradoxically, globalization has empowered Muslim radicals, like many others across the world. The implications for a continued regional Islamic terrorist network are undeniably very serious.

The Muslim problem can be summarized as that of a civilization in the throes of a crisis of unimaginable proportions threatening its very survival. The Muslim world is passing through a very difficult phase of its history. The problems faced by it are both internal and external. Internally, we are stricken by lethal ailments like poverty, illiteracy, social and economic inequity, social anarchy and backwardness, worship of the past, social injustice, etc. The Islamic world seems to be in a big mess. A tidal wave rising from the troubled waters of the Islamic world is the aggressive fanatical extremism masquerading as Islam. This phenomenon is disguising itself in its exterior aspects as religious intolerance, extremism and political violence. Generally every one agrees that extremism, in all its forms, is deadly for national life and that this attitude has the whole Islamic world, to encounter dangers never experienced before. Almost all agree that the devilish activity has hidden the benign, friendly, and enlightened face of Islam from the view of the world. However, there is sharp disagreement about the real causes of extremism, the right strategy for coming to grips with this mind-set, and for its, eventual eradication. Externally, the Muslim Ummah has no status in international affairs. Muslim societies are considered below human. Muslims are branded as terrorists and there is a growing image of Islam as a religion opposed to love tolerance, knowledge, and freedom of speech, human rights and progress. The aforementioned internal weaknesses have resulted in an appalling religious extremism. Although extremism is found in only a tiny minority of militants, it has affected the whole Muslim society. The resulting developments have affected those societal segments that have nothing to do with terrorism. Rather these Muslims are against it. Religious extremism has gradually emerged as a violent force. It is based on incomprehension or a misplaced notion of Islam. Unfortunately, the greatest part that plays in promoting this notion of Islam is by the personalities and institutions that are supposed to be the true interpreters of Islam and its seats of learning. The status given to them has been largely accepted by society itself.

Islam is being hijacked by an unenlightened minority of militants who ignore the core universal values of Islam and whose activities grossly distort the image of Islam. This minority’s activities are greatly harming the
cause of the Muslims, culturally, politically, religiously, and economically. These destructive tendencies need to be countered by mustering all available resources. What can we do about the Islamic radicals? We should be fighting the likes of Al Qaeda on several fronts. We realize that a workable strategy to defeat Islamic terrorism requires both near and long term efforts. It must be a practical strategy which can only be formulated after careful planning.

In the short-term, combat terrorism by ruthless force through coordinated action. This effort This would include implementing several measures, like capturing or killing terrorists, defeating attacks, disrupting the enemy’s plans. military action is not the sole instrument of national power in this fight. Intelligence sharing, and law enforcement are important in this effort. to sum it up, react immediately to the terrorist threats and stop the violence.

Islamic radicalism was primarily a Muslim problem. Clearly, our Muslim societies and states have failed here. We should accept responsibility for that failure. More importantly, the Muslim countries should get their act together and work to eliminate the threat. They must together promote the idea of Enlightened Moderation, as presented by President Musharraf. The idea now reverberates in the entire Muslim world beyond the confines of Pakistan.

The strategy of Enlightened Moderation was a two-pronged strategy. The first prong is to be delivered by the Muslim Ummah through rejecting extremism and terrorism and in advancing on the path of socio-economic emancipation. President Musharraf believes that the only way we can remedy the Muslim situation is by emphasizing the real humanitarian teachings of Islam and by implementing its core values on all levels of society, individual and collective. We must also present the real face of Islam to the world. This requires courage, a strong will, wisdom and sound judgment. We have to take certain big decisions now. Otherwise our society will not be established on positive values. In the long-term, we must change the mind-set fueling radicalism. Many Muslims have an erroneous and misguided understanding of Islam. This cost we have to pay for the neglect of our education system. The illiteracy and lack of quality education in the Muslim world is tragic to say the least. Years of neglect have led to deplorable education standards in the Muslim world. The time to turn the tide of educational neglect in the Muslim world has come. We simply must educate our youth and give them hope for a better world.
The second prong is to be delivered by the West and the US in particular. This consists of resolving all Muslim political disputes and also assisting in the socio-economic uplift of the deprived Muslim World. This is also to be understood as the external dimension of the strategy. Essentially this boils down the world meeting Muslim demands. The world must solve the issues that most bother Muslims, like Kashmir and Palestine. Muslims demand justice and a solution to their long-standing grievances. Anything less will not work. Why should the world assist us? We must win over the hearts and minds of likely supporters of terrorism under the Islamic label. Hopelessness and helplessness breeds resentment and anger that in turn leads to desperate acts of terror. Change the environment and the material conditions those radicals thrive in. vulnerable populations will breed extremists. After all, many misguided Muslims turn towards violence as acts of sheer desperation. The phenomenon of Islamic radicalism cannot be defeated force alone. Much more needs to be done. The world on its part must try to better understand Islamic viewpoints. Islam must not be continuously ridiculed in the global media because this breeds resentment in Muslims. The genuine requirements of cultural space and Islamic identity must be duly recognized. It is not only the poor and alienated who become radicals but also the educated and prosperous. The Islamic world can and should be redeemed. There is hope yet. We must promote the notion of Enlightened Moderation as being done by President Musharraf. This implementation of the policy requires careful planning at various levels, including a regional forum.

LITERATURE


Original in English

APSTRAKT

Autor razmatra sadašnja politička kretanja u Aziji i situacije koje potencijalno mogu da predstavljaju pretnju bezbednosti u ovom regionu. U članku se govori o širenju nuklearnog oružja i slučajevima vezanim za taj problem u Severnoj Koreji i Iranu. Autor razmatra međunarodne pritiskove, diplomatske poteze i reakciju Irana, kao i stavu EU i Sjedinjenih Država prema ovoj situaciji. Takođe se raspravlja o pitanju Tajvana i teritorijalnom sporu oko Južnokineskog mora i problemu između Pakistana i Indije oko Kašmira. Autor analizira uticaj mreže regionalnog islamističkog radikalnog terorizma u ovom regionu.

Dr Sohail MAHMUD

TEKUĆA POLITIČKA DINAMIKA U AZIJI:
PROBLEMI, RAZVOJ I PRETNJE

REZIME

Autor razmatra sadašnja politička kretanja u Aziji i i najvažnije neuralgične tačke koje potencijalno mogu da predstavljaju pretnju bezbednosti u ovom regionu. Najveća pretnja sa kojom se region suočava je širenje nuklearnog oružja. Širenje nuklearnih kapaciteta na države kao što su Severna Koreja i eventualno Iran u budućnosti, a takođe i na nedržavne organizacije kao što je to al Kaida predstavlja najopasniji aspekt sadašnje situacije i okvir za konfrontaciju sa Sjedinjenim Državama i Evropskom unijom. Zvanično, Iran uporno poriče da je imao bilo kakve ambicije za posedovanjem nuklearnog oružja. Sjedinjene Države i Evropska unija su ostale skeptične zbog iranskog plana o obogaćivanjuuranijuma. Godine sve većeg nepoverenja zbog ciljeva kojima je Iran teži su dovele do sadašnjih sankcija Saveta bezbednosti Ujedinjenih nacija. Iran izaziva konfrontaciju sa međunarodnom zajednicom i time što nastavlja da radi na svom nuklearnom programu. Pritom Iran ne samo da odbacuje sankcije, već je najavio i delimičnu suspenziju saradnje sa Međunarodnom agencijom za atomsku energiju. Ratovi u Iraku i Avganistanu su doveli


Savremeni terorizam obučen u ruho Islama je ostao ozbiljan problem i pretnja regionu. Sama priroda islamskog terorizma je ono što ga čini opasnim. Islamska mreža je transnacionalna i poseduje širok spektar mogućnosti za borbenu delovanje. Al Kaida je za svoj pokus poštovati kao poraz radikalizma. Paradoxalno, ovakve islamske radikalne organizacije niču kao pečurke posle kiše. Muslimanski problem se može sažeti kao civilizacija u agoniji krize nezamislivih razmera koja preti svom samom opstanku. Muslimanski svet je prošao kroz veoma tešku fazu svoje istorije. Problemi sa kojima se suočavao su i unutrašnji i spoljni. Na unutrašnjem planu njega su pogadale pojave kao što su nemaština, nepismenost, socijalna i ekonomska nejednakost, socijalna anarhija i zaostalost, divljenje prošlosti, socijalna nepravda, itd. Talas plime nastao iz uzburkanih voda islamskog sveta sada se smatra agresivnim fanatičnim ekstremizmom maskiranim u Islam, koji se izražava kao verska netreljivost, ekstremizam i političko nasilje. Islam je prisvojila neprosvećena nekolicina militantnih aktivista koji prenebregavaju suštinske univerzalne vrednosti Islamske i čije aktivnosti u velikoj meri doprinose iskrivljenoj slici o Islamu. Ovim destrukтивnim tendencijama se treba suprotstaviti mobilisanjem svih raspoloživih sredstava. Muslimani treba da prihvate odgovornost za taj promašaj. Što je još važnije, muslimanske zemlje treba da se udruže i deluju zajedno u otklanjanju ove pretjere, zaključuje autor.