



Asian Conflicts Reports

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Council For Asian Terrorism Research

North Korea: nuclear power or rogue state?

Ralph Hassig



North Korea's underground nuclear test of May 2009 measured just a few kilotons and received considerably less attention than its first test, in October 2006, suggesting that the world now recognizes that North Korea is an emerging nuclear state, although a few governments, including the United States, refuse to officially acknowledge this.

North Korea's nuclear weapons program can be viewed from two angles. If North Korea is recognized as an emerging nuclear state, then it is hardly surprising that it would test its new weapons. Other nuclear powers have followed the same road. The United States conducted the 20-kiloton Trinity test in 1945, the first of over a thousand tests. In the 1950s and the early 1960s, the skies over Nevada, Bikini, and Eniwetok lit up with giant mushroom clouds from nuclear and thermonuclear explosions ranging from a few kilotons to 15,000 kilotons. And they had interesting names too, like test series Buster-Jangle, Teapot, Wigwam, Nougat, and Castle, and individual tests named Shrimp (the largest), Alarm Clock, Jughead, Zombie, and Morgenstern. The Russians, of course, were avid nuclear testers as well.

After the Limited Test Ban treaty of 1963 was ratified, nuclear tests went underground, where they were rarely noticed by the general public. The signature of North Korea's 2006 underground test was so small that a couple of days later the Japanese mistook a minor earthquake for another North Korean test. No one watching the spectacular atmospheric tests of the 1950s ever mistook them for anything else. One wonders if the North Koreans rue the change in international norms that restricts them to such obscure underground testing.

North Korea's nuclear program was newsworthy in the late 1980s, when a large plutonium reprocessing plant was discovered by satellite imagery, and in the early 1990s, when intelligence analysts began to release estimates that the North Koreans had reprocessed sufficient plutonium to make one or two bombs. Since then, the North Korean's goal to become a nuclear weapons state has been clear and consistent, hardly the stuff to inspire news headlines. Under the Kim regime's "military-first" policy, the world should expect that North Korea's nuclear development will continue, especially in the run-up to the year 2012, when Kim Jong-il has promised to make his country a *Kangsong Taeguk*—an economically and militarily powerful state.

Another way to view North Korea's nuclear test is to see it as the provocative action of an international rogue state that has willfully chosen to violate a host of bilateral and multilateral commitments and agreements, including its 1985 accession to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (from which it later withdrew), the 1991 Joint Declaration of a Nuclear-Free Korean Peninsula, and the September 2005 "joint statement" at the Six-Party Talks to end its nuclear weapons program. The nuclear tests and missile launches also go against United Nations' resolutions, although North Korea is hardly the first country to ignore the United Nations. The Kim regime is also renegeing on numerous unilateral commitments, including Kim Il-sung's repeated insistence that North Korea had no intention to develop nuclear weapons and Kim Jong-il's assurance that, if only the United States would end its threats, North Korea was ever eager to see the Korean peninsula completely denuclearized.

Despite these earlier promises and commitments, and for whatever reasons, North Korea now publicly admits that it is committed to developing nuclear weapons, thus reconciling rhetoric with reality. Privately and provocatively, North Koreans have told foreign visitors that they are also prepared to transfer their nuclear technology to other countries—something that the United States fears more than a direct nuclear threat from North Korea.

Some analysts believe the Kim regime is developing these weapons in order to trade them away for security guarantees and economic benefits from the international community, but a more realistic view would be that North Korea is no more ready to give up its nuclear weapons than is the United States, China, or Russia, because these weapons serve the same purposes for North Korea that they do for other nuclear weapons states, and the North Korean press has frequently noted that although many small states have been invaded by larger states, no nuclear state has ever been invaded.

1

The North Korean tests reflect the military influence over the state's power structure

2

Talks, economic inducements, and political agreements will not convince the Kim regime to denuclearize

3

Engagement must be with North Korea's people, not its leaders



It is likely that the nuclear tests and the rocket launches serve domestic political purposes as well, although speculation about the role of these events in preparing for a leadership succession may be off the mark. Certainly, the tests reflect the prominence in the North Korean power structure of the military, which has no desire to see the country embrace economic reform or open itself to the international community. Demonstrations of the power of North Korea's weapons may also boost the pride of the ordinary North Korean, but according to reports coming out of the country, most people are so alienated from their government and so focused on making a living that they care little for their country's reputation in the international community.

Can anything be done to rid North Korea of its nuclear weapons? Threats, which come readily to hand, are useless because North Korea is by now quite used to them. Short of military action, the United States can do nothing it hasn't already done to seriously damage the Kim regime. The offer to engage North Korea and draw it into the international community would greatly benefit ordinary North Koreans but would be viewed as a threat by the ruling elites, who must keep the people isolated in order to control them.

Engaging in dialogue with North Korea is useful to communicate ideas and express sentiments, but it will persuade the North Koreans to give up their nuclear weapons because they have heard all of the arguments many times before, just as they have heard the threats. What dialogue does is satisfy or at least distract political constituencies, and after all the first rule of politics is to keep your constituents happy. As long as talks continue, political leaders can claim to be working on the problem; they can even claim to be making progress. This assertion fools some of the people some of the time, but since most people (and the media) are not "seized" (to use jargon from UN resolutions) by any foreign policy problem for more than a few days at a time, temporarily distracting people is often sufficient to succeed in politics.

For its part, the United Nations has no more influence over North Korea than does China, which is North Korea's major benefactor and protector. Neither China nor Russia wants to see North Korea reunified with a democratic, U.S.-friendly South Korea; consequently, China is not likely to use its considerable economic leverage unless it can figure out how to make North Korea a de facto Chinese satellite.

In the meantime, North Korea can do no better than continue to provoke other countries with its nuclear tests and missile launches, perhaps even going so far as to launch a very limited attack on South Korea. In the past, such provocations have brought the United States to the bargaining table, thus providing the Kim regime with international legitimacy and economic aid.

At the bargaining table, the North Koreans have stated on many occasions that they will not give up their nuclear weapons unless the United States ends all traces of its hostility toward the Kim regime. Since the North Koreans are famous for harboring suspicion and fear, even a peace treaty and diplomatic recognition are unlikely to satisfy them.

If talks, economic inducements, and political agreements will not convince the Kim regime to denuclearize, is there anything else that the United States could do to move toward the goal of Korean denuclearization? I would offer two suggestions. First, ignore the regime when it is "bad." If ignored, it may become worse, but then again it seems to be getting worse anyway. Perhaps if the North Koreans continue to develop their nuclear weapons program and even begin selling or their nuclear technology, the Chinese may decide they have had enough from their neighbor and end their economic support for the regime.

At the same time, since the essential value of North Korea's weapons of mass destruction is to protect and maintain the Kim regime, it would be useful to work for regime change. Once this regime and any like-minded successor regime is gone, the chances of ridding the Korean peninsula of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles will improve dramatically. Engagement should be not with the North Korean leaders, but with their people, who are not happy with how their country is being run, and for the most part do not benefit from the billions of dollars in economic benefits that in recent years have flowed directly into the hands of the elite class. Communicating with the people by all means available, including radio broadcasts, and letting them know that unification, which they desire for economic reasons, will come only after their current government is gone, will put constant pressure on the regime. History suggests that cracks will eventually open up in the regime's upper ranks and they will become distracted with political infighting. When the regime is gone, the main rationale for developing nuclear weapons will have gone with it. •

How the LTTE was destroyed

Shanaka Jayasekara



1

Sri Lanka's defeat of the LTTE did not involve coalition troops or military hi-tech

2

Destruction of LTTE logistics, and the disruption of its were key elements of Sri Lanka's strategy

3

A major power struggle is now underway in the Tamil diaspora for control of LTTE networks

Consider for a moment if it was possible to defeat the Hezbollah or Hamas. The achievements of the Sri Lankan security forces are of a comparable scale. There were no coalition troops or hi-tech geospatial imagery or other hi-tech equipment, it was the strength and courage of the indigenously trained Sri Lankan security forces that accomplished a feat considered by many as impossible. The Sri Lankan forces militarily decimated the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) regarded as one of the most dangerous and deadliest terrorist groups in the world.

The LTTE was considered a trail blazer in terms of terrorist technology and innovation. The hallmark of the LTTE, the suicide body suite was perfected by the LTTE and proliferated globally as the most lethal terror device used by terrorist groups today. The LTTE over a period of three decades progressively strengthened from a guerilla outfit, to having a conventional capability that controlled territory. At the time of the ceasefire agreement in February 2002, the LTTE had military dominance over most parts of the Northern and Eastern Provinces.

The group was founded on an autocratic dictatorship that lasted from its origins to the very end. In a way having a single leader for thirty years retarded its decision making capacity and that of the Tamil community. The group was centered around the cult of Velupillai Prabhakaran and his intransigent worldview. His zero sum mindset which considered no alternative but a separate state was unattainable and unrealistic when over 40% of the Tamil population lived in the south of the island. However, for Prabhakaran it was military gains that brought him closer to achieving a separate state.

The military capability of the LTTE provided the space to develop the trapping of a de-facto administration in areas controlled by the group. The international network and logistics facilities provided resources and weapons for Prabhakaran's army.

The decline of the Tamil Eelam project came following the assassination of Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. The LTTE which was armed and trained by the Indian intelligence RAW, had lost its most important support base politically and militarily which they could never regain. The LTTE in the 1990s grew in strength due to political incompetence and rampant corruption in military procurement in the Sri Lankan government. The reversals faced by the Sri Lankan forces in Operation Jaya Sikuru and Agni Kheela, as well as LTTE operation Unceasing Waves III which captured Elephant Pass redefined the LTTE's as a formidable military power.

The appointment of Gotabaya Rajapaksa brother of the President as Defence Secretary in November 2005 changed the military landscape in Sri Lanka. He provided decisive political leadership to the military and placed the country on a war footing. Over a two year period (2006-2008) he expanded troop numbers by almost 40%, with the induction of over 70,000 new troops to the three armed services and 40,000 new guards to the civil defense force.

The government exploited the defection of the LTTE Eastern commander Karuna Amman and the disbanding of young combatants by capturing the entirety of the Eastern Province by July 2007.

The Sri Lankan navy undertook deep sea operations in international waters and destroyed nine merchant vessels of the LTTE between March to October 2007. The regular induction of weapons and ammunitions to the LTTE using its merchant fleet was critical to maintain its military power. The destruction of the LTTE supply chain capability was the single decisive factor that changed the LTTE from being a formidable military force to a group gasping for survival. The almost complete destruction of the LTTE shipping fleet was possible due to advance technical intelligence and satellite data provided by the US Pacific Command to the Sri Lanka Navy. It demonstrated the close counter terrorism cooperation between the Bush administration and Sri Lanka prior to the Senator Leahy amendment.

The international network of the LTTE was disrupted in the five major fundraising countries. The law enforcement authorities in the United States, France, United Kingdom, Canada and Australia detained key LTTE leaders. The networks had to be reorganized, systems redesigned and rebuilt which was an unnecessary distraction to the LTTE at the time.

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The Indian security paradigm had changed. Indian security was threatened by the proliferation of un-governed territory in the sub-continent. In Pakistan large areas of the FATA regions were un-governed, in Nepal the Maoist had taken control of territory and in Sri Lanka the LTTE had control of the Vanni. The LTTE had acquired stand-off weapons, a naval force and an air wing which all had potential threat implications to India. It was in the broader interest of Indian security to permit the elimination of the LTTE.

Sri Lankan diplomacy exploited what could be called the new world order in a post economic crisis era. The raising influence of India and China as important global actors, and the decline of the west in international politics was effectively used by Sri Lanka to minimize any external intervention.

The combination of these factors and the superior ground tactics adopted by the Security Forces prevailed in the final battle. The victorious security forces not only defeated the LTTE, but also rescued over 250,000 Tamil civilians that were forcibly held as a human shield by the LTTE. The rescue operation was a turning point in war, the rush of civilians towards the safety of the security forces disproved the misinformation campaign carried out in world capitals by the Tamil diaspora.

On Monday 18 May, there were reports of Prabhakaran being killed attempting to flee the battlefield, however, it was on Tuesday 19 May, when an army sniper took out five targets on the banks of the Nanthikadal lagoon that Prabhakaran was killed. The sniper had shot Prabhakaran in the forehead. The four bodyguards around Prabhakaran were also shot by the sniper. It was then that the government was able to provide conclusive evidence that Prabhakaran was dead.

The security forces completely destroyed the senior leadership of the LTTE preventing any rallying point for a revival of the group. The security forces have also recovered over 11,000 T-56 assault rifles, 25 artillery guns, a main battle tank and other sophisticated weaponry of the LTTE. In addition, large quantities of files, papers and computers relating to LTTE operations have been recovered providing valuable insights into the operations of the LTTE. Over 7100 LTTE combatants have surrendered voluntarily to the security forces.

Since the 19 May 2009, the only representation of the LTTE remains among the overseas Tamil diaspora. The international network of the LTTE operated under the leadership of Veerakathy Manivannam (alias Castro) up to 30 January 2009. Facing imminent defeat at the hands of the Sri Lankan security forces, Prabhakaran appointed the head of weapons procurement based in Thailand, Selvarajah Pathmanathan (alias Kumaran Pathmanathan, KP), as the new head of LTTE international relations.

Selvarajah Pathmanathan (KP) had been sidelined due to personality clashes especially with political head Tamilselvan. Furthermore, the KP Department which undertook procurement activity was sidelined during the ceasefire period with a flood of diaspora activists dealing directly with LTTE seniors in Kilinochchi. The LTTE international network that was developed by Castro (Castro network) had distanced itself from the KP network. Furthermore, in the absence of KP in the forefront, the Castro network had taken control of LTTE international finances. The funds collected by the LTTE and stored in secret bank accounts by Sanna (Netherlands) and Nehrujee (UK) were being controlled through the Castro network. In addition, the LTTE had a very active overseas intelligence wing headed by Kathirkamathamby Arivazhakan) which kept watch over diaspora activity and reported to directly Kilinochchi.

As Selvarajah Pathmanathan (KP) attempts to take control of the LTTE international network using a remote office in Oslo, the Castro network and the Aiyanna network do not recognize his authority. The most recent statement by Pathmanathan announcing the death of Prabhakaran was dismissed by the Castro network (now called the LTTE Department of Diaspora Affairs). The three groups are scrambling to take control of LTTE overseas assets, there will be blood spilt and a few will benefit personally given LTTE records have been destroyed. The LTTE battle ground will shift overseas to the Tamil diaspora with each group attempting to define its territory, geographically or thematically.

The LTTE networks overseas will remain disassociated from the conflict if they do not build ground capability in Sri Lanka. Each group will attempt to revive at least a minimalist guerilla capability as soon as possible. It is imperative for the overseas elements to demonstrate control over ground operations, firstly to achieve credibility and recognition, secondly to boost the morale the depressed Tamil diaspora and thirdly discredit the government's claim of destroying the LTTE. It is likely in the short term attacks on soft-targets could be carried out to demonstrate the continued existence of the LTTE. This will also facilitate overseas leaders to assert authority over the LTTE network. •

Challenges in aviation security

Thomas Koruth Samuel



The 11 September 2001 tragedy in New York, the 27 February 2004 Superferry bombings in the Philippines, the 11 March 2004 Madrid bombings and the 7 July 2005 bombings in London all had one chilling factor in common; the deliberate and systematic attack on the innocent via the transportation system.

In this regard, we can conclude that the terrorists have learnt that the transportation system provides them with tremendous opportunities, not only to kill but to disrupt the lives of the ordinary citizen and generate tremendous fear in the process.

The aviation industry is an attractive target for terrorism as they have the ability to capture wide media attention and thus advertise the terrorists' cause and demands to the international audience, the ability to achieve tactical gains such as ransoms or the release of terrorist colleagues from prison, the ability to prove the vulnerability of advanced countries to this form of attack and the capability to magnify the consequences of their actions and thereby cause distorted amount of changes in the international arena.

The possible scenarios that could be utilized by the terrorists include terrorists piloting, commandeering or chartering airplanes or microlights and crashing them into critical national infrastructure/icons and/or descending/ascending airplanes in a targeted country, terrorists infiltrating airports, airstrips and flight parks for the express purpose of hijacking and/or sabotaging airplanes and terrorists being trained in flying clubs or schools to fly and maintain aircraft.

Aircrafts and Terrorism

The possibility of terrorists utilizing aircrafts as potential missiles are both real and plausible as the strategic advantages of utilizing aircrafts, particularly in suicide missions are significant, among them being its simplicity and low-cost, its ability to generate massive casualties and extensive damage, the immense impact on the public and the media and the possibility of highlighting the cause of the terrorists in a very dramatic fashion.

While the direct damage that can be caused by small aircrafts are not extensive (such as loss of lives or physical destructions), there are other costs involved such as the negative publicity to the aviation industry of the affected country, the negative publicity on security agencies and its enforcement capabilities, the possible travel advisory ban issued on the country in question and the subsequent economic implications.

Airports and Terrorism

Airport security, to a great extent, forms the greatest hurdle for a successful terrorist attack and therefore remains the best and often times the last barrier which could identify and thwart terrorist attacks.

In general most airports, particularly the smaller ones, lack efficient airport perimeter security. Hence, there is a possibility that smaller airports can be used as a launching strip for airplanes or experimental aircrafts within or beyond the shores of a country. Among the issues that warrant attention are security vetting on individuals entering the airport/airstrip premises, the uncoordinated manning of the numerous entry points by various government/private entities and the security of smaller airports, store ports, airstrips, and flight parks. While the concentration of security is on major airports, smaller airports or airstrips can be a very viable target for terrorists to launch their operations. These sites have been well-documented by flying enthusiasts and information with regard to them (i.e. exact location, condition of the airport/airstrip) is readily available on the internet.

Among the possible prevailing weaknesses in ground airport security are human fallibility, complacency and variable levels of airport security, particularly between smaller and bigger airports.

1

Terrorists have learnt that the transportation system provides them with great opportunity

2

The possibility of terrorists utilizing aircrafts potential missiles are real and plausible.

3

Airport security forms the greatest defence against a successful terrorist attack



Security Recommendations

Considering the complexities involved, the finite resources available and the tremendous security landscape that needs to be covered, there is a need to better involve the stakeholders, among which is by means of :

- *The involvement of potential flying students and flying enthusiasts* through the issuance of certificate of good conduct/good behaviour as a criterion for potential flying candidates.
- *The involvement of flying schools and clubs* through positioning flying clubs and schools as the 'first line of defence' when dealing with the issue of aviation terrorism, conducting personality and psychological evaluation coupled with security elements in interviews on all potential flying candidates, scrutiny of bank statements of all potential flying candidates to identify their funding source, transmission of information with regards to the dismissal of students/instructors to the relevant flying authorities and ensuring that flying schools and clubs maintain meticulous records of students.
- *The involvement of flying authorities and other relevant bodies* by conducting security vetting coupled with checking the passports and travel details of all potential flying candidates, monitoring pilots, providing a security checklist to flying schools and clubs for enrolment of potential students, publicising the security procedures with regard to flying and flying-related activities by relevant agencies, establishing a security hotline by the relevant flying authorities for reporting suspicious activity, initiating discussions between the various players in the aviation field at regular intervals, including a security element for aviation doctors screening potential pilots, conducting closer scrutiny of joy-ride flights, initiating the establishment of 'no-fly zones' and counter-measures if such zones are breached and ensuring the security of both small and large airports, airstrips and flight parks.

Conclusion

Past incidents have demonstrated that there is no single security vetting procedure that is infallible. Hence, what is proposed is a layered security approach which is varied and diverse with the aim of involving players in the aviation field which goes beyond traditional security forces.

It is sad to note that thus far, many countries have reacted but perhaps not responded well to potential terrorist attacks on the transportation system. While numerous stop-gap efforts have been undertaken, a comprehensive overview of the vulnerabilities of the transportation system has yet to take place in most countries, particularly in the field of aviation. Added to that, while terrorists have began to 'creatively' look at developing their tactics, means and methods; security and enforcement forces are often lagging behind, one step too slow in detecting, deterring and disrupting acts of terror. Until we have identified such areas and taken the necessary measures, we will remain vulnerable. •

A Kazakh perspective on Afghanistan

Murat Laumulin and Fatima Kukeyeva



The political situation in Afghanistan has greatly improved in recent years. First, the obscurantist and wayward Taliban regime ceased to exist. Now, the Afghan establishment functions through political rivalries and intrigues—a considerably better mechanism of dispute resolution than direct combat.

But there are also several causes for concern. Afghanistan remains a country under occupation, with limited national sovereignty. And although there are signs of economic revival—the World Bank has published figures showing that the economy expanded by 50 percent in the last two years—Afghanistan’s development is driven by aid.

Perhaps the most important of the causes for concern is the drug issue, which is increasingly defining the context in which Afghanistan’s internal and international political dynamics operate. Afghanistan is estimated to generate about three-fourths of the total worldwide production of opium poppy and heroin. Billions of dollars are generated annually by this production, a figure far higher than legitimate investment in the country. Some two-thirds of farmers, or about one and a half million Afghans, are involved in the production of drugs.

During a recent visit to the U.S., President Hamid Karzai promised to reduce this figure to 30% by 2010. To reduce the production of internationally-tradable drugs, the Afghan police have been trying to block the imports of heroin precursors. To date, though, these imports have been effectively choked only on the border with Tajikistan. Precursors are still delivered from Europe through other countries.

A second set of concerns stem from the disturbed military situation in Afghanistan—which, it bears noting, is in part underwritten by the profits from the drug trade.

Despite the coming to power of a new administration, the U.S. is persisting with a twin-pronged strategy that consists of seeking to dismantle terrorist infrastructure in Afghanistan, and targeting the key leaders of al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Its objectives are not complex; the U.S. seeks to solidify President Karzai’s regime and stabilize the internal political situation by moving its potential antagonists onto the periphery of politics. The U.S. obviously seeks to limit its own military responsibility in Afghanistan, and secure maximal participation by North Atlantic Treaty Organization states in the peacekeeping process. However, political circumstances suggest that the U.S. will remain the principal military power in Afghanistan.

However, the resources President Karzai today commands make it impossible for him to tighten his grip on the country and put an end to political instability. Therefore, many of the regime’s allies are working to help Kabul increase its armed forces many times over. The idea is to use the army as an element of the state-formation process.

From a Kazakh point of view, though, this solution contains within it a danger. With its new military might—and under the command of a future regime that may be hostile to its neighbors or current allies—the newly-acquired might of a country with no energy resources worth speaking of could develop into a regional threat.

Thirdly, there are concerns which stem from the bearing the military-political situation in Afghanistan has on central Asia’s security landscape and architecture.

Today’s situation of relative stabilization alternating with intensified hostilities is forcing NATO to build up its military presence and widen the zone of fighting. Ever since the April, 2008, NATO Summit in Bucharest, it has been evident that a radical re-appraisal of the intensity of military operations in Afghanistan was on the anvil. The U.S. has geared up to escalate offensive operations against the Taliban, a project in which the strengthened Afghan army will likely have an important role. Pakistan has also been compelled to launch wide-scale operations in its northern and western regions.

Not surprisingly, the U.S. has sought the cooperation of Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States for the transportation of military cargo into Afghanistan. This cooperation, however, imposes costs on the central Asian states. It takes the Afghan problem out of its immediate location, and turns it into a wider regional problem. It also impacts on the security situation inside the central Asian states and their relationships with each other.

Finally, there is the problem of just how long the U.S. presence in the region is likely to be—and what consequences a protracted presence might have.

1

U.S. policies in Afghanistan could have a direct—and unanticipated—consequences for central Asia.

2

Among other things, central Asia desires a security zone in northern Afghanistan

3

Kazakhstan could facilitate dialogue between great-power stakeholders in central Asia.



The U.S. analytical community presents the following argument about the consequences of the war: since the central Asian republics regard balanced relations with all large powers as their strategic aim they should be interested in America's success in Afghanistan. In turn, the U.S., which is trying to stabilize Afghanistan and push it toward economic revival, needs the central Asian states and their businesses as economic partners and sponsors in Afghanistan. The United States is placing its stakes on wider regional cooperation in which Kabul should also be involved.

But Washington has, because of the war in Afghanistan, gained access to an oil and gas bearing region that was exclusively controlled by Russia for years. The military bases are of strategic importance and include outposts along the Chinese border. Besides, Washington is considering the possibility of locating its military in Mongolia. Moscow and Beijing were deeply disturbed by the U.S. attempts to put down roots in this volatile region. Despite their concerns, though, Washington intimated that it was not going to abandon its military facilities in central Asia. Some experts fear that having gained access to bases in the region, the U.S. is unlikely to ever relinquish its hard-won strategic presence.

To mitigate these several, related risks, the central Asian republics want the territory of the former Northern Alliance turned into a security belt to which they and Russia should extend a special level of assistance and support. Inevitably, the ongoing U.S. military operation will not be limited to Afghanistan. It has already spilled over into Pakistan; it will, inexorably, deepen. The developments that are still unfolding will inevitably affect the interests of India, China, and Russia.

The evolving relationship between the Central Asian states and the situation in Afghanistan must also be read against the backdrop of the so-called Greater Central Asia project. The GCA project, initiated in 2005, signaled that the United States treated the region as a foreign policy and security priority. The project was primarily promoted by the changed balance of forces which favored Russia, and to a lesser degree China. This altered relationship of power called for an strategic and geopolitical response by the U.S. At the same time, the Greater Central Asia idea was a conceptual and ideological substantiation of what the United States is trying to accomplish in the region. This is a fresh (and logical) approach to America's entire previous foreign policy theory and practical regional policy.

In a wider sense the project is a strategic matrix the United States is using in Central Asia, the Caspian, and Afghanistan to channel developments in the desired direction.

Kazakhstan's Role

Afghanistan is not a short-term priority for Kazakhstan's external policy. The direct threat of an Islamist invasion of Kazakhstan has been militarily eliminated. Central Asia's security is maintained by the U.S. and NATO in Afghanistan and Russia in Tajikistan. In these circumstances, Kazakhstan's immediate task is to support joint anti-terrorist and anti-drug efforts promoted by Russia and China within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organization and Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Kazakhstan can also benefit from the prospective Trans-Afghan pipeline. It is theoretically possible for Kazakhstan to join the gas supplies to South Asia. However, this project hardly seems feasible, at least in the short term. It is most likely that the pipeline's security will not be maintained if President Karzai does not manage to enlist the guarantees of ethnic opposition in western and southwestern Afghanistan—and it is improbable that he will be able to do so

To secure its objectives, Kazakhstan will seek to work cooperation with Russia and the other Central Asian countries within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Central Asian Economic Community.

But there is also an opportunity here for a new dialogue. Kazakhstan, which all the major powers present in central Asia accept as a major regional leader and a strategic partner of weight and significance, believes the time has come to clarify its relationship with both the SCO, CSTO and U.S.-led structures in the region. It might promote the idea of a new mechanism of cooperation and/or dialog among the all of these security structures

Such a rethinking is crucial today the world political and economic systems are no longer what they were and are still in the process of changing while the states are looking for new models, forms, and formats of international cooperation. This is happening at a pace that makes detailed comprehension impossible. Responses should be dynamic while thinking must be preventive. Kazakhstan's initiatives can, to a certain extent, return the geopolitical rivalry in the region to a constructive sphere for the sake of continued geopolitical balance. Indeed, a successful outcome in Afghanistan will make it necessary for the regional security systems, sooner or later, to identify the level and sphere of their cooperation. ●

Asian Conflicts Reports

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