

North Korea, the Middle East and the Nuclear Game

The North Koreans, perhaps the loopyest regime in the world that actually governs a defined and recognized country, now claims to have a hydrogen bomb. In reality, it may not yet, but eventually it will. We have chiefly the Chinese to thank for this, as North Korea could not in practice accomplish anything without the complicity of China. In one respect, it is comforting to note that China can be as clumsy and stupid in its strategic policy as the West generally has been since the successful end of the Cold War. So concerned is Beijing that the Korean Peninsula not be reunified, creating the world's next Great Power, as the reunification of Germany resurrected that country as the greatest nation in Europe, it has tolerated the lunatic Kimist hermit-despotism in North Korea to become a Frankenstein monster among nations, claiming to have the ability to kill 20 million people at a time in a great neighbouring city such as Seoul, Tokyo or Osaka (or Shanghai).

China could have stopped the North Korean program at any time, but became so addicted to the fun it derived from unleashing that mad state on the West, and was so alarmed at what a mighty democratic (and insufficiently deferential) country a united Korea would become, it now has the joy and reassurance of a potentially hydrogen weapon-empowered Dear Leader in Pyongyang. (Once again, it is clear that Douglas MacArthur, Richard Nixon, John Foster Dulles, and others were strategically correct that the West should have disposed of North Korea in 1952 when it had the ability to do it; though that does not excuse MacArthur's insubordinacy to President Truman. He warned the Congress and the nation in 1951 that, "In war there is no substitute for victory." And the message has still not been taken entirely onboard, after the debacle

in Indochina, Saddam Hussein's survival of the Gulf War, and the gigantic shambles of the Iraq War and its ghastly sequels).

The Chinese toleration of the rogue state in Pyongyang was helped along by all the fruitless negotiations the Clinton and George W. Bush administrations conducted with North Korea (the estimable but not very successful Condoleezza Rice rated her discussions with North Korea among her great career accomplishments). These disasters, combined with the Obama-led capitulation to a nuclear ayatollahship in Tehran, have reduced the hypocrisy of the arms control and non-proliferation regime to a Swiss cheese, a ludicrous, dangerous, charade. Loopy governments will have maximum warheads and some capacity to deliver them, and almost unlimited capacity to put them in the hands of suicide attackers.

The United States, in particular, probably has the ability to shoot down most incoming nuclear-armed missiles from insane states (no country could deal with a heavy barrage of submarine-launched missiles with hydrogen warheads). It will distribute anti-missile defences to serious allies, and all the established nuclear powers, including Israel, have the ability to obliterate whole nationalities in retaliation. It was not bravura when Israeli prime minister Netanyahu told the U.S. Congress last year that "For the first time in a hundred generations, the Jews are not defenceless. Even if Israel must stand alone, I promise you: Israel will stand." Even the pseudo-theocratic riffraff in Tehran must understand the implications of that.

Instead of continuing this fraud of a nuclear club pledged to try to disarm, which is nonsense and has received only the token attention of naifs like Obama, the sane military powers must concert between themselves to try to prevent the detonation of nuclear devices in container-ships and such carriers, and to make holy secular war on terrorist lunatics

like ISIL and Al-Qaeda. Presumably, the next U.S. president will quietly tell the Iranian government that if there is the slightest derogation from the seven-power nuclear agreement by Iran, there will be none of this bunk about “snap-back sanctions;” the military option will be employed at once even if the contracting powers have to conduct a permanent fly-past in the skies of Iran. In the meantime, surely the Chinese and Russians, who have borders with North Korea, as well as the Americans, will send North Korea a message that will deter even that demented government from nuclear adventurism. If there is to be any retrieval of a sense of international security, the message will have to be delivered that any irregular use of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear, biological, and bacteriological weapons, however transported and wherever released, will bring instant death to all who are complicit in the facilitation of such an attack, almost regardless of collateral damage. There may be a practically unlimited quantity of humanoid cannon-fodder prepared to die in the massacre of innocent people, but the cowardice of bin Laden and the quick end of the Hamas terror campaign against buses in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem in the second Intifada, after the Israelis killed successive Hamas leaders, gives some assurance that terrorist ringleaders are not so keen for a fast passage to the next life as their peppier and more zealous followers.

The potential for nuclear porosity is seriously aggravated by the disintegration of any order in much of the Middle East. The Saudis propped up the Western Alliance inadvertently by slicing the oil price by two thirds and raising production, which cut the value of the Russian ruble in half and dampened President Vladimir Putin’s plans for igniting irredentist fires among ethnic Russians in the former Soviet republics apart from Ukraine and Georgia. But Iran got its soft 10-year glide-path to nuclear weapons and the windfall of unfrozen billions of sanction dollars, and the United States took an entire year to reduce oil production from more marginal

sources such as fractional and deep off-shore drilling and refinement from oil sands. The ability of both the Saudis and the Iranians to bankroll competing thuggeries around the Muslim world has been strained.

Even as horrors and humanitarian tragedies rage in much of the Muslim world, some sort of collegiality seems to be emerging in the new Islamic Military Alliance, rounded up by the Saudis and headquartered in Riyadh, in common cause against terrorists, but also against their main sponsors – the Shiites. The 34 member states of the alliance exclude Iran and the Shiite-infected battlegrounds of Iraq and Syria, but include Saudi Arabia and all the smaller Gulf states, Egypt, Turkey, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, Lebanon, most of what was formerly French West and Equatorial Africa, and such recently or currently strife-torn states as Yemen, Libya, Senegal, Somalia, Mali, Mauritania, Ivory Coast, Niger, Nigeria, and even the Palestinians. This presumably means the Alliance supports the comparatively moderate incumbents in those places, and that they have taken some sort of anti-terrorist pledge. The new Alliance extends even to Djibouti and the Maldivian and Comorian Islands (perhaps as balmy places of exile for those signatories to the alliance who are ousted but manage to flee and avoid the usual lethal end of rough-and-tumble Islamic politics). Apart from Iran, the only important Muslim countries that are missing are Indonesia and Algeria. Arab alliances tend not to be too rigorous, as the interminable battles of the Arab League demonstrated, but this grouping at least has an organizing principle that is closely linked to the physical safety of its rulers, contains four or five formidable military powers, and has no serious grievances with Israel. In a region infested by violent religious and racist extremists, where the United States has stolen away as in the lore of the Assyrian nomads in the night, even a charlatan like Turkey's Erdogan and the medieval leaders of the House of Saud look comparatively civilized.

The Assad Alawites (Shiites) will not retain control of Syria no matter how much help they get from the Iranians and Russians. The Kurds will have to settle for a country in what used to be Iraq, and a confederated minority in Turkey. Sunni Iraq, around Baghdad, will have to be some sort of Turco-Egyptian protectorate. The Saudis and Iranians may have to partition Yemen, and the Saudis may have to subdue or even expel the Shiites of Bahrain. The Palestinians will finally have to take the state the Israelis give them. Everyone agrees that the outright terrorists, ISIL and the others, will have to be crushed and those Muslim powers who have played footsie with the terrorists will have to be disincentivized, perhaps quite brutally, from any such practice.

It will get worse before it gets better in the Middle East, and all Europe is waiting for Germany to assume its rightful position as that continent's leading power, reduce dependence on Russian natural gas, and assist Ukraine to get on its feet; all this as the world waits for the end of the Bush-Obama leadership vacuum. But in all the bad, tragic and worrisome news, there are three benign developments: the Palestinian movement is no longer the inevitable subject of misplaced pieties in the salons of the world; the truism that China is taking over the world is just about as stale as the preceding wisdom, 25 years ago, that Japan would do that; and the eco-poseurs are not going to be able to keep much air in the balloon that climate change is the world's greatest problem much longer.

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