

MUHAMMAD RUHUL AMIN

THE balance of power and collective security have been used as the two important principles for maintaining global peace and security despite debate among scholars with regard to their theoretical underpinnings and operational intricacies. The collective security system may have brought temporary peace in the world immediately after the two World Wars. However, it failed to establish long-lasting or ever-lasting global stability and security. For example, the League of Nations established after World War I succumbed into failure as the collective peace effort, which pulled the world to get involved into World War II, the most destructive and devastating event in the annals of history mankind had ever experienced. Some writers, thus, consider the twenty years between the two World Wars as the intermission or interim period. At the end of World War II, a second collective step towards peace was taken through the formation of the United Nations. Unfortunately, the UN, over the years, has lost credibility of the peace loving people to the extent that the structuralists started labeling it as the vehicle of exploitation.

The struggle for global supremacy between the US and the erstwhile USSR, the two super powers could not be diminished by the United Nations. The super powers implanted the seeds of discords, conflicts and war everywhere in the post-war world.

Notwithstanding the failure of the UN, the then existing balance of power between the super powers served as restraint and succeeded in stopping them from initiating dangerous wars. The resultant effects of this power balance have been reflected at the individual, domestic, regional and global levels.

For instances, some people, families or groups have been maintaining imposed stability in a number of countries by achieving high esteemed power at their individual state levels. Understandably, however, their insurmountable power structure crushed into pieces at some critical juncture of their domestic political turmoil. In spite of the domestic "super power image" enjoyed by the Arab dictators, such as, Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, Ben Ali of Tunisia and Muammar Gaddafi of Libya, they had to step down during the mayhem, when their power was challenged by the opposing forces and balanced by their power. That means, the inter-individual or inter-group struggle at individual-state levels intensified until their power had been balanced contributing to a deterrent situation. Thus the flaming fire of many drastic wars along the Afro-Asian Arab countries has finally been extinguished with the emergence of the balance of power at different levels of these countries.

Another important example of preventing hostility and war by deterrent strategy is the nuclear power balance between India and Pakistan. The regional peace in South Asia has been maintained by the balance of nuclear power between the two nuclear countries of the region. The most glaring example of preserving international peace and security through nuclear deterrence has been set by the US and ex-USSR. Their dreadful nuclear weapons enabled them to deter each other from triggering military assault on the other. Over the years since the end of World War II, the sophistication of their nuclear weapons reached

## Inevitability of nuclear deterrence for the Middle East security

the zenith of development and restrained them from engaging into the first strike. They have been able to keep each other away from dismantling each other's world-wide interests and goals only with their balanced nuclear stronghold. In another word, their nuclear balance of power could avert total war between them. The reciprocal sense of security grown out of their balance of power allowed them uninterrupted opportunity not to intervene in such affairs that might lead them to war.

Viewed from a realist perspective, Iran may be noted as such a country. Being frustrated and dissatisfied with the role of IAEA and the Western countries with regard to its nuclear projects, Iran may rush to develop its nuclear installations for the cause of its self-defense. Looked upon the issue from a regional security point of view, international recognition may be accorded for the peaceful nuclear ambition of Iran. A nuclear Iran can deter a nuclear Israel, prevent escalation of war and, and can contribute to regional peace and stability



The creation of IAEA was a measure to obstruct other countries to stretch their security umbrella. The deviation of IAEA from maintaining universal equal rights for all countries, limits it being justified as the valid, lawful and legal organization. That might make some countries vulnerable to the unjust treatment by such international treaties and obligations and compel them to install their own means of self-defense, which may not exclude the development of nuclear energy, nuclear power and nuclear weapons.

through nuclear deterrence.

The Middle East region has been used as the hot zone of the flashpoints of cold war between the capitalist imperialism and communist expansionism. Israel has been a "pushed in state" in Middle East since the UN was established. Israel has been continuing persecution on neighbouring Arab countries and extending its boundaries unlawfully and unjustly by dint of its regional superpower status which has been achieved by its possession of sophisticated WMD and undeclared

nuclear stockpiles.

The erstwhile USSR failed to craft a cold war counter-structure in the region by nurturing a countervailing regional superpower equal to Israel. Equipped with the dangerous WMD and supposedly nuclear weapons, Israel has been instrumental in the implementation of the grand strategy of the imperialists in the Middle East region and elsewhere of the world. Against this backdrop, revolutionary Iran threw blatant blow to the unchallenged power of Israel psychologically, politically and strategically. The news of Iran's nuclear involvement came to the Western imperialists as the blue from the belt. Despite Iran's repeated iterations that its nuclear programs are for peaceful purposes and are quite in line with IAEA provisions, the West as well as Israel have pulled their pants up to deprive Iran of its nuclear rights. Iran has been continuously threatened with series of economic embargo, trade sanctions and military aggressions, such as, Christmas attack, spring attack, winter attack, surgical operation and preemptive air strike and so on.

Paid no heed to international pressures, Iran has continued its nuclear programs either overtly or covertly. We don't know whether Iran has, by now, acquired nuclear bombs or come close to manufacturing nuclear weapons or cherished intentions to possess nuclear stockpiles. In view of the Middle Eastern political reconfiguration in the post-Arab Spring era, the nuclear deterrent strategy should not be kept aside. The West needs to understand the inextricability of the rivalry at the inimical psyche of the newly emerged regional great powers of Middle East like Egypt, Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Tunisia vis-à-vis Israel. The newly-achieved strength of these countries can't be contained easily by the military efficiency of Israel.

Renewed efforts are required for rebuilding the declining credibility of the West so that new leaders may find the Western interests in the region in conformity and coexistence with theirs. It may take a few years for the Middle Eastern countries to tighten a concerted regional power base and by that time, Iran may achieve nuclear sufficiency. The changed reality of the regional politics demands international recognition for regional nuclear power balance. It may replace regional enmity with regional rivalry and competition and prevent any prospective regional war laying far-reaching consequences for the third World War.

Known that no threat has so far been effective in stopping Iran's nuclear projects, West needs to adopt alternative conflict resolution strategies. Any harder policy may instigate Iran to turn much more aggressive. The present Iranian government under the liberal Islamic President may be easier to handle than any conservative government. A policy of appeasement may also be adopted in order not to allow the extremists coming to power.

In fine it can be said that efforts need to be taken to ensure Iran's peaceful nuclear programs. The plan for attacking Iran is not a viable solution. Any step to destabilize the flourishing environment of the balance of power between Israel and Iran will not bring any good result for the international community.

The writer is an Associate Professor, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka and Chairman, CIDS.

## With the focus on Syria, Mexico burns

ROBERT D. KAPLAN

WHILE the foreign policy elite in Washington focuses on the 8,000 deaths in a conflict in Syria half a world away from the United States more than 47,000 people have died in drug-related violence since 2006 in Mexico. A deeply troubled state as well as a demographic and economic giant on the United States' southern border, Mexico will affect America's destiny in coming decades more than any state or combination of states in the Middle East. Indeed, Mexico may constitute the world's seventh-largest economy in the near future.

Certainly, while the Mexican violence is largely criminal, Syria is a more clear-cut moral issue, enhanced by its own strategic consequences. A calcified authoritarian regime in Damascus is stamping out dissent with guns and artillery barrages. Moreover, regime change in Syria, which the rebels demand, could deliver a pivotal blow to Iranian influence in the Middle East, an event that would be the best news to U.S. interests in the region in years or even decades.

Nevertheless, the Syrian rebels are divided and hold no territory, and the toppling of pro-Iranian dictator Bashar al Assad might conceivably bring to power an austere Sunni regime equally averse to U.S. interests if not lead to sectarian chaos. In other words, all military intervention scenarios in Syria are fraught with extreme risk. Precisely for that reason, that the U.S. foreign policy elite has continued for months to feverishly debate Syria, and in many cases advocate armed intervention, while utterly ignoring the vaster panorama of violence next door in Mexico, speaks volumes about Washington's own obsessions and interests, which are not always aligned with the country's geopolitical interests.

Syria matters and matters momentously to U.S. interests, but Mexico ultimately matters more, so one would think that there would be at least some degree of parity in the amount written on these subjects. I am not demanding a switch in news coverage from one country to the other, just a bit more balance. Of course, it is easy for pundits to have a fervently interventionist view

on Syria precisely because it is so far away, whereas miscalculation in Mexico on America's part would carry far greater consequences. For example, what if the Mexican drug cartels took revenge on San Diego? Thus, one might even argue that the very noise in the media about Syria, coupled with the relative silence about Mexico, is proof that it is the latter issue that actually is too sensitive for loose talk.

It may also be that cartel-ravaged Mexico at some rude subconscious level connotes for East Coast elites a south of the border, 7-Eleven store culture, reminiscent of the crime movie "Traffic," that holds no allure to people focused on ancient civilizations across the ocean. The concerns of Europe and the Middle East certainly seem closer to New York and Washington than does the southwestern United States. Indeed, Latin American bureaus and studies departments simply lack the cachet of Middle East and Asian ones in government and universities. Yet, the fate of Mexico is the hinge on which the United States' cultural and demographic future rests.

U.S. foreign policy emanates from the domestic condition of its society, and nothing will affect its society more than the dramatic movement of Latin history northward. By 2050, as much as a third of the American population could be Hispanic. Mexico and Central America constitute a growing demographic and economic powerhouse with which the United States has an inextricable relationship. In recent years Mexico's economic growth has outpaced that of its northern neighbor. Mexico's population of 111 million plus Central



Mexican soldiers cut and burn opium poppies in remote mountains of Guerrero state in southwest Mexico. Mexico is now the second-leading heroin producer in the world, after Afghanistan.

America's of more than 40 million equates to half the population of the United States.

Because of the North American Free Trade Agreement, 85 percent of Mexico's exports go to the United States, even as half of Central America's trade is with the United States. While the median age of Americans is nearly 37, demonstrating the aging tendency of the U.S. population, the median age in Mexico is 25, and in Central America it is much lower (20 in Guatemala and Honduras, for example). In part because of young workers moving northward, the destiny of the United States could be north-south, rather than the east-west, sea-to-shining-sea of continental and patriotic myth. (This will be amplified by the scheduled 2014 widening of the Panama Canal, which will open the Greater Caribbean Basin to megaships from East Asia, leading to the further development of

Gulf of Mexico port cities in the United States, from Texas to Florida.)

Since 1940, Mexico's population has increased more than five-fold. Between 1970 and 1995 it nearly doubled. Between 1985 and 2000 it rose by more than a third. Mexico's population is now more than a third that of the United States and growing at a faster rate. And it is northern Mexico that is crucial. That most of the drug-related homicides in this current wave of violence that so much dwarfed Syria's have occurred in only six of Mexico's 32 states, mostly in the north, is a key indicator of how northern Mexico is being distinguished from the rest of the country (though the violence in the city of Veracruz and the regions of Michoacan and Guerrero is also notable). If

the military-led offensive to crush the drug cartels launched by conservative President Felipe Calderon falters, as it seems to be doing, and Mexico City goes back to cutting deals with the cartels, then the capital may in a functional sense lose even further control of the north, with concrete implications for the southwestern United States.

One might argue that with massive border controls, a functional and vibrantly nationalist United States can coexist with a dysfunctional and somewhat chaotic northern Mexico. But that is mainly true in the short run. Looking deeper into the 21st century, as Arnold Toynbee notes in A Study of History (1946), a border between a highly developed society and a less highly developed one will not attain an equilibrium but will advance in the more backward society's favor. Thus, helping to stabilize Mexico as limited as the United States' options may

be, given the complexity and sensitivity of the relationships a more urgent national interest than stabilizing societies in the Greater Middle East. If Mexico ever does reach coherent First World status, then it will become less of a threat, and the healthy melding of the two societies will quicken to the benefit of both.

Today, helping to thwart drug cartels in rugged and remote terrain in the vicinity of the Mexican frontier and reaching southward from Ciudad Juarez (across the border from El Paso, Texas) means a limited role for the U.S. military and other agencies working, of course, in full cooperation with the Mexican authorities. (Predator and Global Hawk drones fly deep over Mexico searching for drug production facilities.) But the legal framework for cooperation with Mexico remains problematic in some cases because of strict interpretation of 19th century posse comitatus laws on the U.S. side. While the United States has spent hundreds of billions of dollars to affect historical outcomes in Eurasia, its leaders and foreign policy mandarins are somewhat passive about what is happening to a country with which the United States shares a long land border, that verges on partial chaos in some of its northern sections, and whose population is close to double that of Iraq and Afghanistan combined.

Mexico, in addition to the obvious challenge of China as a rising great power, will help write the American story in the 21st century. Mexico will partly determine what kind of society America will become, and what exactly will be its demographic and geographic character, especially in the Southwest. The U.S. relationship with China will matter more than any other individual bilateral relationship in terms of determining the United States' place in the world, especially in the economically crucial Pacific. If policymakers in Washington calculate U.S. interests properly regarding those two critical countries, then the United States will have power to spare so that its elites can continue to focus on serious moral questions in places that matter less.

The writer is the Chief Geopolitical Analyst, Stratfor. ©Stratfor. All rights reserved. Reprinted by arrangement.