

Arms races not the answer in today's world

By Dr. Han S. Park

The Cold War era was marked by a runaway arms race - fueled by what President Eisenhower, in his 1961 farewell address, called the military-industrial complex - between the United States and the Soviet Union. That arms race reached a point where the United States is thought to have manufactured more than 10,000 nuclear warheads and countless other forms of sophisticated weapons.

In the process, the military-industrial complex secured massive power and remains virtually omnipotent. With the absence of the Soviet Union in this post-Cold War age, no state is in a position to challenge American military might. One might expect America to police the world to deter further armament. Indeed, if the United States chooses to do so, it has the power and resources to lead a campaign for global nonproliferation. But, tragically, Washington has chosen to promote an active regional arms race by forming "security alliances" and further dividing regions of the world.

The recent efforts by the Bush administration to sell more arms to selected Middle Eastern countries are certain to bring further instability to the region.

The high-profile sales pitch by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Defense Secretary Robert Gates - who proposed lucrative deals with Saudi Arabia and small Persian Gulf states (\$20 billion), Israel (\$30 billion) and Egypt (\$13 billion) over the next 10 years - is an untimely and dangerous policy posture. All come under the pretext of helping those "friendly" countries to counter negative influences from such rogue states and terrorist groups as Iran, Syria, al-Qaida, Hezbollah and Hamas. When one considers the axiom of human behavior in which bonds by values are more salient than bonds by interest calculations, it seems doubtful the Saudi and other Islamic states will continue to turn their backs on Iran and other Islamic entities in the interest of their alliances with the United States.

After all the foreign policy blunders in Iraq, what more is needed for the U.S. administration to realize Middle Eastern tension in general, and the Iraq quagmire in particular, can't be resolved by military means, and that military superiority is not the answer? Is the military-industrial interest so invincible that common sense has no place in the making of foreign policy?

This pattern of failed policy continues with the recent "civil nuclear cooperation agreement" between the United States and India. Pakistan's response was prompt and resolute, as Pakistani President Gen. Pervez Musharraf warned the agreement will "upset the strategic balance in the region" because it "would enable India to produce significant quantities of fissile material and nuclear weapons from un-safeguarded nuclear reactors." As a result, we will witness a renewed arms race between the two nuclear powers. We already have poured some \$10 billion into the Musharraf government since 9/11, in hope of working with him to fight al-Qaida. Are we giving up on collaboration with Pakistan

in fighting terrorism? We should have foreseen this deal with India will only exacerbate the problem of securing Musharraf's cooperation in the war on terror.

And what about North Korea? This is yet another foreign policy failure of the Bush administration, a failure responsible for North Korea becoming a new nuclear state. It's only a matter of time before Japan becomes a formidable - potentially nuclear - military power, with North Korea as scapegoat for the military buildup. This will undoubtedly drag China into a serious arms race with Japan. Taiwan and South Korea also will join yet another spiraling arms race in East Asia.

We're moving toward greater uncertainty and a potentially far more destructive world.

Our policymakers must come to their senses and steer the course of history in a drastically different direction. It should begin with the painful admission we have a shameful record in global nonproliferation of weapons. The United States, along with the United Kingdom, consistently has marketed more weapons than the rest of the world combined. America also must admit the awesome power of military hardware can't win hearts and minds, and that world public opinion matters. We also must come to the realization that peacemaking through dialogue and communication must replace a security architecture solely reliant on military superiority.

We should employ diplomacy. Diplomacy is not for picnicking with friends; it is active engagement in dialogue and negotiation to alleviate differences and disagreements. Our government must be prepared to meet with any of our adversaries at any time. Had we done this, we probably would have had a different situation in Iraq and have aborted North Korean nuclear ambitions.

Although belatedly, we must examine ourselves and practice the art of dealing with diverse peoples with different values and lifestyles. The American way is one of accommodation and peaceful integration through education and socialization.

In the process, we also must be prepared to adapt ourselves to the changing global community and abandon the dogma of Western frontierism and self-righteous religious exclusivism. This is the only way of restoring our rapidly eroding leadership in shaping the global future.

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