

IS A SHOOT-OUT AT THE (ASIAN) OK CORAL ON THE CARDS ?

Flush with the success of his victory over the forces of former President of Iraq Saddam Hussein, the question is being muted, internationally: Will US President George W. Bush, now, seek another target.

President George W. Bush has become somewhat of a hero in certain circles – because he won the war in Iraq in lightening speed with a minimum number of US casualties.

Everybody loves a winner and, in the Arab world, it is said that he who stands close to the scimitar can avoid being cut.

President George W. Bush, being a Texan by birth and by inclination, has a tendency to shoot from the hip, but he will, no doubt, be constrained by his very able entourage, which comprises some of the world's most able subalterns.

To name just 4 of President George W. Bush's closest confidants, all of whom, over the past year or so, have become internationally recognised:

Colin Luther Powell	Secretary of State
John Ashcroft	Attorney General
Donald Rumsfeld	Secretary of Defense
Richard B. Cheney	Vice President

It would appear to TARGET that, if President George W. Bush continues to have a taste for blood, he has 3 prime targets, all of which would appear to fit his criteria as being evil political regimes: North Korea; Syria; and, Iran.

Of these 3 countries, Syria is the most convenient country to Iraq, of course, since it shares a common border with that conquered country (President George W. Bush has labelled the conquest as being a '*liberation of the Iraqi people*' and, during the 21-day war, it was discovered that Syria had been supplying aid to Iraq in the shape of military knick-knacks (however, no weapons have, as yet, been discovered as having been permitted over their common boundary).

Syria would never admit to knowing about this matter, however, recently, it shut tightly its border with Iraq.

TARGET notes that Syria's political party is the Ba'ath Party, an Arab political party whose main ideological objectives are secularism, socialism, and pan-Arab unionism.

This is the same political party that ruled Iraq for the past 24 years, with Saddam Hussein as its President.

The Ba'ath Party was '*born*' in Syria in 1941 and, in the early 1950s, it achieved political power in that Arab country.

In 1958, one of the Founders of the Ba'ath Party, Salah al-Din Bitar, then Syria's Foreign Minister, led Syria into the ill-fated coalition with Egypt, known as the United Arab Republic (UAR).

About 3 years later, in 1961, Syria withdrew from the UAR, claiming that it could not tolerate the domination of Egypt.

The Ba'ath Party has been in power since 1963 and, since that date, it has embarked on a course of fervent nationalisation.

Just last Friday, Syria rejected allegations from the US that (a) it had been offering assistance to Iraq, during the US-led invasion of the country and (b) it had been permitting fleeing Iraqi Government ministers to seek refuge in the country.

The North Korean Threat

The biggest threat to world peace, however, is not Syria, but North Korea, officially known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

This nation of about 120,540 square kilometers and having a population of about 22.22 million people is ruled by the Chief of State, Mr Kim Jong Il, the son of the legendary Founder, Kim Il Sung, who ruled from 1948 to 1994 (he died in July 1994).

Kim Jong Il was born in Watsukoye, Siberia, in the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), as it was known until 1991.

He succeeded his father as Head of State in 1994, thus ushering in the first of the line of the Dynasty of Kim: The Divine Right of Succession to the Presidency of this Stalinist State had been established although, as yet, Kim Jong Il has not been crowned, or has not crowned himself, President for Life, as was the case with his father.

One of the sworn aims of North Korea is *'to eliminate the difference between the rich and poor classes and to secure the blooming and prosperity of the nation ...'*, according to the official statements of the Government of North Korea.

Another of its sworn aims is self-reliance and the production of *'military auto-defence'*, which is not *'controlled by the imperialist nations.'*

The official Government line states, inter alia (TARGET has made certain changes to the poor grammar and spelling of the official North Korean Government statements and has made appropriate corrections in order to make it understandable and readable):

'In the defence area, the Juche Idea means Self-Defence. It is a basic point to warrant the protection of the country, using an invincible military power that will protect the motherland and the revolutionary achievements from the aggressive Yankee imperialism and its servants.'

From the tone of this statement, it would, perhaps, not be incorrect to state that North Korea has little love for the United States of America.

The US Government, through the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), maintains that North Korea has a professional standing army of about one million men.

In this regard, the military potential of this country is known to be much greater, according to TARGET's research.

The (North) Korean People's Army (includes the Army, Navy and Air Force) comprises not less than 6 million males, who are known to be available to take up arms in defence of their country.

The age of this army – which could be mobilised in a matter of months – comprises males of between the ages of 15 years and 49 years.

But the Government of Kim Jong Il maintains that only about 3.62 million of this number of males are *'fit for military service'*, immediately.

However, even 3.62 million males of between the ages of 15 years and 49 years makes the Korean People's Army one of the largest in the world – and it is known that it is well equipped, with very reasonable leaders.

To say that it poses a formidable threat to any would-be, invading force would be to state the obvious.

The North Korean Government spends about 31.30 percent of the Gross Domestic Product on military expenditure, annually, by its own admission.

North Korea is known to have nuclear capability and the means of delivery of weapons of mass destruction.

It, only very recently, test-fired a couple of inter-ballistic missiles, which landed in The Sea of Japan.

That act was, clearly, done as a show of its prowess to the Japanese Government, which, only a fortnight ago, sent 2 satellites into space in order to keep tabs on Pyongyang and its nuclear programme.

Pyongyang, the Capital City of North Korea and the seat of Government, in December 2002, repudiated the 1994 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, following a tiff with the US.

It expelled the United Nations monitors from the country at the same time.

It, then, reactivated its nuclear plant at Yongbyon, a plant, which had been mothballed since 1994.

Last week, in a statement, released by the **Korean Central News Agency (KCNA)** – the official North Korean Government's news agency – a North Korean Foreign Ministry spokesman said that the United Nations Security Council Meeting, which sat last Wednesday to discuss what to do (if anything) about North Korea and its determination to move ahead with its nuclear programme, was a *'provocative act'* and it would be considered a prelude to war.

In any event, North Korea said that it would not recognise the authority of the Security Council.

To Japan, the North Korean Government sent the message, last Thursday, that Tokyo should be *'mindful that it is, also, within the striking range'* of North Korea's missiles.

Regardless of official statements to the contrary, North Korea is a dictatorship; and, its people are known to be extremely poor, many of whom die of starvation, daily – while about \$US5.12 billion are spent, annually, on improving and fine-tuning the military might of the country.

Mr Kim Jong Il has told the US Government and the United Nations that it would not fall into the same ploy as did Iraq, by allowing into the country, UN weapons inspectors, obeying demands for the destruction and/or mothballing of certain plants and missiles ... and, then, have an armed coalition force, led by the US, invade the country.

President George W. Bush has stated, on a number of occasions, that he would not be averse *'to liberating'* North Korea, in the same way that he *'liberated'* Iraq.

To this Texan, liberation and invasion seem to have similar, or the same, meaning.

In the event that it appeared to Kim Jong Il that the US was preparing an invasion of North Korea, in like manner as there was a build-up of troops and materiel in the Persian Gulf, leading up to the attack on Iraq on March 20, 2003, it is more than likely that Pyongyang would strike the first blow.

And it could, easily, be a nuclear strike at Seoul, the Capital City of South Korea (population about 10 million people).

A nuclear war could not be ruled out in the event that push came to shove for Kim Jong Il.

As for the Government of the People's Republic of China (PRC), it is highly unlikely that that Communistic country would intervene, militarily, in such a conflict since the PRC has had a taste of the good life and it would not like to take a retrograde step, economically.

In the 1950-1953 Korean War, the PRC Government assisted North Korea, sending in The Volunteers, a division of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), following North Korea, invading South Korea, across the 38th Parallel.

In that war, the US, aided by 19 other nations, fought North Korea; it was armed with a mandate from the United Nations Security Council.

Many people tend to forget that North Korea could be considered the victor of this 3-year war since it captured Seoul with comparative ease even though the US Government had '*installed*' Syngman Rhee as the '*popular*' President of South Korea.

President Harry S. Truman of the US, during that conflict, sadly misjudged the determination of the North Korean troops and the masses of PLA Volunteers who aided the late President Kim Il Sung.

However, that war was half a century ago and things have changed, considerably, in the PRC and in North Korea, during those 50 years.

For the PRC, it has only recently discovered the joys of capitalism.

In 1950, it was only one year after the Great Leap Forward and the founding of communes in the country, with Chairman Mao Tse Tung (also known as Mao Zedong), being the PRC's first head of state under the new deal as well as being Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party.

It was, at the outbreak of the Korean War, politically expedient for Chairman Mao Tse Tung to have a common enemy in the shape of the United States and, since a war could be fought on another country's soil, there was no threat to the struggling '*new*' authoritarian state.

Further, such a struggle would have the added advantage of being a coalescent force for the country and its 1.30 billion human inhabitants.

But, that was 53 years ago: There would be few advantages for the PRC Government to stand, shoulder-to-shoulder with Kim Jong Il, today – especially when nuclear bombs were being employed.

If the PRC could maintain a neutral stance, during such a war, it would benefit, materially, ultimately, since, no matter which country should win, the PRC would end up being a major supplier in the restoration of the infrastructure of North Korea.

On the other hand, if the PRC backed North Korea in a war with the US/UN, it would, undoubtedly, set back its economic clock, quite considerably.

It is unquestionable that the US would embargo all imports from the PRC, during such a war, if the PRC Government was seen to side with North Korea.

The only exceptions to the above would be if the PRC Government determined that it would be next in line for an invasion by US-led forces; and/or a matter of '*face*' was seen to be involved.

One has to remember that, to the Government of the PRC, '*face*' is more important than money, although, not every member of the National People's Congress (NPC) would agree with such a suggestion, today, especially those NPC members who, over the past decade or so have grown fat and rich on the prosperity of the country.

The most likely scenario of the Government of the PRC, in the event that a war between the US/UN and North Korea appeared to be inevitable, would be to seek to use its good offices to try to reconcile North Korea's difficulties and differences with the US and the UN.

But, in any event, it would not want to be part of any nuclear war because that would spell disaster for both ethnically Chinese countries.

Syria – A Major Centre of Terrorism

Israel maintains that Syria and its President, Bashar Hafiz al-Asad, are enemies of the Jewish State.

Syria does not deny this assertion.

It is well established that Syria has been used as a type of base camp for terrorist organisations, whether or not President al-Asad has intimate knowledge of it.

As with the case of North Korea, the current President of Syria inherited his position by The Divine Right of Succession, following the death of his father, President Hafez al-Assad, who died in 2000 after ruling the police state for 29 years.

There are striking similarities between the governments of North Korea and Syria – and, no doubt, President George W. Bush is well aware of them.

Syria is a country with a human population of about 17 million people. Its land mass is about 185,180 square kilometers.

The country comprises about 74 percent Sunni Muslims and it employs a legal system, based on Islamic Law, primarily.

The leading political parties are the National Progressive Front (NPF), with the Arab Socialist Renaissance (Ba'ath) Party, under the Chairmanship of Bashar Hafiz al-Asad.

If one has any political ambitions in Syria, one is forced to join the Ba'ath Party due to the immense influence this political party has in the government.

The country is struggling, economically, with an unemployment rate, thought to be about 12 percent.

National annual expenditure outstrips national annual revenues by about 10 percent.

Inflation is running between 15 percent per annum and 20 percent per annum.

The country spends about 8 percent of the Gross Domestic Product on its military machine, which numbers about 2 million males.

Syria has been branded by the CIA as being a transshipment point for opiates and hashish, bound for markets in the West.

Aside from the export of illicit drugs to the West, about 70 percent of the country's exports are petroleum products.

According to the Israeli Government, *'terror weapons'* by the Government of Syria are the *'preferred instrument for promoting Syria's strategic goals.'*

Dr Reuven Ehrlich's 2 main conclusions in his study of Syria may be outlined as follows:

1. The late President Hafez al-Assad's Regime '*systematically and continuously used the "terror weapon" throughout his thirty-year regime, ever since his rise to power in 1970. The basic reason for this was the wide gap between the far reaching aspirations of the Ba'ath regime to achieve regional hegemony and a leading role in the Israel-Arab conflict and the objective limitations and weaknesses of Syria from a military, economic and demographic prospective, placing it in a position of regional and international inferiority; and,*
2. '*From their perspective, intensive use of the "terror weapon" enabled the Syrian regime to promote a series of important objectives in the realms of domestic and external policies: guaranteeing the survival and stability of the regime at home; applying pressure on Syria's enemies in the Arab world; promoting the "Syrian order" in Lebanon; "punishment" of Western nations and achievement of political gain from them and above all, applying pressure on Israel in order to further Syria's goals in the Israeli-Arab conflict.*'

During the 1990s, Syria, ironically, became involved in the peace process, subsequent to The Madrid Conference.

Under the auspices of the US, Syria was seen as a sovereign state, broking a peace with its avowed archenemy: Israel.

However, the US has not been blind to the activities of Syria and was not blinded by its seeming intentions to make peace with the Jewish State.

The US State Department, in its report of foreign terrorist organisations, dated October 5, 2001, defined as organisations that posed a threat to the national security of the US, the Syrians, which were said to be providing different levels of sponsorship and support to at least 7 organisations.

The 7 organisations were listed as being:

- Hamas (the Islamic Resistance Movement)
- Hizballah (the Party of God)
- Palestine Islamic Jihad
- Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (G. C. Jibril Faction)
- Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (George Habash Faction)
- Palestine Liberation Front
- Kurdistan Workers' Party

The US State Department has pinpointed training camps, installations and logistical, political and propaganda offices of most of the above-mentioned organisations in Syria.

Further, most of the leaders of these 7 organisations live in Syria where they are afforded protection from the Government of Bashar Hafiz al-Asad.

They make use of Syria to direct operations, internationally.

The US State Department's information indicates that the following persons are receiving Syrian sponsorship and support from Bashar Hafiz al-Asad:

- (a) Dr Ramadan Shalah, Secretary General of the Palestine Islamic Jihad and his deputy Ziad Nakhlah;
- (b) Khaled Mash'al, Head of Hamas political bureau, Musa Abu-Marzuk, his deputy, and Imad al-Alami, Chairman of Hamas Interior Committee;
- (c) Ahmed Jibril, the leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command and Jihad Jibril, his son; and,

- (d) Maher Taher, a spokesman of various organisations in the leadership of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

The Syrian Government is known to permit Hizballah and the various factions of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine to maintain military encampments and, actively, to organise operations into Lebanon from Syria.

On October 10, 2001, the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) published its '*Most Wanted List*' and, on that list was Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, who is one of the leaders of Hizballah, along with his Operations Deputy, Imad Fayeze Mughniyya.

Both of these gentlemen are known to be residing in Lebanon, a country under Syrian patronage.

In view of what transpired on September 11, 2001, it may behoove Syria to have a little rethink in respect of permitting known terrorists to use its soil to launch attacks on the US, Israel, and/or any other Western countries.

President George W. Bush has made it known that the US is at war with international terrorists, with Osama bin Laden, heading the list of known terrorists, being held responsible for the September 11, 2001 murders of Americans at New York and Washington D.C.

The Texan has said, in no uncertain terms, that he wants Osama bin Laden '*dead or alive*'.

The US has gone on record as saying that those political regimes that sponsor terrorists will not escape punishment, no matter how long it takes.

Only last Saturday, it was reported that, in the event that the US considers launching an attack on Syria, it could not expect the support of the Arab world.

While it is likely that the Syrians, as was the case with the Iraqis, will not have the stomach, or the know-how, to fight back a determined, US-led invasion, such a war would tend to be unpopular in the eyes of the UN Security Council.

Great Britain's Prime Minister, Mr Tony Blair, last Thursday, said, in Parliament, that he had no intention to join with the US in an invasion of Syria, or any other Arab country.

That being the case, it would appear that North Korea is the most pressing issue, at this time.

But, unlike the Iraqis, North Korea is likely to pose a formidable enemy of the US or any other country, which determines to invade it.

Further, the North Koreans have nowhere to run and will stand and fight to the death, as they did in the 1950-1953 Korean War.

Such a war would, most likely, last a very long time and would be labelled:

World War III

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