The "Greater Middle East" as Security Complex

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I. Introduction

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, it was fashionable to discuss new regional concepts, such as a "greater Middle East" and a "mega-Middle East," in order to describe the three regions, namely the Middle East, Central Asia and the Caucasus, as one regional unit. And it was anticipated that inter-regional activities and cooperation would be significantly expanded. These arguments, of course, were based on the historical, religious and cultural relations between the Middle East, Central Asia and the Caucasus. In fact for the last decade inter-regional activities and interdependencies between the regions and among some individual states have increased.

The terror attacks in the United State on the September 11th of 2001 and the war in Afghanistan have brought about new regional configurations, and a new regional security environment has slowly appeared, which covers all the three regions. For instance the war and political process in Afghanistan are and will be strongly connected to political and security issues in the regions as a whole. The deployment of American forces in Central
Asia apparently links to the American military presence in the Gulf and the Indian Ocean.

In this context a new challenge for us is how to analyze new security-related developments in the “Greater Middle East” both theoretically and empirically. In order to achieve this objective, many questions should be addressed. For instance, the extent of the “Greater Middle East” is so vast, and involves so many different states. These states vary from each other in many aspects. Furthermore, security concerns of each states and actors are again highly diversified. Boundaries of the “Greater Middle East” cannot be taken for granted. The recent crisis between India and Pakistan requires us second thoughts over whether the South Asia can be totally separated from the “Greater Middle East.” Above all, it should be examined whether it is appropriate to treat the “Greater Middle East” as one meaningful geographic unit from a viewpoint of security studies.

In order to address these questions and issues, this paper is to experimentally apply the concept of security complex presented by Barry Buzan to the “Greater Middle East.” In the following first session I will examine conceptual aspects of region and security. The concept of security complex will be also briefly explained. In the second part of this paper I will try to describe interactions which are crossing boundaries of the Middle East, Central Asia and the Caucasus.

The term “Greater Middle East” might imply that since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Middle East has “expanded” itself toward and has exerted its influence on the other two regions. As Philip Robins noted, the direction of “expansion” and influence has not always been one-way from the Middle East to the other two regions. In this sense the term “Greater Middle East” might give a misleading implication. Some scholars apply the term “Central Eurasia”, but it would be difficult to include in “Central Eurasia” the Eastern Mediterranean region and the North Africa, which are essential parts of the Middle East. Therefore, in this paper I use the term “Greater Middle East” with some reservations.

II. Region and Security

1. New Approaches to Security Issues in the Third World

Because the concept of national security has been developed in Europe and America, it is highly state-oriented and based on the assumption that threats to national security of a certain state come from outside its borders. In addition to that, during the Cold War era, it was emphasized that the international system was a dominant factor in determining natures of national security of any state. In other words, it was perceived that the two superpowers had an influence strong enough to shape even regional security
dynamics.

These arguments, however, fail to address to two important factors of security issues facing the Third World. The first is the internal dimension of "national security," and the second the regional dimension. In order to try to address these two dimensions, new approaches have been presented by a number of scholars.\textsuperscript{(2)}

One of the features of these approaches is to argue that threats to national security in the Third World do not necessarily arise from outside of borders of a given state, and that internal insecurity is a significant element to characterize national and state security. According to Barry Buzan, the degree of socio-political cohesion of a state in the Third World is low because various societal sectors are not integrated, and as a result, a state itself cannot win legitimacy among its people and state institutions have very weak bases.\textsuperscript{(3)} Mohammed Ayoob made the almost same argument from a slightly different point of view. Ayoob observed that internal dimension in the Third World state's security is salient because of the luck of adequate "stateness." The adequate stateness is defined as "a balanced combination of the coercive capacity and infrastructure power of the state with a high degree of identification on the part of the citizenry with the idea of the particular state that encompasses them territorially."\textsuperscript{(4)}

Another feature of this school of arguments is that internal and external dimensions are undistinguishable and interweaving each other as for the Third World state's security. As Korany and others augured, in the Third World internal and international politics are interconnected and overlapping rather than separated and therefore domestic events are easily internationalized.\textsuperscript{(5)} Azar and others categorized Third World conflicts as "protracted social conflicts" by emphasizing "protracted social conflicts tend to be mixture of both ethnic and inter-state conflicts."\textsuperscript{(6)} This observation again stresses that border of Third World states are so permeable that various elements can easily cross borders both from inside and outside.

When we take into account these two features mentioned above, a four-layered framework could be useful in order to address the Third World state's security: 1) internal level, 2) state level (unit level), 3) regional level (subsystem level), and 4) international level (system level). As already discussed, the first three levels, namely internal, state and regional, are heavily interconnected and interwoven each other.

2. Security Complex

Then how we can connect "region" and "security"? Raimo Vayrynen stated that a regional subsystem is characterized by a certain distinctiveness and proximity, not only in the geographical, but also in the economic and political sense.\textsuperscript{(7)} Based upon these argu-
ments, Mahammed Ayoob identified geographical proximity and intensity of interaction as the core variables that define a region. He added that in the case of the Third World the intensity of conflict might be a better yardstick than that of cooperation to judge whether a group of states comprises a region.⑧

When we try to combine “region” and “security”, Barry Buzan’s concept of “security complex” offers a useful analytical tool. According to Buzan, the principal element that must be added to the balance-of-power view in order to define regional security is “the pattern of amity and enmity.” Amity means “relationships ranging from genuine friendship to expectations of protection or support”, while enmity means “relationships set by suspicion and fear.” By adding the dimension of amity/enmity to the picture, Buzan maintained “one gets a clearer sense of the relational pattern and character of insecurity than that provided by the raw abstraction of the balance-of-power view.”⑨ Buzan then defined a security complex as “a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another,” and described that security complexes emphasize the interdependence of rivalry as well as that of shared interests.⑩

Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde later made a further attempt to “move beyond classical security complex theory.” According to them, the theory of classical security complex was still state-oriented because its referent objects and the units of analysis were states. Therefore they proposed to incorporate various sectors, such as societal and environmental ones.⑪ By broadening the terms of reference, the concept of security complex may be more applicable when we discuss the “Greater Middle East” because relational pattern and character of security and insecurity are determined by not only states but also non-state actors, such as religio-ethnic groups, separatists forces and transnational organizations. In addition, non-conventional threats, such as drag trafficking, environmental problems, water shortage and organized crime, are now on the agenda for national and regional security in Central Asia and the Caucasus.⑫

3. Security Complex and the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Caucasus

When he argued the classical security complex concept, Buzan examined its applicability to the Middle East, and divided the Middle East into three main subcomplexes: 1) the Gulf, with Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia as the principals; 2) the Horn of Africa, with Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia as the principals; 3) the Eastern Mediterranean, with Israel, Syria and Egypt as the principals.⑬ While each subcomplex has its own dynamics and distinctiveness, Buzan observed that the Middle East forms one single security complex, because “there is enough crossing of boundaries within the Middle Eastern complex to
justify identifying the larger formation as a larger regional unit.” In fact, the enmity between Israel and Iran has deeply characterized the security environment in the Middle East for the last decade and more, and any development relating to the Palestinian question affects domestic politics not only in the Arab states, but also in the non-Arab states in the Middle East.

Based upon Buzan’s concept, Hooman Peimani argued that Central Asia forms a security complex because “political, societal, economic, and military/security factors have created a situation in which the national security of every Central Asian state is inseparable from that of other central Asian states; no states can be stable so long as others face instability.”(14) As for the Caucasus, Roy Allison stated that it may be viewed as a security complex “in the sense that conflict in one part of this region, whether the northern Caucasian republics or the southern Caucasian states, can easily spill over or provoke conflict in another part of the region because of ethnic or cultural linkages.”(15) When Lena Jonson and Roy Allison discussed applicability of security complex to Central Asia, they proposed to modify the terms “amity” and “enmity” to “friendship” and “suspicion,” because “amity” and “enmity” are too stark for the Central Asia context and “no single unambiguous one-dimensional pattern of dividing lines exists so far”.(16) Alexander Rondeli observed that there are at least “three smaller security complexes” in the post-Soviet space, namely Western (East Europe), Caucasus, and Central Asia.(17) What Rondeli called as “smaller security complex” can be seen equivalent to security subcomplex as Buzan presented.

III. The Greater Middle East as a Security Complex

As discussed in the previous section, many attempts have been already made to apply the concept of security complex to the Middle East, Central Asia and the Caucasus individually. But so far few attempts have been made to apply it to the “Greater Middle East” as a single complex, based on the assumption that the Greater Middle East is comprised of the three subcomplexes, the Middle East, Central Asia and the Caucasus. For this purpose, I will briefly examine interactions crossing boundaries of the three regions at two levels: regional actors with some emphasis on Turkey, Iran and Israel; and major outside actors, namely the United States, Russia and China.

1. Intra-regional Aspects in the Greater Middle East

Since the early 1990s numerous interactions crossing boundaries of the three
regions have been witnessed, and regional actors have expanded relations with each other in various forms. Among them, Turkey and Iran have been the most active regional actors. The open-up of the new fronts even created a sort of euphoria in both countries. For instance, it was reported that in early 1992 Mehdi Karrubi, the Speaker of the Iranian Parliament, declared that “for the first time since centuries, the Caspian Sea is once again an Islamic mare notrum”. (18)

The euphoria at the first stage quickly faded away when it encountered the new reality, such as shortage of fund and lack of technology on the part of Turkey and Iran. But the two nations have been heavily involved in the regional conflicts. For instance, Turkey has been one of the significant actors of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict, with amity relations with Azerbaijan and to a less extent with Georgia, and with enmity ones with Armenia. Turkey’s relations with the Central Asian republics have been less developed than those with the Caucasian ones. But since 1995 the summit of the presidents of the Turkish republics has been held every year, and not only economic cooperation but also issues of terror, drug trafficking and religious extremism have been discussed. Economic and trade relations between Turkey and the Central Asian states have also expanded very rapidly for the last five years. (19)

The existence of the NATO air base and its strong relations with the United States has given Turkey an additional significance in the regional strategic and military arena. Turkey also has assumed the command of the international peacekeeping force in Kabul, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), since June 2002. In addition, Turkey has expanded its strategic and military relations with Israel, despite the fact that its fellow Islamic states have strongly criticized the expansion of its relations with Israel. These new developments and changes in the regions have apparently led Turkey to new security considerations. For instance, Umat Arik argued that because of its fundamental and central place in Eurasia Turkey has to monitor closely regional developments for the sake of its national security. (20)

The breaking ground for the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline in the middle of September 2002 is also significant for the whole regions from a viewpoint of security complex, since the pipeline would link more closely the three subcomplexes, namely Central Asia, the Caucus and the Eastern Mediterranean region. Once the pipeline is under service, Turkey’s relations with the Central Asian republics, particularly with Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, should be more interactive.

The emergence of the newly independent republics in the former Soviet South have provided Iran with a unique opportunity to recover from its isolation in the international arena. (21) For the last decade Iran has always been a focal point in the context of so-called
pipeline-politics because of its geo-strategic location in the corridor, which connects the Caspian Sea and the Indian Ocean. At the same time Iran has been perceived as a source of threat by its neighboring states. The Central Asian republics and Azerbaijan are strongly concerned about Iran's religious influence on their internal affairs, particularly on Islamic radicalism. The member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council and Turkey have kept their cautious attitudes toward Iran for the last two decades. Israel and Iran have escalated their enmity relations against each other particularly since the early 1990s.

At the same time, however, Iran cannot be ignored because of its status as a regional power and its geographic location. In fact even before the September 11th Iran had been involved in the Afghan affairs as a member state of the so-called “6+2” with other five states adjacent to Afghanistan along with the U.S.A. and Russia. And new developments in Afghanistan after the September 11th have added further importance to Iran's position in the region.

Iran has strategic and military relations with Russia. In 2001, they signed an agreement under which Iran would buy up to $7bn worth of conventional weapons, such as fighter aircraft and air-defense, systems for the first time since 1979. Russia has also provided Iran with nuclear technology, which has been a very controversial issue for a long time between Russia and the United States. For instance, in advance of his official visit to Moscow in May 2002, George Bush issued a warning to urge Vladimir Putin to cease Russia's nuclear assistance to Iran.

Although it is located far away from Central Asia and the Caucasus, Israel has expanded wide relations with the new republics in the Former Soviet South partly due to many immigrants from these states. In addition, Israel has provided these states with agricultural technologies and equipment, particularly relating to irrigation and arid agriculture. For Israel it is very meaningful and important to promote and expand its relations with these new republics, particularly with the Muslim republics, because Israel has been seeking for formal recognition by Muslim states.

Israel is expected by the Central Asia and Caucasian republics to be a gateway to Washington. This expectation is based on the perception that Israel has a very strong influence over American foreign policies. It is true that Israel has strong leverages in Washington in the area of forming Middle East policies, but its influence is always highly overestimated. In fact one Israeli diplomat said that Israel is very cautious not to be drowned into any conflicts and enmities because, if it takes side with one or another, a room for Israel's own maneuvers in Washington might be restricted and undermined. The fact that the United State has graded up its relations with these republics after the terror attacks on September 11th may reduce their high expectations toward Israel. In this sense
roles which could be played by Israel in Central Asia and the Caucasus are limited to a certain extent. Even so, still Israel is perceived as a regional major actor which can exert its influence in regional politics and security issues. For instance, an official of the Azerbaijani Ministry of Foreign Affairs asserted that its relations with Israel had a strategic meaning because of Azerbaijan’s geopolitical location. In this context, Bülent Aras argued that the Central Asian states had tried to expand their relation with Israel “to set a barrier against the expansion of Arab and Iranian influence in the new republics.”

2. CICA Summit

Reflecting changes and new developments in security environment, various attempts to set up regional forums and organizations have been made. One of the results of these attempts was the first summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), which was held in Almaty in June 2002. With Kazakhstani President Nursultan Nazarbayev as a host, heads of the seven states, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Pakistan, Russia, China and India, participated in the summit together with representatives of Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Mongolia, Iran, Turkey, Israel, and Palestine. The list of the participating states indicates that the security complex of the “Greater Middle East” has appeared in the reality. The origin of CICA goes back to 1992, when President Nazarbayev called for an establishment of a regional confidence building forum modeled on the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In September 1999 the CICA ministerial meeting was held and it adopted the Declaration on Principles Guiding Relations.

The summit produced the Almaty Act, which defines the main objective of CICA as “to enhance co-operation through elaborating multilateral approaches towards promoting peace, security and stability in Asia.” It also lists up the following issues as “challenges to security”; peaceful settlement of existing and prevention of the emergence of new crisis situations and dispute, the continuing existence and proliferation in all its aspects of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), including nuclear weapons, the necessity to curb excessive and destabilizing accumulation of conventional armaments, terrorism in all its forms. The Act particularly refers to their rejection against “the use of religion as pretext by terrorists and separatist movements” and “all forms of extremism.” The summit also adopted the documents “CICA Declaration on Eliminating Terrorism and Promoting Dialogue among Civilizations.”

As Gareth Winrow observed, CICA is unlikely to effectively deal with regional security issues because of the size of its membership and the wide range of topics it tries to address. In fact, representatives of Israel and Palestine severely accused each other of
the deterioration in the Middle East peace process at the summit meeting. The summit
was also almost hijacked by the crisis between India and Pakistan. But these facts them-
selves indicate that the scope of the CICA includes various security issues in the whole
area of the "Greater Middle East" plus the Indian Subcontinent.

3. Relations with Major Outside Actors

The United States started expanding its relations with Central Asia and the Caucasus
in the middle of the 1990s. Its interests in the regions have been primarily based on oil in
the Caspian Sea region. Strobe Talbott, then Deputy Secretary of the State, declared in
July 1997, "It would matter profoundly to the United States if that were to happen in an
area that sits on as much as 200 billion barrels of oil. That is yet another reason why con-
flict-resolution must be Job One for U.S. policy in the region."(31) Although estimations of
volume of oil reserve in the Caspian Sea region widely vary, U.S. officials view the region
as an alternative or backup to the Middle East.(31) In fact diversification of energy
resources is a highly placed policy objective of the Bush Administration. For instance
Bush stated in May 2001, "overdependence on any one source of energy, especially a for-
eign source, leaves us vulnerable to price shocks, supply interruptions, and in the worst
case, blackmail."(32) Along this policy line the United States has developed various types of
security relations with the regional states. Even so, the United States could not establish
any military presence in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

The September 11th terror attacks, however, have drastically changed the land-
scape. Now the United States keeps its military presence in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and
Tajikistan for the war in Afghanistan. This presence has been explained by the United
States as "temporally," but the definition of the term "temporally" is not clear. In February
2002 Colin Powell, Secretary of State, expressed America's intention to maintain its pre-

cence before the House International Relations Committee by saying, "America will have a
continuing interest and presence in Central Asia of a kind that we could not have dreamed
of before."(34) In addition to that, a small military adviser group has been stationed in
Georgia as part of the "war on terrorism."

The Gulf War in 1991 provided the United States with a unique and long-waited
opportunity to deploy its forces in the Gulf, which had been sought for during the 1980s
but not been realized because of strong reluctance on the side of Saudi Arabia and other
Arab Gulf states. Gregory Gause described the significant change in the security environ-
ment caused by the U.S. military presence after the Gulf War as "from 'Over the Horizon'
to 'Into the Backyard.'"(35) Now another horizon has opened up for the United States.

The Russian government strongly opposed the U.S. military presence even after the
September 11th. Within a week of the terror attacks, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov ruled out even a “hypothetical” use of military bases in Central Asia to support the U.S. campaign. But under Putin's strong leadership, Russia has been very cooperative toward the U.S.

The new strategic relations between the United States and Russia in respect to Central Asia and the Caucasus were clearly manifested in the joint statement announced on May 24, 2002, by Bush and Putin when Bush visited Moscow. The statement declares “In Central Asia and the South Caucasus, we recognize our common interest in promoting the stability, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of all the nations in this region.” Interestingly enough, both leaders also agreed to promote further cooperation in energy sector both in Russia and the Caspian region in the form of “Energy Dialogue.” The two presidents also declared that the long-term stability in Central Asia serves the strategic interests of both states in the “Joint Statement on Counterterrorism Cooperation.”

One observer commented that Putin's cooperative attitude toward the United States might “open the door to a major American role in shaping the future of the once Soviet-ruled countries.” But his attitude has not been necessarily supported in the Russian domestic political arena. It has been reported that many Russian politicians and some in the military have raised concerns over expansion of American military and political influence into the former Soviet republics. When construction works of the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline started, Igor Ivanov, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said, “we are ready for cooperation but will not put up with the attempts to crowd Russian out of regions in which we have historic interests.”

As for China I briefly point out two aspects regarding its relations with the “Greater Middle East.” Firstly China is the world's third largest oil consuming country, behind the United States and Japan. It became a net oil importer in 1994, since then the volume of oil import has increased. China will heavily depend on oil from the Middle East as Japan currently does. In fact China has expanded its relations with the Middle East states for the last ten years, particularly with Iran, Saudi Arabia and other oil producing countries.

Secondly a number of ethnic minorities live on both sides of China and Central Asia, and this fact causes a security concern in China. The Chinese Government has particularly been cautious against separatist movements by Uighurs in Xinjiang, alleging that more than a thousand Xinjiang separatists have received terrorist training in Afghanistan. Just after the September 11th, the Chinese government has expanded its own “war on terrorism” there by claiming that Beijing has conducted the same war against international terrorism as Washington has.

At the same time, however, it is little doubt that China has a strong security con-
cern over the American military presence in Central Asia and new strategic relations between the United States and the former Soviet South republics. In fact China initially urged the United States to conduct its antiterrorism military operations through the United Nations. Its concern is understandable because Central Asia constitutes China's strategic backyard just as for Russia, and China may have a feeling that it is now encircled by the U.S. military presence.\(^{(41)}\)

**IV. Conclusion**

As I have discusses, there have been relations and interactions which cross boundaries of the Middle East, Central Asia and the Caucasus in the field of security affairs. Therefore, we can conclude that to a certain degree there exists a security complex, which can be called the "Greater Middle East." This broad security complex is comprised of some security subcomplexes. Each of them has its own distinctiveness and autonomous dynamics, but at the same time each is connected to others.

From Buzan's viewpoint, the Middle East security complex can be divided into three subcomplexes. From a different point of view, Kenneth Weisbrode proposed the term "Central Eurasia" instead of the South Caucasus and Central Asia because of the following two reasons.\(^{(42)}\) 1) The emphasis of the old Soviet borders excludes Afghanistan, northern Iran, the northern Caucasus, northwestern China, Kashmir and the Tibetan plateau, all of which have historic, ethnic and cultural ties to Central Eurasia. 2) The separation of the Caucasus from Central Asia would underestimate the economic and political links between the two territories. If we take into consideration Weisbrode's argument, another set of subcomplexes should be examined. In any case, the "Greater Middle East" consists of some subcomplexes, which are multi-layered and sometimes overlapped. And the "Greater Middle East" itself overlaps with its adjacent security complexes.

The trend to increase and expand interactions crossing subregional boundaries has been accelerated by the September 11th terror attacks and the following political and military developments in Afghanistan and the region. As a result, we have witnessed a new wave of efforts to promote new regional security cooperation and arrangements. CICA is a most remarkable example as already examined. In addition, there have been efforts to give a new breath to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Collective Security Treaty of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CST-CIS). It is not clear which direction SCO will take in the future, but China has put an expectation on its future as a counterweight to growing U.S. influence in Central Asia. As for CST-CIS, it is reported that it
has now "struggle to redefine its purpose and relevance in a world terrorism rather than cold-war geopolitics defines security threats."(43)

Still, however, the problem remains that no effective regional security system has yet been invented. In the region the five states have already armed themselves with nuclear weapons, namely Russia, China, India, Pakistan, and Israel, which has not officially recognized its possession of nuclear arms. And there are some potential followers. Buzan argued that security complexes could be used to evaluate policy proposals because they provide a useful framework within which to consider policy issues.(44) To see the three regions as one single security complex with a multi-layered structure could be an effective framework when one tries to invent a possible regional security system which covers the "Greater Middle East."

Notes
(3) For details of the concept of socio-political cohesion, see Buzan, op.cit., pp.96-107.
(9) Buzan, op.cit., pp.189-190.
(10) ibid., p.190.
(11) Buzan and others, op.cit., pp.15-17.
(12) For this discussion, see Nancy Lubin, "New Threats in Central Asia and the Caucasus: An Old story with new Twist," and Irina D. Zviagelskaia and Vitali V. Naumkin, "Non-Traditional Threats, Challenges, and Risks in the Former Soviet South," Rajan Memon and others (eds.),

13 Buzan, op.cit., p.199. In addition to the three main subcomplexes, Buzan wrote that the Maghreb among Algeria, Morocco and Libya forms a vaguer node of rivalry.

14 Hooman Peiman, Regional Security and the Future of Central Asia: the Competition of Iran, Turkey, and Russia (Westport; Praeger, 1998), p.129.


19 See Oner Kabasakal, “The Economic and Trade Relations of Turkey with the Turkish Republics,” Eurasian Studies, Special Issue, Summer 2001, pp.37-59.


24 Israel has been recognized by about 160 states. Of them 24 are the member states of Organization of the Islamic Conference which has 56 member states.


26 My interview in Baku in August 1998.


29 The full text of an English version of the Almaty Act may be found in http://missions.itu.int/ -kazaks/eng/cica/cica05.htm.


31 Address at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, July 1, 1997.


Antonenko, op. cit., p.53.


Buzan, op. cit., p.225.

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