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NEW WORLD ORDER, NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT AND INDIA

By P.S. JAYARAMU

I

IN a way, the quest for a new world order is as old as the nation-state itself, if not the very origin of the humankind. For the purposes of this paper however, the starting point for understanding and analysis is the concept of a new world order articulated by the American President George Bush in the wake of the Gulf crisis created by the unjust and unacceptable, Iraqi aggression of Kuwait on August 2, 1990, ordered by the Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. Needless to say, that was a time when the former Soviet Union engulfed as it was in domestic problems decided under its leader Mikhail Gorbachev to support fully the United States in its efforts to find a solution to the Gulf crisis. The rest of the western international community too had identified itself with the American strategy for managing the Gulf crisis. The overall international situation, coupled with the reality of America's military-strategic dominance of the world, emboldened George Bush to enunciate his concept of a New World Order. Describing Saddam Hussein as the modern day Hitler, whose overthrow was necessary, George Bush told the joint session of the U.S. Congress on September 14, 1990:

Out of these troubled times our objective — a new world order can emerge a new era free from threat of terror, stronger in the pursuit of justice and more secure in the quest for peace. An era in which the nations of the world, East and West, North and South, can prosper and live in harmony.¹

Bush also emphasised the need for continuing American leadership to prevent global instability and pave the way for a worldwide movement for Democracy.² The unipolar world, which according to the American leadership and sections of the academic-media complex, had emerged as a result of the American victory in the Cold War following the decline of the Soviet Union as a Super

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Power had added all the more to the American responsibility to help structure the new world order. As one strong advocate of unipolarity put it:

The most striking feature of the post cold war world in its Unipolarity ... Now is the Unipolar moment. The alternative to Unipolarity is chaos.³

The above characterisation of the nature of the international system has been quite controversial. There have been, and quite justifiable, two major criticisms of George Bush's concept of New World order and the Unipolar nature of the international system that has been advocated. Firstly, it is held by of the American and Third World scholars that the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War thereof, has led the American leadership to scramble for alternative rationales for U.S. interventionism in the Post-Cold War world and the same has been advanced by articulating the need for American role and leadership in ensuring 'stability' and a world wide 'movement for Democracy', in short a new world order.⁴

The American Administration's Commitment to stability as well as its respect for national sovereignty (the need for restoring the sovereignty of Kuwait and establishing stability in the Gulf region was emphasised by the US Administration as a demonstration of the Commitment) the critics argue is somewhat selective as Washington displayed little reluctance about interfering in the internal affairs of Panama and overthrowing the Government there in December 1989 when that step served other US objectives. The critics further argue that in the name of helping Gorbachev to bring about Democracy in the Soviet Union the US Administration often helped materially and otherwise the secessionist elements/movements in the former Soviet Union. The main aim of the US Administration, the critics say, was/is to help in the evolution of the US as the hegemonic power.⁵

More substantiative criticisms/disagreement relate however to the so-called Unipolar character of the international system. Although there is no disagreement about the collapse of the Soviet Union as a Super Power (the successor Russia is in no way capable of replacing the former Soviet Union's power and position in the comity of nations) International Relations scholars the world over have expressed strong reservations about the emergence of the

Unipolar world. The arguments advanced by them centre round two important propositions. Firstly military power is not any longer the sole criterion of determining the power position of a nation, more so a Super Power.⁶ As part of this proposition it is stated that the collapse of the Soviet Union need not necessarily lead to a position of US military overlordship of the world. One leading scholar feels in the Post Cold War world, the world will be multipolar from a structural point of view, but the poles will have different currencies of power—economic and financial (Japan and Germany), demographic (China and India), military (United States),—the fate of the world depending on how the different poles cooperate with one another.⁷

The second proposition is that in our understanding of the character of the international system, considerable importance has to be given to the role of the developing Third World States who provide the resources as well as the markets to the industrially and militarily advanced nations leading to a considerable dependence of the latter as the former then necessitating us to consider them as important constituents of the international system. Simply put, the interdependent character of the world is a compelling factor in recognising the multipolar character of the international system. The inevitability of the multipolar system and the need for the system being responsive to the needs and aspirations of the Third World nations who are ever since the 1950's fighting for a new international order based on equity, development and social justice in an otherwise neo-colonialist world system has been in recent times brought out emphatically by India and China. During his December 1991 visit to India, the Chinese Prime Minister more than once made it clear to his Indian hosts that the new world order which the world (and specially US President George Bush) has been talking of, in order to have global legitimacy should be based and built on the five principles of Peaceful Coexistence (Panchasheel) which characterised the Sino-Indian relations of the fifties.⁸ It is heartening to note that the Chinese Premier even went to the extent of saying that Panchasheel should be the basis on which the United States should fashion its relations with the outside world, specially the countries of the South.⁹

The above discussion has thus placed in proper perspective the debate on the nature of the international system and the type of a world order to be built in the years to come. The historic and unbelievable changes in the global political scene notwithstanding,

the international system has remained essentially multipolar thus exposing the illusory character of the American belief and advocacy of the Unipower World. More than anything else it has emphasised the need for bringing about a harmony of the Third world and developed world's goals and value systems in the remaining years of the 20th century and beyond.

II

It is not an exaggeration to say that the western, specially North American understanding of the origins and objectives of the Nonaligned Movement have been extremely biased and limited. Most of the western scholars who have written about the Nonaligned movement have seen the movement's origin and even its *raison-d'être* in terms of the Cold War¹⁰ and are arguing that now that the Cold War has ended, Nonalignment also has lost its relevance.¹¹

It is extremely important that such misperceptions and misinterpretations of the origin and objectives of the Nonaligned Movement are laid to rest and efforts are made at an objective understanding of the issue. While it is no doubt true that the Cold War constituted one of the strong external variables/inputs for the emergence of the policy of Nonalignment, the most conspicuous factors which led to the birth of Nonalignment were the national and international objectives of the former colonies of Asia and Africa. These countries who had suffered under one imperial power or the other had therefore put themselves on the forefront of the anti-imperialist and anti-colonial struggle. Put positively, they had given to themselves the objective of establishing a new international order based on freedom, equality, social justice, racial harmony and democratic path of development.¹² Although many of them were impressed by the socialist experiment in the then U.S.S.R., they were not prepared to accept the regimentation that was associated with the Communist system. Thus, it was only natural that they thought it imperative to stay out of the Cold War blocs and pursue an independent foreign policy of judging every issue in the light of their own national interests and value systems. This was possible only with the policy of Nonalignment and hence their choice of the same. Since most of them realised the need for grouping themselves into a single entity to resist the pressures of the Cold warriors, they constituted themselves into a movement

which came to be thenceforth called the Nonaligned Movement. The movement also felt the need for regular/periodic meetings at the Foreign Ministers level annually and at the level of Heads of States and Government once in three yearly to accomplish their objectives as well as express their solidarity vis-a-vis the designs of the Super Powers.

Viewed from the above perspective, it becomes clear that the demise of Cold War has not necessarily meant the end of Non-alignment. Many of the objectives like opposition to hegemonist politics, neo-colonialism, and the dominance of the major powers in the United Nations are still very much on the agenda of the Nonaligned nations pointing clearly to the continuing validity of Nonalignment and the Nonaligned Movement.¹³ The Nonaligned Summit meeting of 1989 and the Foreign Minister meeting of 1991 have shown enthusiasm and interest among many of the European nations to participate in the Nonaligned Summit Confernces as Guests and Observers.¹⁴

At a time when the North-South dialogue is virtually dead, thanks to the highly non-cooperative attitude of the United States government, the Nonaligned Movement has an extremely important and delicate task to perform. India and the other leading members of the NAM which are wedded to democracy and human right should be able to take advantage of the improvements in their bilateral relations with the United States, to persuade the U.S. government to agree for a reopening of the North-South dialogue. The G-15 which has emerged as the nodal agency of the Nonaligned nations should be able to foster not only greater South-South-Cooperation, but also act as a link between the developing Third World countries and the industrialised nations. It is no doubt an uphill task, but certainly not an impossible one.

The Nonaligned nations should also be able to work with the permanent members of the Security Council and evolve a consensus regarding the restructuring of the UN Security Council. There is already a growing realisation on the part of the permanent members to provide representation to the Third World in the inner circle of decision-making. The Nonaligned should be able to make them agree for providing the permanent membership status to the country occupying the Chairmanship of the NAM.

The NAM should also be able to deal independently with the European Economic Community (EEC) nations in the field of trade and commerce. There strategy should be to loosen the hold of

the United States over the members of the movement thereby ensure the gradual, yet steady democratisation of the international system.

III

As far as India is concerned it needs to be reiterated that the choice of Nonalignment as the foreign policy strategy was not because of Cold War, but for a variety of other domestic and international objectives, like restructuring international relations based on democracy, human rights, equity, justice, disarmament, and opposition to imperialism and neo-colonialism. Since some of the above mentioned objectives are still very much on the agenda of world politics, for India Nonalignment is relevant for the 1990's and perhaps beyond. But having said that, it must also be noted that the dawn of the Post Cold War era following the disintegration of the Soviet Union has posed vital new challenges to our decision-makers. Going by the way the foreign policy has been conducted in recent months one feels that our leadership has succeeded in bringing about the necessary reorientations and adjustments in the conduct of our foreign policy.

To take up first the question of the official Indian responses to the changes in the former Soviet Union and the management of India's national interests in the new set-up i.e., the Commonwealth of Independent States, we need to be truly objective. Though the Government had in a way mishandled the situation specially in the wake of the failed coup in August 1991, it was quick to overcome its diplomatic mistakes by fine tuning its policy to the new power (and personality) realities in the former Soviet Union.

That the government was able to get over the so called sentimentality vis-a-vis its relations with the Central authority and Gorbachev is seen by its realisation of the need for not only recognising Boris Yelstin, but also the new Commonwealth.

Earlier to that, the leadership also took the right step of recognising more importantly the need for recognising the new power realities.

The Memoranda of understanding on Trade and Supplies of Defence and Power generation equipment has allowed for flexibility to meet changes in the two countries' economies. Though issues like the continuity or otherwise of the rupee-rouble trade do not seem to have been resolved, the visit and the Memoranda of

Understanding signifies that at the official level, efforts are being made to work out arrangements which would be to the advantage of both the parties. The post cold war and the post Soviet Union developments have led to a definite change in the American attitude and policy towards India. They are no longer looking at India as they did during the four decades of cold war. Pakistan has clearly outlived its strategic utility to the United States. The recent American statement that Pakistan has nuclear weapons at its disposal suggests to the possible deterioration of US-Pakistan relations. Our leadership should be able to introduce a strong politico-strategic context to Indo-US relations with the objective of not only strengthening the bilateral relations but also more specifically of using the American connection against any possible security threats from Pakistan.

The biggest challenge to Indian foreign policy lies in how successfully India's leadership's reconciles the real politik oriented management of its national interests with the value-oriented goals of Nonalignment.

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