

# Another global arms race?

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THE end of the World War II saw the world divided between two power blocks: the West led by the US and its NATO allies representing elected democracies, and the East led by the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact countries representing Marxist-Socialist states. Although the Soviet Union and the West fought together against the Axis powers, they fell apart soon after the War on ideological issues that translated into a global struggle for power and influence. The so-called "Cold War" started; its beginning marked somewhat by Winston Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech on 5 March 1946 in a small college in Fulton, Missouri, USA, where he said, "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent."

The Cold war saw the NATO and Warsaw Pact armed forces facing each other eye to eye with nuclear weapons capable of destroying human civilization many times over. Because both sides had the capability to destroy each other in case of a nuclear showdown, it was argued that common sense would prevail and that the "balance of terror" would ensure no military conflict on a global scale. The global peace was based on "Mutually Assured Destruction", aptly acronymed "MAD". This however, did not prevent localised conflicts such as in Korea (1950-53), Vietnam (1959-75), Mid-east (1948 till to date) and many smaller ones across the globe. The arms race continued to gather speed until 1990 with both sides fielding newer and more sophisticated weapon systems conventional as well as nuclear. This had taken heavy tolls on the national economies, particularly of the Soviet Union. By the time of the Regan-era military build-up in the 1990s, the US with its robust economy far outspent the Soviets. Although the US defence

expenditure during this period did not exceed 7% of its GDP, the Soviets spent a staggering 25% and yet could not match the US arsenal. The Soviet economy as well as the society could not bear such heavy burden for long and soon came tumbling down. The tearing down of the Berlin Wall in 1990, the collapse of the socialist system, and soon thereafter, the break up of the Soviet Union marked the end of the "Cold War." The end of the Cold War saw the emergence of a unipolar world with the USA as the sole superpower, the only power with a global reach and capability and a willingness to exercise it. A new world order was in the making. Prof Francis Fukuyama wrote, "What we may be witnessing is

era in which the nations of the world, East and West, North and South, can prosper and live in harmony" (President George H. W. Bush, 1990).

For few years, it looked as if a generally peaceful world had emerged. In the period 1990-98, the world military expenditures more than halved mainly due to cutting down of the defence budget of NATO and old Warsaw Pact countries. During this period, the military budget in North America and Europe declined by 30% and 55% respectively. Defence as a percentage of GDP declined in the USA from 6.1% in 1985 to 3% in 2000 (Military Balance 2001-2002, Published by Oxford University Press for The International

due to reduction of defence expenditures in the US and Europe, there was, in fact, increase in defence expenditures in the Middle East (ME), South Asia and Africa. In the ME, Arab-Israeli conflict, Iraq's occupation of Kuwait in 1991, and the US led "Operation Desert Storm" that followed sharply raised the military expenditures in that region. Indo-Pak rivalry over Kashmir continued to push military expenditure in the region. The whole of Central Africa gradually sank into endless military conflict. While during the Cold War, both the US and USSR tried to keep a lid on the regional trouble spots; with the end of the Cold War, all restraints were removed

ures rose from US\$ 800 billion in 1998 to US\$ 1.47 trillion in 2008. There were a number of factors responsible for the rise. First was the continuing crisis in the ME. The first Gulf War (January-March 1991) between the US-led coalition and the Iraqi forces put a heavy demand on human resources and armament on all warring sides. Expended weapons and ammunitions had to be replenished often with newer, more sophisticated and costlier versions. Arab-Israeli conflict and later the rise of Saddam Hussein in Iraq saw huge military orders pouring out of ME costing billions of dollars. For example, a single arms deal named "Al-Yamamah" that the Saudis signed in 1989 with the British Aerospace cost more than £ 80 billion.

By the turn of the century, Russia under Vladimir Putin had come out of its economic crisis and could once again rearm and rebuild its defence forces. Russian military expenditure that was US\$ 33 billion in 1988 plummeted to only US\$ 9 billion in 1998. This has since then been rising and in 2008 stood at US\$ 70 billion. Awash with energy-generated cash, Russia could once again flex its muscle. Meanwhile, continuing eastward expansion of NATO, especially losing some of her former Warsaw Pact allies to the west causes a lot of heartburn in Moscow. Russia once again feels encircled and threatened politically, if not militarily. The latest pinprick has been the decision by the US to install a missile early warning system in Poland and the Czech Republic. The West argues that the aim is to defend Europe against a possible long-range missile attack from 'rogue' states such as Iran or North Korea. Russia, on the other hand, sees it as a threat to her own missile force's credibility. Despite Russian objection, the US is going ahead with the project.

Most dramatic rise in military expenditure has been in case of China from US\$ 12 billion in

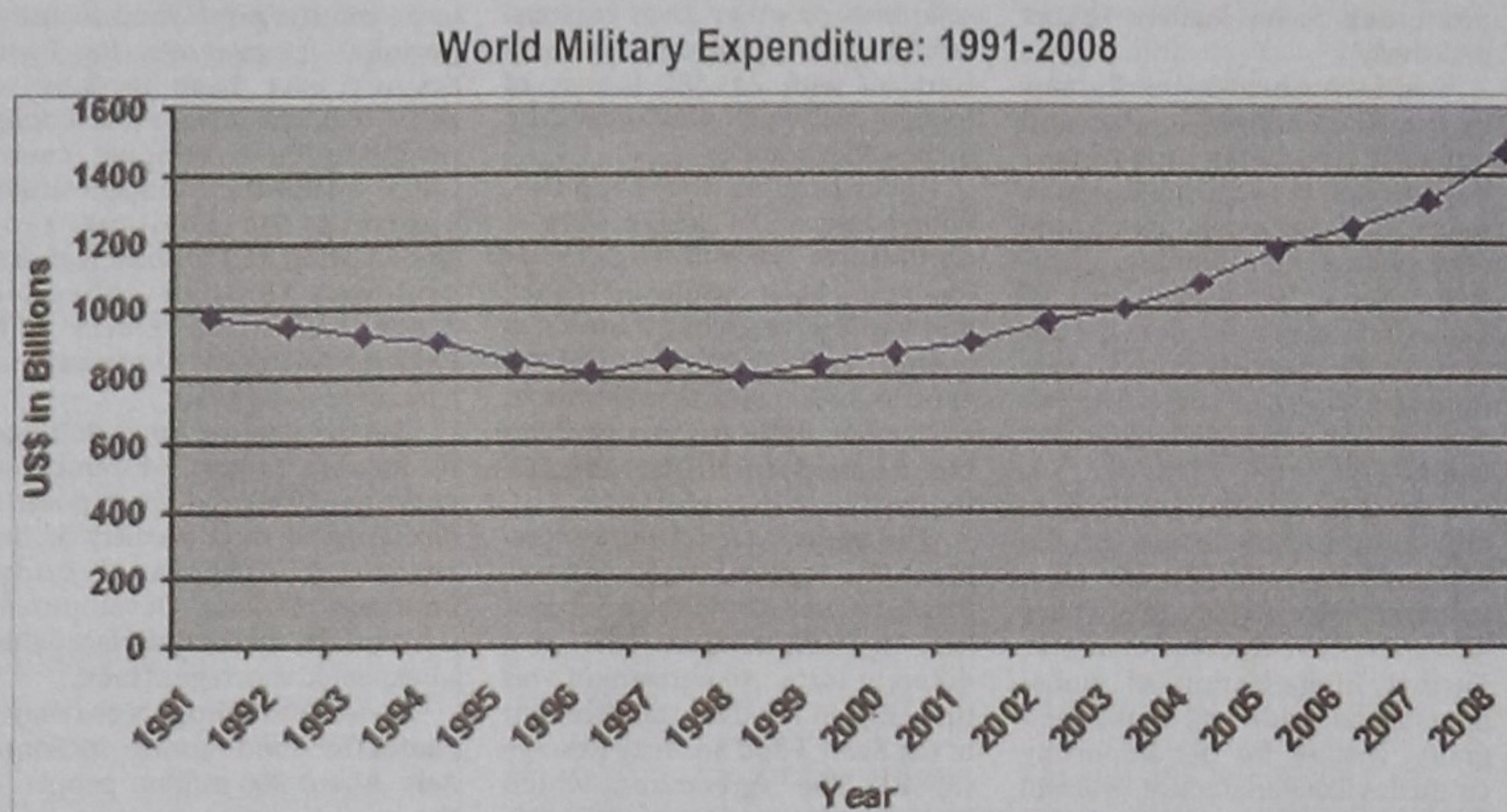
1999 to US\$ 122 billion in 2008. China, whose military forces have stagnated for long, is now rearming and modernising with frenzy. The Chinese leadership, emboldened by the rapid rise of the economy, is now consolidating their armed forces. In its annual report to Congress on China's military strength, published in May 2008, the Pentagon said China's "expanding military capabilities" were a "major factor" in altering military balances in East Asia. It said China's ability to project power over long distances remained limited. But it repeated its observation, made

aftermath of that attack, the US and other western powers got involved first in Afghanistan to drive out the Taliban and hunt down Osama Bin Laden, and then in Iraq to overthrow Saddam Hussein. The war in Iraq had so far estimated to cost \$560 billion for the USA alone, much of it in military hardware and most of it after the fall of Saddam Hussein. The Iraq War has changed the geo-strategic scenario in the ME. After many centuries of being outside the centre of power, the minority Shias are a powerful force in the ME causing anxieties in the

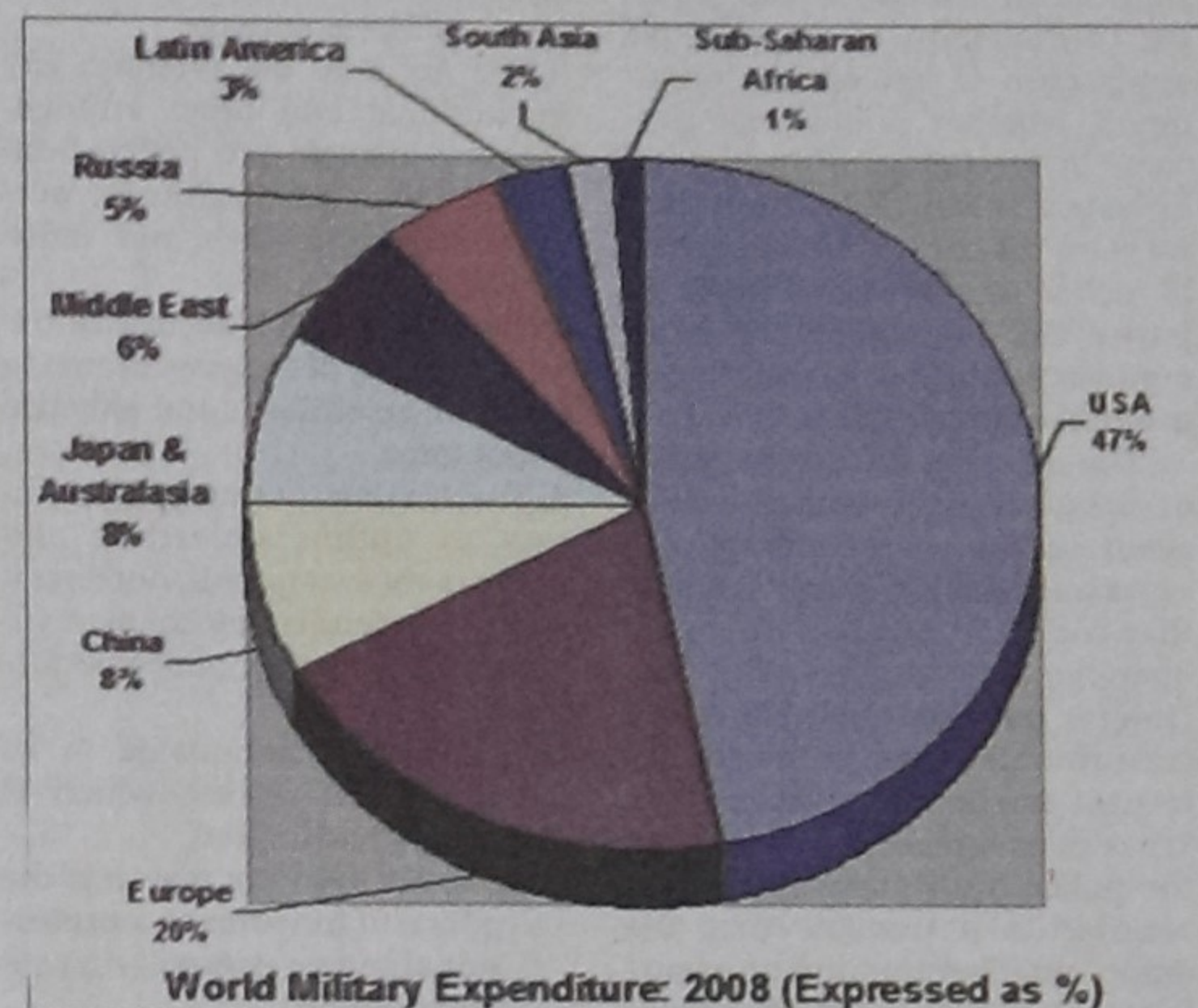
host of countries of Europe, Asia and Africa have joined the US-led war. Despite their political and strategic differences, USA, Russia and China are partners in this war. The war has spurred the development of sophisticated intelligence gathering and surveillance equipment, unmanned aircraft, precision guided munitions and sensors. A new doctrine is being developed on asymmetric warfare where a modern well-armed army fights an ideologically indoctrinated group armed with light weapons and improvised explosives.

Two decades after the end of the Cold War, the world is back again on high military expenditure. The unipolar world led by the US is increasingly being challenged by Russia and China, yet their military arsenal and capability are far inferior to those of the US (Chart 2). The US accounts for almost half of the world's total military expenditure. She continues to remain the only power with a global reach and capability. US along with its NATO and other allies such as Israel, Japan, South Korea, and now the new strategic partner India, represent a formidable military alliance. Although regional rivalries could result in arms race such as in the ME or South Asia, but a return to the days of the Cold War, when nuclear-armed bombers and submarines used to be on constant patrol ready for the Armageddon in minutes notice, are most unlikely. Peace-loving people of the world are disillusioned because the much-awaited peace-dividend in the "new world order" never arrived, nor the peaceful democracies flourished as expected. Although "the clash of civilization" as envisioned by Prof Samuel P. Huntington seems more and more real, there is the hope that ultimately our collective wisdom would sail us through the turbulent present to a better future.

The author is a freelancer.



Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Year Book 2008



in 2006, that among "major and emerging powers" China had the "greatest potential to compete militarily" with America. China had imported around \$11 billion of weapons between 2000 and 2005, mainly from Russia. Despite these modernisation and reorganisation, the Chinese military continues to lag far behind western technology and doctrinal advances and would pose little challenge to the US dominance in the Asia-Pacific region in the near future.

The most significant factor contributing to the rise of global military expenditure has been the Global War on Terror (GWOT), intensified since 9/11 attack on the US in 2001. In the

Sunni heartland. If the Iranian quest for nuclear weapon materialises, it would spur the race for nuclear weapons in countries such as Saudi Arabia, Syria, Egypt and Libya. But before that happens, there is the danger of a pre-emptive strike on the Iranian nuclear sites by Israel, aided and abetted by the US forces in the region. If that happens, it might give rise to a new set of strategic issues the consequences of which are still uncertain.

The War on Terror is essentially directed against numerous Islamic militant groups who are fighting the so-called "Jihad" to establish an Islamic Caliphate from Spain to the Philippines. A

## Third World diplomacy

BARRISTER HARUN UR RASHID

THE name "Third World" was coined during the Cold War to refer to nations that did not belong to the First and Second Worlds - First World being the Western countries, while the Second World was the Soviet Union and its allies.

While there were debates on the appropriateness of the term, it got stuck and was embraced by the member-states of the Non Aligned Movement. In academic circles, the countries of the Third World are known as the "Global South".

Diplomacy without military power is like music without instruments, according to King Frederick the Great of

### Objectives of Third World diplomacy

The objectives of Third World diplomacy are variable depending on situations and circumstances. However, there are some overriding objectives that are pursued.

First is the preservation of sovereignty and territorial integrity of a nation. Second, the region must remain peaceful and inter-state disputes within the region must be resolved through peaceful means (Article 33 of the UN Charter). Third, the security of the state is to be ensured and the term "security" used in a wider sense of the term. It includes not only state security but also social secu-

diplomacy other than the interactions between national governments.

Public diplomacy focuses on the ways in which a country (or multi-lateral organization such as the United Nations) communicates with citizens in other societies. Film, television, music, sports, video games and other social/cultural activities are seen by public diplomacy advocates as enormously important avenues to understand each other and integral to the international cultural understanding, which is a key goal of modern public diplomacy strategy.

Traditional diplomacy is a refined art of negotiation, representation and analysis. The core function of diplomacy is the ability to understand and

terrorism, international drug trafficking, AIDS and other infectious diseases involve an elaborate network of foreign governments and domestic agencies. All must be involved if effective results are to be achieved. In some circumstances it may be possible to aggregate bilateral agreements to achieve policy goals, but in many other situations, for example in the evolving world of electronic commerce, multilateral or multinational agreements are going to be necessary.

Third World diplomacy works best if like-minded countries or regional group air their view on a subject that affect them and lobby with the great powers to achieve the desired result. For example, issues such as easy mobil-

played an indispensable role in the process of decolonisation of Third World countries across the world, mostly in Africa. It also provided a major thrust in the efforts for disarmament and was directly responsible for convening the 10th historic special session of the UN General Assembly in 1978 on disarmament.

Another success is the introduction of ASEAN countries. Steadily and gradually it became a force in the South East Asian region and the great powers and Australia have to work with ASEAN for stability, economic security and peace.

Another success is the introduction of Free Trade Agreements (FTA). The Third World countries have forced the industrialized countries to enter FTA for mutual benefits when they fail to achieve their goals under WTO trade talks.

### Failures

The major failure of Third World diplomacy is the inability to reform and democratise the organs of the UN. The current structure does not reflect the realities of global powers. The call for reforming the Security Council is justified by the need of greater credibility, legitimacy, representation, effectiveness, and enhanced capacity and willingness to act in defence of peace.

The most important organ of the UN, The Security Council, suffers from representational grounds. For example, the second and third largest economies of the world (Japan and Germany) are not represented in the Council, neither are the larger regional countries, such as Brazil, India and Nigeria or South Africa. Some say that the failure to reform the Council has been due to position taken by regional rivals.

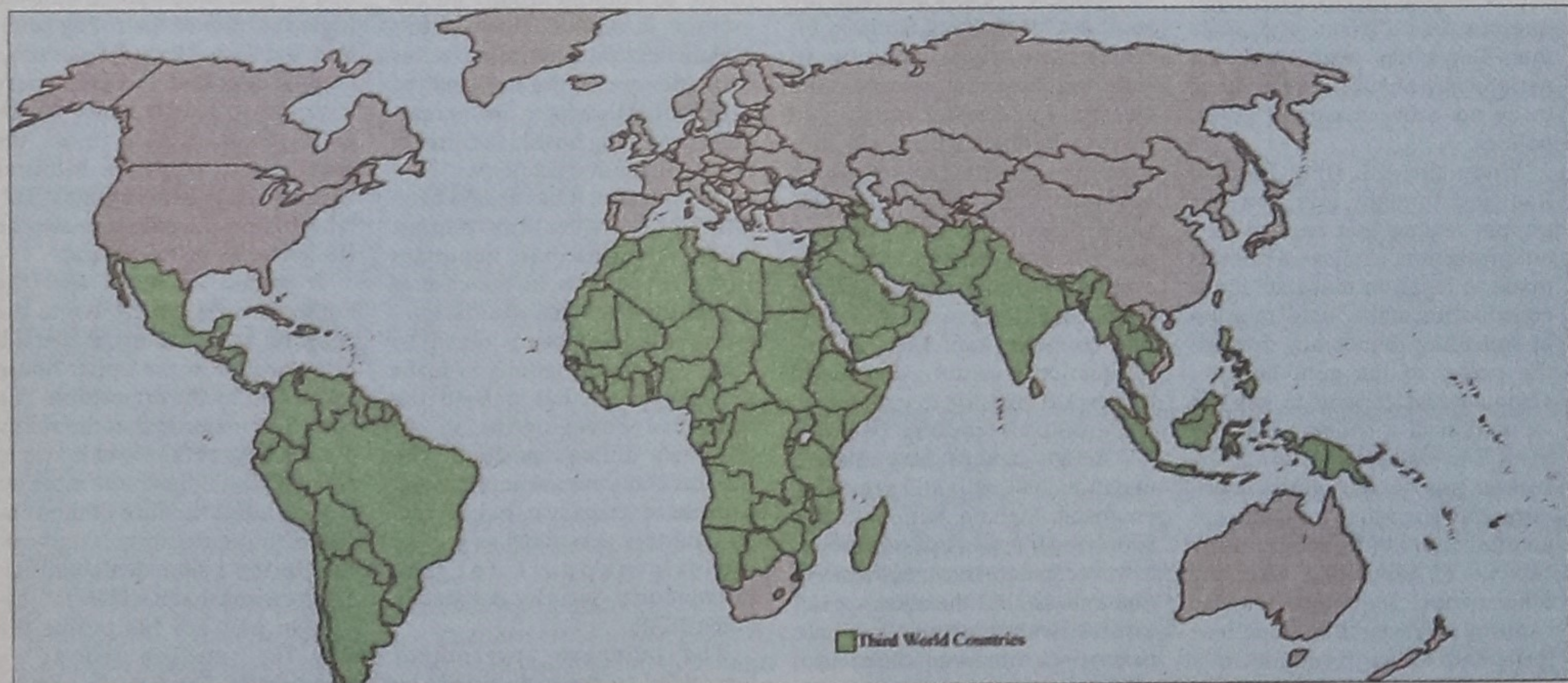
Another failure is their efforts to stop the raging civil wars in the Third World countries, mostly in Africa. Somalia, Congo, Zimbabwe and Western Sahara remain the challenge for Third World diplomacy.

It is reported that 5.4 million died in armed conflicts between 1955 - 2003 in 13 nations. Since 1945, there had been more than 120 conflicts in 71 countries of the Third World, of which 36 were civil wars.

### Conclusion

Third World diplomacy, like bilateral diplomacy, is the first line of defence. It must be reinvented, reinvigorated, re-equipped and not be allowed to die. We will all be losers if it does.

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Prussia (1712-1786). Former Secretary General of the UN Kofi Annan said, while he was leading a peace mission to President Saddam Hussein in 1998, that diplomacy was good in resolving disputes, but diplomacy backed by military power would be better.

Third World diplomacy operates with serious limitations because developing countries are not economically and militarily powerful. It does not operate on a level playing field. There lies the weakness of Third World diplomacy.

Although Third World countries recognise that power dominates relationship between states, they tend to think that use of force is a blunt and destructive tool to resolve inter-state disputes.

ity, economic security, energy security, water security, food security and environmental security. Fourth, interactions within the regional countries must be smooth to enhance economic gains through collective bargaining.

Most of the above objectives may come under two main heads: security and development. These two major goals constitute the ingredients of Third World diplomacy.

### Public and traditional diplomacy

These goals are carried out by public and standard diplomacy. Public diplomacy is open and transparent. In international relations, the term public diplomacy was coined in the 1960s to describe aspects of international

analyse the cultures, societies and institutions through and in which a state seeks to advance its values in the world. Traditional diplomacy may be described as the ways in which diplomats communicate with each other to resolve bilateral issues. Shuttle diplomacy has, however, reduced the role of traditional diplomacy in many ways and is likely to do so more in the future.

One of the other distinguishing features of this new world of international relationships is the multilateral diplomacy. It is evident that most of the trans-national issues, which have come onto our foreign policy radar scope, can neither be solved on a bilateral state-to-state basis nor by a single state, however powerful it may be.

Global warming, refugee flow,

ity of labour to industrialized countries and free access of goods to their markets are of direct interest to Third World countries.

### Success of Third World diplomacy

The formation of Non-Aligned Movement is considered one of the successes of the Third World diplomacy. During the Cold War, Third World countries wanted to keep away from the rivalry and camp of two super powers and the result was the Non-Aligned Movement. The members of the Non-Aligned Movement would look at an issue on its merit raised by either of the super powers and support accordingly. The Non-Aligned Movement was hugely successful and

## Noam Chomsky on Indo-US nuclear deal



"I think it is a terrible idea, very dangerous for the world. I should add that I am very far from agreeing with those in India who oppose this deal because of threats to India's sovereignty. That's far from the problem, in my opinion."

On December 18, 2006, after receiving overwhelming congressional approval, President Bush signed the United States-India Peaceful Atomic Energy Cooperation Act. As is a common practice, becoming routine since the Reagan-Gingrich years, the titles of acts of Congress are drawn from Orwell. This is no exception. The major thrust of the act is effective authorization of India's development of nuclear weapons outside the bounds of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. It also offers India assistance in nuclear programs along with other rewards. The Bush initiative was unilateral (as usual), nuclear weapons specialist Gary Milhollin reports, without the required notification or coordination with the international institutions (the Nuclear Suppliers Group, Missile Technology Control Regime) that had been established to stop the spread of nuclear weapons and delivery systems. The U.S.-India agreement violates the "cardinal principle of both regimes": that they are "country neutral."

Washington "has invited other members to act the same way," Milhollin observes, perhaps by undertaking "unilateral deals with Iran or Pakistan" or others of their choice. Washington's new initiatives to undermine the barriers against nuclear war, he adds, "may hasten the day when a nuclear explosion destroys a U.S. city." The reasons, as Secretary of State Rice conceded, were to facilitate exports by U.S. firms. The primary interest, Milhollin suggests, is military aircraft. The message is that "export controls are less important to the United States than money" that is, profits for U.S. corporations (Current History, November 2006). Shortly after, it was reported that China

and India were about to sign a similar deal, which would give India "access to high-tech nuclear technology it was denied previously." The deal would enable India to "become equidistant between the U.S. and China," an Indian official explained, while in Chinese eyes, helping to develop Russia-China-India cooperation to balance U.S. global hegemony (Jehangir Pocha, "China and India on verge of nuclear deal," Boston Globe, November 20, 2006). Meanwhile Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh informed Parliament that "there is no question of allowing American inspectors to roam around our nuclear facilities," and foreign minister Pranab Mukherjee added that "We will not allow external scrutiny or interference with the strategic program," meaning nuclear weapons development and testing (Pallava Bagla, Indo-US Nuclear Pact in Jeopardy, Science, 22 December 2006).

The seriousness of these moves is underscored by Michael Krepon, cofounder of the Henry J. Stimson Center and a leading specialist on nuclear threat reduction. "Now that the United States has given India a free pass around nuclear controls," he writes, "other states will be lining up to profit from proliferation." The unilateral U.S. move to exempt India from the global rules of nuclear commerce has "no precedent," and if the other "primary potential profit-takers" in the Nuclear Suppliers Group the five permanent members of the Security Council follow the U.S. lead and "place profits ahead of nonproliferation," the nonproliferation regime will suffer yet another severe blow.

"Simply put, as export controls go, so does the NPT," he concludes. "Senior Bush administration officials view the U.S.-India deal as a significant part of the administration's legacy," Krepon observes: "Unfortunately, they may be right."

Source: Internet