

Global hegemony and the victims

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DISCORD over the nuclear defense shield of the United States in Eastern Europe, particularly in the Czech Republic and Poland, is intensifying. Especially Russia is vehemently opposing the plan. Although the US claims that the shield will be a deterrent to North Korea and Iran, there are many in the world who believe otherwise. Justification of these dissidents' opinions is very much crucial given the present global geopolitical situation. Because, over the last few years, the US has initiated a new war the War on Terror throughout the world. The first victim of this war was Afghanistan and then Iraq. Now, everyone is looking for the next: who's next? Iran? Is this war to protect the US (or the world) from terrorism and maintain global peace and security or to expand the US military grip to gain strategic dominance against other rivals?

Let's talk about the missile defense shield. First of all, North Korea and Iran still do not have the capacity to hit Eastern Europe or US territory. Secondly, there is a high degree of probability that the proposed defense shield will become a controversial part of the US National Missile Defense (NMD) which is designed to protect the whole of US territory against any incoming ICBMs. The current NMD project involves using radars in Alaska and California in the US and at Fylingdales in the UK, and in Greenland. The latest plan of deploying the radar base in the Czech Republic is basically relocating the existing radar base at Kwajalein Atoll, Marshall Island. Besides, the US plans to install 10 more interceptors in silos in Poland.

Here we can see that although the US is terming its recent military engagement in Eastern Europe as a European Missile Defense Shield, it is apparently becoming a part of its long planned NMD project. Iran, Iraq and North Korea simply became the scapegoat to justify the plan. For this, in the last several years, by distorting intelligence and misleading the nations with false threats, the US conservative administration totally misled the world. And as a way of implementing the hidden agenda- Iran, North Korea, and Iraq were clustered as 'rogue states' and 'axis of evil'. Earlier in January 2002, President Bush at his State of the Union speech said, "...today the world is also uniting to answer the unique and urgent threat posed by Iraq. A dictator... must not be allowed to produce or possess those weapons. We will not permit Saddam Hussein to blackmail and/or terrorise nations which love freedom." After all these rhetoric we all came to know that a president had misguided his fellow citizens and the world community. All of these distortions, lies and misguidance... for what? Establishing US supremacy in a more unparalleled way?

This is certainly one aspect. Another aspect is that the US is transforming. It is transforming politically, socially and culturally. A new conservative group (neo-cons) has emerged in Washington. Its belief in the clash of civilisation is alarming. It is worth noting that the neo-cons are heavily dependent on the military-industrial complex. Therefore,

military adventurism takes the highest priority on the table nowadays. Many critics pointed to the US's quest for military dominance and hegemony throughout the world which naturally requires envisaging possible threats at all times and preemptive war.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 the peace-loving people of the world thought that the world would turn into a safer place than before since no big threats remained. They hoped that the United Nations would take control of the world events with its unilateral position in the dispute settlement matters bypassing individual actors. People dreamt that the decision making process at the United Nations would be more participatory and the distortions in exercising veto-powers would be reduced to a minimal level. Nations also expected controlling the vicious arms race and better use of scientific research and innovation. That was the hope and aspiration of each and every nation. On the part of the US, it also claimed victory and declared the end of a hostile and intimidating era. George Bush, then the US president, greeted the event as: "By the grace of God, America won the Cold War... (and the country is) the undisputed leader of the age" (Walter LaFeber, 'America, Russia and the Cold War, 1945-1996', 1997).

The question is: why does the United States go frantically after issues like missile defense after the successful end (according to them) of the Cold War? Why does it continue to focus on indiscernible enemies? Even after 1991, it did not go for closing down its military bases scattered around the world rather, continued expanding the network in many strategic positions. In Eastern Europe it basically filled the vacuum created by the end of the Warsaw Pact. Moreover, Central Asia, a very crucial passage of the global oil supply chain, also came under the purview of US dominance. These deliberate moves created lots of irritation among regional powers like Russia and China. On the other hand, small states' (buffer states) sovereignty and national security are facing enormous external threats and they fear being bogged down in the complex intelligence game of the superpower once again.

Why does America need more military bases after 1991? Is that for exporting democracy and capitalism at gun point? Some may argue that it is military adventurism. We learnt from the past political history that similar tendencies were exercised by the imperialist powers to expand their grip. For that, no matter who was being taken out of the list of enemies, they picked new foes to fight and defeat. It is such a continual and destructive process that it ultimately brings on their fatal collapse. Imperialist powers usually envisioned their goals to increase their dominance to such an extent that they could easily deploy their forces anywhere at any time. But that was a tragedy for them too. Very soon it became an unmanageable task to deal with. The Roman Empire is one of the foremost examples of how an empire could make an ultimate burden on its capability. Many political analysts also see the same consequence for the so-called American Empire. Now, all around the world, there are some 725 military bases of the United States and it is frantically trying to plant more.



Few may be puzzled that initiating a war with Iraq will hamper its long-term strategy and hinder its main purpose. And because of the economic woes created by this war, there is also a high degree of probability that American citizens are also put pressure on the congress not to spend more for military expansions. Yet, the reality is that the US administration masterminded the plan of taking control of the Gulf region 35 years back!

After the Yom Kippur War (third Arab-Israeli War) in 1973, the defeated Arab countries retaliated against the western allies of Israel by imposing oil embargo, which distorted and destabilised the global oil market seriously. Fuel prices skyrocketed and reached nearly to \$17 per barrel. It was one of the most significant geo-political games during the cold-war era. Since then, for the past 35 years, the Gulf has been in the cross-hairs of an influential group of Washington foreign policy strategists who believe that in order to ensure global dominance the US must seize control of the region and its oil.

Washington foreign policy strategists also believe that, if

you were to spin the globe and look for real estate for building an American empire, your first stop should have to be the Persian Gulf. Because the desert sands of this region hold two of every three barrels of oil in the world (Iraq's reserves alone are equal, by some estimates, to those of Russia, the United States, China and Mexico combined). Apparently, the United States is driven by this theory. Though risk remains high, the main answer is there: to establish unparalleled global dominance, seize control of the Persian Gulf first.

As former US ambassador to Saudi Arabia Mr. Chas Freeman (1991) mentioned, "the US administration believes you have to control resources in order to have access to them" and "the end of the cold war left the US able to impose its will globally and that those who have the ability to shape events with power have the duty to do so. It's ideology," he added. Professor Michael Klare of Peace and Security Department, Hemispheres College and author of 'Resource War', says "Controlling Iraq is about oil as power, rather than oil as fuel" and "Controlling Persian Gulf trans-

late into control over Europe, Japan and China. It is having our hand on the spigot." Considering the comments mentioned above, all ambiguous and rhetoric claims such as 'Weapons of Mass Destruction', 'Terrorism', 'Threat to West', and 'Al-Qaida' etc. turns into much politicised words which are being emphasized for a special purpose to achieve. Besides, America's ambition was further unearthed by President Bill Clinton in his presidential poll campaign speech: "I believe it is time for America to lead a global alliance for democracy..."

It will be interesting to see how the US implants a new form of democracy in Iraq and Afghanistan. President Bush had in fact very little things to do. Pentagon, the US administration, and the US military-industrial complex, got a long due plan and they needed an impotent leader like George W. Bush to carry out their plan. Nevertheless, Mr. Bush was not supposed to be an US president. But they ardently wanted him to be and they brought him to power through a master ballot-rigging in US history.

Now, a new threat has appeared in the Persian Gulf region. That is Iran's growing economic and military strength. Undoubtedly, a powerful Iran could thwart any US plan in the region and could jeopardise its objective of seizing control over the strategically important Hormuz Strait. Further, Iran's nuclear programme also wrinkled Pentagon's master-minds too as if Iran, by any means, could become a nuclear power, it could have the means to retaliate against possible attack from the US. Hormuz Strait, the biggest sea passage supplying some 40 percent (between 15 to 16.5 million barrels) of world's petroleum, will also be subjected to Iran's wish. Although Iran continues to claim that its nuclear programme is only for peaceful purpose, but again it is the United States who is recklessly trying to establish a case that Iran is going to build a nuclear bomb. It is ludicrous that the US also played the same game in Iraq. "I strongly believe he was trying to reconstitute his nuclear weapons program" Yes, that was one of the fanciful statements of President George W. Bush which he made while discussing on War on Terrorism at White House on 17 July 2003.

Surely the proposed radar base in the Czech Republic and missile interceptor in Poland are not to protect the US from Iran or North Korea's missile but to ensure that the US plan to establish and exercise stringent control over the world using its prevailing 725 military bases. Already a wide range of scholars from Europe and Russia has expressed deep concerns that the US is still intensely driven by the NMD theory which might give it an unparalleled position and immunity in any strategic confrontation, whether with Russia, China, or with Europe. But Europe's response is quite surprising in this regard. May be it will be too late for it to get the point. Fear is that: If once the US ventures get accomplished, Europe itself will struggle over finding its own deterrence against the 'Hyper Power'. History suggests that imperialism knows no permanency in friendship or tie, whatever its religion, faith, or culture.

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India's growing military power

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INDIA is gradually showing signs of military assertiveness as it is becoming an economic power.

India is the second largest populous country (nearly 1.1 billion) in the world and seventh largest in geographical area. It is twenty-three times larger than Bangladesh. There are almost 1,000 people for every square mile of area nationwide, much denser than China. India is likely to overtake China in the 21st century as the

gradually increased both at home and abroad.

India's buildup has several overlapping motivations. It now trades vigorously with the world, most critically in oil. It has bought oil fields or engaged in exploration in Iran, Iraq, Libya, Russia, Sudan, Syria, Vietnam and beyond.

A more robust military is also vital for protecting millions of Indian workers in the Gulf, who are from time to time threatened by political volatility. But the most pressing motivation may be the fast-moving

"We are ready to play a more responsible role," he added, "but we don't want to impose ourselves on others."

In a speech in India's Parliament this summer, a rising political star, Rahul Gandhi, M.P. son of Rajiv and Sonia Gandhi and an official of the Congress Party spoke of a change in civilian thinking that helps explain the change in military strategy.

"What is important," said Rahul Gandhi, "is that we stop worrying about how the world will impact us, we stop being

people on board, not only Indians, but Sri Lankans, Nepalese and Lebanese eager to escape the fighting.

Two years earlier, when a tsunami throttled Asia, including this country's own southern coast, the Indian Navy dispatched 16,000 troops, 32 warships, 41 planes and a floating hospital for rescue operations, according to news accounts.

Such changes bring pride to many Indians. But some also fear that India may become the kind of swaggering power it has opposed since it became independent from Britain in 1947.

In recent years, while world attention has focused on China's military, India has begun to refashion itself as an armed power with global reach: a power willing and able to dispatch troops thousands of miles from the subcontinent to protect its oil shipments and trade routes, to defend its large expatriate population in the Middle East and to shoulder international peacekeeping duties.

"India sees itself in a different light - not looking so much inward and looking at Pakistan, but globally," said William Cohen, a secretary of defense in the Clinton administration who, in his new role as a lobbyist, represents American firms seeking weapons contracts in India. "It's sending a signal that it's going to be a big player."

India is buying armaments that major powers like the United States use to operate far from home: aircraft carriers, giant C-130J transport planes and airborne refueling tankers. Meanwhile, India has helped to build a small air base in Tajikistan that it will share with its host country.

It is modern India's first military outpost on foreign soil. India also appears to be positioning itself as a caretaker and patroller of the Indian Ocean region, which stretches from Africa's coast to Australia's and from the subcontinent southward to Antarctica.

"Ten years from now, India could be a real provider of security to all the ocean islands in the Indian Ocean," said Ashley Tellis, an Indian-born scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington who has also been an adviser to the Bush administration. "It could become a provider of security in the Gulf in collaboration with the U.S. I

would think of the same being true with the Central Asian states."

Observers say that Indian military planning is still heavily focused on China and Pakistan, against both of which the country has fought wars. China, whose own military expansion outstrips India's, has not sounded public warnings about India's military modernization but Pakistan is more critical about it.

Pakistani officials "are paying attention to Indian plans to project India outside the South Asian region," said Hasan Askari Rizvi, a leading Pakistani expert on that country's military.

"There seems to be an emerging long-term competition between India and China for pre-eminence in the region," said Jacqueline Newmyer, President of the Long Term Strategy Group, a research institute in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and a security consultant to the United States government. "India is preparing slowly to claim its place as a pre-eminence power, and in the meantime China is working to complicate that for India."

India has worked to close the gap with China by spending heavily on modern arms. Analysts estimate that India could spend as much as \$40 billion on military modernization in the next five years (China is spending \$90 billion dollars on defense budget). What is most striking is that many of the weapons are designed for operations far from home.

Among the more notable purchases are six IL-78 airborne tankers, which can refuel three jets simultaneously and allow the air force to fly as far as Alaska. Other armaments recently acquired or in the pipeline include naval destroyers, nuclear submarines, aircraft carriers and the C-130J transport planes that are a staple of long-range conflicts.

India is slowly but steadily maturing into a conventional great power. Times have changed when India which gave the world the idea of Gandhian non-violence and, has long derided the force-projecting ways of the great powers is now showing military muscle to demonstrate that India is "rising" and should be given the role in world affairs commensurate with its size, resources and population.

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NATO launches anti-piracy operations off Somalia

NATO has launched its first anti-piracy mission off Somalia after one of its warships successfully escorted a cargo ship to the port of Mogadishu, the alliance's chief said Oct. 27.

"One NATO ship just finished escorting a ship which was bringing in supplies" for the Burundi section of the U.N.-mandated African Union peace-keeping mission in Somalia, NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer. The escorted ship was expected to dock on Oct. 28, with similar escort missions to follow swiftly, he added.

Three NATO ships have been given the go-ahead to use force under their rules of engagement and in line with international law.

They are an Italian destroyer, the lead ship that carried out the first operation, and British and Greek frigates that form NATO's escort Allied Provider. They will mainly help escort U.N. World Food Program (WFP) food shipments, tempting targets for pirates, until the European Union can launch its own operation, probably in December.

The WFP ships 30,000 to 35,000 tons of aid into Somalia each month. Last week a maritime watchdog said Somali pirates were now responsible for nearly a third of all reported attacks on ships, often using violence and taking hostages.

The International Maritime Bureau said 63 of the 199 piracy incidents recorded worldwide in the first nine months of this year occurred in the waters off war-ravaged Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden.

That comes to almost double that of the same period last year. Piracy is rife and well-organized in the region where Somalia's northeastern tip juts into the Indian Ocean, preying on a key maritime route leading to the Suez Canal through which an estimated 30 percent of the world's oil is transported.

The pirates operate high-powered speedboats and are heavily armed, sometimes holding ships for weeks until they are released for large ransoms paid by governments or owners.

Earlier this month the EU announced that its own mission - with ships from Belgium, Cyprus, France, Germany, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and possibly Britain - would be run from a headquarters at Northwood, north of London.

Russia and India have also sent ships to the area on anti-piracy duties.

Indian auditor find gaps in air defense

India's autonomous Auditing Agency found glaring gaps in the country's air-defense system.

"Indian Air Force (IAF) do not possess adequate surveillance radars needed for providing efficient and reliable detection capabilities for ensuring credible Air Defence," said the 97-page report by the Indian Comptroller and Auditor General, sent to Parliament on Oct. 24. "The shortage of Medium Power Radars (MPRs) needed for ground control and intercept was as high as 53 percent of the projected requirement."

Most of the country's air-defense gear, including various kinds of radar installed around the country, was bought from the Soviet Union in the 1970s.

The Indian military has asked for more than \$2 billion over eight years to buy radar and other air-defense gear, including battlefield surveillance systems, air-defense radar systems, anti-aircraft weapon control systems, low-flying-detection radar systems, land- and ship-based 3-D radar surveillance systems, and multimode fire control radar for military aircraft.

Source: www.defensenews.com

China's Pakistan quandary

Following Pakistani tradition, President Asif Ali Zardari made his first state visit to China from 14-17 October. In late September, Pakistan's army chief, Gen. Ashfaq Kayani too had made his first official visit abroad to China.

What exactly have these visits delivered for Pakistan? Alongside the usual rhetoric, China reaffirmed its commitment to advance strategic partnership with Pakistan, promised to help its cash-strapped neighbour ward off financial disaster, and signed about a dozen bilateral

agreements during the Zardari visit, covering several trade, space technology and energy among others. While an agreement was apparently reached on China giving Pakistan new civilian nuclear reactors, such a deal is highly unlikely to pass muster at the NSG. With a rising global profile and concomitant responsibilities and expectations to be fulfilled, there are clearly limits to what China will or can do to befriend a Pakistan that is increasingly unable to deal with domestic instability and is under rising international pressure to act against terrorism.

"A strong China means a strong Pakistan," declared Zardari during his visit, but the reverse is probably truer. Right now, however, Pakistan is far from being strong, and its domestic chaos is particularly anathema for China. What then does the future of Sino-Pak relations hold? Zardari's sought to give Sino-Pakistan economic relations a fillip by saying that he was "the first businessman president of Pakistan" but this is perhaps double entendre at its best given his soubriquet back home of being "Mr. Ten Percent."

At any rate, for China, it is not trade with Pakistan that is the most important consideration as it is the latter's geostrategic location. In this context, China has concerns that the instability in Pakistan can threaten its plans of building up Gwadar port as an access point for West Asian crude and an alternative outlet for goods and commodities from the Chinese mainland. Gwadar's location in the troubled province of Balochistan apart, Islamic radicalism spreading to the heart of Pakistan can also put paid to any plans for linking up Gwadar with the Karakoram Highway, itself a vital and strategic lifeline between China and Pakistan.

Beijing realizes, no doubt, that its traditional goals with respect to Pakistan cannot be achieved if the latter continues to be unstable. Not only will the US be increasingly involved in the region and by extension in Central Asia, but the continuing ethnic and religious disaffection in its Xinjiang province, mean that China must pay close attention to the growth and spread of religious radicalism elsewhere in the region. Beijing must worry about the possibility eventually, of Islamic militancy being funnelled northwards from Pakistan or Afghanistan towards China.

During his visit, Zardari stated that Pakistan and China would cooperate closely on anti-terrorism. Such cooperation already exists to the extent that Pakistan has assiduously tried to apprehend radical Uyghur elements from Xinjiang who have fomented trouble back home using Pakistan as a base. While there is no popular anti-China sentiment in Pakistan as there are anti-American feelings, China has nevertheless, in recent times, paid close attention to terrorist incidents in Pakistan, including the Marriott Hotel bombing that came on the eve of Gen. Kayani's visit.

A major irritant in the bilateral relationship has, in fact, been Islamabad's inability to ensure the safety of Chinese citizens in Pakistan - there are about three times as many Chinese working in the country as there are Americans - and they have frequently been the victims of kidnappings and killings. In early September this year, for instance, two engineers working with a Chinese telecommunication company were abducted in Pakistan's North West Frontier Province (NWFP).

Remember too, that one of the triggers for the Pakistan army's siege of Islamabad's Lal Masjid in July 2007 was the kidnapping by militants and madrassa students in June, of Chinese nationals running a massage parlour in the city. During the siege, itself militants in NWFP retaliated by killing three Chinese nationals near Peshawar. Throughout the crisis, China is believed to have kept up the pressure on the Musharraf regime to take strong action against the "terrorists".

Meanwhile, it is interesting to note that China has made very little comment about US presidential candidate Sen. Barack Obama's views for a more proactive American approach on Pakistan, including cross-border attacks, if necessary. Perhaps, Beijing understands that there is no other way around the Pakistani state's inability (or unwillingness) to tackle Islamic militancy? Alternatively, an Obama administration could also be just the spur for China to pre-empt such possibilities by using its influence with Pakistan's military to force the latter to pay more attention to the war on terror.

Whatever the path China adopts, it seems evident that it will have to walk a fine line between persuading the current Pakistani establishment to take the necessary action and pushing it into a corner. It certainly would not like to go the way of the US which despite being powerfully ally of Pakistan for decades, is now hated so much on the Pakistani street. Whoever said being an "all-weather" friend was easy?

Source: IPCS, New Delhi



world's most populous country. Under the US-India nuclear deal, it will receive nuclear fuel and technology and will be much more capable to enlarge its nuclear arsenal. According to the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, the India's Defense Ministry has earmarked US\$ 2 billion annually to build 300 to 400 weapons over the next 5 to 7 years. Currently India has about 50 to 95 nuclear warheads.

Analysts say that there are many reasons for acquiring military power and some of them are described below:

Government officials argue that India's commitments have

Chinese. "Immediately after independence, true, we had to engage ourselves for developing our country economically, politically because we were exploited under colonial rule for more than 200 years," Pranab Mukherjee, India's External Affairs Minister (a former Defence Minister) said in an interview.

Now, he said, things have changed: "Naturally, a country of this size, a population of this size we will be required to strengthen our security forces, modernize them, update them, upgrade our technology."

scared about how the world will impact us, and we step out and worry about how we will impact the world."

Middle-aged Indians remember a time when their country would watch thousands of Indians in jeopardy in a foreign land and know that there was nothing their military could do.

But in 2006, when conflict between Israel and Hezbollah threatened Indian expatriates in Lebanon, four Indian warships happened to be in the Mediterranean. The navy rushed the vessels to Lebanon and brought more than 2,000