Similarly, the South-east Asian Muslim countries like Malaysia and Indonesia have a long history of repression which has politically displaced many people, with some of them seeking jihadist spaces. India's problem with Kashmir is well known as is Pakistan's problem with the same, which has kept the regional jihadist enterprise alive. Pakistan's investment in supporting groups like the Taliban which also has a geographical location in the Pushtun area and Lashkar-e-Toiba, primarily a Kashmir outfit, are also open knowledge.

While other factors are, of course, there, but it's the failure to address regional or national political issue that seem to have created a significant part of the problem. To that is added the global US-USSR rivalry when during the Soviet Union's occupation of Afghanistan, it became a lucrative destination to invest to train and fund jihadists by the US and Pakistan as it fought a proxy cold war. Just as the Kashmir problem has become on a smaller scale.

The response and reaction to these three issues are interestingly universal all over the world. Although China is under the Communist Party leadership, it didn't introduce equity components in its economic surge. India has been very traditional in following its economic model. The US not only produced the same crisis as it did in 1930s, but its response is basically the same now, although the equations have changed enormously.

Environmentally, the US, China and India along with other G-20 countries are ignoring the environmental issue as the principal priority because it might put a cap on conventional economic patterns. Despite the Kyoto summit and Bali summit, the attitude of countries is closer to the environmental ethics of the early industrial revolution than the present age of post-carbon life.

Security-wise, people are responding militarily in a way which suits frontal warfare and nation state systems rather than the very changed patterns of terrorist war without borders.



AFP

End of Modernity, but No Post-Modern Leadership

In all three sectors, the responses and visions of global leaders are inadequate. The fact that the environmental, economic, and security crisis are all but unmanageable with traditional and conventional weapons of past eras should say that the leadership must face the fact that they can be in power but don't seem to be in charge.

The ideology of the Industrial Revolution is still running the world, and the American century, its best product, is the primary influence in shaping the world. Yet there is no evidence that this approach has worked and will work for long. The G-20 also seems to be constructed along the same lines and have no vision of controlling climate warming, let alone sharing prosperity.

Unfortunately, time is short. Unless climate issues are resolved within a year and dramatic action taken, there is little chance of a viable future for all.

Economically, the global system has shown itself to be very fragile. It totters near the brink far more than we are used to think and as a single year of melting has shown, it is not the kind of platform that can ensure large-scale prosperity or economic security.

Perhaps, it's in the security sector that the challenges are most obvious, as every country has faced non-state actors and seen that large armies are no match for small scale groups unbound by geography. Technology has also made conventional notions of security invalid. Yet, everyone continues to pursue security on the terms set by the enemy. Investment in peace is read as weakness, making the world continuously unsafe.

Our present is full of people with minds resting in the past. Even though none of the critical sectors are working, global leadership has not found a path fit for changed times.

Barack Obama takes rein at a time when the US and the world are going through this great transition, a changing of the guard. The US president-elect has already been briefed by his officials that the old order has shifted and is changing, but the US will continue to play a critical role.

In terms of the military, this will be particularly important, because regional conflicts as a result of the Big Three sectors are feared to increase.

He has not shown much signs that he is the transformative mind that the world expects him to be, but he definitely can provide critical breathing space as new realities make him and the G-20 leaders adapt to change to make them appropriate for the new emerging century.

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