

Historical Perspective of New World Order in Twentieth Century

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Twentieth century has been described as a century of conflicts. The master minds at the helms of affairs in Europe repeatedly painted the World Canvas with gruesome wars costing millions of lives. The first quarter of 20th Century is characterized by conflicting theories on the impact upon international power play, of sea power, land power and air power. The second quarter witnessed Hitler putting some of these theories in practice with the results that destabilized the world for decades. The third quarter witnessed the world peace held to ransom by two rival philosophies – Capitalism and Communism – ideologies which superceded nationalism at the apex of the their clash. The last decade of the Century is witnessing a phenomenon in the shape of 'New World order' emerging from the debris of the erstwhile bipolar world, following the demise of communism and breakup of former Soviet Union.

The US approach on world affairs is essentially governed by her geo-strategic compulsions. Two mighty oceans protect America's eastern and western shores. Canada in her north and the countries in South America do not pose a danger to her security.

The ideas which influenced directly or indirectly the American politicians and strategists to formulate its policy towards the world are taken from geo-political philosophers like Mahan, Mackinder and Spykman.

In the clutter of 20th Century intellectuals two names stand out : Mahan and Mackinder. Both belonged to the determinist School and appeared at the turn of the century.

Mahan was lauded for his famous treatise titled "The influence of sea power upon History" published in 1890. Barely had United States started building herself the world's largest navy when, in 1940, Mackinder, a British geographer negated Mahan's navalist philosophy and consolidated land oriented strategies prevalent in continental nations. Other theories, such as Spykman's Rimland theory emerged in the United States which determined the American strategic pattern of encirclement of former Soviet Union. The ideas of these philosophers influenced major political actors of this Century directly or indirectly shaping the destiny of the world.

The colonial epoch was already coming to an end when Mahan, an officer of the United States Navy, stated the significance of overseas trade, the importance of Naval and commercial fleets and the value of protected Naval and commercial harbors from where these fleets could operate. Mahan emphasized the role that a powerful Navy could play in securing colonies, in protecting commercial trade and in winning wars. (1)

The strategical and political implications and impression gained from MAHAN's writings was that, large battle fleets, and a concentration of force, decided control of the oceans, that *guerre de course* (the strategy of commerce raiding) was always ineffectual; that the blockade was a very effective course which sooner or later brings an enemy to his knees; that the select bases on Islands or continental peripheries was more valuable than control of large land masses.

Mahan's philosophy of sea power had won instant recognition and acceptance in professional Naval and diplomatic circles. His views on the value of overseas bases did influence strategic decisions. For instance, in the Island hopping strategy in the South Pacific in World War II,

deprived the Japanese of operating bases in the far East and brought victory to Mac Arthur. (2) Strategic might of the great powers does not reside entirely in its maritime power. Had it ever resulted in a show down, the geographic location of former Soviet Union would have made it impossible for the allies to defeat the Union from the Sea alone.

Sir Halford John Mackinder, a British geographer was the person who first invited attention to the fact that the Columbian epoch, the period of four centuries of overseas exploration through sea power was coming to an end. That sea power was now becoming irrelevant in case of a conflict with a power which resides deep in a continental heartland. He announced that in the past Columbian era efficiency and internal development would replace expansionism as the main of modern states. Studying the pre-requisites of a stable peace, he argued that the great pivotal area of the world – Central Russia, had great potential for economic and industrial development. This area, once the source of many invading armies, was thus likely to become the strategic center of the world. He prophesied:

“The successful powers will be those who have the greatest industrial base. It will not matter whether they are in the center of a continent or on an Island”(3)

Nicholas J. Spykman (1893 – 1943), was critical of the potentialities of Mackinder's heart lands and regarded much of the Eurasian heart lands and Mongolia, as wastelands. He emphasized the role of the tier states surrounding this heartland which were fertile, full of resources, more populated and ready to absorb industrialization. To this tier, he gave the name 'Rimland' and concluded that whosoever controls the Rimland rules

Eurasia; and who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world.

His ideas gained popularity in Post World War II era. After World War II, Americans faced the menace of Communist expansion following the events of 1946 – 47, which may be regarded as the watershed years in the relations between the two rival philosophies.

Spykman's Rimland Theory, came to serve as the underlying principle of the US strategy of encirclement of Russia in the years following the official declaration of the 'Truman Doctrine' in March, 1947. (4)

The 19th Century international order primarily revolved around the attempts at forging a confederation of Europe by continental powers viz Russia, Austria and Prussia. While being an ally, British diplomacy stood in sharp contrast as it aimed at maintenance of balance of power in Europe to prevent the rise of a Super-power which could threaten peace. In this era Britain played an important role, as it had large and efficient Navy. But in the second quarter of 20th Century America, took over from Britain. Washington Naval Treaty, 1925, allowed America to maintain a battleship fleet larger than all Europe combined. It was a major early success of US diplomacy. It clearly indicated that the US has taken over from Britain's role of an arbiter in world affairs. (5)

In the 19th Century the European confederacy, which called itself 'Holy Alliance' had ultimately assumed the self proclaimed right of armed intervention in the affairs of weaker sovereign states viz Spain and Naples. There flagrant violations of international norms were done in the name of reconciling a system of paternal supervision over a some what unruly family of nations. (6) While Germany led European alliance, only United States can and does

unilaterally embark upon armed intervention in small but sovereign nations, such as seen in Panama and Haiti, in the name of global peace.

Mahan and Mackinder undoubtedly had influenced the first quarter of the 20th Century on determination of force structures, military equipping and ship building programmes. Both developed their separate and conflicting sets of theories on power. Mahan's ideas form the basic tenets of pre – 1914, navalist philosophy. Mahan's world of the late colonial era with plenty of far flung lands available for acquisition has given way to a community of independent Sovereign nation states, members of United Nations, with a vote and a voice. By the same token there are no states even in the Russian heart land to be absorbed by great powers any more. Which makes Mackinder's proposals equally anachronistic.

The World has, at the end of the twentieth Century again caught up with Woodrow Wilson's idealism of peace and security. In 1950s, John Morton Blum wrote that:

“Wilson's was a nineteenth century
intelligence, obsolescing at a rapid rate” (7)

At the end of World War I, the World had moved beyond the familiar and optimistic world of the 19th Century, but Wilson had not. He had clung instead to the regnant liberal beliefs in man's essential reasonableness; in the power of public opinion; in the inevitability of progress as mediated through the working of liberal, political and economic institutions. These beliefs had been challenged and very nearly discredited by the war and post-war years Wilson's world of peace and prosperity had vanished. Yet in the last decade of the twentieth century that world appears to have been resurrected. The conviction increasingly grows today.

That history is going to resume the course it was pursuing before 1914.

The collapse of liberal internationalism inevitably affected the standing of the statesman who was considered to be its spiritual father. On the left a revisionist historiography arose in which Wilson was seen as the prime architect in this century of an expansionist strategy to create a liberal capitalist world order. At the time this estimate was partly shared by the right. Although there was little doubt among conservatives about American power, there was a pervasive doubt about the attraction that American ideals of freedom held for most of the world. Self determination, the achievement of political independence, had not been followed by the triumph of free institutions.

Wilson believed that peace is indivisible, just as he believed that only a democratic world is a truly peaceful world.

In the Wilsonian vision, an international order, based on the principles of the consent of the governed, equality of right and freedom from aggression is joined by the idea of American leadership. It was Wilson who made this leadership an essential condition of American participation in the international system. America was elevated to become the leader of the nations. Wilson believed not simply because of its material power, not even because it was freedom's exemplar, but because it was the nation of idealists. (8)

Wilson appeared to believe, that war, and the necessities regularly alleged to attend war's conduct, held out the greatest threat to the very institutions and values in defence of which it might be waged. As nothing else did, war introduced in to democratic societies the elements of their corruption. Wilson's defence of collective security did

not contradict his view of war. He did not believe that force was a critical element of a system of collective security. Indeed, the concert of power that such a system represented was in his view an alternative to war. By joining the league of Nations, he insisted,

“we would take the one path affording an escape from the threat of recurrent wars”. (9)

In his attempt to fashion a lasting peace, Wilson failed. The vision he set forth for transforming the world went unrealized. The old politics returned with a vengeance in the years between the two world wars. He sought nothing less than a transformation of the international system. In place of politics characterized by inequality and sanctioned by force, he strove, to substitute a politics based on the principles of freedom and equality. He had vainly sought to establish an international order that would prevent the recurrence of the catastrophe of world war I. He repeatedly, warned that if the American nation did not play a role – leading role – in this new order, if it did not accept the responsibility, an even more terrible war would occur. It all came to pass just as he had prophesized, it would. In this view, Wilson represented a ‘higher realism’.

Wilson was the supreme realist because he saw more clearly than any one in his time, that the old politics with its parochial interests, its inequalities, its obsession with balancing power, and its reliance on force would have to give way to a new politics of inter dependence, greater equality, less concern with power equilibrium and a reliance on peaceful means to settle disputes. Then, and subsequently, Wilson’s critics persisted in labeling his vision as lacking in realism. For realists thought ‘mainly in strategic and material terms’ President Wilson was a realist of a different sort, because his realism was more perceptive and more in accord with ultimate reality.

Wilson's failures were failures only of the moment, for in them were laid the foundations of future achievements, that had a transforming effect on history.

Wilson saw the league as the most significant achievement of his life. It formed the constitution of the New World Order. It expressed his hopes for the world and for America's relationship with it. The league was the most important expression of Wilson's realism in state craft.

In submitting the Versailles treaty to the Senate, Wilson declared:

"A war in which (the people) had been bled white to beat the terror that lay cancelled in every balance of power must not end in a mere victory of arms and a new balance. The monster that had resorted to arms must be put in chains that could not be broken" (10)

The peace treaty, above all the provisions containing the league of Nations, formed those chains.

America's relationship with the world was made to depend upon how the world was organized. America would abandon its historic position and policy; but it would do so only through membership in the league of Nations. It was only through the league, Wilson insisted, that the American might take up a new role in the world.

League's covenant laid out a procedure for the peaceful settlement of disputes. It obligated the members to take non-military sanctions of a comprehensive sort – the severance of all trade and financial relations and the prohibition of all inter course – against a member resorting to war in violation of this procedure. And in Article X, the members under took to protect each other against armed

aggression. Wilson's major contribution to the covenant was this provision which obligated the members;

"to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and political independence of all members".

Wilson declared of League's Article X that,

"All the wrongs of the world, have their roots in the seizure of territory or the control of the political independence of other peoples". (11)

The league council was to advise members on the means of fulfilling the commitment that Wilson believed "cut at the very heart of the old system".

This was Wilson's blue print for transforming the old system and substituting a community of power in place of a balance of power. The league would put an end to militarism and imperialism. It would provide the means not only for achieving a lasting peace. The America's post-war role certainly bore little resemblance to Wilson's vision. In rejecting the Versailles treaty, America rejected and refused to take any responsibility for upholding the post-war territorial settlement in Europe.

There is little evidence that the public was disposed to back the kind of commitment that was only made thirty years later in the wake of world war II, when a direct threat was posed to Europe by a victorious and hostile Soviet Union. Only in creating the Western Alliance in 1949, did the United States make the sort of commitment in time of peace. If this commitment had been made after world war I, it would have changed the course of history.

America committed itself in a manner which was opposed by Wilson. America's post-world war II policy embraced the means of the old diplomacy. Containment had, as its essential feature, the organization of power to counter power. In the pursuit of a stable balance of power, an alliance system was created and sustained over a period of four decades. All this can be seen as a vindication of Wilson's realism. In terms of means employed, America's cold war policy was a rejection of Wilson's vision. Bush's vision of a New World Order gives a role to force that is very far removed from the vision that Wilson entertained.

In George Bush's vision of a 'New World Order' we appear to have a reply of sorts of Woodrow Wilson's vision of a World Order.

Originally Bush administration adopted 'beyond containment' as its foreign policy watch word in 1989. According to Don Oberdorfer, the concept of a 'New World Order' was originally conceived by the president George Bush and his national security advisor, Brent Scowcroft during the President's vacation at Kennebunk port on August 23, 1990. Just after the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait. (12)

The idea behind this concept was to assess the US Options to deal with the Gulf Crisis.

'the broader ramifications of what we were doing and what it might mean, (13)

In reference to the historical context of the US foreign policy, the concept of a New World Order is comparable to the 'Concept of Containment'; more so on account of the perceived US global roles and responsibilities with the rise and fall of the communist world.

Like Wilson's vision, Bush's world order vision also emphasise the guarantee of sovereignty and territorial integrity, of small and great states, of the world. The peace of the world is to be maintained and democratic societies are to be made safe against the threat of arbitrary power, by a universal system of collective security that substitutes a community of power for a balance of power.

More over, the circumstances attending the present vision appear far more favorable than those that marked the past vision. It is not only that democratic ideals have triumphed today to a degree far beyond an earlier period, equally important, the position of American leadership that Wilson's vision of world order assumed has also been realized. After America's dominance in the world in the wake of disappearance of Soviet power, a conception of international order with which this century has dealt harshly was revived in the gulf war in 1991.

It was revived by the war not because a true community of power suddenly materialized where none had existed before, but because a hegemonic power emerged, where before there had been balance of power. The 'New World Order' proclaimed by Bush was not an order of collective security in the sense that champion's of that system had always imagined. Even so, were it to persist and to develop, it would be an order that might achieve the purpose that collective security is designed to achieve.

The Truman Doctrine, in holding out the prospect of the world in which free people's might work out their own destinies in their own way, a world that would make possible the lasting freedom and independence of all nations was vintage Wilson. The same may be said about Bush's declaration at the outlet of the Gulf crisis that:

"Every act of Aggression unpunished
strengthens the forces of chaos and
lawlessness that, ultimately threatens us all".
(14)

According to the US official thinking, the principles that underlie the idea of a New World Order, are the same principles contained in the charter of the U.N. Us president George Bush, told an audience on April 13, 1991 that:

"a new world order really describes, in
regards to us, new international
responsibilities imposed by our successes. It
refers to new ways of working with other
nations, to deter aggression, and achieve
stability, prosperity, and above all, peace".
(15)

"The cold war's end has not, unfortunately,
delivered us into an era of perpetual peace.
As old threats recede, new threats emerge.
The quest for a New World Order is, in part, a
challenge to U.S. and the International
Community, to find ways of keeping the
dangers of disorder at Bay". (16)

For more than four decades, America's energies were focused on containing the threat to the free World from the forces of communism. That war is over. Soviet Union has vanished from the map and in its place new and free nations are erected. The Warsaw pact has passed in to the pages of history. Twice this century, a dream borne on the battle fields of Europe died after the shooting stopped. The dream of a world in which powers worked together to ensure peace; to settle their disputes through co-operation, not confrontation.

For Americans, the Great War was a moral crusade to establish a New World Order in which democracy would finally be safe. Even before the US entered the war, Woodrow Wilson called for a peace without victory. In a speech delivered in January, 1917 he proposed for the first time a league of peace to check aggression collectively:

"I am proposing, as it were, that the nations should with one accord adopt the doctrine of president Monroe, as the doctrine of the world: that no nation should seek to extend its polity over any other nation or people, but that every person should be left free to determine its own polity, its own way of development, unhindered, unthreatened, unafraid, the little along with the great and powerful". (17)

New World Order as perceived by the US, includes certain concrete issues under pinning the US foreign policy in the new global structure. In President Bush's words:

".....where diverse nations are drawn together in a common cause, to achieve the universal aspirations of man kind; peace and security, freedom and the rule of law". (18)

Though primarily aimed at the future formulation of US policies, the concept bore an objective, internationalistic content; the future shape of the world as US saw it; or the sum of structural features of the post-cold war era politics with special reference to the US approach and response towards them. At its core, the concept connoted three different but chained processes interplaying simultaneously in the new world; the shape of things after the demise of Soviet Union; the structural changes emanating from this transitional phase which led to the changed world; U.S. approach and role during this period and after.

The end of cold war meant that the East-West tussle for influence was gone, the reunification of Germany meant to reshaping the structure of security in Europe. With the process of the falling of communist regimes in Eastern Europe, an era of transitions began which took the European continent to an internal strife as in case of Yugoslavia, peaceful parting of the ways as in Czechoslovakia, reunification of Germany or replacement of communist oriented authoritarianism by political experimentation with other forms of government. The demise of the Soviet Union led to the emergence of new realities, obsolete security arrangements, disengagement from the regional disputes like Afghanistan, Cambodia, Angola, Cuba, Nicaragua etc. The Gulf war of 1991, manifested in its aftermath the redundancy of the traditional balance of power in the region on one hand, and need for a new security arrangements among regional countries on the other.

In these circumstances, Bush emphasized the need for;

“the UN to become a forum for achieving international consensus and maintain effective influence as an instrument for international peace keeping”. (19)

This leads to the inference that the US sees UN to be a vehicle for promotion of her interests in the execution of the foreign policy objectives. New World Order is basically an international system in which the United States and its like minded friends, act together under the aegis of the United Nations, to preserve or establish peace by holding international law and order against aggressors, law breakers and oppressors. Such a world order was

championed by Bush and James Baker since the collapse of Soviet Union and political changes in Eastern Europe.

Robert Oakley, in his speech had said that:

"A new world order does not mean that nations must surrender national sovereignty or forfeit national interests. But the notion of what such an order could be, springs from hopes for a world based on shared commitment, among nations large and small, to a set of principles: peaceful settlement of international disputes, solidarity against aggression, reduced and controlled arsenals, and just treatment of all peoples". (20)

This order, this ability to work together, got its first real test in Gulf war of 1991. One of the most acute dangers posed to international peace and stability is the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the attention of the international community was greatly accelerated by the Gulf war, in which, it was feared that Iraq might use chemical or biological weapons delivered by missiles or other means.

The months after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on 2nd August, 1990 President Bush spoke of a New World Order. Persian Gulf war was a test of whether the possibilities for peace and justice in international relations, that had been created by the end of cold war could be realized and even institutionalized. After the war it seemed feasible to establish a global security system, based on norms, administered by international institutions, and resting on the commitment of leading states to the maintenance of peaceful international relations. What seemed to make such a project plausible was the absence of ideological rivalry among states i.e. United States and Soviet Union.

In retro aspect, the Gulf war was an ambiguous interlude in a wider process of restructuring that had been going on since the cold war's end. The military operation organized in Washington, code-named Desert Storm, demonstrated that American defence technology was capable of defeating any formidable third world enemy within a short period. Further, the one sided outcome of that Gulf War was thought to teach Islamic world perceived by many Americans as the new focus of evil in the aftermath of the collapse of communism – a vital lesson, that the Christian West was in control, and thus its economic and strategic interests could not be threatened by Islamic forces without dire and humiliating consequences. The results of the war also reshaped the debate over power relations after the cold war, and also with the abdication of Soviet Russia from the Super Power status, the world is understood to have come under a unipolar system of influence. There is no competition, any more between the bipolar forces in maintaining or extending their respective spheres of influences. The war also exposed the abject surrender of the UN to before the US policy requirements but also underlined the ineffectiveness of other major powers of the world in finding and asserting any alternative course of action.

As President Bush had said: Peace, security, freedom and the rule of law, like wise the New World Order had two pillars: a pillar of Democracy and a pillar of freedom from aggression. On his visit to Ukraine, Bush said that:

“United States stands committed to a New World Order based upon what Shevchenko (21) called a new and righteous law’ --- the rule of law and the guarantee of real economic freedom, political freedom, religious freedom” (22)

"In the Gulf, we seek to demonstrate the idea that we have truly turned a age in the history of relations among nations and that the World Community, acting collectively will no longer tolerate the terror and intimidation which have blighted the International System since the time immemorial". (23)

"At the same time in Central and Eastern Europe we are seeking to demonstrate in practice the idea that free government can mean good and stable government, and that free enterprise can mean economic opportunities for all" (24)

The excitement and hopefulness of 1989, seem part of a distant past. At the time, the collapse of Berlin wall and the process of German unification were unexpected developments. These unexpected development continued and the Eastern Europe countries recovered their political independence after decades of bureaucratic grayness and cruel domestic repression. The old Soviet internal empire was superceded by fifteen independent states. These new political entities were all committed at achieving a western-style political order and market based economy. But as the bipolarity collapsed, the discipline of the bloc system also was lost. The lack of correspondence between the territorial boundaries of states and the ethnic identification of people gave rise to intense new political and ethnic conflicts. The situation in Yugoslavia was heading towards the disaster of unbound ethnic violence, given a criminal edge by genocidal Serbian actions. The New World Order did not basically arise from successful compliances and deterrence.

The New World Order as it emerged after World War II, was principally the product of a durable consensus among a sizeable number of major and smaller states. They formed various consensus, designed both to deter external actions and to promote a different kind of International conduct among themselves, i.e. to encourage political and economic co-operation and integration, expand trade and communications, resolve conflicts peacefully etc. The various associations and institutions created for these purposes like NATO, Western European Union, European community etc. proved overtime not only durable, able to withstand external challenges and internal disintegration, but also successful in promoting prosperity, political stability, and democratic freedom among the members themselves. (25)

These European alliances and associations in European International history are not new. In 17th and 18th Century, all alliances worked almost purely as instruments of power politics, i.e. self-defence, war and territorial expansion. These associations lasted only as long as they served the special interests of the contracting parties. The 19th and 20th Century alliances were more durable, but still normally served the power – political ends of defence against and acquisition of special advantages. Because they primarily served the special interests, their very durability and reliability, and the resultant rigidity of alliance systems, became a prime cause of war, especially World War I. (26)

The late 20th Century has seen durable international alliances and associations of a new kind, directed not simply against common dangers, but also for constructive purposes. They were more durable and reliable. It is this startling change in the structure, purposes and uses of international alliances and associations that makes the New World Order new.

The collective action that gave birth to New World Order, the Persian Gulf War, was not at all new. Compliance and deterrence were not absent from the emergence and the operation of the New World Order. The creative power behind building of New World Order, was a broad process of political and cultural learning. This process of collective learning shows most clearly in the defeated enemies of World War II. The process involved absorbing and internalizing few lessons, that old power politics would not work and that new and different means of achieving objects would be needed. This formula, fits all the major post-world war II achievements, those changes that are now permanent and irreversible (in Germany, Japan, Britain, France, other former colonial powers, Western Europe), those changes that under went in Eastern Europe, and those apparently starting in Middle East, Africa, China, India and Pakistan, and Central and South America.

Perhaps, no requiem for the cold war was more poignant, therefore, than the embrace of neo-Wilsonian constructs by the last Soviet President, Mikhail Gorbachev. Speaking at Stanford University in May, 1990 he seemed to paraphrase Wilson's 'Peace with out victory' speech to the US Senate in January, 1917:

"I am convinced that we stand on the threshold of reviving the concept of alliance building until now, alliances have been built on a selective, and infact discriminatory, basis. They wee based on setting countries against each other ---- But we are approaching a time when the very principle of alliance – building should become different. It should mean unity to create conditions for a life worthy of human being". (27)

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