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Author(s): Samir Amin

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US Hegemony: Need to Reshape European Politics

Samir Amin

US intervention in Kosovo defines a new world order with the replacement of UN by NATO, the alignment of Europe with the US and military reinforcement of US hegemony. If the European project is to be salvaged from this situation, it must be on the basis of a more modest concept of a 'Europe of nations', with a friendly and non-aggressive approach to Russia, China and the third world.

WHILE the simplistic economic discourse of neo-liberalism holds that the globalisation of a deregulated market (that is to say, regulated unilaterally by capital) should spontaneously produce peace and democracy, the facts prove that US military hegemony is the necessary condition for the functioning of this system, ensuring as it does both its domination by the Triad (US-Canada, western Europe and Japan), and the submission of Europe and Japan to America's strategic objectives.

This a unipolar world can be checked by multipolar globalisation, the only strategy that would allow acceptable social development for the different regions of the world, and thereby the democratisation of societies and the reduction of motives for conflict. The US's strategic hegemony is today the principal enemy of social progress, democracy and peace.

The reply the dominant forces brought to the crises that have occurred in rapid succession since 1990 and the chaos engendered by the establishment of the neo-liberal utopia reveal both the US's hegemonic goals and the dissolution of the European project.

The Gulf crisis had already revealed Washington's objectives. Secretly encouraging Saddam Hussein to invade Kuwait, the US turned the situation to its own benefit in order to establish a military protectorate over the petrol states of the region, with the blessing of Europe and the UN, domesticated for the occasion. The Iraqi regime's use of nerve gas against the Kurdish guerilla movement, which had never bothered western diplomatic circles before, was suddenly orchestrated by the media to justify the systematic destruction of Iraq.

Encouraged by this first success, the US then became involved in European affairs, exploiting the Yugoslavian crises in a bid to achieve a variety of objectives, not least the surrender of the European Union. It is not my intention to disregard the principal responsibilities of the fragmented local ruling classes, all of which chose

ethnic chauvinism as a means of reconstituting, to their profit, a 'legitimacy' to replace that of Titoism which had been based on social progress and the equality of nations. Ethnic cleansing was therefore practised by all these ruling classes, in Croatia (through the expulsion of the Serbs, a majority in Krajina) as in Bosnia (by each of the three components of this absurd state – for, if coexistence is possible in the 'little Yugoslavia', why would it not be so in the large one?) and in Serbia (Kosovo). But we must admit that Europe threw oil on the fire by its almost immediate acceptance of Slovenia and Croatia's unilaterally proclaimed independence, without the imposition of any conditions in terms of respect for the rights of the minorities created by the explosion of Yugoslavia. This decision could only serve to encourage the criminal regimes in question. The point was made at the time, but the media abstained from any critical analysis of the policy inaugurated, it must be said, by Germany, but which an initially reticent France resisted no longer than two weeks. Subsequently, the media systematically applied double standards, mobilising all the means at its disposal to denounce massacres in one place while ignoring them in another.

The massacres in Kosovo and the provocation practised by its 'Liberation Army' (was it any better, at the outset, than the Basque ETA?) provided the pretext for the US's systematic intervention, already put to test in Bosnia. This intervention is based on three principles: (1) the brutal replacement of the UN with NATO as the means of managing the international order; (2) the alignment of Europe with Washington's strategic objectives; (3) the adoption of military methods reinforcing US hegemony (no-risk bombing campaigns and the use of European troops for an eventual ground intervention).

The consequences of these choices are catastrophic at all levels. They have deprived the dominant discourse on democracy and people's rights of any scrap of

credibility. They reveal that the real strategic goal, beyond Serbia, is Russia and China – a fact that American strategists do not refrain from stating. NATO, now openly the tool of American expansionism, and no longer that of European defence has thereby been able to put an end to illusions of 'European autonomy', forcing the EU into a new alignment, even more severe than that imposed in the past under the pretext of the 'cold war'.

The only option which would have had some meaning for Europe would have been to inscribe its construction within the perspective of a multipolar world. The margin of autonomy that this option defines would have allowed the invention of a socially valid project, in keeping with the best humanitarian and socialist European traditions. This option, of course, implied the recognition of the same margin of autonomy for Russia, China, and each of the large regions of the third world. It also implied that the NATO page would be turned, once and for all, and replaced by the concept of a European defensive force, which could be integrated gradually at the rhythm of European political construction itself. It implied, furthermore, the conception of adequate modes of regulation at the European level, and at the level of the world system, to replace the dominant forms; Bretton-Woods, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI). By choosing liberal globalisation, Europe has in fact renounced the use of its potential economic competitiveness, and been satisfied to navigate in the wake of Washington's ambitions, of which it has become the zealous servant.

The fact that the European states have chosen this path reveals the frailty of the European project itself, and even the fact that this project is only a subaltern priority on the scale of dominant political visions. Great Britain's fundamental option since 1945 has been to console itself for the loss of its imperial role by reliving it vicariously through the US. Germany, having given up the insane nazi dream of world conquest, has chosen to limit its ambitions to the means at its disposal by reconstituting its traditional zone of influence in east and south-east Europe, tailgating Washington's global hegemonic strategy. For somewhat similar reasons, Japan – confronted with China, and even Korea – has also inscribed its strictly regional expansionist ambitions within the same global American perspective.

Today, Blair and Schroder are, clearly, not only the most dangerous gravediggers of the traditions that were once the pride of the European left, but also the servile executors of America's anti-European project. Their association with Clinton in

the so-called 'third way' discourse must be the object of no illusions, for the new 'Clinton doctrine' that has been announced aims – after Yugoslavia – 'to turn on the east and the middle east'. Robert I Hunter, senior adviser at the Rand Corporation and US ambassador to NATO from 1993 to 1998, recently wrote the following in the *Washington Post* (April 21), with respect to the Clinton doctrine and its application in Kosovo: "It is the gateway to areas of intense western concern – the Arab-Israeli conflict, Iraq and Iran, Afghanistan, the Caspian Sea and Transcaucasia. Stability in south-eastern Europe must be a precursor to protecting western interests and reducing threats from farther east." Again, the only question is that of protecting western interests (such as oil and pipelines, or the flourishing of MacDonald's), not democracy or the rights of Kurds and Palestinians.

We must therefore expect a policy of systematic provocation in Russia and China. As for west Asia, as it is clearly impossible to imagine the US bombing Israel to make it accept the Palestinian state and the return of refugees (the official motive for the intervention in Kosovo!), the use of force in Lebanon (where

Hizbullah's 'fanaticism' can serve as a pretext) and Syria (an 'undemocratic' regime) will be the means of imposing the Pax Israeliana.

Can the European project be saved from this debacle? Things being what they are, the only means of climbing back up the slope that leads to the eradication of the European project implies that the political forces attached to it – in France, Germany or Italy – should rethink this project in terms of what is immediately possible – in other words, in terms of return to a more modest concept of a 'Europe of nations', while waiting for the progressive ripening of co-operation. This in turn would imply a friendly – and non-aggressive – approach to Russia, China and the third world and, in this framework, a revival of the UN's functions. Once again, this is not the option taken by the European governments, including the socialist majority. The priority given to the ultra-conservative management of a fictive single currency, the support for globalised liberalism and the US's hegemonic strategy are arrayed against the project of a multipolar world, and will lead to the worst catastrophes imaginable, for Europe and the rest of the world.

It was president George Bush who initiated the post-cold war new world order by organising a coalition of allies to launch operation desert storm against Iraq in 1991. Iraq had attacked Kuwait and the UN Security Council had supported action against Iraq. But the allied operations were largely US and British with Saudi and Kuwait financing, and not carried out by the UN itself. The US strategy was that of a UN legal framework providing the umbrella for US and its allies.

If law is an ass, international law qualifies more appropriately for the epithet. Currently, the US action against Yugoslavia is taken under the auspices of the 19-member North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO): three of them – Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic – became members in March on the eve of the air strikes. The validity of NATO action under international law has been questioned and Yugoslavia has appealed to the international court of justice. The US state department spokesman pooched the appeal since the court cannot do anything if the US does not accept its jurisdiction in the matter. Austria a neutral country by its peace treaty and not a member of NATO but otherwise a western country and member of European Union specifically denied air corridor facilities for NATO. Austria stated that it would have been bound to participate had the action been authorised by the UN or the Organisation of Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). The OSCE has a broad-based membership including Russia and the US. OSCE provided the monitors/verifiers under the October 1998 agreement on Kosovo. Without a UN Security Council umbrella resolution there is some doubt on the legality of NATO strikes against a sovereign country in a conflict like a civil war – the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) fighting the Yugoslav Army. Indeed, the Rambouillet agreement recognises Yugoslav sovereignty and the US would most likely seek a UN framework either under the Security Council or under the Human Rights Commission. It has taken preemptive action on the occasion of its 50th anniversary celebrations in Washington at the end of April asserting NATO's right to take similar action as in Kosovo in other parts of the world and being worried about nuclear proliferation in south Asia. Indeed if international law is an ass, the 19-member NATO is more universal than the 10 times larger UN!

More worrisome than international law has been the combined aggression of NATO technology, information and propaganda. From the outset this has seemed the major preoccupation of US and British heads of government, foreign and defence

World Order Designed by US

India's Options

S Nanjundan

The Kosovo crisis and NATO action demonstrate that the United Nations and the international court of justice have become irrelevant in the post-cold war unipolar world. Globalisation has conferred power, prestige and prosperity on the US. India now has no choice but to develop an independent deterrent and grow stronger economically.

THE last year of the second millennium has been witnessing the collapse of the post-1945 world order of peace and security ensured through the United Nations. Instead the post-1991 post-cold war unipolarisation has intensified into unbridled aggression and unilateral violation of national sovereignty not authorised by international law.

The hopes and expectations of the early 1990s that with the collapse of the Soviet Union the framework of global governance would become more broad-based, more equitable and more participatory have been belied. The US the sole superpower, while helping in the restructuring and rationalisation of the economic and social activities of the UN, has strongly resisted reform of the UN's political security and peace-keeping activities. In a world no

longer bipolar, no longer needing mutual deterrence by two equally armed opposing groups, the US has favoured retention of the monopoly of power in the Security Council by the five nuclear weapons states having permanent membership and individual veto. Indeed decision-making, both economic and political, is sought to be shifted from the United Nations to the developed countries' G-7 which has been expanded as G-8 to include Russia. Not only have proposals to expand membership of the Security Council not materialised; the former UN secretary general Boutros Ghali's well intended moves for a permanent fund and a permanent source of manpower for giving teeth to peace-making have been set aside by the most developed countries particularly the US.