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RETHINKING THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEMIC TRANSFORMATION

The end of the Cold War following the collapse of the Soviet state as well as the termination of its state ideology offered the scope to reform the existing state structure, creating newer ones as well as eliminating longlasting regimes in others. The extent and degree of the transformation of the post-Cold War system has not been envisioned immediately since the very shock of the communist demise may have actually jolted the dreamers of a future global order, caught unprepared by the sheer magnitude of implications to follow. Whether there should be a global nuclear freeze leading to a total disarmament now, as the optimist pacifist hoped for or whether the sheer anarchic prospects that were unleashed with primitive vengeance and had characterized the Balkan model of sub-nationalist warfare, would emerge as the reigning standard for new times to come these two extremes have to be confronted as the parameters of analysis for systemic sustenance.

This paper aims at interpreting some of the diverse directions of systemic transformation which is an area of central concern to any serious student devoted to the contending theories of international relations. The question of systemic survival or the reverse of it, meaning the collapse of the post-War international system following the end of the Cold War, is a

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sensitive issue that currently remains conveniently shadowed by the tricky application of the term "transitional" stage, as if, the flow of time and the crystallization of a transformed structure has to prevail in order to define a new system. Chances are that just as past international systems over the last two hundred years have been defined by large scale violent upheavals as the dividing interludes for system transformation, we may perhaps be invoking appropriate sensation-creating standards of global destructive magnitude in order to project system-transformation.¹ But perhaps truly enough, there are grounds to reconsider the merits of a transitional-character argument as a more appropriate index of the global search for systemic identity.

The paper strives to rearrange, therefore, some of the recognizable peculiarities that may offer directions towards building the basic parameters of a probable and viable system fixation. The consequent research value of this academic exercise would be to gain a clearer understanding of the ethics of the system-transforming process, whereby, the current set of renewed global transactions may be placed within indentifiable patterns of either distinctiveness or continuity. The paper is also an attempt towards extension of ideas as a part of a lot of scholarly literature being produced on this subject.²

A system is often distinguished from the other by applying the criteria of international politics being rearranged through a process of the leading systemic contenders balancing each other's powers as a major reshuffle. This realist interpretation is how Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger sought global balancing when they initiated the detente process which although short-lived, made way for an eventual drastic and sweeping breakthrough during the Reagan-Gorbachev period and wrecked the very pillars of the Cold War systemic structure.³ Considering the proposition that a world order implies a stable distribution of power among the major states, a new and

1. R.N. Rosecrance, *Action and Reaction in World Politics*; Boston, Little Brown, 1963.

2. Joseph S. Nye. "What New World Order", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 71, No. 2, Spring 1992, p.84.

3. S. M. Hersh, "Kissinger and Nixon in the White House", *The Atlantic Monthly*, May 6, 1982, pp. 35-68.

unstable balance-seeking fluid process may take a longer time to settle down since the evolution of an institutionalized structure with new rules of the game laid down would require many of the contending parties to settle for whatever emerges as acceptable criteria for the leading actors. There is also the liberal's perspective as well, where, relations among peoples, measured by broad values of democracy and human rights, acquired a new significance in the system-transforming mechanism. In this liberal formula, international law and institutions, revolving around redefined premises for a far more expanded role of the United Nations, the specialized agencies and regional organisations, gains credence.⁴

In the present circumstances of system-restructuring, there is indeed a great deal of practical concern, whether a unipolar global order under an American patronage may be inevitable to the extent that possible American inclination of not readily yielding to United Nations-based world order or of initiating Euro-American hegemonic culture with a benign American approach of over-all controls appear rather likely to continue to prevail in the future which seems to unfold. Typically enough, the Bush Administration applied the characteristics of a 'Realist' order-seeking balancing method while its rhetorics had appeared more attuned towards portraying the Wilsonian-Carter model of an idealist-liberal order.⁵

Considering the extent to anarchic potential in this global transformation process labeled as transitory, there was indeed a relative level of splendid stability within the imposed world order of the Cold War in the sense that dormant issues of territorial and nationalist claims remained deactivated not only in Europe but even in a lot of the outlying extensions of the Cold War peripheral sphere. Although Third World conflicts did conflagrate as a reflection of sub-systemic value structures, erstwhile Soviet military power did help to deter escalatory pressures and had often neutralized any possible severe economic war among the trio of U.S., Japan

4. Paul H. Nitze, "World Order From Hiroshima To Kuwait", *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 44, No.4, Autumn 1991, pp.8-15.

5. Michael Mandelbaum, "The Bush Foreign Policy", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 70, no. 1, 1991.

and West European competitive economies, Although it may appear hypothetical, perhaps a Soviet Union as a Cold War super-power may have contained Iraqi temptations to occupy Kuwait for the sake of stability in the Cold War deterrent structure.

While acknowledging the uncertainties in the context of the transitional dynamics, it would be perhaps an act of over-optimism to suggest, as analysts like Francis Fukuyama does, that the collapse of the Soviet Union heralds the end of history, meaning that liberal capitalism has won the final ideological battle and that the great ideological debate of the century which actually constituted the mainstream of contemporary international history, is finally over.⁶ Perhaps in an emerging systemic crystallization, liberal capitalism may confront no serious threat beyond a co-existence with a market socialism concept which conforms with the basic ethics of the market economy approach and is an eventual step-by-step progression, like the Chinese seem to be moving towards. Future patterns of economic integration or the lack of it are important in formulating the destiny of both democracy and the market structure. But there may be the likely birth of new sources of international conflict which remained temporarily buried under the scourge of ideological compulsions, specially in East Europe. A recent paper by John Mersheimer entitled "Back To the Future" demarcates the apprehensions of turning the clock backwards, although we know that institutionalized structures as those of West Europe apply very firm and stable cushion-effect in retrieving realities from turning towards the untamed variety of East European resurgent nationalism as well as those in regions with fragile colonial boundaries where ancient animosities fit the solution of neither self-determination nor supranationalism.

The most promising transitional reality may be the contrast between the newly-found basis for nationalist claims in the current state of sharp increase of self-determination prerogatives as well as a fluid under-current of sub-nationalist claims even across established boundaries, and the

6. Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?", *The National Interest*, Summer 1989, New York, pp. 3-18. See also, his article titled, "A Reply To My Critics", *The National Interest*, Winter 1989/90, pp.21-28.

intellectual demand for internationalism meaning integration both on a regional and global basis, which is a consequence of changed global trading patterns as well as increasing ecological compulsions. On the one hand, regional cooperation and trading blocs seems to gain greater levels of integrative potential due to the global strategies of large transnational corporations promoting innovative economic linkages as well as minimizing the time components in communications and media coverage abilities, thus shrinking the world further. On the other hand, nationalism seems to have further modified the statehood dilemma, leading to a growing number of insurgent moves worldwide, as if in search to promote a growing number of shockingly vulnerable mini-states.

The negative apprehensions deserve a calculated mending mechanism in the context of a system formation for, just as transnationalism has powerful integrative values, it also generates the drug industry, the terrorist networks and even the global warming process, along with the dreadful AIDS virus. The collapse of the Soviet Union has loosened the earlier tight Soviet controls on nuclear technology and have led to the denial of any Russian ability to control the erstwhile Soviet client allies in any comparable manner on matters of territorial defense. The transitional character of the world order has been referred to as a possible turn towards disorder because of definite symptoms of anarchic prospects brewing up in regions where in the past, stable super structures maintained forced balance and status quo though they could be vulnerable and crisis-prone.⁷ Whether situations as those of Bosnian statehood may be finally contained as a matter of ultimate paradox due to an increasingly complex nature of NATO's emerging role-perception, would constitute revealing behaviour regarding manipulative choices of the newly-emerging systemic contenders.

In formulating an emerging systemic order based on the hypotheses that the past system has undergone basic alterations in geo-military power configuration, it is necessary to turn towards the theoretical prospects of a

7. Michael T. Clare, "Wars in the 1990s : Growing Firepower in the Third World" *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, May 1990, pp. 9-13.

new global power distribution: It is understandable that in defining a systemic transformation, which would be normally attributed to violent extremes, it is the changed military context that remains nonetheless the most crucial factor in determining system alteration, including possible shifts in deterrence relationships at the systemic level that may fully nullify the relevance of long-drawn alliance structures. Abolition of the Warsaw Pact, the rapid erosion of NATO's credibility despite its role-searching pretensions and the undoing of many of the long-term bilateral defence agreements initiated by earlier super powers' prerogatives, now clearly compels adoption of new rules of the game for any new system formation process.

The first and obvious concern springs from a largely American self-indulgence of promoting a unipolar world order where the USA can see itself playing the central role in global decision-making. This is perhaps valid in an ideological context when we notice an overall global acceptability of the market economy approach and a gradual erosion of allegiance regarding the moral perpetuity of communism or other related systems. But beyond the ideological basis in applying unipolarity, there is also considerable sense in such an expression to the extent that a very large portion of the systemic transition, whatever be its content at this stage, had been pre-empted, triggered and sustained with American patronage. Only a unified West Europe can maintain a comparable collective thrust in order to expedite or pacify any American effort towards preferred directions of change. Clinton's election pledges on Bosnia failed completely because the Europeans, and specifically, the British government accommodated "enlightened" policies of genocide and territorial expansion within the wider policy of avoiding escalatory pressures of such violence across Europe, which is purely a cost-benefit calculation and Clinton's enlightened mind chose to join the European ineptitude. Such a policy appears to be a benign-neglect approach but the shrewd, calculated and role-defined character of it is in no doubt when the U.N. arms embargo serves definite functions and there is very little extra-regional intervention of any sort. Western public opinion have also led to an abolition of statesmanship.

An aspirant European role which may be thrust into the unlikely choice of replacing the United States as the conscience-keeper in an emerging system has indeed lost its reliability forever, with the Balkans burning once again and reviving memories of the notorious power-tactics of the colonial past when European flesh-hunters sought delight at Versailles on Germany's humiliation and had scoffed off Wilson's idealism, all with a moral fervor. Growing racism across the mainstream European states have mostly surpassed past barometers of socio-political stability-threatening criteria and indicate a sharp turn towards intolerance and a lack of moderation, which had been the most significant factors to dissuade the case for ethno-religious secularism in Europe. Europeans may opt for integration as a way of gaining certain important collective advantages but such integrative values do not seem to deemphasise the role of the nation identity in its narrowest and parochial sense as elected governments choose to amend immigration policies with increasing repressive measures in response to anti-immigrant violence.

Japan in its serenely-defined status as an economic super-power continues to maintain a low profile political thrust on global politics and concedes most reluctantly to even a peace-keeping role for itself that might involve military manpower contribution. The Russians do have the nuclear military capability of a far higher magnitude than any other European power and it also compares well with that of the USA in the realm of strategic long-range missiles.⁸ It may still be considered possible that despite the Soviet collapse and the proliferation of nuclear weaponry beyond Russia into the hands of Ukrainians, Bylo-Russians, Georgians and the Kazakhis, a peaceful and friendly state of deterrence can operate at a conscious level between the Americans and the Russians. The current state of Russian economic transition does remain wildly focused on gaining some semblance of transformation although it means negative output for over the initial ten years or so. There can be little prospect of her militarization and a greater prospect of her being dismantled militarily.

8. Charles Krauthammer: "The Unipolar Moment", in Graham T. Allison and Gregory F. Treverton, Eds, *Rethinking American Security: Beyond The Cold War to a New World Order*, N. Y. Norton, 1992.

In the foreseeable future, Russian policy may continue to develop its new-found role-identity as more of a genuine-looking conformist and not really as adversary to anyone in particular unless specific time-bound events or issues create temporary foes of inconvenience, as currently the Bosnians, both Muslims and Croats, for the sake of the Serb cousins.

China maintains an independent political distance from the USA but she is not currently in a position to deter the unipolar perspective which the USA can mobilize as long as Europe offers consent. It may be argued on the other hand that American inclinations to move away from foreign policy issues in favour of greater domestic compulsions may create circumstances of likely disinterest to impose hegemonic ideas- even on the favourite human rights abuse theme. To a certain extent however, the U.S. unipolarity at this time appears to be subservient to a status quo-minded Europe and even resistant to needed global change.

A future world order is unlikely to return to bipolarity in either a political or ideological context. Only a Russian policy of promoting military parity vis a vis the USA for the sake of any competitive deterrence relationship could offer, if at all, any viable prospect for a bipolar military relationship. The likelihood of Russia to promote its military power for the sake of bipolarity is non-existent and furthermore, she can no longer draw up any internal rationale of any western security threat as before, when the East European region served as the first security perimeter, and is now totally non-existent. The theme of multipolarity in an emerging systemic equation has certain practical and feasible prospects although any pronounced significance of such a theme lacks any thorough content at a time when power blocs based on ideological commitment are non-existent. Yet, there are impressive potential groupings which are of a futuristic nature considering the enormous flexibility in future reordering options. Russia's future emergence is not a simple or a short time-span prospect, considering her politico-economic transition complexities as well as her essential stages of aid-dependent recovery. China, despite her impressive socialist strides and a very stable economic growth, will still continue as a modestly self-

sustaining country for many years to come and can at best make a few gigantic strides at certain specific areas of economic transition. The international system as it tends to stabilize itself, is unlikely to undergo a transfer of leadership into new hands, although flexible interest-groups operating on an ad hoc basis will inevitably create new system-sustaining regimes.

West Europe and Japan, along with the other developed states as Australia, Canada, and the Scandinavian region, are likely to maintain the global multipolar projection with a new meaning added to it, following the post Cold War compulsions to restrain American-imposed unipolarity at some point or under particular circumstances. In most cases however, a more effective coalition of the USA joining forces with these regional power sets would be the more inevitable and articulate combination, geared towards addressing global issues as they appear to either serve them or threaten them. Regional powers or mid-ranking states of the semi-developed category, like India, Brazil, South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Argentina, the oil-rich Arab states and other similar powers seem to have moved considerably away from whatever earlier distinct identity they had possessed, be it a non-aligned status, a committed super power ally status or a surrogate status, except for client regimes of the Middle East-type, whose lack of uncertain popular support have continued to require placing their strategic oil resources at the service of protector patron ally just as in the Cold War period. Allies like Pakistan and Israel have very different meaning to the United States now with a totally contrasting set of strategic utility to be derived from them when they are compared to each other in terms of extremes with a more obnoxious nuisance value, as far as American interests matter.⁹ If restrictive economic blocs tend to emerge, Europe and Japan would contest the U.S. for global economic hegemony. But present global technological transactions suggest a global openness rather than restricted regionalism or closed policies. The United Nations system offers much promise to draw in larger numbers of small states within the folds of global vision of an ecology-biased global survival.

9. Spurgeon M. Keeny, Jr. and Wolfgang Panofsky "Controlling Nuclear Warheads and Materials: Steps Toward A Comprehensive Regime", *Arms Control Today*, Jan./Feb. 1992, pp. 3-9.

There are also the uncertainties of future military-oriented security; policies with possibly sensitive lapses in nuclear proliferation much due to the refusal of contenders to abide by the discriminatory nature of proliferation regimes and the inevitable changes in global military hierarchy that may be triggered off for example, by any American acknowledgement to promote Germany and Japan as permanent members of the Security Council, hypothetically replacing France and the United Kingdom. There have been recent speculations in this regard although there has not been any authentic literature available as yet to substantiate this, Charles Krauthammer has coined an emerging trend towards a benign American hegemony following the American success in liberating Kuwait from Iraqi occupation.¹⁰ Such notions of hegemony do possess a visible emphasis on United Nations-focused role at the current global level wherein American intentions and funding commitments are considered the most crucial elements for the sake of implementing any planned U.N.-led initiative, either in Somalia, Kampuchea or even the much-criticised and hopelessly vulnerable and unresolved realities of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The prospect of a U.N. based global structure appears compatible with the present American diplomacy focused on creating the notions of consensus-based legitimate international transactions in which UN-initiated actions do not confront rejection from the erstwhile Third World states of the anti status-quo character. Rather than any open criticism or confrontation at the United Nations in carrying out massive peace-keeping operations under its flag. There has been a radical yet silent revolution in the area of collective action in global crisis belts despite the reality that U.N. troops do suffer from a dreadful inability to confront direct aggression or to resort to any meaningful war that may desist aggression or expansion. The United Nations is yet to acquire a mandate to deal on politically sensitive military matters from a military perspective of its own. Undoubtedly, the sacrifices imposed upon a helpless population in Bosnia-Herzegovina would create powerful and educative precedents to learn on future prospects of confronting genocide, perhaps much after the price is paid in the Balkans.

10. Charles Krauthammer, *op. cit.*

The sad reality of the new global systemic reordering is its very process of distorted emergence in which, despite the tremendously powerful instruments of violence available to mankind to counter genocide or aggression, the latter is allowed to unfold itself in a part of Europe near which the most destructive defensive weapons of deterrence had been installed for over forty years of the Cold War in order to maintain unbridled peace across the Iron Curtain. The character of the emerging international system may be considerably influenced by the lessons of the current United Nations-centric international peace-keeping initiatives, the limits, prospects, support and domestic response to such peace-keeping endeavours and the final consequences for altered actions in the future. While the national military institutions in most states have now found themselves linked to a new role model beyond national requirements, there is bound to be a greater degree of internationalization of military structures which in effect may do a great deal to demote undue emphasis on chauvinist national sovereign issues and help to create a more internationalist and technology-biased global order whose values and standards are perhaps more well-defined than ever before.