

# After the Euphoria

It's now Obama's Turn. Given the depth of Bush's Unpopularity and the stunning collapse on Wall Street it was not unexpected. No doubt a spirit of change took root in American psyche and Barack Obama became its embodiment. A black president for America for the first time does not mean Black-Americans would be able to get rid of age-old racial discrimination so easily. Yet a blackman's extra-ordinary journey to the White House will inspire the underprivileged irrespective of their colour, in his country. In all fairness the question of racism is a domestic issue for American people. It does not have much impact on America's foreign policy orientation. Washington's foreign policy reflects American hegemonism. No matter whether American president belongs to Democratic Party or Republican Party, the legacy of American domination and overlordism remains unchanged.

For quite some time Bush has been trying to clean up the Iraqi quagmire by covertly making a deal with Iran, without however acknowledging it in public. A triangular accommodation formula of Shia-Sunni-Kurd is all that is required to neutralise Iran's influence in Iraq before downsizing America's military strength in that hapless country. Iran too seems to be responding while not losing momentum in anti-Americanism even for a single day. Obama is not going to reverse Bush's Iraq policy overnight. He has no option either unless he sees illegality in Bush's invasion of Iraq. It is Afghanistan that has really become a headache for the American administration. What Obama said about Afgan war theatre during his election campaign is unlikely to make this world a less dangerous place to live in. Obama is not against sending more troops to Afghanistan. Maybe, he will opt for redeployment of some troops presently stationed in Iraq. But American and NATO forces are losing in Afghanistan not because they are small in number, but because they have turned the Afghan population against them by killing innocent citizens and supporting fathomless corrupt government of Hamid Karzai. In many ways Afghanistan, not Iraq shows the symptoms of Vietnam syndrome.

The spill-over effect of America's Afghan war is now being felt in neighbouring Pakistan with all its regional ramifications. In terms of ground reality America has extended its Afghan war to Pakistan forcing South Asian countries to react in one form or another. Even when commentators around the world were calling for Obama's victory celebration air-raids against a suspected hide-out of Taliban insurgents in south Afghanistan's Kandahar province bordering Pakistan claimed the lives of nearly one dozen civilians. In truth escalating war against al-Qaeda and Taliban in Pakistani territory has boomeranged as it has encouraged jihadists to regroup themselves and make fresh in-roads among masses. If American missiles continue to hit Pakistani people, all in the name of combating extremists, even liberals and democrats in Pakistan will take to streets against American interference. Also, the military establishment in Pakistan is clearly reluctant to fight the militants owing allegiance to Taliban and to some extent to al-Qaeda because they do not want to see America-India axis which has attained a new landmark after the Nuke deal, thanks to Bush, dominating Afghanistan. But America is indirectly forcing Pakistan to commit more troops along Pak-Afghan border to fight terror while allowing India to remain free from the grave threat posed by Pakistan-backed proxies on Kashmir front. For one thing the history of Afghanistan is a bone-chilling narrative for all colonial powers. The Soviets had to lick their wounds and pay dearly after invading Afghanistan. One reason the mighty Soviet Union disintegrated so quickly was Moscow's Afghan adventure, rather misadventure. Before the Soviets the British wept in the rugged hills of Afghanistan. Indications are that Obama is not going to change Bush's tough stance on Afghanistan. Obama has not really clarified his position on Cuba either. Democrats and Republicans do not differ much in their attitudes towards Cuba.

With the financial giants of America going down by the housing bubble triggering a global economic slow-down the myth that the world needs American leadership is vanishing. Whether they like it or not much of the world can do just fine without American leadership. And Obama has no magic wand to reverse the agonising situation created by the loss of millions of middle-class manufacturing and service sector jobs. Also, he cannot resolve the Palestine-Israel conflict to the satisfaction of all.

Then there are people who would like to swim alongwith Obama-tide. Not very long ago Indian industry hailed Bush-scripted Indo-US nuclear deal as a historic opening in business. And

after Obama's victory in presidential election which is seen by many as a 'significant event' in international affairs, the same captains of India's burgeoning corporate world hailed him as representing "a new and fresh opportunity for future of the world and India in particular". But Obama's desire to increase subsidies for US farmers is no good news for India's agriculture. The problem for all democracies, no matter whether they are big or small, is that people leave politics after the votes are counted. And American voters are no exception. With Obama euphoria subsiding it will be business as usual. Once in office Obama too will have to realise that it is an interconnected world and it is not that easy to translate his election-rhetoric, mainly against outsourcing, into action. □□□