

COMMENT

Cold War Returns

THE TERM 'PEACEFUL CO-existence' took shape way back in February 1945, barely three months before the total defeat of the Nazi-fascism, at the famous Yalta conference hosted by Stalin. But the concept never got fulfilled though it was one of the basic components for creating the United Nations Organisation. Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill signed the Yalta Declaration and cold war, not peaceful co-existence, replaced hot war in no time. Superpower rivalry produced many a local war in subsequent years defeating the very idea of 'peaceful co-existence' and development. With peace remaining elusive in the troubled regions of Asia and Africa, and Afghan war escalating, 'peaceful co-existence' makes little sense to economically and militarily weak nations.

As NATO expands towards east even in the absence of Warsaw Pact that disappeared 20 years ago, Russians find no reason in placing faith in 'peaceful co-existence'. So they are trying to build a security system which will be Europe-specific, stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok, leaving to one side the collateral one imposed by the United States. That European Union does not see eye to eye on every international issue with America is a fact of life. At every critical juncture Washington takes advantage of Europe but acts against it in a sneaky way. The invasion of Iraq and destruction of Saddam Hussein exposed the differences of focus and made it totally apparent that America has very little interest in what their European partners think if it is a case of its own interests.

At the beginning of October '08, during the World Policy Conference in Evain, French President Nicolas Sarkozy said in no uncertain terms that the current "unprecedented financial storm that is shaking the world" would provoke the birth of an era in which the link between the European Union and Russia "will be essential". The oblique reference to America as observed by the French President was actually the endorsement of a European security proposal forum by his Russian counterpart Dimitri Medvedev.

For all practical purposes the implosion of Soviet Union has created a situation in which major European powers can liberate themselves from US tutelage. If the Sarkozy-Medvedev idea gets strengthened, it would be the death of NATO, which, on the contrary, the White House strategists insist on further strengthening. Washington cannot stand the existence of *euro* though it does not admit it. Nor can it allow Russia to integrate itself with the rest of Europe. In other words cold war has never vanished from the international scenario and it is taking a new turn against the backdrop of 'financial tsunami' promoted in the first place by US speculative irresponsibility and Russia's renewed attempts to thwart NATO's expansion. □□□