

NOTE

Old Wine in New Bottle

Bharat Jhunjhunwala writes :

The world is on a joy trip on Obama assuming the reins of American Government. Most blame George W Bush for pushing the world into wars followed by recession. But Obama and Bush are following essentially same policies and both equally fail to deal with the basic problem of over-consumption by American people. Europe and Japan have become junior partners in the alliance of over-consumption forged by America.

Obama said in his inauguration speech "We will begin to responsibly leave Iraq to its people, and forge a hard-earned peace in Afghanistan." The determination to come out of Iraq is rendered meaningless by the resolve to go deeper into Afghanistan. The main complaint of al-Qaida and other jihadi groups is that America is extracting the oil of West Asia in collaboration with the ruling elites of these countries. Saddam Hussein had opposed this policy of rulers of Arab countries. He had publicly asked why twenty percent of the people in developed countries should consume eighty percent of the world's resources. In reply America highlighted his other wrongs like attack on Kurds, which were in reality smaller in content, and launched an attack on that country. The mission of establishing a pliant ruler like that of other Arab countries having been accomplished, now Obama has no hesitation in withdrawing from Iraq just as Ravana had no hesitation with Marici in command in his neighbourhood. The crux of opposition to this policy is today located in Afghanistan. America will get a license to exploit the resources of the entire developing world once Afghanistan is defeated; and continue consuming large part of the world's resources.

Indeed, Obama also said in his speech, "we can no longer afford indifference to the suffering outside our borders; nor can we consume the world's resources without regard to effect." Obama recognizes that over-consumption will bring forth reaction from others. But instead of reducing consumption, he wants to sustain it, as he argues, by using clean technologies. But he is not willing to concede that the position of the United States in the new world order will change. There is no recognition that America has to reduce consumption. On the contrary, Obama says, "We will not apologize for our way of life, nor will we waver in its defense." What this means is that America is committed to maintain high levels of consumption as much as possible by using clean technologies but also by removing the opposition in Afghanistan. Nothing will change if America wins the war in Afghanistan because the imbalance between high consumption by the few and low consumption by the many remains unaddressed.

Obama says, "We will harness the sun and the winds and the soil to fuel our cars and run our factories." But, Alas! Nothing is surplus in nature. Harnessing the sun will bring forth other problems. The monsoons, for example, are pulled by the sun heating the sands of the Thar. The hot air rises and pulls in the monsoons from the Arabian Sea. This pull-action will be hit if the sands are not heated and people may be deprived of rains. Similarly doubts have been raised about the adverse impact of wind power. It is said to harm the birds, who eat the insects

and sustain agriculture. Excessive exploitation of wind power, therefore, can lead to a crisis in agriculture. Obama's policy is that of old wine in new bottle. □□□