

Towards a Bi-polar World?

Yesterday it seemed impossible. Today it seems to have been inevitable and quite normal. What the Chinese Communist Party (CPC) has officially done is being endorsed by most communist parties (CPs) worldwide—granting formal as well as informal membership to corporate lobbyists and businessmen, including big businessmen, who, otherwise, are opposed in principle to what CPs apparently stand for—‘bloody reality of social change’. And CPs in India never seriously disclose the class composition of their party cardholders. Not that CPC did it out of love, though the radical shift seems to have come out of nowhere. Shanghai stock-brokers chanting ‘long live Mao Tse tung’ many sound funny but in today’s China all are concerned about ‘one step forward’, not ‘two steps back’. The magicians never tell the truth. So do the CPs in India. To cultivate favour from business establishments has been a time-tested practice of Indian Communists for long. And now the Chinese communists show the way as to how to legitimise it without running the risk of losing communist tag. With the changed outlook in the Chinese communist culture, comes their theory of multi-polar world which is intricately related to their efforts to make their prime position felt in world arena in every possible manner. The Chinese Ministry of Commerce statistics show in the first 11 months of 2010, the Chinese corporate tycoons made direct investment in 2,786 overseas companies in 122 countries, mostly in third world countries. The number of Chinese enterprises in Africa has already surpassed 2000 with a total investment of more than \$30 billion.

Barring China no other major power is inclined to describe the post-Soviet world as multi-polar. European Union, despite high hopes it generated at the initial stage, among colonial powers of bygone era, failed to pose itself as a counter-weight to American economic and military might, notwithstanding the recent global financial crisis that hit America most in the first place. And Russia being a shadow of its Soviet past, is no answer even to the growing challenge thrown by the multi-directional approach of the Chinese economy. Whether the mandarins in Beijing admit it or not, the world is again heading towards a bi-polar syndrome, with China for all practical purposes, going to attain the superpower status, not in the distant future as its military might, unlike Europe’s is evenly balanced by economic strength. True, China doesn’t station troops on foreign soil but its quest for oil in Asia, Africa and Latin America, is likely to fuel global rivalry which it can hardly avoid in the long run.

China’s “all weather” ally Pakistan is the key in keeping the Chinese oil flow uninterrupted. After all China now boasts of the engine of the world as they think, not quite unrealistically, that their contributions have helped the global economic recovery move forward as uncertainties about 2011 begin to surface.

Not for nothing they have spent \$200 million on the first phase in the construction of a deep water port at Gwadar in Pakistan’s Baluchistan province with “sovereign guarantees to the port’s facilities”. And Pakistan agreed somewhat willingly to surrender its sovereign authority over the port—almost a semi-colonial status as it was in many parts of pre-liberated China. Given China’s ability to grant “aid” to the needy in the third world, proxies like Pakistan will always emerge in Asia and Africa, to propel China’s foreign policy. China has a long-term plan of setting up of a series of “home ports” along its key oil supply routes from Pakistan to Sri Lanka to Myanmar. In plain language, “home port” signifies the beginning of China’s hegemonic adventure—or misadventure—beyond the traditional Chinese border. In other words China’s march towards a bi-polar world, not a multi-polar world, looks unstoppable.

One reason America maintains a global military basing system is oil, more precisely to keep sea-lanes free from intervention by any power, major or not so-major. As of late 2008 over 150,000 troops and 95,000 civilian employees are massed in 837 US military facilities in 45 countries and territories, including Iraq and Afghanistan. Then the official figure is quite misleading as to the scale of US overseas military basing. Secret or unacknowledged facilities in Israel, Kuwait, the Philippines and many other places including Pakistan, particularly after America's massive anti-Taliban operations in eastern Afghanistan are not shown.

Meanwhile, China like America has taken the matter of diversifying oil supplies very seriously. Twenty-eight percent of what's left of the world's proven oil reserves are in the Arabian world. And China's 'market in motion' could easily gobble it up while remaining thirsty still. Chinese companies have already invested a staggering \$120 billion in Iran's energy sector over the past five years. They are likely to invest more. They are also buying huge quantity of oil from Iraq as well. Even if America makes a case of Iran's illegal nuclear project, it is difficult to bomb that country to the stone age the way the Bush brigade did it in Iraq. It doesn't matter what the Chinese tell the world, it is oil that is polarising the world into two poles and China is going to occupy one, anytime soon, though this bi-polarity is stemming from one market mechanism, not the two, as it was the scenario during the Soviet era. □□□