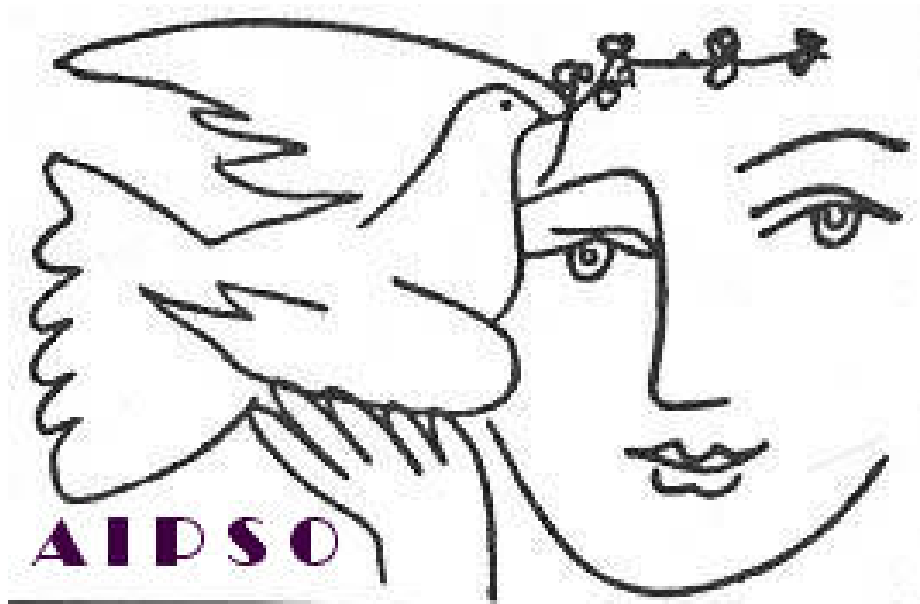


# Political Resolution



National Conference  
**All India Peace and Solidarity Organisation**  
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Pondicherry

## **Draft Political Resolution of the National Congress of All India Peace and Solidarity Organisation (AIPSO)**

The National Conference of the AIPSO recognizes that the contemporary world is passing through a very complex phase. The Congress realizes that the ushering of the new millennium was being projected as a time where the world would move towards enduring peace with the end of the Cold War and the people will be entitled to the peace dividend. It was also fervently hoped that the material and human resources will be exclusively deployed for the benefit of mankind resulting in a trajectory of sustainable development where each citizen of the world can realize their fullest potential.

We recollect we pride that the Father of Indian Renaissance, Raja Rammohan Roy (1772-1830) expressed his support as early as in the 1820s for the people of Latin America fighting against the Spanish colonial rule under the inspiring leadership of Simon Bolivar.

The organized movement of various sections of the Indian people in post-First World War period in particular had begun to stand firmly in solidarity with the peoples fighting against colonial subjugation in Africa and Asia.

C R Das, one of the greatest leaders of the Indian freedom struggle, urged to form an Asian Federation in his presidential speech at the All India Congress Session in 1921. During the 1930s, the Indian National Congress, the broad platform of various trends of the national liberation struggles organized 'Abyssinia Solidarity Movement'. Indian people supported the cause of Spanish people's fight against Nazism. The Indian National Congress sent a Medical Mission to China in 1937 when the Chinese people had been fighting against Japanese aggression.

When the Second World War broke out, the people of India had organized a broad-based anti-fascist movement. The organization like Friends of the Soviet Union (FSU) played a historic role at that time.

The people of India extended their whole-hearted support for the people of Indo-China and deplored the machinations of French colonial power. A strong Vietnam Solidarity Movement was mobilized in late 1940s in various parts of the sub-continent.

The holding of the Asian Relations Conference in Delhi in March 1947 was also a significant event. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, then head of the Indian Interim government, inaugurated the conference.

The first World Congress of Intellectuals for Peace convened in Wroclaw, Poland on 6 August 1948 and made an appeal for the struggle for peace the world over to be organized. On 20 April 1949 the first World Congress of Peace Forces, convened simultaneously in Paris and Prague. A decision was taken during this Congress to

found the World Peace Council, and a year later this decision was implemented in Warsaw, with the French academician and Nobel laureate Frederic Joliot Curie its first president.

The WPC is guided by the words of its Founder President Frederic Joliot-Curie – “Peace is Everybody’s Business”.

The first campaign organized by the WPC was to collect signatures worldwide on a petition demanding the abolition of atomic weapons.

It was quite naturally that Indian people welcomed the decision to form the World Peace Council (WPC) in and took part in the activities in the WPC since its inception.

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The situation as it was emerging called for giving our peace movement an organized shape to play a more effective role. As a result first All India Peace Conference was held in Mumbai in May 1951. The conference set the tone and perspective for the developments that followed.

The conference gave a ringing call to safeguard and strengthen India’s newly-acquired freedom which was threatened by the imperialist forces.

The delegates from all parts of India called for a united movement to carry forward the best traditions of the Indian national movement – the end to war and weapons of mass destruction, active support to all peoples and countries fighting for their independence, condemnation of imperialist aggressions and conspiracies to destabilize democratic regimes, against colonialism, against racism, against military bases and pacts, against exploitation by foreign companies and corporations, for self reliance and mutual cooperation

The urge for freedom took on a new dimension and began swiftly to spread throughout the continent of Africa, seething under cruel domination by French, British, Belgian and Portuguese imperialism.

In 1956, the Suez Canal was brought under the jurisdiction of Egypt when President Gamal Abdel Nasser was at the helm. The national liberation movements were advancing in countries like Algeria, Madagascar, Cameroon, Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea Bissau, Congo.

The Indian Committee for Asian Solidarity took the initiative to call for the holding of a conference for solidarity with the peoples of Africa and Asia. The Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization (AAPSO), which had been originated in a conference in Cairo, in 1957. India is proud to have taken the initiative for the great movement led by the AAPSO.

AIPSO after its inception in the early seventies, also started to cooperate with the Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa and Latin America (OSPAAAL)

when it was founded in Havana, Cuba in January 1966 with the stated purpose of fighting globalisation, imperialism, neoliberalism and defending human rights

Early seventies was a turning point in our movement. The organisation spread further and drew new sections. The national liberation movements in Vietnam, Angola and Mozambique, reached new heights. The NAM provided a new awakening to the people of the newly-freed countries, the attempts by the US imperialism to subvert the process of independence and threats on our sub-continent alerted our people of the dangers we faced. All this gave a new dimension to the AIPSO.

The history of AIPSO is the history of important contribution towards movement for peace, disarmament, development and solidarity with people of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The debacle of socialism in former Soviet Union and in East Europe and subsequent strengthening of imperialist hegemony made the situation difficult also for the peace movement around the globe. The World Peace Council suffered a lot. The AIPSO had to face a very difficult situation during the 1990s.

However, AIPSO has fought back the odds. It also contributed towards rejuvenating the World Peace Council as a global forum.

In 1994, a conference took place in Mexico, which was a landmark event, really, because the forces regrouped again, and a secretariat – which had disappeared – was approved, made up of the national committees from Japan, France, Portugal, Palestine and Cuba. In 2000, the headquarters of the WPC was shifted to the Capital of Greece, Athens.

AIPSO is also active in the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation. The last National conferences of AIPSO held in Patna (Bihar), 7-9 April 2007 was a big breakthrough in reviving our movement at the national level with broad political orientation to enable our organisation for carrying forward its long cherished legacy of mobilizing Indian people in defence of peace, independence, development, and social justice against the imperialist machinations.

Therefore, the AIPSO proudly shares the legacy of our anti-imperialist and anti-colonial freedom struggle and for the widest possible unity across the nations and the peoples of the world. The AIPSO remains steadfast in its appreciation for the objective of an independent policy direction of our country which will realize the goal of decolonization, ensure our contribution towards sustainable peace in the region and the world, and strive for enrichment of the economic and social life of our citizens and work relentlessly for solidarity and friendship with other peoples.

### **Contemporary Challenges**

However, this Conference notes that extremely serious and adverse developments have come to undermine these hopes and aspirations. With the end of the Cold War and the disappearance of Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, it was widely recognized that there is no further need for any military block. But dashing such hopes, not only does the NATO continue but has assumed further aggressive postures. The claim that there will be no further existence of imperialism and the notion of empire itself will not

be in vogue has been belied – imperialism led by the United States (US) spearheads its time worn policies inflicting severe burdens on the people of the world seriously undermining their capacity and aspiration to remain free and live in a peaceful world.

The new millennium has opened up with the invasion of Iraq and the seat of the oldest human civilization remain devastated by the aggressive actions of the US and NATO forces. Similarly, the purported objective of dealing with Al Qaeda in the aftermath of the terrible attacks on the World Trade towers on 9/11 in Afghanistan has now degenerated to such lower depths that the entire region is not only in convulsion but it has actually reinvigorated the Taliban and led to a consolidation of fundamentalist forces in the entire region including Pakistan.

The instability of the world due to these aggressive maneuvers and campaigns by imperialism constitute a major aspect of the contemporary challenge that we face as a peace movement. The other major dimension of the challenge arises out of the global financial crisis and the continuing aftermath in the form of economic recession and slow down which affects the lives of the people all over the world.

The current approach of imperialism to secure hegemonic control over every aspect of contemporary human civilization, resources of nations, particularly the energy resources are leading to unbearable threats of military intervention.

The specific trajectory of market-driven economy is also leading to promotion of a pattern of consumption which is also seriously jeopardizing the environment and global climate.

This makes it incumbent on this Conference to realize the multi dimensional and comprehensive and interconnected nature of these challenges which threatens not only world peace but the very survival of the planet. The peace movement in India cannot proceed in any meaningful way without assimilating the seriousness of these challenges and without evolving appropriate responses to them.

### **Financial and Economic Crisis**

A brief prognosis of the global financial crisis prompts this Conference to believe that the very economic paradigm that emerged since the early mid-seventies with the express attempt by US imperialism to pursue an economic trajectory which would unburden capitalism from the impediments that it came to face at that point of time.

The emergence of international finance capital and facilitating undeterred financial flows across the globe to seek short term speculative super profits led to pulling down internal, as well as, national barriers of sovereign laws and regulations. The drive for unhindered access to markets particularly financial markets had been the principle feature of this paradigm which has come to be globally recognized as globalization.

This imperialist globalization and its all pervasive sway need refashioning of national policies which would ensure compliance with the requirements of international finance. This had further led to the evolution of neo-liberal policies which in reality meant the redefinition of the role of Nation States. The State, in this new global dispensation, is forced to withdraw from its traditional function of providing welfare

and facilitate social development in areas like education and health care. And, concentrate on promoting the unhindered interests of the market. In economy, this led to adoption of a low tax regime with commensurate reduction in subsidies for social services for the people. This has also led to large-scale privatization and handing over of the ownership and control of natural resources to private corporates.

The obvious impact of these policies for the last so many years – particularly implemented with great intensity during the last two decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the socialist camp – is the unsustainable growth of inequality, unemployment and poverty. **[1]**

The implication was a direct and steep decline of the purchasing power of the people. This constituted the intensification of the premise which has led to the crisis. The diminution in the purchasing power was sought to be overcome through expanding credit in which the financial institutions like bank, insurance and mortgage companies got involved and induced credit driven consumption. But when this vicious circle matured the failure to repay the original debt due to the absence of repayment capacity which had gone substantially higher due to intermediate speculative activities by the institutions brought the whole financial system to a collapse. And, since this whole process was globally integrated, the collapse of the financial order in US in the housing sector threw the entire capitalist economies in a topsy-turvy.

The global financial meltdown and the subsequent economic recession have led to widespread adverse impact on productive economic activities and particularly employment. Though the intensity of the crisis is not as severe as it was till some time back, but the global economy has not recovered. Not only that, with no signs of any radical departure from this paradigm, one does not know when common citizens will come out of its aftermath.

The completely debilitating effects on the life of the citizens are continuing to be in evidence in a myriad ways. Particularly it is most pronounced in the convulsion that grips the lives of common citizen's social and economic life.

The other serious dimension of this course of neo-liberal globalization is the way it impacts on the environment and leads to global warming and other aspects of the environment. Now it has come to be established that such destruction of the environment is leading to major changes in the climate with major adverse consequence for life and livelihood of the people, particularly the global poor.

Therefore, this Conference notes that it is incumbent on the peace movement and AIPSO to sensitize our people over this pernicious paradigm promoted by the international finance capital threatening life and livelihood of the people and the survival of our very planet. Without a struggle for a change in this ominous global policy, people's life cannot be secured and peace cannot prevail.

### **Strategic and Military Dimension**

It is obvious to this Congress that such aggressive maneuvers and persuasion of the paradigm of neo-liberal globalization could not have been possible but for the overall

military and strategic domination of imperialism. It is this overall strategic and military superiority of the imperialist camp and its drive for creating a unipolar world had facilitated this course especially in the closing stages of the last century. And rightly, we here in the peace movement have sought to fight every aspect of carving out such a unilateral and unipolar direction of the world. The struggle continues.

### **Drive for Hegemony over Hydro Carbon and Other Energy Resources**

The drive for securing overall strategic and military monopoly for the imperialist camp has been associated with the forging of different military alliances and regional strategies. After the end of the Cold War, instead of pursuing demilitarization, the imperialist camp has proceeded to vigorously create new adversaries which would justify campaigns to further consolidate their domination.

The sweep of the policies of neo-liberal globalization which international finance capital wished for could have been pursued by the mere display of the military-strategic balance, but the physical control over energy resources warranted actual physical intervention.

Therefore, dovetailing of these two objectives of further consolidating the military strategic advantage and control over energy and hydro carbon resources, have led to interpretations and creation of new enemies. Otherwise, how can we explain the emergence of Al Qaeda and its pioneer Osama Bin Laden. It is in course of the struggle to dislodge the Soviets from Afghanistan that these forces – the Al Qaeda and Taliban came to be not only established but strengthened.

Subsequent to 9/11 attacks, these came in handy to justify the campaign in Afghanistan. A new definition of freedom and democracy was manufactured to justify 'pre-emptive' strike and regime change. The global corporate media which had overwhelming reach to influence public mind was deployed fully in promoting the interests of imperialism and international finance capital to demonise Saddam Hussein and carry out the invasion.

It is clear now, as never before, that Iraq invasion had nothing to do with disarming the nuclear weapon capability of the Iraqi regime led by Saddam. It was only aimed at securing the oil resources which has led to complete denationalization of the Iraqi oil wealth and brought under the ownership of US and other western global oil companies.

It is this objective of securing hegemony over energy and hydro carbon resources that continue to make West Asia and the Middle East the major contemporary theatre of violence and war. It is this drive for oil resources that is influencing the current reality of war and destruction that is ravaging West Asia and the Middle East.

### **Regional Reality in West Asia**

The Arab-Israel conflict and the Palestine question continues to endanger peace and deny the Palestinian people their legitimate right to independent nationhood. Despite tall claims by the United States that they believe in an independent state of Palestine and would like to have a two-state solution, the application of the Palestinian National

Authorities to be awarded a full membership of the United Nations saw the most unacceptable U-turn from the sole super power of the world. In continuation of the age-old imperialist policy of imposing the Zionist state of Israel and dispossessing the Palestinian people of their homeland, Obama administration denied the Palestinians their rightful place in the comity of nations – raising the bogey of security concerns of Israel.

It is this nexus of US-led imperialist camp and the increasingly aggressive machinations of Israel that West Asia continues to remain violent. The US-Israel core with adequate cheer leading from other western nations and the oil-rich monarchies which lead the Gulf council with complete absence of democracy and freedom under their own regimes are now targeting Iran to secure a complete sway over the entire region.

The excuse that US and the NATO powers advance to secure this goal is the very same one which they cited to lead the military invasion in Iraq; that Iran has nuclear weapon capability and it is moving towards producing weapons of mass destruction. Just as in the case of Iraq, no credible proof was available to substantiate these contention and the last seven years of occupation in Iraq has not even rendered an ounce of radioactive material, not to speak of actual nuclear arms, the disinformation campaign is very much afoot. Sanctions have been imposed by the imperialist camp against Iran and though there is no UN resolution through the military and security monopoly attempts are made to isolate and strangulate Iran.

Amidst the death and destruction in Afghanistan and more importantly in Iraq, the new security doctrine of US imperialism stands thoroughly exposed. At the fag end of the last century, the Bush administration embarked on its neo conservative project. The perspective document titled the 'Project for the New American Century' was formally launched. This gave official legitimacy to the notions of pre-emptive strike and regime change. And the regimes were also identified and were named 'axis of evil' and the States' concerned 'rogue'. [2]

Following the strike in Afghanistan which had some semblance of justification after 9/11, though the question remains as to why the people of a nation be punished and that nation occupied for the misdeeds of terrorists who had close links with that government; but Iraq campaign totally unmasked the viciousness of this new security doctrine. Today, seven years after occupation of Iraq in the wake of disabling the UN Security Council not trace of arms for mass destruction have been discovered. Once united, Iraq today remains badly polarized along Shias, Sunnis and Kurds. With 8.5 million dead and 10 million refugees, Iraq, today, is a haunted ruin. Violence still continues to mar peace. The high quality Iraqi oil is no longer a national asset. It is owned by US and British oil companies. But perhaps, the most ironical outcome is the great price that the US economy has to pay for this military campaign. Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz has shown the initial estimate of few billion dollars endorsed by the US Congress has actually turned out to be trillions. And, the crash of the US financial system is also largely an outcome of the Iraq campaign. And the subsequent cuts on social expenditure are the price that the US people have to pay for the waging of the war. [3]



But the overwhelming military presence of the US and NATO is also proving to be the ground for which its policies are being questioned.

The central question which the US-led imperialist camp find increasingly difficult to answer is their attitude on the Palestine question. Israelis are continuing with their settlements dispossessing Palestinians of their land and erecting a security network with 120 checkpoints and the obnoxious 800 km long wall. This expansion by the Israeli state is actually making the possibility of a two state solution untenable. It is public knowledge that Israel has a nuclear weapon programme but the US intransigence on this question in Iraq and now in Iran is completely conspicuous by its absence.

The US policies of supporting dictatorial regimes are also coming under severe question. This was evident in the outbreak of the so-called Arab Spring - first in Tunisia and then in Egypt. Doubtlessly, the popular movement for democracy in these two countries have led to the ouster of the dictatorial regimes of Ben Ali in Tunisia and Hosni Mubarak in Egypt. However, due to the marginalization of progressive forces, pro-Islamist groups have assumed power in these two countries. Lest this process, snowballs into something which the US and NATO cannot handle, it was used by the imperialist camp to dislodge Muammar Kaddafi in Libya. Again, the US and the NATO violating international laws have been able to establish a puppet regime which is facilitating the huge deposits of oil in Libya for the benefit of western oil MNCs.

With the final target for affecting a regime change in Iran, the imperialist camp has in the meanwhile focused its attention on Syria, the last surviving secular Arab nationalist regime. The opposition and its military arm – the Free Syrian Army is being bankrolled by the Emirates of Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The greatest joke is that these regimes are sponsoring the opposition for ‘restoration of democracy’ in Syria. There are Islamist regimes which want President Assad’s government to go. There is Turkey, which is trying to substitute Egypt as the main regional ally of the imperialist camp. The CIA is there on the ground and the latest entry in this battle is the Al Qaeda. They are fighting shoulder to shoulder with this US sponsored project for a regime change in Syria. But it is proving difficult. Firstly, the Assad regime is not as isolated as Kaddafi. And, having learnt their lesson from the Libyan experience, both China and Russia have exercised veto in the UN Security Council to stop the adoption of any pro-imperialist resolution.

Therefore, the effort is restricted to aiding and abetting the opposition and a direct military intervention by the NATO as in the case of Libya is not becoming possible. But there is also a step up in the campaign against Iran. But Iran has also proved to be a difficult customer. The recently held Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement with the participation of more than 120 countries and over 50 Heads of State was a rebuff against the US-Israel attempts to sabotage the event.

In conclusion, the drive for hegemony over energy resources and a complete control over this extremely important resource rich region continues to be the main theatre of US imperialist aggression.

### **Unfolding of Counter-Poles**

However, the progress of the journey to install a unipolar world under the aegis of a hegemon-the sole super power of the world today-the US seems to have run into trouble. Clear signs of multi-polarity are emerging. The unfolding of the serious contradiction which has led to the financial crisis and the great global recession unseen in the eight decades since the great depression of the 1930's has raised fundamental questions about the sustainability of the very model imperialist neo-liberal globalisation itself. And it goes without saying, that it was the enforcement of this paradigm which was the defining feature of the unipolar world that US imperialism was dreaming to establish and perpetuate.

Therefore, the crisis itself has given rise to many processes which challenge the vision of a unipolar world order.

First and foremost among these, is the emergence of China as a rapidly growing economy and the relative capacity that is demonstrated in overcoming the shocks of the global economic tail spin has established it as a major player in the financial and economic sphere. The importance of China in the contemporary global arena can be understood from the fact that US and its European and other allies are looking to China to revive the crisis affected global capitalism. Along with China, there are a host of other emerging economies who, though affected by the crisis are not doing as badly as North America or Europe. This was recognized by the expansion of G-8 to G-20 in taking important decisions with global significance on economic and financial questions.

The emergence of new blocks, regional platforms also underlines the changing reality which aims at challenging the unilateralism and the tendency towards a unipolar world. Important among these are the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the BRICS. The more frequent convergence of the positions of China and Russia, not just on economic issues, but also on strategic and military questions do imply roadblocks for the unipolar vision.

The changes in Latin America which was earlier considered as the backyard of US imperialism and had been the happy hunting ground and laboratory for some of the earliest experiments of neo-liberalism have also challenged the US ordained new unipolar world order. Cuba has survived the worst attacks on its sovereignty and socialism initiated by US imperialism through the obnoxious blockade. Cuba has sustained and acted as an inspiration for more widespread and thoroughgoing political changes. Mass and social movements have grown from strength to strength in the region bring about significant changes in Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Argentina, Paraguay and so and so forth. These new regimes are keen on pursuing a non neo-liberal path of development. In many instances they are nationalizing natural resources like oil and gas. And using the value locked up in these assets to provide basic services like education , health, nutrition to the vast masses who have languishing at the receiving end of the extreme and intense inequality perpetrated by the pro-US often neocolonial and dictatorial regimes of the past. In some cases these regimes are also initiating agrarian reforms to break loose the extreme concentration of land ownership. Most importantly these regimes are evolving new regional structures of cooperation which severely undermine the US imperialist influence. These are in the process of consolidation and expansion from ALBA to the Community

of Latin American and Caribbean nations which ensure the exclusion of US and Canada. And this process is being extended to create regional mechanisms and institutional arrangements in specific fields like Banco del Sur in Banking or Telesur in television broadcasting. Overall, the advances by the forces of anti-imperialism in the region are proving to be a great inspiration for the forces for just peace –the world over and acting as an increasingly major stumbling block for the vision of a unipolar world order.

The global financial meltdown and the subsequently recessionary aftermath has not led to any meaningful introspection, not to speak of radical departure away from finance driven course of globalisation. Even if some of the biggest financial behemoths have been bankrupt, the imperialist camp has far from giving up the unsustainable course have mobilised public resources to bail out many of the corporates whose irresponsible and profligate actions have been in the first place responsible for the crisis. Thus, corporate insolvencies have been converted into sovereign insolvencies and pushed many of the economies to the brink. It has led to sharp cuts in social security; intense rise in food prices many other unbearable burdens for the working people. There has been widespread loss of employment. Social crisis in sectors like housing has stalked large parts of the developed world. The crisis had most severe impact in Europe. Greece, Portugal, Spain, Italy continue to be in intense throes of this phenomenon.

What is heartening is that the people are not taking these lying down. They are out on the streets challenging these imperialism driven international finance capital sponsored policies which are making their everyday a living hell.

In the recent massive popular protests have swept across United States and Europe. The Occupy Wall Street movement starting with New York had spread across nearly thousand cities of the US. The significance of this huge expression of popular protest lay not only in their magnitude, but in the qualitatively new level of consciousness which was directed against the finance driven policies symbolized by Wall Street. The agitationists have clearly brought out that 99% suffer because of these neo-liberal policies which seem to favour only 1%. And now in the aftermath of the debt crisis in different parts of Europe and severity of recession leading to cuts on social security referred fashionably as ‘austerity’ measures is provoking the widest and deepest of discontent. This is galvanizing huge resistance bringing lakhs of working people out on the livelihood and unemployment related questions. This has been most pronounced in Greece Portugal, Spain, France and Great Britain. This has also led to the advance of the political forces which are opposed to the policy paradigm pursued by international finance capital. Such advances have also found electoral expressions. Obviously, the growing emergence of such forces which challenge the main thrust of imperialism’s policies also act as a deterrent to unipolarity.

Therefore, all these developments which have emerged and getting increasingly reinforced in response to the pursuit of imperialist globalisation, do signal the appearance of multipolar trends which is characterizing the contemporary. To the extent that the unipolar vision of the world faces resistance, the international situation becomes conducive for the peace movement to take on imperialist aggressive for establishing its hegemony.

## **America's Pacific Century: Ramifications for the region and South Asia**

The US economy and finance may appear to be in doldrums. Wounded and, at times, gasping the imperial ambitions are, however, very much alive. That is how one can describe backdrop of the new strategic geo-political initiative that the US administration under President Obama has embarked upon.

What new geo-strategy that US is talking about? The US Secretary of State – Ms. Hillary Clinton explained this in November, last year. In an article in the most influential US think-tank – the *Foreign Policy* –she has candidly elaborated the new approach.

She explained, “As the war in Iraq winds down and America begins to withdraw its forces from Afghanistan, the United States stands at a pivot point. Over the last 10 years, we have allocated immense resources to those two theaters. In the next 10 years, we need to be smart and systematic about where we invest time and energy, so that we put ourselves in the best position to sustain our leadership, secure our interests, and advance our values. One of the most important tasks of American statecraft over the next decade will therefore be to lock in a substantially increased investment – diplomatic, economic, strategic, and otherwise – in the Asia-Pacific region.”

And she has no qualms to admit that, “Harnessing Asia’s growth and dynamism is central to American economic and strategic interests and a key priority for President Obama. Open markets in Asia provide the United States with unprecedented opportunities for investment, trade and access to cutting-edge technology. Our economic recovery at home will depend on exports and the ability of American firms to tap into the vast and growing consumer base of Asia”. And then she proceeds with the audacious patronizing tone symptomatic of imperialist spokespersons – “The region is eager for our leadership and our business – perhaps more so than at any time in modern history.”

But while she has formally spelt out the nuclear ambitions of North Korea as the major provocation for focusing on Asia Pacific; the real intention is not so implicit. And, she is quite clear that for the US and its allies, it is important to dominate the regional security architecture to ‘patrol Asia’s sea lanes and preserving stability’ by ‘defending freedom of navigation in the South China sea’.

That the South China Sea is a key to US strategic interest has become increasingly clear. Given the background of dispute, it is also understandable that the US strategy underlines its concern for containing China. The Maritime territorial disputes in South China with overlapping claims of Vietnam, Malaysia, Philippines and Brunei, on the one hand, and China on the other – is a convenient invitation to US to intervene in the choppy waters.

The role of China as a business and investment partner with most of these South China rim countries is becoming increasingly crucial. Perhaps, it is because of this that the recent ASEAN meeting did not come to a conclusion in roundly criticizing China as the USA had been egging these countries to pursue. On the contrary, these countries do feel that a consultative process should lead to the evolution of a code of

conduct to settle these issues on the use of the maritime resources of this commercially important Sea.

Another important focus for this new geo-strategy is Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean. There is a new opening up in Burma. Some disputes between Burma and Bangladesh have been resolved recently by the international commission on law of the seas. This opens up the possibility of investment in the petroleum and the natural gas sector. Again, the Chinese had been sharing an economic relation with Burma. A pipeline between Burma and China will be commissioned next year. This will enable China to largely obviate its vulnerability on Malacca Straits for the transportation of hydrocarbon. Bangladesh and Bay of Bengal bed also have major gas reserves.

If Ms. Clinton had barely outlined the contours of the reformulated US geo-strategic priorities, the US defence secretary Leo Panetta did not leave it to anybody's imagination. In a recently held security conference in Singapore, Panetta has clearly mentioned that the US would station 60 per cent of its naval fleet in Asia Pacific. They are looking for allies – and obviously, 'subordinate allies'; because that is the very nature of empire's modus operandi. It is obvious that such reprioritized deployment will translate into new military and naval bases in the region.

And Panetta stated clearly "In particular we will expand our military partnerships and our presence in the arc extending from Western Pacific and East Asia into the Indian Ocean region and South Asia defence cooperation; defence cooperation with India is a lynchpin in this region".

This is not merely to have an enhancement of trade. Today, the US does not have the capacity to exercise its hegemony purely on the basis of its economy. Therefore, the military machine and the ideological apparatus will be moving in tandem to secure its new geo-strategic imperatives.

That the central thrust of US ideological blitz will continue is clear from its discourse. Ms. Clinton states – "...we have made it clear, for example, to Vietnam that our ambition to develop a strategic partnership requires that it take steps to further protect human rights and political freedoms."

The super power stung by economic and financial reversals wants to make good with a holistic intervention in Asia Pacific in order to 'harness' the benefits of advance that Asian economies have registered. In its new aggressive for hegemony it wants India not just as a 'strategic partner', but as a 'lynchpin'.

Therefore with this new priority in Asia- Pacific the implications for peace and the involvement of US imperialism are crystal clear. For example, the failure of the US Af-Pak policy has already created a major threat of terrorism in entire South Asia. It is an irony that Pakistan and particularly its armed forces that have an ignominious record of exporting terror, a long time ally of US, is now a major victim of terrorism accentuated as a result of the US's failed Af-Pak policy.

Similarly, the growth of deeply racial ideology in US and particularly anti-Islam rhetoric has been a major feature of the deeply polarizing policies of US imperialism, particularly in the Middle-East; influenced by divisive theories espoused by the likes of

Samuel Huntington in *Clash of Civilization*. How far this ominous process can degenerate is patently clear from the widespread protest against the blatantly anti-Islam documentary film. Muslims in more than 20 nations have taken part in protests targeting the United States since September 11 over "Innocence of Muslims" - a blasphemous 14-minute trailer for a film that mocks Prophet Mohammed as a womanizer, child molester and killer. The aggressive imperialist maneuvers of the US make them vulnerable and perceive official encouragement to the making of the film- and such widespread perceptions are subjecting US diplomatic establishments to massive protests and violence. Islamabad has been a major theatre of protest.

Obviously the step up of US presence in the region will have its own ramifications for South Asia. The peace movement and the AIPSO will have to take this new reality. Given the new global landscape- whether India will subordinate its independent role in the region and the world is something that we Indians have to decide. Given our heritage and the contemporary reality which increasingly presages trends of multipolarity – the choice should be simple.

### **Growth of Identity Politics, Fundamentalism and Terrorism**

India has always been a confluence of diverse identities. And, more often than none, these divergences have been sought to be used to break up the unity of the people. In fact, our freedom struggle and the national movement has been a glorious experience in terms of overcoming those divergences and rallying the people in unity against British colonialism. But the constant struggle between forces of division and unification continued.

However, the form of identity politics that we have come to encounter today is of a different genre. The new assertion and aggressiveness seem to be displaying the manifestation of certain more fundamental and philosophical justification. Therefore, it is necessary to study this new reality contextualizing it in the contemporary global tendencies that seem to be playing a role in this changing environment.

Identity politics with identity based on race, religion, caste or gender is increasingly becoming the basis for politics and political mobilization. It is well known that identity of a person can be manifold. Economic class is also an aspect of identity. But stressing the non-class categories of identity negates the concept of classes – particularly those of the toiling millions. Obviously, this plays a big role in obfuscating exploitation and the need for transforming the exploitative order. But more than that, by its very nature, identity politics excludes and demarcates those of one identity from others. Wherever identity politics takes hold, it divides the people into separate and disparate groups often in conflicting and competing terms. And, to that extent, the divisive use of identity politics undermines the unity of the people against imperialism which in a way is encouraging the accentuation of such brand of identity politics.

Identity politics is ideally suited for the present global order signaling a neo-liberal direction. Fragmentation of identity is harnessed by the market. This has been tried out for the first time in Yugoslavia and subsequently, in Sudan and many other countries.

In countries like us, identity politics facilitates the penetration of global finance capital and their capture and control of the market. The difference between identity groups does not affect the homogeneity of the markets and its practices. Identity politics intervenes to negate the unity of the working people and acts as an impediment to build the united activities of the people. It is typically carried out through NGOs, voluntary organisations and what has now come to be seen as the civil society.

This new political construct seems to be affecting our polity. This construct in the realm of politics clearly derives its philosophical inspiration from post modernism. Post modernists argue that politics can only be 'micro' or 'local', that politics can be based only on 'differences' and 'identity'. This post modernism is a philosophical outlook which arose out of the success of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century capitalism and reverses of socialism. But it does not remain confined to just opposing socialism; but it questions all the values of Enlightenment and rejects any philosophy or politics which is universal and dismisses them as 'totalising theories'. Post modernism, obviously, does not recognize either capitalism or socialism as a structure. Its only utility seems to be as a philosophy which suits the interests of global finance capital.

Therefore, we have observed in recent times growth of sectarian politics and ideology and, obviously, religious fundamentalism has gained tremendous momentum. The patently unjust imperialist interventions, the world over, are giving rise to a deep sense of insecurity and frustration. Obviously, people see and perceive aggressive imperialist interventions not just as disruption of a peaceful environment, which is so very necessary for pursuing development so urgent a necessity; but it also leads to greatly undermine pursuit of life, livelihood and the realization of their full creative potential.

It is because of this that, despite the claims of the top brass of the imperialist camp, the widespread perception is that imperialism is against the non-western civilizations. It is this widespread belief which has seen the kind of violence recently across the Islamic world over the documentary film made in US which lampooned the Prophet.

In fact, the conditions of the people who have been victims of imperialism particularly in the Arab world on the Palestine question, on the destruction in Iraq, Libya and now in Syria, there is a sense of desperation to fight US as the spearhead of such interventions. In many cases, it is this which is influenced by sectarian and fundamentalist ideologies. Though they aim to hurt imperialism but, in effect, they are resulting in weakening and undermining the unity of the people thereby derailing the resolve and the united struggles of the people against imperialism.

In South Asia, this is a major reality. In India as well, we are witnessing this phenomena. However, in India, the added factor is the pernicious communal ideology of the forces of Hindu communalism which creates a further sense of insecurity and persecution among the minorities. The qualitatively new feature of this ominous development of sectarian and fundamentalist politics is the increasing use of arms, violence and terror to protest the victimhood. This has meant tremendous growth in using terror as an instrument of righting the wrongs, but ends up in further providing some justification for the aggressive of imperialism and other forces of majoritarianism. Therefore, it is incumbent on the peace movement to oppose and resist terrorism in all its forms.

## **Here in India: Need for an Independent Policy**

The glorious anti-colonial legacy of our freedom struggle provided a firm basis for a strong anti-imperialist component in our foreign policy after we became independent. The overall international context which was adverse for imperialism provided a complementary environment. India sided with struggles of the people for decolonization, peace and disarmament. India also became one of the founders of the non-aligned movement.

However, the situation has changed substantially with the predominance of imperialist globalization and the domestic economic reorientation to pursue policies of neo-liberalisation. With the obvious overall tutelage of imperialism which ensures the trajectory of neo-liberal globalization, de-ideologisation aimed at glossing over the role of imperialism becomes an important ingredient of this paradigm. It is being argued by our establishment that for our development, investment is a prerequisite and its pre-eminence has to be given precedence over all other considerations.

It is this blind pursuit of investment not just direct investment which would enhance our productive capacities and production and create employment; but also financial investment which is deployed namely with speculative purpose and for earning profits, that has come to not just undermine but also reverse many of the past foreign policy imperatives that we have followed earlier.

This is evidenced on the Palestine question. India was appreciated all over the Middle East and Arab world for its steadfast and principled support to the Palestinian cause. From Mahatma Gandhi to Pundit Nehru, India's leadership has raised their voice in support of the patently legitimate Palestinian cause; but not so any more. Today, India imports arms heavily from Israel. The arms purchase of India is so much so that we are buying even more than what Israeli armed forces buy from their arms industry. This is obviously affecting our foreign policy position vis-à-vis the Palestinian cause and our attitude towards the US-Israel axis in the Middle East.

A similar position was seen earlier on the question of invasion of Iraq and now the aggressive US moves towards Iran. India's voice against imperialist aggression is no longer heard on a world scale. On the question of Iran, India had abruptly and inexplicably changed its position in the IAEA and UN forum. Even though India is fully aware that Iran has its rights as an NPT signatory and there is no proof that they have violated the provisions, India succumbing to US arm twisting. This was clear from the way that even though there was no UN sanctions, India reduced oil imports from Iran. The same attitude was also evident on the question of Syria.

This major shift of Indian foreign policy is a result of the reorientation of domestic economic policy making. It started in the early nineties through the minutes of the joint Indo-US dialogue which recognized a special relation with US. This was further consolidated under the NDA government with its Next Step in Strategic Partnership and the following several rounds of Jaswant Singh-Talbot talks. In between the nuclear explosions, Pokhran-II aimed with a jingoistic consideration not just escalated the tensions with Pakistan but made Indo-Pak dispute a potential area of outside intervention. With the nuclear dimension, Kashmir became internationalized. It is



obvious that pressures on India were mounted to force India into accepting the global non-proliferation regime. And, there is no doubt that the establishment has moved in that direction. The 1988 Rajiv Gandhi plan on global nuclear disarmament stands all but buried.

That India's journey to forge a strategic partnership with US is bearing its fruits is for all to see. The Nuclear Suppliers Group continues to insist that India signs the NPT to entitle itself to import nuclear feedstock. That the Indo-US nuclear deal was the pivot in cementing a wider strategic alliance including military cooperation is also amply clear from explicit statements of US Defence Secretary. And, therefore, shift of Indian foreign policy positions on important bilateral and multilateral forums should not come as a surprise. For India, it is the domestic economic policy which has influenced a reversal of its earlier independent non-aligned policy for peace and disarmament.

Obviously, compromises of independent foreign policy making are costing India. In many of the disputes that India faces countries are tending to view us as the front for US strategic game plan in the region. That US strategic priority remains containment of China in the region is clear. But whether India ought to deal with our disputes with our neighbour by taking a view through the US strategic prism is a question. We must have a neighbourhood policy which must ensure peace in South Asia, the precondition for our own good. But, unfortunately, that is not happening. And, it is quite clear that US interventions in the region is making this extremely counterproductive. Therefore, the need for an independent foreign policy is being felt, more than ever before.

It is in this context that the challenges for the peace movement and AIPSO have grown manifold. And, we have to redouble our energies to ensure that India's foreign policy is independent. That is a precondition to invigorate the struggle for peace, disarmament and development in the neighbourhood and the world.

### **Forward to Mightier Struggles: For a Better India and a Better World**

For a country like India, which suffers from such a great deal of inequality, unemployment and poverty, peace cannot mean just the absence of war. Peace has to be the ground on which we embark on a trajectory of development which brings benefit to people who cannot realize their fullest potential. Peace also cannot remain the subject of an intellectual discourse confined to the rarefied environs of seminar rooms, round tables and workshops where we discuss and debate the pros and cons, policies and statistical data relating to war and peace. Peace has to be intelligible as a necessity and a prerogative of the people; especially for those who suffer from the basic needs of a dignified human existence. Therefore, let this historic conference give out a clarion call that we will move forward towards mighty struggles with resolute action for linking the need for peace with the creation of just and equitable development that can ensure the unleashing of the creative energies of our people. We should give a clarion call to create a peaceful and better India for a just and better world.