

Girish Mathur

**SOVIET
N-TEST
MORATORIUM
AND ASIA**



ALLIED PUBLISHERS PRIVATE LIMITED
NEW DELHI BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS BANGALORE
HYDERABAD AHMEDABAD LUCKNOW

ALLIED PUBLISHERS PRIVATE LIMITED

Prarthna Flats (1st Floor), Navrangpura, Ahmedabad 380009

15 J.N. Heredia Marg, Ballard Estate, Bombay 400038

3-5-1129, Kachiguda Cross Road, Hyderabad 500027

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13/14 Asaf Ali Road, New Delhi 110002

751, Mount Road, Madras 600002

First Published, 1986

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PH
363.1799
M 42 S



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IAS, Shimla

PH 363.179 9 M 42 S



G880

PRINTED IN INDIA

AT ALLIED PUBLISHERS PVT. LTD., A-104, MAYAPURI, PHASE II, NEW DELHI

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Nuclear tests are a crime against humanity and a crime against the survival of the human race. No country pleading the interests of its security has the right to perpetuate this nuclear holocaust. I would appeal to the two Great Powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, to desist from nuclear tests.

— Jawaharlal Nehru

We have been witnessing the results of this policy of 'speaking from strength' for many years now. When one side grows a little stronger, the other side grows stronger also, so that any reference to strength induces the other party to build up its strength as rapidly as possible. And we are where we were, and perhaps in a worse condition.

— Jawaharlal Nehru

Political freedom is incomplete if it does not lead to wider horizons of economic opportunity, and this is only possible by peace. Hence, apart from preventing suffering and dispelling uncertainty and fear, disarmament would make decisive difference to development.

— Indira Gandhi

We are very much against space becoming a new dimension of war. What we are talking about is missiles as active defence systems, and that, we feel, will be very very dangerous, especially because we are relying more and more on computers. The time between a particular action and the response is getting reduced to so small a fraction that it is going to be difficult for any thought process to counter-check. We may end up with machines starting a war. . . . Star Wars is, as I said, more dangerous than just a new defence system because, firstly, we believe it is not going to work and secondly, it will give the confidence that it might work which could trigger new adventurism, trigger a whole new ball game in the arms race.

—Rajiv Gandhi

INTRODUCTION

It seems ages when Jawaharlal Nehru, independent India's first Prime Minister, correctly diagnosed the conflict in the contemporary world to be one between nuclear weapons and the spirit of humanity. He held the view that nuclear war would be not between two parties but against the entire humanity. Nehru's response to nuclear weapons did not reflect only the reaction of a society weak in terms of arms and armaments but possessing a rich cultural tradition and a high moral sense, to the introduction in the armoury of nations a weapon of mass destruction before which mankind was helpless. By their very nature nuclear weapons evoke in man a great deal of emotion ranging from awe over the command of a source of unlimited energy and utmost horror at the prospects of the destruction they could cause. Nehru's response also reflected the urge of a newly liberated country for a peaceful environment in which it could rebuild itself and reconstruct its social order. As his numerous speeches from the day he took office show, Nehru was fully aware of the link between disarmament and development. And for long before he took over the reins of government he had felt affinity for the Soviet Union because he was sure that it also needed peace for building the new society the foundations of which he had seen being laid when he visited Moscow in 1927.

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When in June, 1946, The Soviet Union proposed an international treaty prohibiting the production, possession and use of atomic weapons and destruction of the then existing atomic weapons the then Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister had urged the UN Security Council to ban the atomic weapons and consider one-third reduction in conventional arms, Nehru must have felt like speaking up in support of the proposal. But India was not yet free and Nehru had not yet joined the Interim Government. However, when the Soviet Union repeated its demand for prohibition of atomic weapons in 1948, it evoked a sympathetic response from India—as did the 1952 Soviet proposal for a one-third reduction in all forces and arms. India has had its compulsions and its priorities, and its approach, its style and its emphasis might not always have been the same as those of the Soviet Union. But the two countries have always shared the vision of a world free of the threat of a nuclear holocaust. And both the countries have always treated a ban on nuclear tests as the necessary first step in the direction of the realisation of their goal.

When the USA exploded its first thermo-nuclear bomb and its radio-active fall-out affected 23 Japanese fishermen, Jawaharlal Nehru was the first world leader to raise his voice. Again, it was he who first proposed a ban on all tests in 1954. Support came to him from the Soviet Union which in May, 1955, came out with proposals which included nuclear test ban. The Soviet proposals also sought an agreement on non-first use and a freezing of nuclear arsenals. They contained concrete ideas about progress towards disarmament. But they ran into opposition from the US and its allies—as had the Soviet proposals of 1952. While maintaining that nuclear and general disarmament could not be put in separate compartments, India advocated a step by step

approach, and so it pursued the idea of a test ban. Its efforts proved rewarding when negotiations began which after five years of hard bargaining resulted in the Partial Test Ban Treaty being signed in Moscow in 1963. The Soviet Union had in the meantime followed up its 1955 proposals with another set of proposals in 1956 which sought partial measures for disarmament including a ban on tests independent of the progress in the talks for general disarmament. In 1957 the Soviet Union again proposed a two to three year ban on tests, and in March 1958 it announced unilateral moratorium on explosions, reserving the right to resume them if others continued with their tests.

Although the United States was the first to acquire the atomic bomb and an inter-continental bomber to carry it, four years ahead of the Soviet Union, it has always opposed prohibition on tests for further development of its mass destruction capability on the plea that the Soviet Union enjoyed an advantage over the USA's West European allies in terms of conventional weapons. Soviet threat has been its bogey to rally its allies in support of its efforts to maintain nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union. But maintenance of superiority was, in the words of Truman's arms control advisor Chester Barnard, "a most deadly illusion." The four-year gap between the development of the American and Soviet atomic bombs was reduced to a bare nine-month gap between the American and Soviet Hydrogen bombs (the US H-bomb came in November, 1952, and the Soviet one in August, 1953). The "most deadly illusion" persists when Reagan insists on his Star Wars programme despite the Soviet warning that an answer to Star Wars would be found. It, however, goes to the credit of the Soviet Union that it has never been the first to develop or deploy the dreaded Bomb.

Indeed, the Soviet Union should also be given the

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credit for pursuing the intermediate goals of ban on tests, freeze on nuclear arsenals, and arms cuts. And its efforts have not been entirely unrewarding. For instance, the Partial Test Ban Treaty (August, 1963) had been preceded by an agreement with the US (June, 1963) for establishing a hot-line between the leaderships of the two countries, and four years later the two signed a treaty on outer space. India has all along believed that it is only by direct talks between the leaderships of the two Great Powers, the Soviet Union and the United States, that mankind can be saved from the holocaust which is otherwise in store for it. And much of the credit for whatever success has been achieved in the Soviet-US summit meetings goes to the concern of the Soviet leadership for peace in the world. That is how in the 1970s one agreement after another was signed by the two countries, and military detente was brought about at least in Europe and what is known as the Helsinki process was initiated in the mid-1970s.

The agreements signed between the two Great Powers in the 1970s include a convention banning bacteriological weapons (April, 1972), SALT-I agreements (October, 1972), an agreement on prevention of nuclear war between them (June, 1973), a protocol on anti-ballistic missiles (July, 1974), the Threshold Treaty on Nuclear Tests (July, 1974), Peaceful Nuclear Explosion Treaty (May, 1976), and finally the two sides initialled the SALT-II in June, 1979. But the process received a setback when in 1977-78 the United States, in the words of the then US presidential national security aide Zbigniew Brzezinski, found it necessary "to gradually revise our (US) basic priorities and to concentrate efforts on policies designed to preserve and maximise American power." We will come to the causes behind what Brzezinski has described the "turning point" a little later. Here it is

sufficient to indicate that the "turning point" in US policy came not because of anything the Soviet Union did or did not do, but was a deliberate choice made by the US.

The first indication of the coming shift in US policy came when on June 7, 1977, the *Washington Post* revealed that a more advanced nuclear weapon called enhanced radiation weapon (ERW), popularly known as the neutron bomb, had been developed and that the US intended to deploy it in the European "theatre." There was a hue and cry all over Western Europe. The neutron bomb could not be deployed, but once again the bogey of the Soviet threat had been raised and a new phrase had been coined—"window of vulnerability" which really meant that the US was feeling uncomfortable with the parity in arms maintained under the SALT-I regime. The NATO was pressurised into accepting new American ground-based missiles, Pershing-II, despite resistance from some of the West European governments. This is how the current phase of the cold war which Asian experts describe as the second cold war, began, and the SALT-II, initialled by the two sides, remained unratified. With the coming-in of the Reagan Administration this cold war has been so much intensified that the fear of a nuclear holocaust has assumed an imminence which it did not possess so far. Never since the end of the second world war has mankind felt so threatened as during the Reagan administration.

Radically New Soviet Offers

It was in this bleak atmosphere of a developing confrontation that Mikhail Gorbachev came out with his January, 15, 1986 offer of a "step-by-step, consistent process of ridding the earth of nuclear weapons to be

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implemented within the next 15 years, before the end of this century." According to the programme envisaged in the Gorbachev proposal, within the next five to eight years beginning with the current year the USSR and the US should reduce by one half the nuclear weapons that can reach each other's territory, and of the remaining delivery vehicles of this kind each side will retain no more than 6,000 warheads. In the second stage which should start no later than 1990 and last five to seven years, the other nuclear weapons powers will begin to join the process of nuclear disarmament by, to start with, freezing all their nuclear arms and not leaving them on the territories of other countries. In this period the USSR and the US would complete the 50 per cent reduction of their nuclear arms and proceed to take another radical step of eliminating all their tactical weapons with a range of upto 1,000 kilometres. In the third stage to begin not later than 1995, will be initiated the process of the elimination of all nuclear weapons by 1999 when a universal accord would be drawn up to the effect that such weapons would never come into being again.

The rationale of such a radical time-bound programme of ultimate elimination of all nuclear weapons, implies that both sides also renounce the development, testing and deployment of space-strike weapons in the very first stage, and all nuclear weapons tests are prohibited in the second stage. It also meets the positions which the two West European nuclear weapons powers, France and the UK, have adopted as also the position of China, another nuclear weapons power, on the question of nuclear disarmament. Gorbachev also extended the unilateral Soviet moratorium on tests for three months and expressed the hope that the US would reciprocate.

The United States has always obstructed progress in

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disarmament talks by raising problems of verification. Removing this obstruction Gorbachev declared, "for us, verification is not a problem. Should the United States stop all nuclear tests on a reciprocal basis, appropriate verification of compliance with the moratorium would be fully ensured by national technical means as well as with the help of international procedures including on-site inspections when necessary." He gave time to the US to respond and expressed the hope that the bilateral moratorium which he proposed would become a multilateral agreement on giving up nuclear explosions. He endorsed the plea of the non-aligned nations that the 1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty prohibiting atmospheric, outer space and under-water nuclear tests, should be extended to cover underground tests as well.

In order to implement the programme Gorbachev emphasised the need to activate the entire existing system of negotiations and to ensure the "highest possible efficiency of disarmament mechanism." He announced that the Soviet delegation to the Geneva talks had been instructed to proceed in compliance with the agreement reached by him and Reagan during the summit meeting in November, 1985. He said that the offer that both sides should reduce their nuclear arms by half would be open for negotiations at the Geneva talks. At the same time he deplored that the problem of space (Star Wars) was being raised to block progress towards nuclear disarmament and that American first-strike missiles continued to be deployed in Western European countries violating the interests of these countries. He reiterated the Soviet Union's long-standing proposal that Europe should be freed of medium-range and tactical nuclear weapons. He also proposed complete elimination of such barbaric weapons of mass destruction as chemical weapons and suggested that the talks for an effective and verifiable international

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convention prohibiting such weapons should be intensified. In addition to elimination of weapons of mass destruction Gorbachev also proposed that conventional weapons and armed forces should also be reduced to agreed levels.

The January 15, 1986, proposals were addressed, as Gorbachev himself put it, to the entire world and were meant to reverse the process of militarisation which had taken the place of development on the agenda before the world. He emphasised the need for reversing this order by undertaking disarmament for development. He added that "the Soviet Union wants each measure limiting and reducing arms and each step towards eliminating nuclear weapons not only to bring nations greater security but also to make it possible to allocate more funds for improving people's life." He also came out against the US tactics of "making the implementation of disarmament measures dependent on so-called regional conflicts" which to him was indicative of "both (US) unwillingness to follow the path of disarmament and a desire (on the part of the US) to impose upon sovereign nations what is alien to them." Towards the end of his statement Gorbachev said, "There is no shortage today to statements professing peace. What are in short supply are concrete actions to strengthen the foundations of peace. . . . We want 1986 to be not just a peaceful year but one that will enable us to reach the end of the 20th century under the sign of peace and nuclear disarmament."

The American response came in the form another nuclear explosion in the middle of March. After the January 15 statement the spokesmen of the Reagan Administration found it difficult to adopt an outright negative attitude; instead, they felt compelled by the manner in which world opinion reacted, to strike a posture which suggested that they would take the

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Gorbachev proposals ir to account. But, as Gorbachev had said, what was needed was concrete action, and their concrete action was the nuclear explosion just about the time that the Soviet moratorium was to expire. The US explosion also showed utter disregard for world opinion, including public opinion within the US. In February, six world leaders led by Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and representing all the five continents had appealed to the leaders of the Soviet Union and the United States to refrain from nuclear explosions, and, as on earlier occasions, the Soviet leadership agreed to the proposal. The Soviet leadership even ignored the American test. But when on March 28, three days before the unilateral Soviet moratorium was to expire, Gorbachev came to know that, in his words, "in the coming days, in the near future, the United States intends to set off yet another nuclear device", he appeared on the Soviet TV to explain to his people the rationale of Soviet moratorium and announced that even after March 31 the Soviet Union would not carry out any test if the US did the same. In a statement on August 18 he extended the unilateral Soviet moratorium till January 1, 1987.

The March 29 and August 18 announcements of Gorbachev proved his sincerity if proof was needed. And his January 15 offer was wholly endorsed by the Warsaw Treaty members at their Political Consultative Committee meeting at Bucharest on July 10-11, 1986. The communique issued at the end of the meeting offered broadest cooperation to all countries for the cessation of nuclear tests, total elimination on a reciprocal basis of Soviet and US medium-range missiles in European zone, reaching concrete accords at the Soviet-American talks on nuclear and space arms, eliminating by the end of this century such weapons of mass annihilation as chemical weapons and the

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industrial base of manufacturing them, substantial reduction of armed forces and conventional arms on a global and regional scale, and effective verification in all fields and at all stages of arms reduction and disarmament.

The Bucharest meeting also proposed substantial reduction of all components of the land forces and tactical weapons of all European states, as well as corresponding forces and weapon systems of the US and Canada deployed in Europe. All this was to go on alongwith reduction in the number of tactical weapons of the two sides.

What was the American response? To quote from Gorbachev's speech at the Soviet auto industrial centre of Togliatti, "Over the years they have kept harping that the Russians cannot be trusted because they do not permit on-site inspections. We have agreed to such inspections. In response, President Reagan offers us to 'verify' not a ban on nuclear explosions but a procedure for improving nuclear weapons. As an American newspaper aptly remarked the other day, this is like asking a man who advocates abolition of capital punishment to witness an execution. We naturally have not accepted and will not accept any such offer." He then went to add, "They also say another thing—that the US will have to remove the missiles across the ocean while Moscow will only ship them to Siberia from where they can be easily and promptly brought back. In saying this they pretend not to know that the USSR offers to *eliminate* the missiles rather than ship them elsewhere."

On another occasion Gorbachev recalled the American argument for continuing with the deployment of nuclear arms in Europe—that the Soviet Union has superiority in conventional arms. But both Gorbachev and the Warsaw Treaty meeting had offered reductions in

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conventional arms and armed forces. Such misrepresentation of Soviet offers is indicative of US unwillingness to talk seriously about nuclear disarmament.

NUCLEAR BLACKMAIL

What do Gorbachev's proposals mean for us in Asia in general and India in particular? Let us not forget that the only country on the territory of which the atomic bomb has been dropped lies in Asia. Japan then was and, in the literal sense, it still is a non-nuclear weapons country. Nor can we forget that Hiroshima and Nagasaki were made the targets of the American bomb in August, 1945, not with a view to expedite Japan's surrender, but with an eye on securing a political edge over the Soviet Union. The purpose which the United States had in mind in demonstrating the power it had acquired by manufacturing the bomb should be evident from a study carried out by New Delhi's Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA). According to a table prepared by its deputy director, Air Commodore Jasjit Singh, nuclear arms carrying forces were employed but nuclear arms were not used—i.e., the threat of use of nuclear arms was held out—by the US on 28 occasions between 1946 and 1982, and on 22 of these occasions the threat was held out to countries outside Europe. If we further break up the figure, we find that on 17 occasions the US held out the threat of the use of nuclear weapons against Asian countries, on six occasions against countries in Europe and on five occasions against countries in the rest of the world.

The 17 occasions when the US held out the threat of use of nuclear weapons against Asian countries were: during the political crisis in Iran in 1946, twice during the Korean conflict in July, 1950, and August, 1953, in Vietnam (Dien Bien Phu) in 1954, during China-Taiwan conflict on Tachen island in August, 1954, and the conflict over Quemoy in 1955, during the Suez crisis in October, 1956, the political crisis in Lebanon in July, 1958, and in Jordan in the same month, again in the same month in the China-Taiwan conflict over Quemoy and Matsu islands, during the Indo-China war in 1961, on the question of withdrawal of US missiles from Turkey in April, 1963, during the crisis over the seizure of Pueblo by North Korea in January, 1968, during the siege of Khe Sanh in Vietnam in 1968, again during the Vietnam war between 1969 and 1972, twice during the South Asian sub-continental crisis and the liberation struggle of Bangladesh in 1971, and in the Arab-Israel war in October, 1973.

Firstly, it is not as if these were empty threats. The then US President, Richard Nixon, has written that the use of nuclear weapons was seriously considered by him during the 1971 South Asian sub-continental crisis, and it is a well-known fact that the nuclear arms carrying aircraft carrier *Enterprise* led a Pacific Ocean based US Seventh Fleet Task Force into the Bay of Bengal while the liberation forces were advancing towards Dhaka. As Jasjit Singh has put it, "that the *Enterprise* adventure turned out to be a failure was due more to the rapidity and combat superiority of Indian defence forces than any restraint exercised by the US Task Force. It was simply too late on the scene to do anything." The military might of the mightiest-ever power on earth was held to world ridicule by a people struggling for their liberation with the backing of a peace-loving neighbouring country. It was a proud occasion for the

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countries which have liberated themselves since the end of the last world war.

Secondly, it is internationally recognised that any weapon known to have a particular capability will be deemed to be deployed with that capability. Therefore, the deployment of forces carrying nuclear arms carries with it the threat to use them. The present US Defence Secretary Caspar Weinberger is on record that "it is still possible to fight some wars using conventional forces that don't involve nuclear weapons. But I think (if) you advice potential opponents in advance that you do not intend to cross certain limits, (then) you have almost assured another Vietnam. *Any time you get into a war, the possibility that you will use every weapon available, has to be left open*" (Emphasis added). He was answering a question whether he would have recommended the use of nuclear weapons in the Vietnam war. In reply to another question he said that wherever US sent its troops it was incumbent on it to use all available weapons to ensure their safety. In other words, wherever and whenever US troops are sent the US can use nuclear weapons.

The threat of use of nuclear weapons which Asia faced on 17 occasions between 1946 and 1982 has to be viewed in the context of another post-war development. As Jasjit Singh has put it, "There has been a major departure in US perceptions and approach to world affairs since the Second World War. The Roosevelt approach of good neighbourly policy, employment of economic diplomacy rather than direct intervention, and tolerating nationalism (in other countries) even when it took anti-US tones, has long since given way to a policy of trying to *manage the world and shape history*. The Reagan approach especially provides the very anti-thesis of Roosevelt's policies. If one were to look at major historical factors

of change in the international order which might have provided incentives for this change, one could identify two: destruction of the world balance-of-power systems and its transformation into a bipolar system; and the decolonisation process and the emergence of large number of sovereign states. That most of the newly emerged sovereign states are populated and ruled by non-white peoples leads to a lurking suspicion that a great deal of interventionist strategies that are being written in the US, are really directed in continuing the (imperialist) whiteman's-burden under a different name. It is thus clear that the US has converted its military might which includes nuclear weapons into an instrument "to manage the world and shape history" which is an updated version of the "whiteman's burden."

Pointing out that "the US has been the greatest intervening power in the past forty years", the Air Commodore continues, "in its preoccupation with the bipolar confrontation with the Soviet Union and failure or lack of desire to understand and face the dynamics and realities of the changing international order, the US perceives the developing countries moving further and further away from the control of the United States. The collapse of US-backed regimes and failures in Vietnam, Cuba, Angola, Iran, Ethiopia, Nicaragua, and even withdrawal from Lebanon are seen as symptomatic of the dangers of a less controllable world arising out of what in Carter's days was described as world-wide decline in American power and prestige." He quotes Kissinger stating in 1980 that "we (the US) are sliding towards a world out of control, with our relative military power declining, with our economic lifeline vulnerable to blackmail, with hostile radical forces growing in every continent, and with a number of countries willing to stake their future on our friendship dwindling."

On the basis of available literature, the IDSA study

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reaches the conclusion that “diffusion of power” in the world order—or, in other words, the emergence of new sovereign states and their assertion of independence in international relations—has brought about a shift in US strategy which is characterised by: (i) transferring the epicenter of confrontation with the Soviet Union from Europe to other continents, (ii) military preparedness for intervention in future conflicts in the developing countries and the sea-lanes of the world, (iii) transformation of unilateral interventions into multilateral, cooperative and collaborative interventions, carrying the NATO allies along, against the developing countries, and (iv) preference for employment of means which provide clear advantage over adversary powers (including the Soviet Union) and the target countries—US technology and strategic mobility being such means.

Using data from Western sources, the study points out that between 1946 and 1982 there were 259 incidents all over the world in which the US employed its armed forces without resorting to armed conflict—what in the past used to be called gunboat diplomacy and for which the right expression should be political blackmail. The study points out that “the weight of evidence points towards a continued, if not an increased, use by the US of its armed forces as a political instrument for coercion, intimidation and deterrence in pursuance of objectives perceived by decision-makers (in Washington) to be in the interests of the United States.” To illustrate the point the study cites an interesting example: “The message of the omnipresence of the nuclear threat is well conveyed in every military exercise, manoeuvre or movement of nuclear-capable weapon systems. A case in point is the US Sixth Fleet in Mediterranean and its Task Force in the Arabian Sea. Loud and clear signal of US exercise

Bright Star would not have gone unnoticed either by the South West Asian countries or the Soviet Union when six USAF Strategic Air Command B-52H (designated for strategic nuclear strike role) flew thirtysix-hour 15,000-mile non-stop conventional bombing missions (with several in-flight refuellings) against simulated targets in Egypt while operating from their home base in North Dakota, USA, in November, 1981."

Since then *Bright Star* exercises have been held every year, while at the Far Eastern end of Asia, similar exercises code-named *Team Spirit* have been going on every year for almost a decade. Now *Rimpac* exercises are also held. In these exercises military units of three countries (so far on a bilateral basis)—the USA, South Korea (*Bright Star*) and Japan (*Rimpac*) are engaged in perfecting their offensive operations which include a nuclear attack against North Korea. If West Asia had till recently been looked after by the US Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean, the Far East has been lorded over by the US Seventh Fleet with nuclear aircraft carriers *Carl Vinson*, *Midway*, and *Enterprise* and *New Jersey* which is the modernised battleship armed with Tomahawk cruise missiles (and which earned notoriety by shelling Lebanese territory during the 1982 Israeli aggression). There also are in the fleet nuclear submarines of the Ohio and Michigan class carrying nuclear missiles, and about 140 US warships and over 800 warplanes are operating. Now a new fleet has been created for the Indian Ocean which is deployed in the Arabian Sea, raising, according to one estimate, the strength of the US flotillas in the Pacific and the Indian Ocean to 160 warships including six attack aircraft carriers, several dozen nuclear-powered submarines and nearly 1,000 carrier-based aircraft.

Over the last four or five years the strength of US troops stationed in Asia and the Pacific has increased

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considerably. Till 1985 they had gone up by 30,000 men to a total of about 150,000 men. In the Far East and countries of the Pacific, the US has more than 300 military installations, including some 120 in Japan of which 30 are major bases, 40 in South Korea and 20 in Australia. The US has now set its eyes on Micronesia, an archipelago in South Pacific comprising of some 2,000 islands with a population of some 1,30,000 people. These islands which constitute something of a bridge between South East Asia and Australia, were given to the US by the UN in trusteeship for preparing them for self-governance by 1981. But the US violated trusteeship and built a network of bases in these islands to control vast areas of the South Pacific; These bases include a major naval base on Palau island for servicing submarines carrying Trident missiles. The US has also built a port and an airfield on the Saipan island, storage facilities for nuclear and chemical weapons on the Babelthau island, an airfield and other military installations on the Tinian island, ammunition depots and a communication station on the Marshall islands, and a naval base and an airfield for B-52 heavy strategic bombers on Guam.

These are besides the 23 bases in Philippines including the Clark airfield, 100 km from Manila, and the Subic Bay naval base. The Clark airfield, occupying 530 sq km., is one of the largest US bases outside the US, and Subic Bay naval base enabled the US Seventh Fleet to operate during the Vietnam war. US-South Korean military-political relations are based on a 1953 agreement on military cooperation under which US provided assistance to Seoul for building its armed forces, now estimated to be 601,000-strong, equipped with US supplied arms. Also under this agreement there are more than 42,000 US troops stationed in the country, and the US has deployed there some 1,000

tactical nuclear weapons. Today, the US has in South Korea 30 airfields and nearly 200 military installations. During a visit to South Korea in 1981 President Reagan ruled out the possibility of any reduction or withdrawal of US troops and gave an undertaking that in any emergency situation the US would hand over to Seoul military equipment worth two billion dollars which it had stockpiled in the country. In 1983 during a visit to Seoul US Secretary of State George Shultz promised that US aid, which amounted to 210 million dollars in 1982, would be increased further, and later in the year the *Washington Post* reported that the US was planning to deploy neutron bombs in South Korea along with Lance missiles and neutron shells for 203 mm howitzers fielded by US and South Korean troops.

Taiwan which in reality is part of China but has been kept separated under US military umbrella, has all along been treated by the US as its "unsinkable aircraft carrier". It has been assigned a key role in US plans for the region because its geographical location makes it possible for whoever is in actual control of the island to control the sea lanes from North East Asia to rest of the Asian continent. The US also seeks to involve South East Asia in its military strategy in the region by inducing (in other words, forcing) the ASEAN countries to acquire its latest weapons systems and thus transform this regional economic organisation into a military bloc under US aegis. For instance, arms deliveries to Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand include F-16 fighter bombers and other weapons systems. The AWACS aircraft are being given to Singapore although it is difficult to believe that this tiny little city republic really needs such a highly sophisticated spy aircraft. All in all, according to a Philippines newspaper report, arms deliveries to ASEAN countries would total 3,000 million dollars in the next three years and 10,000

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million dollars in the next ten years. Among the ASEAN countries, Thailand figures prominently in US military plans. In 1983, the US extended to Bangkok 60 million worth of military aid which in 1985 was increased to 100 million dollars in lieu of regaining control over several Thai airfields which the US was using during the war against Vietnam but which it had lost in the wake of its humiliation at the hands of the heroic Vietnamese people. The US was even reported to have been studying the possibilities of stationing cruise missiles and stockpiling chemical weapons in Thailand. It should be remembered that US warships of the Seventh Fleet have all through enjoyed the privilege of visiting Thai ports at will.

It is Japan however which is the kingpin of US strategy in the Far East even as Israel is in West Asia. Over the entire postwar period, Japan's rearmament and the revival of Japanese militarism have been attracting world attention. Beginning in 1950 with the creation of a reserve police force which was reorganised into Self Defence Force in 1954, the process of militarisation reached a very high level by the beginning of the 1980s. Over these 30 years, the country's military expenditure grew from 86 million dollars in 1951 to 12 billion dollars in 1984, while the Self Defence Force has been transformed into a regular modern military force equipped with all the latest in modern weapons except the nuclear ones. In 1985, military expenditure was further raised by 6.9 per cent to 13.4 billion dollars. In September, 1985, the government approved a new five-year plan for military spending of the order of 76 billion dollars which would exceed the Diet-imposed limit of 1 per cent of the GNP. For long the US has been urging successive Japanese governments to share the American "responsibility" for the security of the region which was not possible for Japan without

crossing the 1 per cent of GNP limit. Since Nakasone came to power in 1982, he has been inching towards acquiring the role assigned by the Reagan Administration to Japan. On a visit to Washington in January, 1983, he declared that Japan was an "unsinkable aircraft carrier", and since then the US has demarcated a 1,000-mile zone in which Japan will be "responsible" for the security of sea lanes. The Reagan Administration is in fact seeking "total militarisation" of Japan, and the pressures from Washington become harsher and harsher. Not that the Japanese ruling circles are an unwilling partner in the game. They are getting ready to amend the constitution to revoke the anti-militarisation clauses, particularly Article 9, to take on the role assigned to them by the US. In fact, the anti-militarisation provisions have already been eroded to the extent that have almost been reduced to a myth.

Besides 120 military installations, the United States has 45,800-strong air and ground forces units in Japan which together with a 40,000-strong force in South Korea, over 15,000 troops in the Philippines and the 18,300 personnel of the Seventh Fleet and the forces stationed along the chain of bases in the Northern and the Southern Pacific, constitute a standing threat to the sovereignty of the peoples of Asia. Any kind of diplomatic moves with this standing threat behind it reduce all diplomacy to sheer political blackmail. Japan's neighbours are reminded of their experience at the hands of the Japanese during the Second World War when they find its military might being rebuilt, but US Defence Secretary Caspar Weinberger tries to order them into silence when he tells them that they have nothing to fear as long as the US is there to look after them.

In fact, Japan's militarisation provides an opportunity to the US to strengthen its hold over those



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countries in the region which have accepted its security umbrella.

The US, however, does not count with the peoples of these countries. Even in Japan there is resentment against remilitarisation. In South Korea students are on war path. Philippines is in turmoil. And it was not long when demonstrations by students and others had forced the US to close down its bases in Thailand. Anti-Japanese demonstrations in Indonesia constitute a major hurdle in Japan's efforts to find a niche in Indonesian economy. Even Australia is not very happy over US attempts to push Japan into the South Pacific islands. A staunch ally like New Zealand has defied the US on the question of visits by nuclear arms carrying US ships. The defiance of the tiny island of Kiribati is even more striking. After protesting to the US over its trawlers entering the island's exclusive zone and carrying away fish, Kiribati signed a 1.7 million dollar agreement with the Soviet Union giving it fishing rights. But in the arrogance of its military might the US cares little for the wishes of other people—or, for that matter its own people which however is a different story.

INDIA'S ENCIRCLEMENT

When the SEATO and the Baghdad Pact came into being Jawaharlal Nehru warned, "they tend to encircle us." With the Mediterranean-based Sixth Fleet on its Western flank and the Seventh Fleet based in Sublic Bay on the Eastern Flank, Asia can as well say, "the two US fleets tend to encircle us." But India is even more justified in feeling encircled today than it was in the mid-1950s. For one thing, nuclear arms carrying ships had not yet come into the neighbourhood. For another, the US had not yet projected its military (including nuclear) might into the Indian Ocean except for keeping a small naval presence in the Gulf region. In modern times it is through the Indian Ocean that the imperialist powers have come to meddle in India's affairs and ultimately to rule over the country.

Even as the British were pulling out of the Indian Ocean—they still maintain a small presence in Oman—the US had begun taking over British bases. The US got the right to use the naval and air force bases at Bahrain, still under British rule, in 1971, and later acquired an air base in Oman in exchange for help to the Sultan to put down a patriotic upsurge among his people. Later on they acquired from the British the Diego Garcia island of the Chagos Archipelago which has the advantage of being equi-distant from almost

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everywhere on the Indian Ocean's East African and West Asian coasts. American admirals compare Diego Garcia with Malta in the Mediterranean. In 1965 and 1966, the UN General Assembly passed resolutions sponsored by Indian Ocean littoral countries, that the transfer of Diego Garcia by Britain to the US was illegal. The UN resolution categorically stated that "any attempt at partial or complete violation of the national unity and territorial integrity of the colonial territories, as well as the creation of military bases and installations on these territories; are incompatible with the aims and principles of the UN Charter." But Britain paid no heed. Nor did the US.

According to disclosures in British Parliament in 1975, Britain had acquired the right to buy Polaris missiles and 14 million dollars in return for Diego Garcia. The talks for the deal began during the days of Eisenhower's US presidency when Harold Wilson was the British Prime Minister and were finalised during Nixon's first presidency when Edward Heath became the British prime minister. But as far back as 1959 the US navy had selected six sites in the Indian Ocean for setting up its bases, and Diego Garcia was one of them. The navy needed this 25 kilometre long and five kilometre wide island to build anchorage facilities and a refuelling station. Later it wanted a communications centre to be set up there, and till recently the US officially described Diego Garcia as a communications facility. Constructions began in March, 1971, and the station went into operation in 1973. But it was only after the US humiliation in Vietnam that the idea of building naval strength in the Indian Ocean on a permanent basis began to gain ground in American military circles.

After the failure of the *Enterprise* to intervene in the Bangladesh liberation struggle, US warships had begun

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to visit the Indian Ocean on what were described as familiarisation missions but they really were flag showing visits. After the experience of the 1973 Arab-Israel conflict the proposal to link the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean and the Seventh Fleet in the Pacific Ocean with an independent fleet in the Indian Ocean had begun to be canvassed. In 1974, the US entered into an agreement with Britain to convert the communications centre at Diego Garcia into a "naval support base", extending the runway from 8,000 feet to 12,000 feet, deepening the lagoon so that it could handle a dozen ships rather than two or three, building the fuel storage depot which could supply an aircraft carrier Task Force fuel for 28 days, and enlarging other facilities like housing for personnel deployed there with a view to, in the words of the then US navy's assistant director for strategic planning, "enable the navy to play a role in the peace time" and have "a place to tie a carrier." A new standing threat of use of nuclear weapons was being set up in the heart of the Indian Ocean—and as the largest littoral state India was justified in viewing it as a direct threat to it.

By 1980, Diego Garcia had already developed into what an Indian External Affairs Ministry brief to the concerned parliamentary consultative committee described as a staging base for landing ground forces in any Indian Ocean littoral country—or, in other words, a base for what US Col. R.A. Sulik writing in (US) *Martime Corps Gazette* described as "forcible entry" into any country including India. B-52 fighter bombers, taking off from the Clark Field base in the Philippines, had begun to land at Diego Garcia. It became the natural centre for the new fleet that was to be set up later, and was assigned a central role for the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) which was to be assembled soon. Diego Garcia had been fully developed and the

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proposal for forming the new Indian Ocean fleet and the RDF when the Shah was still ruling in Tehran and Iran was still the centerpiece of the US plans in the region. Now, however, the Americans justify the upgrading of the Diego Garcia base, the creation of the RDF and the setting up of a permanent naval presence in the Arabian Sea region of the Indian Ocean by referring to the supposed threat to their interests and the sea lanes posed by the Iranian and Afghan revolutions.

Under the present US administration militarisation of the region has been stepped up and the entire Indian Ocean including the Persian Gulf and West, South and South-East Asia, has been proclaimed as the "third strategic zone" after Western Europe and the Far East. The very concept of a "third strategic zone" means the encirclement of Asia—and of India in particular as would become clear shortly. The Pentagon now has 30 bases and facilities located along the rim of the Indian Ocean from South Africa through the Gulf region to Australia.

Then there is the Indian Ocean fleet comprising aircraft carriers, missile cruisers, destroyers and frigates (mostly nuclear-launching), nuclear submarines, floating bases, several transport ships, tankers, auxiliary vessels, and pre-positioned and floating depots storing components of the permanently deployed "strategic triad" which includes B-52 bombers and Trident submarines.

At present the Pentagon is developing several strategic lines of naval and air bases and facilities in the Indian Ocean area. One of them stretches along the eastern coast of Africa through US facilities in Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Djibouti whose ports are used by US warships. Another goes through West Asian countries of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Oman. The third line provides bases to the US armed forces in

the eastern parts of the Indian Ocean in Thailand and Australia.

There are also plans to use the Indian Ocean region in the "star wars" project. A ground electronic and optical monitoring and surveillance station is being developed in Diego Garcia for near-Earth space tracking and neutralising artificial satellites. The submarines deployed in the Indian Ocean would be equipped with systems for vertical launching of missiles carrying nuclear warheads and explosive devices whose energy would be transformed into laser beams. These systems would be used to destroy the missiles of the other side right at the launching pads. The US centres for control, tracking and receiving information from military satellites, located on Mahe island (Seychelles) and in Alice Springs (Australia), are being adapted for their roles in the star wars project. Plans are also afoot to deploy on the bases in the Indian Ocean F-15 aircraft capable of launching miniature self-homing weapons systems for satellite interception.

The military build up of US "strategic allies" such as Israel, Pakistan and Thailand is being significantly stepped up to complement the US Armed Forces. Of particular interest to India is the build up of Pakistan which has since the downfall of the Shah, taken the place of Iran in American plans for the region. Discussing the role of the Rapid Deployment Force and Pakistan in the current US plans, Francis Fukuyama, a member of the State Department's planning division, told a Washington audience that "current RDF plans call for roll-on roll-off ships in Diego Garcia which will take several days to arrive....Were these ships to be based in Karachi, distance and deployment time would be considerably reduced. Furthermore, there is the possibility that the Pakistani army could serve as a proxy fighting force in the Gulf." Fukuyama also

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authored the report which became the basis for the Reagan Administration extending a three point four billion dollar military and allied economic aid for the six year period to Pakistan ending next year. Now another four point two billion dollar aid for the next period of six year has been extended and the sale of 40 more F-16s is being negotiated.

By supplying the F-16s to Pakistan, the United States has introduced in the sub-continent arms which for it are the next generation arms and has thus triggered an arms race in the region. Now the arms race is being carried to a new high with the US decision to give Pakistan the AWACS. It now appears that the US is also giving 200 M1 Abram tanks with laser-guided shelling capacity which too, like the AWACS, are next generation arms for this sub-continent.

The Indian press has missed Caspar Weinberger's deputy Richard Armitage's announcement that the US is setting up a permanent high-tech defence system in Pakistan which would enable that country to keep up with advances in arms technology. Pakistan is being armed on the plea that Soviet presence in Afghanistan has made it a frontline state. The justification for Pakistan's military build up is that it should hold back a Soviet push till the Rapid Deployment Force arrives.

Opposition leaders in Pakistan have alleged that Gwadar and some other ports on the Makran coast and some 32 airfields in the sparsely populated Baluchistan have been built or developed, and access to the US air force and navy has been given to these airfields and ports. Recently the warships of the US fleet in the Indian Ocean visited Karachi for rest and recreation. In October, what the Pakistani media described as a secret seminar was held in Islamabad in which the American and Pakistani participants exchanged notes on the

regional security situation in the context of global security environment.

Quoting reliable sources in Washington and Pakistan, American scholar-journalist Lawrence Lifschultz has written in a Pakistan daily that "General Ziaul Huq has permitted, at least since 1983, the use of Pakistani air bases to American P-3 surveillance aircraft. The Pakistani Air Force base at Mauripur near Karachi is described as the facility most frequently utilised.... (This) is but one aspect of a much more extended project framed by American military planners which places Pakistan within the context of a broad regional security vision. At its centre is the emergence of the first geographically unified military command to be established by the United States in more than 35 years. This new military command is called the US Central Command or CENTCOM, and has been operational since January 1983. It is considered on an operational par with NATO in Europe and CINPAC in the Pacific. Its 'area of responsibility' specifically covers 19 countries—three more than NATO—in South West Asia, Persian Gulf and Horn of Africa region, ranging from Kenya and Somalia to Pakistan and Afghanistan. Yet, its 'command area' is the Indian Ocean itself and the territories of 44 littoral and hinterland states in its basin."

Lifschultz goes on to point out that "if required the Central Command can currently call upon an intervention force of nearly 300,000 troops for deployment in South West Asia. By 1989, when it reaches nearly peak operational capacity, it will be able to land at least 460,000 personnel into the area under war-time conditions. Some estimates place its troop strength as high as 600,000. Whatever the precise figure, it is agreed that combat manpower available to US CENTCOM is second only to US force assigned to

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Western Europe. The Central Command is the direct descendent of the RDF formed in March 1980. In the view of American military planners the RDF was an immature and inadequate force when compared to what the US was capable of developing and deploying. The US military has budgeted more than 14 billion dollars to be spent by 1988 on facilities linked to the deployment of forces in the region. This is the single largest coordinated construction programme undertaken outside the US by the American armed forces since the end of the Vietnam war."

The implications for India's security are quite serious. The CENTCOM's area of responsibility stretches right upto India's international and defacto Western borders and its "command area" covers the Indian Ocean which washes Indian shores. Worse still, the use of P-3 spy aircraft inducts American military personnel into India's neighbourhood. The AWACS too will bring with them American military personnel into India's neighbourhood. India has always been opposed to foreign bases on the sub-continent, but Pakistan is giving the US access to its bases and facilities. This is apart from the induction of next generation weapons and the arms race in which India is involved. This is also besides the fact that in the past US weapons supplied to Pakistan have been used only either against India or against the Pakistani people themselves, and most of the weapons now being supplied can never be used against either the Soviet Union or Afghanistan or in Pakistan's function as US replacement for the Shah as the gendarme in West Asia. They can only be used against India. Add to all this Pakistan's nuclear ambition about which American scholar Stephen P. Cohen who has done the best profile of the Pakistani army, says that the bomb "would provide the umbrella under which Pakistan could reopen the Kashmir issue."

NEO-COLONIAL OFFENSIVE

Cold war thinking has come to influence even those who are opposed to the US militarisation drive to such an extent that they often ascribe it to what they call super-power rivalry. But the logic behind militarisation has been explained in a study by Prof. Guy J. Pauker for the Pentagon think-tank the Rand Corporation. In the report entitled *Military Implications of Possible World Order Crisis in the 1980s*, which should correct the perspective of its readers, the author pointed out:

“The North-South conflict should not be perceived as a temporary clash of interests produced by the four-fold increase in the prices of oil in 1973, but the expression of a much deeper conflict. It is the present stage of political mobilisation of the Third World *following several centuries of Western dominance*. Its expression is most visible in the General Assembly of the United Nations where more than a hundred new countries that did not have sovereign status at the end of World War II, are now in control in accordance with the principle of majority rule.

“This group of countries which includes almost all of Asia, Africa and Latin America, does not consider the process of decolonisation completed with the achievement of political independence, believing that the economic dominance of the world market by the

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industrial democracies (read former imperialist powers—GM) creates for them conditions of dependence and exploitation to which they refer as neocolonialism.

“An increasingly determined campaign is being waged by the Third World through a variety of overlapping groupings, for the establishment of a ‘New International Economic Order.’ *Although its articulated demands are economic, the general thrust of the movement is political aiming at a major modification of power relations between the former colonial powers which are at present the most advanced industrial societies and the former colonies which are still at the early stages of modernisation and industrialisation.*

“The Third World movement has many similarities with the growth of trade unionism in the West in the nineteenth century. Its dynamism is reflected in the fact that the number of participating countries has increased more than three-fold in the last two decades. It is also a sign of its strength that recently some of the more moderate and pro-West leaders of the Third World countries are endorsing the positions of the radicals. *As neither the Soviet Union nor the People’s Republic of China is involved in this Third World Movement, it would be misleading to interpret its manifestations as mere episodes in the cold war.*

“What the North-South conflict actually involves is a *struggle for the world product which is not likely to be resolved by a few brief summit meetings.* The struggle will probably continue for a long time interspersed with crises and confrontations. Nations, like individuals, do not divest themselves voluntarily of their accumulated wealth and of their sources of income merely in response to more appeals. *If they have the power to resist demands on their assets, the American people (which means American propertied classes—GM) would*

probably expect their government to negotiate from a position of strength, and if they (the US government—GM) lack the power needed to for the protection of their interests, they will hold their government accountable for having failed to maintain its preparedness.

“As a super power *cast by history* in a role of world leadership, the United States would be expected to *use its military forces* to prevent the total collapse of the world order (as it exists today with US domination—GM) or, at least, to protect specific interests of American citizens (which means American corporations including transnational corporations—GM) in the absence of international rule of law.

“Such contingencies might generate *military requirements without precedent* in the experience of American military planners who may not yet fully comprehend the significance of events that are already happening, such as the *interaction between East-West conflict, the North-South conflict* and the acceleration of the consequences of planetary mismanagement.

“*More attention may have to be devoted to the development of doctrines, plans, weapons and force structures in anticipation of possible uses of military force in some novel crisis situations.* The American people may demand that their national interests be protected by *all available means (including use of nuclear weapons—GM)* if global turbulence prevails in the 1980s.

“The military posture implications of such a situation are not self-evident. If a harsh international environment were to develop in the 1980s, *additional military capabilities might be required besides the forces directly dedicated to Soviet and other well-understood contingencies*” (Emphasis added.).

This long extract is self-explanatory—and it is the

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explanation which it provides for the US militarisation drive in the Third World, particularly in Asia—and in the Indian sub-continent—which justifies its inclusion here. As the author of the report of the Pentagon Think-Tank study points out, this militarisation drive is directed against the developing countries “besides the forces dedicated to Soviet and other well-known contingencies”. It brings out the invalidity of the theory of super-power rivalry and provides the background in which the Soviet moratorium on all nuclear tests as well as Gorbachev’s January 15, 1986 proposals should be viewed.

A REVOLUTIONARY MOVE

Between 1958 and 1985 the United Nations General Assembly passed 35 resolutions calling for an end to nuclear testing. Nuclear weapons test are no less than rehearsals for nuclear war, and the use of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons, according to resolution 1653 of the General Assembly, is contrary to the spirit, letter and aims of the UN, a violation of the UN Charter, a war not against an enemy but against mankind, and, as resolution 33/71/B of 1978 declared, a crime against humanity. The people of Asia have all the more reasons to feel concerned on the issue. Two Asian countries, the Soviet Union and China, are nuclear weapons powers—and both are India's neighbours on the north—while the seas around the continent are littered with nuclear arms carrying warships. But both the Soviet Union and China are committed to non-first use of their nuclear weapons. The UN General Assembly, by its resolutions 37/78/J and 38/183/B of 1982 and 1983, recalled the solemn unilateral declarations of the Soviet Union and China that they would not be the first to use nuclear weapons, and urged the other nuclear weapons powers to make similar declarations.

While the Soviet Union has always responded positively to the UN calls for nuclear test ban and has even unilaterally declared moratorium on tests, the response of

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the United States and its allies has always been negative. The 1984 General Assembly voting record on various resolutions relating to the issue clearly brings out the position of the nuclear weapons powers:

Resolutions	For	Against	Abstentions
Nuclear Test Ban	119 (USSR, China)	2 (US,UK)	26
Halting nuclear arms race	108 (USSR)	19 (US,UK, France)	16 (China)
Nuclear arms freeze	124 (USSR)	15 (US,UK, France)	7 (China)
Non-use of nuclear arms	126 (USSR, China)	17 (US,UK, France)	6
Non-first use	110 (USSR, China)	19 (US,UK, France)	15
Prevention of nuclear war	128 (USSR, China)	3 US,UK, France)	20

Evidently, nuclear disarmament is no longer on their agenda, and, so the talks between the Soviet Union and the USA remain confined to limitation and control of nuclear arms. Viewed in this context, Gorbachev's January 15, 1986 proposals for elimination of all nuclear weapons by the end of the present century, have rightly been described by the IDSA director, K.

A REVOLUTIONARY MOVE

Subramanyam, as "both revolutionary and visionary" in character.

What makes these proposals revolutionary is that they go beyond the philosophy of nuclear arms control, reject the fatalistic view that mankind has to live with the nightmare of a nuclear holocaust haunting it, and seek to delegitimise nuclear arms. The Gorbachev proposals are visionary in so far as they visualise a new world order in shaping which every nation will play its part. After the breakdown of his talks with President Reagan at Reykjavik, Gorbachev said in his press conference, "The world is not what it once was. It does not want to be, and will not be, the private domain of the United States of America or the Soviet Union. Every country has the right to choose, the right to its own ideology, to its own values. If we fail to recognise this, there will be no international relations. There will be only chaos and the law of the jungle." While being revolutionary and visionary in character, the Gorbachev proposals are also realistic and practical. He has proposed a step by step programme keeping in mind the apprehensions, real or imaginary, of others.

In his report to the 27th Congress of the CPSU Gorbachev had rightly pointed out that "the present level of balance of the nuclear capabilities of the opposite sides is much too high. For the time being this ensures equal danger to each of them. But only for the time being. Continuation of the nuclear arms race will inevitably heighten this equal threat and may bring it to a point where even parity will cease to be a military-political deterrence. Consequently, it is vital in the first place, to dramatically reduce the level of military confrontation. In our age genuine equal security is guaranteed not by an excessively high but by the lowest possible of strategic parity." This is the logic behind the unilateral Soviet moratorium and the first

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stage Gorbachev has proposed in the move towards a nuclear weapons free world in the next 15 years. And it is to seek this that he went to Geneva and Reykjavik to meet Reagan.

The philosophy behind his approach is, as he put it in his report, that "in the context of relations between the USSR and USA, security can only be mutual, and if we take international relations as a whole it can only be universal. The highest wisdom is not in caring exclusively for oneself, especially to the detriment of the other side." He must have found this highest wisdom lacking among those to whom he talked in Geneva and Reykjavik. But it cannot be so completely absent in the vast continent of Asia which is the birth place of great savants and where great civilisations have flourished in the past and at least two of them, the Chinese and the Indian, have survived the ravages of time. But more than two centuries of imperialist domination, based on policies of divide and rule, has left this great continent divided against itself, and the continuing US policy of intrigue, manipulation and intervention to ensure its economic and politico-military domination, has further aggravated these divisions.

It is, however, not only in the hope that he would evoke a response from Asia in the tradition of the wisdom for which it is known, that Gorbachev has come forward with the idea of Asian security. For, behind this move there is also the realisation that universal security alone can ensure the security of every country. Asia is the only continent with so many conflicts and confrontations, and as an Asian power the Soviet Union has every right to feel concerned over the situation in the continent and seek some way out. What better way out can there be than that the countries of the continent guarantee mutual security? If the accords emerging from 1975 Helsinki conference on security

and cooperation in Europe have preserved the military detenté in that continent despite the aggravation in the cold war during Reagan's tenure in White House, there is no reason why some similar device cannot work in Asia. It is justifiably argued that the situation in Asia is much more complicated than in Europe. But, as Gorbachev said, the road to Helsinki too was not smooth.

Nobody says that Asia can proceed along the same path through which European countries reached Helsinki. The countries of Asia will have to work out their own paths through bilateral, regional and inter-regional understandings of different political varieties, and advance through a variety of routes, some more circuitous than others, towards setting up some kind of a forum where Asians can come together and think and talk of ways to preserve peace on the continent and if possible reach agreements. The idea is not exactly new. Even before effective power was transferred to India on August, 15, 1947, its leadership had held the first ever Asian regional conference. Then there was the famous Bandung conference. And the basis on which mutual security can be assured by Asian countries have also been worked out for long—the five principles of peaceful co-existence. There is also the 10-point declaration of the Bandung conference. What is needed, however, is that the people should start thinking and talking of Asian security—first among themselves and to each other. This is the essential first step.

It is certainly not going to be a process the outcome of which could be expected within a short period. No time limit can be set for a process of this kind, more so because Asian security or, for that matter, the security of any region can be ensured only if a comprehensive system of global security is evolved which, as stated earlier, is a revolutionary objective involving as it does

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the reshaping of the present world order. But the whole idea is that the process should be initiated, and the task of initiating has acquired urgency because of the attempts to take the nuclear arms race into the outer space. Asia too has been assigned a role in the Star Wars project and the chain of American bases in Asia and the Indian and Pacific oceans is to be integrated into it. Nuclear arms in outer space would pose before the entire mankind the danger of its annihilation.



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