

**Redefining Non-Alignment:
The Global South in the New Global Equation
Clovis Maksoud**

As the rumblings of glasnost and perestroika were sending shockwaves throughout Eastern Europe, the democratic project, both in the former Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe, began to show signs of resilience and irreversibility. From then onwards this was reflected in the growing congeniality of relations between the United States and the Soviet Union, manifesting itself in cooperation between the superpowers within and outside the United Nations. The process of democratization in Eastern Europe, and growing signs of introversion in the former Soviet Union gave rise to a sharper contradiction between North and South; replacing the endemic tensions between East and West. The Global South, otherwise known during the Cold War as the Third World, welcomed the surge of freedom in Eastern Europe, but sensed that its margin of maneuver on the world scene and influence in the United Nations was being gradually reduced and eroded. The policy known as Non-Alignment was, on the level of essence, becoming less relevant, while the motives and objectives of the movement continued to be necessary, constructive, and useful. This undoubtedly necessitated a restatement of the policy in a manner that would emphasize South-South relations and recast the South in a way that would enable it to withstand the transitional phase in which international relations were being constructed after the Cold War.

For this reason, it was premature to describe what was taking place, as President Bush did in the euphoria of triumphalism after the Gulf War, as the "New World Order." A more precise description would be that what was emerging was a new global equation; a term which avoids rendering a moral judgment on an emerging situation. Needless to say, this equation has given rise to new political prescriptions and economic panaceas, setting in motion ethnic and sectarian developments that, while affirming self-determination, have also brought in civil strife, ethnic antagonisms and untold human tragedies. This is why the term "order" is misplaced; equally the question must be asked whether this global equation can be called "new" at a time when we have witnessed a revival of ethnic medievalism and early colonial tendencies and developments.

While the Cold War froze some of these negative tendencies, the fragmentation that followed the fall of communism demonstrated the flaws and vulnerability of the "democrats." This led to a fall back on ethnic and absolutist concepts of nationalism that brought in their wake the destruction of many civil societies and the breakdown of long established communities. As in former Yugoslavia, in Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and other regions, crisis management became complex and costly. In many instances the United Nations had to be involved, which meant that its peacekeeping functions had to be redefined. While the enforcement measures used during the Gulf crisis were authorized by the UN Security Council, as in its Resolution 678 on November 29, 1990 authorizing the use of force, the subsequent implementation of the resolutions were not undertaken by the UN itself. The looseness of language in some of these resolutions allowed exclusive interpretations by the Western powers, as the countervailing role of the Soviet Union no longer existed.

Of course, the end of the Cold War made the UN Security Council more operational and active; yet with the new global equation, a perception that the U.S. was setting the agenda became widespread. There was evidence of growing Western assertiveness. This led the Global South to treat the UN Security Council more as an adversary rather than a protector. Perhaps this perception was overblown, and in certain instances gave rise to exaggerated and unreasonable

anxieties; the fact remains, however, that a measure of alienation developed which in turn increased the intensity of the already existing North-South tensions.

To the countries of the Global South, the Western powers' historic shift from their dismissal of the UN during the Cold War, ignoring its resolutions for more than a quarter of a century, to their sudden celebration of the UN's new role, and their need to dominate its proceedings and deliberations was, to put it mildly, dizzying. We were and still are, it seems, witnessing the pains of adjustment; some adjustments might appear unrelated while others could lead to rational reorganization within the framework of the Global South.

Evidence of oddity falls into the realm of political and psychological reflexes existent, but not necessarily inherent, in any process of adjustment. They express themselves in defiance; acceptance of defeats but never of surrender, coping with being humbled but rejecting humiliation. Perhaps this explains the phenomenon, for example, of Saddam Hussein's sustained defiance and the Global South's general reaction to it. While most of the Arab world and the Global South condemned the coerciveness of Hussein's regime - its blatant and obvious violations of human rights, its bloody and useless war against Iran, its invasion of Kuwait, and its obliviousness to prevailing realities and opinions - the Arabs and the people of the Global South profoundly resented the haughtiness of Western diktat, the clear objectives and the West's dealing with Hussein's infractions as more eager to project hegemonic power in the region than to correct the infractions and redress the actual grievances.

This resentment was reinforced by the crude exploitation of Iraq's intransigence to bolster the fortunes of political leaders in the U.S. and other Western powers. Even when this alleged opportunism was categorically denied there was in the background sufficient historical experience to justify some of the Global South's wild and perhaps farfetched conclusions: Iran - Contra, the "failed policy" which President Bush admitted towards Iraq prior to the invasion of Kuwait, etc. The chasm that has existed between the West and the Global South has, in many instances, been exacerbated by a Western discourse oblivious to Southern sensitivities, concerns, and dignity. It is this power consciousness that has permeated Western parlance, and lent credence to the assumption that the West is against the rights, aspirations, and interests of the Global South. This in turn has clogged the channels of communication between the West and the South, and at times interrupted consequential dialogue, introducing obstacles to a genuine understanding and balanced relations. True, mastery of the technological revolution by Western - especially U.S. media has rendered Western terms of reference prevalent and at times dominant. These terms, however, should not be considered as if they have been readily accepted or necessarily approved. In many instances the asymmetry in communication capabilities has pushed political elites in the South to recoil into cultural assertiveness for fear of being easily coopted; thus leading to a tendency - maybe a trend - to mystify historical roots as a means of compensating for technical inability and the paucity of access to the most advanced and empowering scientific and technological opportunities. It follows that the political constituency in many countries of the Global South has become susceptible to movements that seek to fill their lives with pride while knowledge declines.

Inequality in any form, and in most circumstances, is a prescription for the insurrection of the spirit. In such an atmosphere, extreme ethnic and/or religious fundamentalist approaches find fertile ground and hit a responsive chord. What follows is a dethronement of reason and a concomitant absence of scrutiny and accountability. Many sectors of the population become mesmerized by the challenge to their collective sense of dignity rather than acquire a collective commitment to struggle for their human rights. A derailment of energies follows and the chances

for a thorough advancement diminish. The Global South, although conscious of its predicament has found itself in the grip of false choices, unable to converse with the West and North - or to cooperate on equitable terms, and thus pushed to confrontation, only to be penalized or ostracized.

While the Global South has been grappling with this predicament, the North has been preoccupied with reconstituting its broader framework, reasserting its primacy and harnessing the consequences of a new and enlarged, albeit turbulent, Europe. In pursuing this endeavor, the North has been dealing with problems that are similar and, as in the case of Yugoslavia, identical to those facing many Southern societies. These problems, however, are far more acute in the South. This is not to underestimate the seriousness of the fragmentation that took place in the former USSR and Eastern Europe, but to highlight the sense of instant responsibility that the West felt towards its eastern counterpart, while responsibility towards the Global South has remained distant, patronizing, and selective. The South thus has found itself in a transformed world, echoing policies of the past that, while redundant and repetitive, have remained relevant and useful at a fundamental level. These policies, however, need to be restated in a manner indicating that they have been updated and are being practiced in different circumstances and conditions.

The policies of Non-Alignment were the product of the South's will to exercise independent judgment over and above enjoying the fruits of independence from colonial and imperial rule. Non-alignment became the policy direction of developing countries as they sought to expand the area of peace and avoid being coopted into either the U.S.-led Western bloc or the Soviet-led Eastern bloc. While not belonging to an organized "third force," non-aligned countries considered their position as contributing to relaxing international tensions, enabling them access to both superpowers, and signaling that the countries of the Global South would not forfeit their new freedom to accommodate the logic and requirements of the Cold War. What the Non-Aligned Movement assumed was that the imperatives of the Cold War, in terms of military priorities, invariably hampered the urgent needs for expeditious economic development.

This assumption was correct, but the readiness to act accordingly was not equal among all non-aligned states. Pivotal states in the Non-Aligned Movement, such as India, Egypt, Indonesia, and Yugoslavia during the 1950s and 1960s, could not prevent cracks in the movement as they began to surface in the 1970s due, in part, to a loosening of the criteria of non-alignment which enabled, for example, Saudi Arabia and Cuba to be included, and to the concomitant amorphousness that ensued. The strains within the movement that followed eroded its effectiveness and weakened its credibility. Despite these handicaps, non-alignment continued to provide countries that adhered to it a sense of association and solidarity that proved serviceable, sustaining a modicum of mobility on the world stage and thus exercising a restraining influence on the dangers of a bi-polar world.

With the removal of the Soviet Union as a counterbalance to the U.S., the bi-polar world began to be replaced by what is termed a unipolar system. This description, logical on the surface, is not precise. The new global equation that followed the fall of communism and the breakdown of the Soviet Union is more complex. The question of whether the world has become unipolar could only be asked if we assume that the previous system was exclusively a bipolar one. True, if the possession of overwhelming nuclear and long range missiles are the primary determinants of what constitute a pole," then we must all acquiesce to this definition. It was this outlandish acquiescence that rendered the Non-Aligned Movement insistent on convening a Summit Conference in September 1992 in Indonesia, although many [illegible]...

...no longer applicable (see below). However, the bonds of similarity of conditions, interests and objectives render the need for an ongoing grouping essential and crucial. Most of the non-aligned countries are all in the Global South and from this optic their status in the world is distinct and distinguishable from the profound and substantial changes taking place in the Global North.

In the early days of non-alignment, the countries that subscribed to it were emerging from Western hegemony, fulfilling long denied national rights and aspirations. To most of these countries, the West was associated with capitalist exploitation of their resources, raw material and economic potential. Nationalist movements considered the process of decolonization to be simultaneously one of freedom from capitalist control. But while independence from the West was the paramount motivating force, there was no inclination - indeed there was prevailing rejection - to fall under the control of the Soviet Union, economically, militarily, or ideologically.

India's Jawaharlal Nehru, trained in the Western liberal tradition and also a socialist, was the principal architect of the policy of non-alignment. India, the backbone and pioneer of non-alignment, persuaded other newly independent countries to join the movement. The term "non-alignment" did not mean neutrality; it was distinct in that it adhered to an objectivity of judgment. Non-alignment could be neutral, but neutrality was not inherent. It was a political concept that consciously chose to remain separate from the spheres of influence of both Western and Soviet blocs. In this sense it was an outer projection of an inner search for direction; insisting on an independent ideological judgment, i.e., socialism with varying democratic structures. Non-alignment was an activist, judgmental policy, aligned with - when necessary - progressive, democratizing forces within both blocs, and seeking economic policies that enhanced the role of the public sector but not to the exclusion of the private sector.

The Bandung Conference of April 1955 prefaced the Non-Aligned Movement, accentuated cooperation between African and Asian countries, and highlighted the need to find peaceful solutions to tensions within the two regions, the Pauch Sheel. The conference expressed its concern with poverty, and decided to pressure for the rapid decolonization of Africa. It also upheld a position to maintain relations with both superpowers.

Khrushchev's ascendance to power reduced the tension that had built up between the Soviet Union and the Non-Aligned Movement under Stalin; prompting the U.S. to reevaluate its position as well. The late 1950s and early 1960s saw a tacit recognition of the movement by the two superpowers, in contrast to their earlier contempt. The rise in the political stature of non-alignment was accompanied by an increase in membership as most American countries, upon achieving independence, joined; Latin American countries showed increased interest and participation. Of particular importance was the ideological difference within the movement that came to the fore at the 1961 Belgrade conference. Nasser and Tito wanted to see a strict and refined definition of "non-alignment," while Nehru maintained that it should be a looser and more open concept. It was this latter view that prevailed, and opened the movement to a variety of members, making it increasingly difficult to articulate coherent overall policy objectives.

The influence of the Non-Aligned Movement in the 1960s began to manifest itself in the UN General Assembly. India became a key player as neither East nor West would trust each other on sensitive political issues. Although the U.S. and the Soviet Union respected the independent role of the movement, both wanted to intrude on it by creating alliances within it. This became manifest in the 1962 conflict between India and China. China's attack on India related to its desire to play the dominant role in the movement, although it was not a member. Despite Nasser's successful mediation between the two countries, India's position within the

movement was substantially weakened by these events, and was further eroded by the war between India and Pakistan in 1965. Egypt began to play a more central role in the movement, and the development of a more radical and americanized consciousness of non-alignment focused on Israel as the projection of the West in the Middle East, and on the eradication of apartheid in South Africa. In Asia, the political focus became internalized as the region struggled with its developmental problems and regional conflicts.

In the 1970s, the NAM receded as a global movement, but maintained a position of strength within the UN General Assembly, using this forum to articulate independent judgments on a variety of issues. This decade represented non-alignment's peak of moral influence, but also the beginning of the erosion of the concept itself. There were several reasons for this. Central was the inclusiveness of the definition. Attempts to synchronize diverse interests resulted in watering down policy decisions to such a degree that they became vague, redundant, and at times meaningless.

The prevailing ideological orientation sought by the movement was to align with the progressive and sympathetic forces within the two blocs, seeking to liberalize communism, while at the same time making capitalist societies more socially conscious and sensitized to Third World problems and concerns. It was hoped that such an evolutionary process would result in a convergence of interests including a commitment to freedom, equality and human rights. The proliferation of non-aligned members resulted, however, in a loss of focus and vitality of purpose. The 1980s saw the position of the Non-Aligned Movement reduced still further, as the UN began to lose influence in world affairs; especially during President Reagan's administrations.

After the collapse of communism in the Eastern bloc and the Soviet Union, the Non-Aligned Movement had to reassess its position in world politics, and to question its relevance in a new global equation. It was in this context, then, that the Tenth Summit of Non-Aligned Countries was held in Jakarta on September 1-6, 1992. In many ways the summit was the last hurrah of a movement that united developing countries at a time when the bipolar system sought to determine and dominate their policies and destinies. The terms "non-alignment" and "Third World" are no longer germane to the discourse in the new global equation. The motives and objectives that impelled the developing countries to act together, however, remain valid and relevant. Changes in the international order have rendered a regrouping of developing countries necessary and a redefinition of their purpose.

The summit was a significant effort in this direction. In the Summit Declaration the leaders of 128 states affirmed that the next era in international relations would be determined by the North-South paradigm, as opposed to the old East-West Cold War axis. And indeed, while an attachment to the term "non-alignment" has persisted, it is more a lingering nostalgia, circumventing the immediate need for a semantic and psychological adjustment to new and emerging realities. In fact, the Jakarta Declaration implicitly recognized the dawn of a new era, in which the terms "Third World" and "non-aligned" have been subsumed by the term "Global South."

Historically, the sense of collective consciousness that imbued the Non-Aligned Movement was prompted by a determination to remain distinct and apart from the Western and Soviet blocs. The same consciousness has continued as the countries of the Global South seek to remain immune from the hegemonic propensities within the new unipolar system. The Jakarta Declaration articulated the anxieties of the developing countries by stating that "the dominance of a few countries, which has become prominent, could result in further inequities, uncertainties and instabilities. The failure to redress the widening gap between the affluent North and the

impoverished South is looming as the central issue that could threaten international security and stability."

The Jakarta Summit recognized the changed contours of the international landscape. On the one hand, the leaders of the Non-Aligned Movement showed themselves eager to avoid precipitating any unnecessary confrontations with the North. On the other hand, they underlined a multitude of legitimate grievances, both political and economic, nurtured by patterns of patronizing behavior and insensitive policies. In a strategy that reflected these new realities, the summit leaders sought to deter Northern hegemony by advocating a strengthened and more powerful United Nations. In particular, they called for enhancing the powers of the secretary general and restoring the authority of the General Assembly. The exercise of excessive power by the Security Council, leading to unacceptable imbalances in the international order, was a matter of explicit concern.

It was no surprise that the summit should have called for a formula to redress the imbalances within the UN system, and to ensure that the countries of the South restore to themselves a credible and effective collective solidarity. The summit sought a breathing space - a measured distance from the North - to allow the countries of the Global South to set their own agendas and to negotiate their economic and developmental priorities without being forced into suffocating strategic and economic dependencies on the developed North.

The goal was to fashion a strategy which avoided confrontation but put the dialogue with the North on firmer ground. The Declaration stated that "the Heads of State or Government were of the view that, as an indispensable corollary to the North and South context, some South-South cooperation based on the concept of collective self-reliance must also be intensified. This cooperation not only opens up new avenues for growth and reduces undue dependence vis-a-vis the North, but also constitutes an integral element of any strategy towards the restructuring of international economic cooperation. They emphasized that success in South-South cooperation will lend greater credibility and added strength to efforts in obtaining a new, more rational and equitable international economic order. The South needs the resources, markets and technology of the North to realize its development aspirations. The developed countries cannot be the sole engine of growth for the world economy, particularly in the context of recessionary conditions.

The developing South has shown itself fully cognizant of its economic and political potentialities and liabilities. Recognition and articulation of these factors imparted a certain historical significance to the Jakarta Summit. For these reasons alone the gathering deserved more serious attention from the media and political establishments in the North. The South's insistence on recovering its independence of judgment and its own terms of reference has become evident. The legacy of forty years of non-alignment reinforces this determination, manifest in the movement's assertion of independence from the bipolar system of power. The Global South's distinct and independent position provides a means to share in the construction of a genuinely interdependent world, thus avoiding the debilitating consequences of perpetuated dependencies on the North. We may be witnessing the end of non-alignment as the term becomes outdated; yet, the Jakarta Summit may have signaled the beginning of the mobilization of the peoples and nations of the Global South.

Perhaps this is the time to explain more precisely what we mean by "Global South," and to define its quest for a consequential presence on the world stage in order to respond to the legitimate demands and requirements of the peoples and societies that constitute it.

It is obvious that the terms "non-alignment" and "Third World" are no longer descriptive of the South; the motives and the conditions that led these countries to consider themselves as

parts of a "Third World" were due to a conviction that they were clearly distinct from the two worlds led by the two superpowers. What the term the "Third World" meant to these countries was that they, as newly independent states, were both an integral part of the world, and also independent of the two hegemonic military blocs that repeatedly sought to dominate the global scene. The insistence on being distinct from these two "worlds" was not a declaration of separation from them, but a declaration of independence in dealing and interacting with them. For this reason, as we have observed, the policy of non-alignment was pursued and both terms, non-alignment and Third World, were inextricably linked. Now the changes in the overall world situation require a more appropriate term - the Global South - in order to define, in more precise terms, the context of the international situation and the proper juxtaposition of regional groupings.

The Earth Summit in Rio in June 1992 underlined clearly the new relationship between the North and South, with the Group of 77 playing a pivotal role in rallying the countries of the South, based on common concerns in the economic, environmental, developmental and social arenas. A definition of the South was spelled out:

Three and a half billion people, three-quarters of humanity, live in the developing countries of the South. These countries vary greatly in size, in levels of development, in economic, social and political structures. Yet they share a fundamental trait; they exist on the periphery of the developed countries of the North. Most of their people are poor; their economics are mostly weak and defenseless; they are generally powerless in the world arena.

It is noticeable that the most distinguishable characteristic of the South is that the large majority of humankind live in the developing South. The term "developing" indicates a process of catching up with levels obtainable but not achieved; of opportunities available but in most instances denied or foreclosed; of potentialities existent but, either deliberately or through neglect, unexplored. What a South consciousness seeks is to address the urgent need to accelerate the pace of South-South relations in order to interface with the industrial North in a manner that prevents the divisiveness inherent in the proliferation of regional political, strategic and economic dependencies. What follows is a requirement that the countries of the South should project the South as a collective grouping on the global scene. The Non-Aligned Movement thus becomes subsumed in the Global South. This is what emerges in international relations.

Although the term Global South connotes a broad geographic area of former colonial and presently developing countries, this does not mean that within the Global South there are no pockets of affluence and developmental achievement akin to those in the North. Similarly in the North there are to be found pockets of poverty, of disenfranchised populations and institutional and social decay. Having stated this proviso, and the fact the South is fully aware of this reality, it remains necessary, however, that the Global South continue to be defined as a distinct and distinguishable group of nations and societies.

But what about areas which, prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, were integrated within its superpower framework, only to be revealed as fragments of an empire with many facets of vulnerability, impoverishment, untutored and frustrated ethnic tendencies? Are they to be included in the Global South? There is also yet another category of states and societies which objectively fit into the broad definition of the South but are reluctant to be included, except on their own terms as a "leader," i.e., China; or eager to be considered fully part of the North but unable because of cultural and religious restraints, i.e., Turkey.

While China and Turkey might be gray ones in the North-South divide, the issue concerning the newly independent Central Asian Republics remains an issue that should be addressed in light of their special circumstances as well as their socio-economic conditions, which in many aspects are similar to those obtaining in the countries of the Global South.

Positing the Global South in an emerging new equation requires an understanding of the dynamics of change that the international community is undergoing. These changes are either sudden or expected. The sudden changes require the nations of the Global South to construct mechanisms that provide them the ability to mesh the expected with the sudden. In other words, we must be cognizant of the reality that in the new global equation the sudden must be expected. This should not be too difficult, as most of the changes - both sudden and expected - continue to take place in the North. This in turn has engaged the North in what might be described as "North-centrism." What follows is a growing realization that the characteristic Northern propensity to marginalize the Global South has acquired a life of its own. This became inevitable as the oppressive regimes in both the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia collapsed, unleashing xenophobic forces whose paramountcy destroyed the glue that preserved the aspects of their civil societies however coercively.

The preoccupation of the Western powers with this complex series of problems, in addition to the economic dislocations that free market economics have brought about, has rendered the treatment of critical problems in the Global South secondary, to be neglected if not ignored. Thus, while the North has sought to get its eastern house in order, the Global South has been doing the same.

The South, however, must not allow the North's indifference and neglect to prevent it from developing and promoting its own agenda in the new global equation, whether this takes place through a rejuvenated Non-Aligned Movement, through the United Nations, or by other means. Ultimately, if co-existence was the optimum objective during the Cold War, co-discovery between North and South should become the inspiring incentive for genlinch' new international relations.