

Pain of Globalisation

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After the fall of Iraq and the rude realisation by Washington that Americans were persona non-grata in Iraq, George Bush had a change of heart and attitude towards the UN and Old Europe, as self-complacent Secretary of State Rummy boy is now in want of reminding Germany and France. The slight change did not come as a surprise to many political observers around the world. The Americans had gone to Baghdad riding chariots of fire, expecting the streets to be lined with crowds chanting glory to America, long live George Bush and frantically waving olive branches, with excitement rising like dust in the Baghdad still afternoon air. The reality turned out to be very different, very different indeed. What they encountered were angry demonstrations of people armed with guns and all sorts of explosives chanting death to America. Had they listened to the voices of the majority before invading a sovereign country, the outcome could have been much less disastrous but then, they were Americans!

Once upon a time, so the Greek mythology goes, Daedalus and Icarus, father and son of royal descent, managed to take a flight on glued wings. Icarus flew too close to the sun after experiencing the excitement of his newfound emancipation. If he could defy the laws of gravity, he could challenge *Zeus*, the Greek god of skies in his own territory. His father had forewarned him of the dangers of flying too close to the sun, but being young and full of hot blood, the young Icarus had no time for the old and experienced. Icarus flew so close to the sun that the glue melted, detaching his wings. He subsequently fell down into the sea where he perished.

Europe has seen empires come and go. It knows the financial and human cost in creating hegemony, the inevitable doom and eventual humiliation. It was this experience that Europeans (*with exemption of political leadership in Britain*) were passing on to young America at the UN debate before the Iraq war. But America, being of hot blood like Icarus and at the cutting edge of technology was in no mood to listen. It was going to fly high...come sun come rain. It decided to go it alone and attacked Iraq. After all it was armed with Skyhawks, Tomahawks or any other sharp-eyed hawks like Dick Cheney, Rummy boy and the security guru Paul Wolf, Richard Perle et al who dominate Washington and its skyline. Any little lies they may have given had been washed in the blood of...you got it...blood of the very, very born-again His Holiness the Attorney General, John Ashcroft...whose veins are full of blue cleansing blood. But they forgot that they needed the UN as a binder...the glue in their mission. Now that the heat is on, the wings are melting in the desert.

The implication of this gung-ho attitude is damaging the long-term American reputation and interests around the world. It will disrupt the existing world order and probably, as some might already be starting to read the writing on the wall, bring about the turning point of the very American domination that the hawks are trying to build. Some Imperial analysts are presently drawing the parallels of the vigorous American domination to the peak of British Empire, which started to crumble shortly after the Second World War leading to an avalanche.

America should ask the historians: *Why did the British Empire crumble?* Simple. During the Second World War, the colonised fought alongside the colonialist

to preserve *The Empire*. The subject had supported the empire during the war and they expected support after the war and not to be subjugated.

During the cold war between America and the Soviet Union, a lot of nations had supported America, now it seeks supremacy over them. They feel betrayed. They may not be fighting a gun battle with America but a rather gruesome economic war with no end and no hope in sight. They are now asking: Did they help to write an equation (or an inequality), which is clearly imbalanced against them? Ordinary people in far-flung nations know of different acronyms than those based in Washington and elsewhere...IMF-International Monetary Fund, WB-World Bank; a bank that sings to its master's voice at the Citicorp, WTO- World Trade Organisation.

The dominated are fiercely responding to the new world order. It was new fifteen years ago but it is not new any more. Developing Nations are now well familiar with the pain they have endured over the years and they need no telling of the benefits of the sugar coated pill as generations get wiped out by the merciless wild bank policies whose basic principles are survival for the fittest and the winner takes it all. As Joseph Stiglitz, who held a three-year stint as the World Bank Vice President and its Chief Economist, Chairman of Council of Economic advisers among others, the current globalisation policies are nothing else than briberization. They are policies made by the likes of Ken Lay, the former chief executive at Enron who supervised the largest looting of a company in human history, the Federal Reserve Bank of America, Citi-Corp. et al. These policies are geared to benefit the rich in America while impoverishing the poor in already poor countries. No wonder they are starting to fight back.

The poor countries in Cancun were unable to see the serenity of the tourist resort set on the pristine beaches...the delegates' minds were haunted by the scourge of poverty and disease in their own countries which on the one hand, the Capitalist West has sworn to eradicate while on the other, they are relentlessly seeking to perpetuate the same by setting shady and unfair trading terms on the poor nations. The meeting at Cancun was not any different from the one in Seattle four years ago or the one in Doha in 2001. The rich will have their way, while the poor will suffer what they must, just as it were in the old Olympian World. Ironically, the meeting was being held in Kan Kun...Mayan, meaning nest of Vipers. The G7 vipers were truly home!

When the wind of change started blowing all across Africa, the ordinary folks saw hope of globalisation shimmering like the dawn of a new day. He had shown his face again in the great continent after nearly three thousand years. But it has turned out that the shimmering rays of globalisation were the scorching heat that would kill the tender economic plants in mostly young countries that on average have known political independence for about thirty years. It was a plant that required constant watering on the fast draining sandy-political independence soil but the west with its vast ability to soak up drained the soil of the little water it could hold and the death of the economic plant was a matter of when not if.... Now where there was hope, desperation. Poverty has increased and death rate from all sorts of diseases has reached disaster levels, a situation that they have almost come to agree as their destiny with an uncaring god. To a bacteriologist, E coli is a measure of a filthy environment and other bacteria. Surely there must be an equivalent economic model to measure failure or success. What suffering will the developing countries have to undergo

before IMF and co. acknowledges poverty as a measure of failure of the current world economic policies?

To most people in the developing world (*are they really developing?*), the term globalisation had come to mean colonisation, poverty and slavery redefined. Can a slave owner really liberate a slave to the slave owner's detriment? They are asking and they say no. Developing countries, especially Africa, which was the slave goldmine for the west, need to fight for real economic freedom. Globalisation means that when developing countries borrow money for capital investments in a bid to lift themselves up the ladder, they are shackled with terms that in a little while leave them worse off than they were in the beginning. They are given money to pave the way for big corporations to take over any profitable services being run publicly and they are left with those tax guzzling services, which due to their nature cannot and will not generate income no matter who runs them, private or public...the essential services, like public schools and colleges, public health, roads, social services etc while money generating water departments within municipal councils are privatised in the name of efficiency. Where the profitable service could have complimented the non-profitable ones, a hole is created and the money most likely will be in the pocket of a big American corporation. The borrower is forced to go back again to borrow their own money at crippling terms and interest. Cheques are offered written in the ink of their own blood. Before too long, the country is hopelessly poor, children with running noses, diseases and hunger become the feeding grounds for popular journalism, creating a stereotype image of a people beyond help. The loan shacks of the middle ages are back but this time they operate globally and not in Europe.

There is no limit for globalisation. Globalisation is a black hole for the poor countries whose economic singularity will soon become a matter of national security to many countries around the world. But do the greedy lot see that? Do they care if they see? No. If the term democracy means that which works for most people while taking care of the rights of the minority, globalisation means that which works for a few and disregards the majority. Otherwise how does one marry the fact that half of the world population is on less than one dollar a day while a tiny minority have more than half of the world wealth?

Globalisation is threatening to enslave the future generations for ages to come. It is also important to realise that any economic gains has to be acquired by inches and it has to be hard fought. To paraphrase Thomas Jefferson writing to Charles Clay in 1790 "*The ground of liberty is gained by inches and we must be contented to secure what we can get from time to time and eternally press forward for what is yet to get*". When the freedom charter was declared and the formal colonialism ended, the colonised were duped to thinking that the playing field was now levelled. The colonialist simply melted away into the bush to fight another day. They have now regrouped and the pagan colonisation has been christened globalisation and whose soldiers are now advancing a deadly crusade whose control centre is in Washington...deadly economic war. The poor, especially Africa, are back to where they were in before the slave charter was drawn. One can almost hear the taunts "*We told you we would be back!*" Even as they (the enslaved developing countries) look back nostalgically to the day when a bushel dished out by the master could make a full belly, the master now taunts the liberated, "*We told you couldn't do on your own.*" But it was the master who made the conditions unfavourable to fulfil his prophesy.

The following conversation I overheard the other day may sum up a lot of peoples feelings from developing world today.

'Is the World running out of inventions?'

'Why do you say that? There are plenty of them, only that you may not be aware.'

'Why are American pharmaceutical companies going round the world patenting trees that we have always used for herbal medicines to their own companies...trees that have never and cannot grow in America.'

'Ha! Have they now?'

'They are trying to take over our Game Reserves too. They will own the Game Reserves which by nature cannot be found in their countries.'

'Don't you think that these are much more cleverer, more imaginative inventions than the past ones?'

'As Clever as Grant and Speak discovering Mt Kenya and putting that as a fact our for children to read.'

Luckily, it did not take long before the children asked questions on the Mt Kenya discovery and putting the records straight...*The First white people to see...*

It will not take long either before the children trip over the TRIPs and reclaim their *mugumo, muiiri, murubaini, neem* (A tree in India threatened by American Pharmaceutical companies to obtain patent rights. The Indians have been using its extracts to treat a host of ailments for a long time), etc trees and their Game Reserves.

The **Project for New American Century** (PNAC, a blue print for *Pax Americana*) may not be quite what **Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz** and their Corporate friends are packaging...it may be a different pact all together in another twenty years...**Pact for New World Century**.

One interesting observation about 'globalisers' is that they require minimum governments or if possible, no governments at all so that that can carry out their dubious deals with impunity. The minimum government is a government as defined by them and be-spoke to their own benefits. They base their theories on Adam Smith's invisible hand. But as Joseph Stiglitz says at *Carnegie Council's in Books for Breakfast* "...every game needs rules and referees to avoid chaos." 'Globalisers' will certainly agree with Stiglitz, only that they are playing both. The end result is a game without rules leading to chaos. They have reduced institutions of governance like parliament to a talking shop and the executive to a cuddling poodle as the looting goes on. I only know of another group of people who do not like governments: anarchist and if this beast is not checked, we will be in it together. With money, one can build a glasshouse to shield him from the doomsday of the physical environment, which has become a concern for many other than in Washington, but there is no running away from the economic doomsday. It will get you wherever you are and whatever you are!

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