

## Lecture 26

HRH The Prince Hassan of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

The Winstanley Theatre

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### Multilateralism: Alignment for Peace?

I am grateful for the opportunity to talk of a great man - a man of vision, full of great ideas. I am sure if Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru were alive, he would powerfully plead for multilateralism in the context of 'alignment for peace' just as he promoted non-alignment in the context of the Cold War in the bipolar world in which he lived.

Nehru served as a role model for millions around the world, not only as a statesman, but also as a human being and as a humanitarian committed to building a better future for mankind. According to one of his biographers, Stanley Wolpert, "Nehru loved thinking about the future. Planning was one of his passions, for his mind always raced ahead, often flying high above the boring wasteland of the moment... His vision of the future was one world of socialist humanism, in which each person would create or labour to the limits of his or her ability"<sup>1</sup>. One of his partners in the promotion of non-alignment, President Nasser of Egypt, opined that he is "not only the exponent of the dreams deeply nestled in the hearts of the people of India. He is also the expression of the human conscience itself"<sup>2</sup>.

It might interest you to know that the years Nehru spent as a young student in England influenced him a lot in his future thinking. A few months before he started here in Cambridge at Trinity College, he toured Ireland with his cousin Brijlal Nehru. His father was very disturbed to learn that his son was in Belfast when the army opened fire there in August 1907. According to Wolpert, "What he saw and heard in Ireland did more to revolutionise his mind than anything he had ever seen or learned about India". A few months later, upon entering the university, the first memorable lecture he heard was given by George Bernard Shaw, entitled, 'Socialism and the University Man'. "Deeply impressed, he started reading whatever he could find by Shaw, who remained one of his life-long heroes"<sup>3</sup>.

I have chosen as the subject of my lecture 'multilateralism' as an 'alignment for peace' because Nehru was a great proponent of both multilateralism and peace and struggled all his life to promote both and to consolidate their alignment. Let me begin with multilateralism as a global concept and a tool for peace. Semantically, multilateralism only represents an agreement or understanding between three parties or more. According to the Dictionary of Politics, however, "multilateralism is a political label that has come about simply because of the need for symmetry in political argument. Its meaning is taken by opposition to unilateralism"<sup>4</sup>. In fact, the term has a much broader and global connotation. Recently, President Chirac in his address to the United Nations General Assembly, called it a 'key' which ensures the participation of all in the management of world affairs. It is a guarantee of

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<sup>1</sup> Stanley Wolpert, *Nehru, a Tryst with Destiny*, Oxford 1996. p.5.

<sup>2</sup> Rafique (ed.), *A Study of Nehru*, Bombay, 1960, p.183.

<sup>3</sup> S Gopal (ed.) *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, New Delhi, 'Jawahar to Father, Trinity College, Cambridge, p.35.

<sup>4</sup> David Robertson, *Dictionary of Politics*, Penguin, 1985, p.220

legitimacy and democracy, especially in matters regarding the use of force or laying down universal norms”<sup>5</sup>.

Nowadays, a great debate is raging regarding the merits and demerits of multilateralism versus unilateralism. More often than not, the latter serves as the tool of the powerful while the former represents the hope of the powerless, supported by idealists. Since the powerless represent the majority of countries and people in the world, multilateralism is sometimes used by the powerful to cover up unilateralism. In this context, it is important to make a distinction between ‘principled multilateralists’ and ‘instrumental multilateralists’. The latter “want to win international support. They like allies and they like approval for their actions” but their approach is more pragmatic, based on cost-benefit analysis rather than “a principled commitment to multilateral action as the cornerstone of world order”<sup>6</sup>. In this state of confusion and conflict, bilateralism comes in handy because it is based on common geopolitical or socio-economic interests.

There is no doubt that in the long run and in the context of collective interests of our common humanity, principled multilateralism is inevitable. This aspect was discussed at length by the Independent Commission for International Humanitarian Issues which I had the honour to co-chair back in the eighties. The Commission came into being in the context of promotion of a “New International Humanitarian Order” as suggested in a number of the UN General Assembly Resolutions. In the Final Report of the Commission entitled “Winning the Human Race?” which we made available to the General Assembly, we emphasised that “we are convinced of the need for global consensus-building and for strengthening multilateralism”. We affirmed that “we realise that powerful and privileged States with a vested interest in preserving the status quo are less likely to gain immediate benefits from multilateral arrangements. It is, therefore, to be expected that, in the absence of far-sighted policies, their consent or acquiescence in the initiatives of a weaker majority may tend to be reluctant and minimal. Weaker States, on the other hand, may well be suspicious of the motives of the major powers”<sup>7</sup>.

While asserting that ‘multilateralism, like diversity, can be a source of enrichment rather than constraint’, we recognised that ‘institutional efforts tend to fall short of their potential, thus encouraging a “we can do better” attitude on the part of individual governments, which then use this as a pretext to opt out of multinational arrangements”<sup>8</sup>. In this context, allow me to reiterate what we highlighted in our report: “That humankind today has within its power the capacity to annihilate all forms of life just as much as it has the means to lead global society to prosperity unprecedented in history, is for us a sign of hope, not despair. For we believe that in the end, only those human impulses which ensure survival and well-being will prevail. It is on faith in human nature that we have built the hope which is the message of the Report... To Strengthen hope; the foremost task for peoples and nations is to nurture multilateralism. Recent years have witnessed its steady retreat before the short-term benefits that unilateralism and bilateralism bring. We consider multilateralism of which the United Nations and other international institutions are the building blocks, essential to man’s future”<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Jacques Chirac, Address to the UN General Assembly, New York, September 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Kagan, *Multilateralism, American Style*, The Washington Post, September 13, 2002.

<sup>7</sup> Report of ICIHI, *Winning the Human Race?*, London, 1988, p.190

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.188

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.186

I would like to point out that the report of the Independent Commission was completed and made available to the UN General assembly sixteen years ago. However, although most of our recommendations are now a part of national policies or international legislation, a lot of key passages in the report, like those I just cited, read as though they were written yesterday. This is a sad comment on the slow pace of progress being made by the powerful - and the powerless - to build a peaceful and prosperous future for humankind despite the means now available to it. The United Nations and other multilateral bodies, at international as well as regional level, are in dire need of strengthening in order to face new challenges. The world needs more Gandhi's to plead for non-violence and more Nehru's to plead for multilateralism!

Aldous Huxley once said that the most important lesson History has to teach us is that men do not learn from History. It is high time we try to prove that he was wrong. Admittedly, my idea of 'Alignment for Peace' is drawn from the experience gained through the 'Non-Alignment Movement', which was a noble and timely response to the challenge posed by a combatant bipolar world during the Cold War and which was bravely promoted by Nehru.

I should point out, however, that regarding Nehru's personal contribution to the policy of non-alignment, which was the main pillar of India's foreign policy, there are two seemingly contradictory views. One view in his own words is that: "it is completely incorrect to call our policy 'Nehru' policy. It is incorrect because all I have done is to give voice to that policy"<sup>10</sup>. The other view expressed by one of his biographers is that, "In no other state does one man dominate foreign policy as does Nehru in India. Indeed, so overwhelming is his influence that India's policy has come to mean in the minds of people everywhere the policy of Pandit Nehru..."<sup>11</sup>.

Soon after the Second World War, the so-called Cold War broke out between two belligerent blocks led by the United States and the Soviet Union. The rest of the world and, in particular, the newly independent states had only two choices after shedding the colonial yoke: "On the one hand, there was the choice of participating in the Cold War, inevitably including military alliances and counter-alliances... There was the choice on the other hand, of keeping out of the bi-polar confrontation, preserving the newly-won sovereignty and playing an independent role in international politics"<sup>12</sup>. The latter choice led to the famous Bandung conference in 1955 and eventually to the birth of the Non-Aligned Movement which was to play a vital role in international relations and dealings until the end of the Cold War and is still alive but in need of adjustment to new challenges.

The dismemberment of the Soviet Empire and the downfall of the Communist system raised high hopes in many quarters. People around the world looked forward to a new world order, expected to bring peace and harmony. The twentieth century had known the bloodiest wars in human history but its last decade had begun with an announcement by the American President about the establishment of a "New World Order". In fact, it turned out to be the decade of the biggest 'world disorder' of the century which not only brought instability and insecurity to dozens of countries but also claimed millions of human lives in inter-state and intra-state warfare.

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<sup>10</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *India's Foreign Policy*, Delhi, 1961, p.80

<sup>11</sup> Michael Brecher, *Nehru: A Political Biography*, Delhi, 1959, p.564

<sup>12</sup> B R Nanda (ed.) *Indian Foreign Policy, The Nehru Years*, Delhi, 1976, p.171-172

Many years before that, in 1981, I had the privilege to introduce to the UN General Assembly the concept of a “New International Humanitarian Order” which led to the establishment of the Independent Commission for International Humanitarian Issues which I mentioned earlier. The General Assembly has adopted a series of resolutions on the subject since then. However, despite the consensus among member states of the United Nations regarding the need to promote the proposed humanitarian order, the concept has continued to suffer from benign neglect.

In the General Assembly, the follow-up is ensured by the Independent Bureau for Humanitarian Issues which also is specifically mentioned in a number of the General Assembly resolutions. I have the honour to be one of its founder members and to chair the International Council of the Bureau. I am sure if Nehru were alive, I would have invited him to join in the efforts to promote a new international humanitarian order of which the world is in dire need at this point in time. I am also quite sure that he would have joined with enthusiasm. In his memory, allow me now to appeal to you and to all men of goodwill to join in the effort because I am convinced that both multilateralism and the pursuit of peace would stand to gain from our common endeavour to promote a new humanitarian order.

Now at the beginning of the new Millennium, the need for humanitarianism is even greater than ever before. I firmly believe that it is the duty of every modern human being on earth to re-learn to be human and humane and the responsibility of every government to practise ‘politics where people matter’. In this context, I am reminded of the words of Professor Radhakrishnan, a contemporary of Nehru and former President of India: “We live in an age which is aware of its defeat and moral coarsening, an age in which old certainties are breaking down, the familiar patterns are tilting and cracking. There is increasing intolerance and embitterment. The creative flame that kindled the great human society is languishing”<sup>13</sup>.

He wrote this in his introduction to a book entitled, “All Men Are Brothers”, containing autobiographical reflections by Mahatma Gandhi. That was almost half a century ago but it sounds as if he wrote those words this week. He added in the same text: “Provocative remarks fly about freely. We use aggression even in words; harsh judgement, ill-will, anger, are all insidious forms of violence.... While the obstinacy of the political leaders puts fear into our hearts, the commonsense and conscience of the world gives us hope”. He could have added the word “terrorists” after ‘political leaders’ and the passage would have mirrored the contemporary world where hatred is beginning to replace love, fear is gradually dominating the sense of security and armed conflicts within and between states are taking over from world peace.

Talking of peace, let me first comment on its relationship to multilateralism. Our experience at global level has amply demonstrated that multilateralism promotes and strengthens democratic processes; it aims at consensus; enhances people’s power; builds natural trust; strives for common security and provides the tools for conflict resolution. On that basis, it has been suggested that “Multilateralism should become the cornerstone of a new world order” because by definition, it means “listening to all actors in civil society and acting on the basis of consensus” and because it “carries with it shared human values that are grounded in

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<sup>13</sup> Gandhi, M. *Autobiographical Reflections: All Men Are Brothers*, UNESCO/Columbia, 1976, p.179

religious values and moral principles... Multilateralism means common responsibility and accountability by all”<sup>14</sup>.

Peace based on, and produced by, multilateralism is bound to be durable. That is real peace; it should not be interpreted as mere cessation of hostilities or the end of armed conflict on the basis of temporary cease-fire agreements. Peace is also not a matter to be dealt with exclusively by governments. In fact, it can only be durable if it grows from the grass roots rather than imposed from above. I am reminded in this context of the constitution of UNESCO which emphatically states that ‘since war first begins in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that defences for peace should be built’. The peace-making process should, therefore, include individuals and communities in addition to national governments and multinational organisations.

This approach to peace is all the more relevant and important in modern times since the nature of war has radically changed. In recent decades, most armed conflicts have taken place in the context of intra-state ‘civil wars’, in which non-state actors have played a major role. Consequently, the law of war or the so-called ‘humanitarian law’ needs to be reviewed in the light of the nature of modern wars and contemporary challenges faced by the international community.

I recall in this connection that when the Jordanian government proposed the inclusion in the agenda of the General Assembly the question of a “New International Humanitarian Order”, one of the most important points emphasised in the submission was that governments and multilateral bodies should put in as much energy and effort in the elaboration of the “Law of Peace” as has been done in the development of the “Law of War.” This is not to criticise the impressive and valuable body of humanitarian law but rather to stress that humanitarianism and human ingenuity should prevail more in the context of peace than war and that ‘prevention is better than cure’.

Since I belong to a region which has known armed conflict and tensions between governments and people since decades and which continues to be one of the most volatile and crisis prone areas of the world, I have been emphasising and trying my best to promote a Middle Eastern code of conduct, a ‘partnership of peace’ or an Eastern Mediterranean Treaty Organisation which can promote and preserve peace and harmony between communities and countries of the region and contribute to socio-economic as well as political stability. There are a lot of important issues which could constitute a timely agenda for such a regional body. For example, the need to promote a WMD-free zone; defining both state and non-state terrorism and concrete steps to address the root causes of this increasingly threatening phenomenon; a humanitarian Marshall Plan; moving of policies from ‘refugee mode’ to ‘poverty alleviation’ mode; education for all and establishment of academic bodies such as a School of Mediterranean Humanities to research and educate in the context of shared values; establishment of a Community of Energy and Water etc.

In a recent meeting of the Club of Rome which I have the honour to chair, I had the occasion to talk about the problems and challenges of our times, particularly in my own region. I pointed out that in the Arab world, historically, we are familiar with the concepts of both progress and regress when we consider questions of civil society, community affluence,

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<sup>14</sup> Aram, I., Armenian News Network, [http://groong.nsc.edu/ro.ro\\_20030325.html](http://groong.nsc.edu/ro.ro_20030325.html).

educational standards, citizens' participation and transparent government. In my view, it is high time we recognise and value our own history and contribution to humankind and renew that sense of value in order to build a better future for our children. Likewise, in the contemporary world of cyberspace and information technology, we talk a lot about 'virtual reality' but I think it is time we also start speaking of the world of 'virtuous reality'.

In the Middle Eastern context, allow me to avail myself of the opportunity offered by this "Nehru Lecture" to plead for and promote an idea that I am sure Nehru himself would have strongly supported. Parallel to the current 'Road Map' intended to promote peace and security in the region which deals with the politico-military aspects of the challenges now being faced in the Middle East, we should try to develop a "socio-economic road map", geared to human well-being and peace-making at the grass roots level. Such a map is bound to bring people closer to each other in an environment of peace and harmony even if politicians remain in a belligerent mood.

Likewise, I am convinced that for solving problems within and between governments, we should try to promote regionalism and strengthen regional bodies. In other words, before internationalisation of differences between countries and communities, whether cultural religious or political, solutions should be sought and promoted at regional level. To begin with, it would be worthwhile to attribute a broader interpretation and enhance the scope of Chapter VIII of the charter of the United Nations relating to 'Regional Arrangements'.

At the same time, based on the lessons learnt through the non-aligned movement, we should now try to develop the "Alignment for Peace" which is the main subject of this lecture and which should be the dream of every peace-loving person. It would be a worthwhile effort for those countries, numbering many more than a hundred, which joined with enthusiasm the 'non-aligned movement' to now start an 'alignment movement'. I invite them and all others to now bring the same energy, commitment and enthusiasm to the 'Alignment for Peace' movement.

I am reminded in this context of a speech made by Nehru during a visit to Washington in 1956 in which he explained the policies of his country and his own convictions in this regard. He said: "We believe in non-aggression and non-interference by one country in the affairs of another and the growth of tolerance between them and the capacity for peaceful co-existence. We think that by the free exchange of ideas and trade and other contacts between nations, each will learn from the other and truth will prevail. We, therefore, endeavour to maintain friendly relations with all countries, even though we may disagree with them in their politics or structure of government. We think that by this approach we can serve our country but also the larger causes of peace and good fellowship in the world"<sup>15</sup>.

I am convinced that if Nehru were alive and visiting Washington today, he would be able to use exactly the same words and ideas and they would be viewed as directly relevant to the prevailing situation created by the developments around the world since the events of 9/11 and the war in Iraq.

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<sup>15</sup> 1956, Nehru, J., Speech in Washington, 18th December 1956, Department of State Bulletin, 14th January 1957, p.49-50.

In conclusion, while pleading for strengthening of multilateralism, allow me to launch the concept of a “World Movement of Alignment for Peace” in the post-Cold War period just as Nehru along with other world leaders launched the “Non Alignment Movement” at the beginning of the Cold War.

May I, in this connection, refer to a book I wrote almost twenty years ago entitled “Search for Peace”. In the concluding paragraph of the book, I emphasised that my country “remains committed to the search for a durable peace. The question is no longer how to negotiate, but what to negotiate”<sup>16</sup>. Sadly, that challenge still remains valid after two decades. However, my concluding sentence in this lecture is what I chose as the opening sentence of the book, a citation from an address to the United States on 22 January, 1917 by President Woodrow Wilson: “There must be, not a balance of power, but a community of power; not organised rivalries, but an organised peace”.

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<sup>16</sup> Hassan bin Talal, *Search for Peace*, London, 1984, p.144.