

SESSION THREE
**International Law
and Government**

Alternative Global Visions of a New World Order

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Abstract

American foreign policy in the aftermath of the Persian Gulf war can be summarized in light of President Bush's presentation of a "new world order": Interpretations from a number of speeches indicate that military force will still be a major factor in maintaining international stability. The "new world order" as envisioned by the president does not conform to the religious, political, and economic realities of today. It lacks democratic ideals and underestimates alternative visions of world order and the quest for human dignity. The Muslim world, the Third World, and Japan will have contrary views of world order, and they will pose challenges to American leadership in the future if the current trends of military might and economic mismanagement continue.

During the last months of 1990 and into the early days of 1991, President George Bush often used the expression, a "new world order." The expression appeared during the heady days of the successful U.S. effort in mobilizing a United Nations effort to remove Iraqi forces from Kuwait. The expression appeared during the period of euphoria that followed the successful defeat of the army of Saddam Hussein.

What Bush means by a new world order has never been made explicitly clear, but interpreting from a number of speeches, the following conclusions about Bush's vision may be drawn.

1. The territorial, sovereign state will remain the dominant force in international politics.
2. Conflict and competition between states will mean that violence will play a major role in international politics and war will remain an option for conflict resolution.
3. The suitability or success of policy and leadership will be military victory.
4. It will be possible to maintain international stability in spite of the proliferation of chemical and nuclear weapons through the use of military force.
5. National security involves the protection of business interests and the flow of oil as an energy supply.

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6. The U.S. will beware of wars of national liberation, but national security policy will selectively confront enemies. “In cases where the U.S. confronts much weaker enemies, our challenge will be not simply to defeat them, but to defeat them decisively and rapidly.”
7. In the maintenance of international stability the U.S. will act with a consortium of military powers, but the U.S. will very much be first among equals. “No one in the whole world doubts us any more,” stated President Bush on March 17, 1991.

This policy seems notable for its lack of democratic ideals. It is a vision which understands the use of military force, but which badly underestimates alternative visions of world order and ignores political rivalries, economic realities, and the quest for human dignity. Among those almost certain to have contrary views are: (a) the Muslim world—whose vision we do not understand, (b) the Third World—whose vision we have rejected, and (c) Japan—whose vision we refuse to believe.

The Muslim World—Whose Vision We Do Not Understand

The Muslim world actually presents us with two visions contradictory to our own—the tough view of Middle East politics and the religious view of global politics. The tough view is expressed in the aspirations of dictators such as Qadhafi of Libya, Assad of Syria, and Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The position is quite simple—maintain dictatorial power within your own country by brutally crushing all opposition, and mobilize support by promising to lead the charge that will push Israel into the sea. The tough leaders stand opposed to the U.S. because of our support for Israel. Saddam’s brutality in crushing opposition is notorious. Through the unmitigated use of numerous terror tactics, Saddam has maintained an iron grip on power. Likewise, in an act of brute force, Assad turned his army loose against opposition forces in the city of Hama, establishing what Thomas Friedman (1989) in *From Beirut to Jerusalem* calls the “Hama rule” (p. 76).

The religious vision within the Muslim world stands outside the comprehension of most Americans. It has been represented by the Ayatollah Khomeini and the Muslim Brotherhood. The Ayatollah has passed from the scene, but the movement he represented remains alive and well within Shiite Muslims. The Shiite movement is marked by a number of defining characteristics: (a) a desire for martyrdom, (b) fanatical spiritual devotion to suffering for salvation, and (c) a belief that they are guided by Allah through the Imam. Though they believe that the last known Imam disappeared in 872, there is always an Imam around, even if not recognized. Khomeini accepted the title Imam, but like other Shiites, awaited the appearance of the Mahdi, a mystical figure who will lead Muslims to control of the globe.

Shiite Muslim Opposition to the United States

From the Western point of view the most important feature to note regarding Shiism is that it has established its credentials through revolutionary and anti-Western activities. Shiism stands completely opposed to such aspects of Western culture as materialism, alcohol, promiscuity, divorce, drugs, and crime. The vision shared by Shiites who find expression in the Muslim Brotherhood is that of a first-class Muslim fraternity, a homeland in which politics and religion are inseparable. Shiism is culturally indigenous—it

goes across many borders. It appeals to those of high moral fervor and those who are opposed to the West. In the achievement of its goal, the end justifies the means, and fanatical acts are a sign of dedication.

The U.S. approach to the tough Muslim vision has been aggressive and militaristic. We do not know how to deal with the religious vision, and our handling of the first exacerbates problems with the second. The United States stands as a symbol of the Great Satan. The appearance of a very charismatic Shiite leader could unify a very large anti-U.S. movement among the rapidly growing Muslim population spread around the globe, and under any circumstance the religious view will remain in opposition to much of U.S. materialism and culture.

The Third World—Whose Vision We Have Rejected

The vision of the majority of the people in the Third World is nowhere meaningfully addressed in current U.S. policy, nor does the Third World vision fit into the new world order. When we speak of the Third World we are talking of the two-thirds of the world that lives in abject poverty, illness, and illiteracy. Within that world over 40,000 children die per day as the result of malnutrition.

India represents but one example of the problem that is faced. In many ways India is two separate and distinct countries. There are the 400 million plus who live above the poverty line and are able to compete in the modern world of technology. They are adequately fed, adequately housed, and adequately educated. Indeed, at the top of this group stands a number of people who are as rich as any in the world. The other India is composed of the 400 million plus who live below the poverty line. Poverty in India is determined by a calorie figure. Anyone who has access to 2,400 calories a day is considered to be above the poverty line. Over 400 million exist underneath the poverty line, and they marginally survive in the streets of cities such as Bombay, Delhi, and Calcutta. If they are lucky they may find work for 50 cents per day on which to support their families. Usually no schools are available, potable water is scarce, and a roof over their heads is a plastic sheet. They serve as the work force for the upper 400 million.

There are no currently apparent plans in the new world order to assist these people. Those at the top will be tied into the world of multinationals and the business activities of that order. Those at the bottom will be left to live out their lives in abject poverty. The frightening note is that the number of people involved in the lower half is multiplying rapidly, and therein lies the danger to world order. The masses of India are in such abject poverty, and their attitudes are so gentle, that revolution is not likely. However, in other parts of the Third World anger is growing, and the threat to any kind of world order finds expression in angry leaders. The threat to the comfortable world of the well-to-do finds expression in the words of Mutabaruka in the new recording, "Any which way . . . Freedom."

Any Which Way . . . Freedom
meanwhile yuh dancin to dis musik
and tryin to figure out these lyrics
meanwhile yuh drinking and havin fun
WATCH OUT

MIU WORLD PEACE CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS
ALTERNATIVE VISIONS OF A NEW WORLD ORDER

de revolution a com
betta be a part a de solution
dis mite be di final confrontation
betta awake to dis reality
dis is no time to loose yuh sanity
causse. . .
by de ballot or de bullet
by de bible or de gun
any which way freedom mus com

killin de children in soweto
turnin el salvador inna one big ghetto
dumpin waste on sea and lan
buildin up arsenal of nuclear weapon
oppresin de haitians
bombin in iran
troops in afganistan
there mus be
a solution . . . a revolution

by de ballot or de bullet
by de bible or de gun
any which way freedom mus com¹

Japan—Whose Vision We Refuse to Believe

One last, very different vision of world order needs to be addressed. For many Americans this is a “vision from hell,” from science fiction, or at least one which is incomprehensible. This is the vision from Japan, and it pictures the United States, not as a first among equals, but as a weakened, dependent nation. The view is expressed in a series of best-sellers to be found on the Japanese book market (Kunii, *Pax Japonica*; Etoh, *The War Between Japan and The America Is Not Over*; Seike, *America's Decline*, see Steven Schlossstein, 1989, p. xi). The conclusions of these books are that the United States has been weakened by a huge national debt, declining education, uncompetitive manufacturing, fiscal irresponsibility, a collapsing family structure, and crime that is out of control. The conclusion is that the United States ruled the 20th century because of its control of raw materials, but that Japan will rule the 21st century because of its control of human resources.

Economic projections, based on the performance of the past two decades, lend credence to the Japanese vision. From 1895–1980 the U.S. showed a trade surplus every year. However, between 1980–1988, in the years of “borrow and spend,” the U.S. tripled its national debt and became the world’s largest debtor nation. By 1987 the trade deficit had reached \$160 billion, \$60 billion with Japan alone. By 1991 Japan had become the biggest creditor nation in the world. In the U.S. in the meantime, in the decade of junk bonds and the art of leverage, the making of products was replaced by the making of deals. It has been documented that between 1981–1988 the rich became richer, and the poor poorer. The share of the wealthiest 1% of the population was 8.1% in 1981, but 14.7% by 1986. If current projections continue the following will be the case:

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1. By 2000, Japan's net external holdings will reach positive 1 trillion.
2. By 2000, the U.S. net will be negative 1 trillion.
3. By 2005, 40% of our budget will go to pay interest on our debt.
4. Of the Fortune 500 companies, 100 will be owned by the Japanese.
5. 15% to 20% of Americans will be in an underclass.
6. Over 5 million will be homeless.
7. College will be unaffordable for a large percentage of families, as will owning a home.
8. The United States will be a dependent nation to Japan.

This scenario seems unbelievable to most Americans, yet the empirical data is clear. In August of 1989, *The New York Times* ran a story which stated, "Japan became the world's richest nation, surpassing the United States in national assets for the first time with \$437 trillion worth of land, factories, stocks and other wealth" (quoted in Burstein, 1990, p. 306).

In 1991 the United States stands as a military superpower, but is in danger of becoming an economic cripple. "More than 200 years after the Declaration of Independence, the United States has lost its position as an independent power. . . . Our increasing dependence on foreign capital is not just an economic issue. It is also a security issue, as well as a political issue with major implications for foreign and domestic policy. . . . This country will not be able to deal politically with its economic problems until a simple, basic requirement is recognized: to capture our lost financial independence" (Rohatyn, 1988, p. 8).

Conclusion

In the flush of victory after the Gulf war, it was natural for President Bush to propose that a new world order had dawned, and that it would be a kind of "Pax Americana" in which the United States with its preponderant military power would be able to maintain the status quo. In many ways the new world order as expounded was very remindful of Henry Kissinger's "Pentagonal System" in which Kissinger proposed a consortium of major world power brokers who would maintain equilibrium in the world through the selective application of power. Kissinger's system, which pictured the USSR along with China, Japan, the United States, and Western Europe holding hegemony over contiguous territorial areas in the world, did not survive the 1980s. The system was meant to minimize change, and the demise of the USSR illustrates the impossibility of that scheme. Kissinger saw statecraft as a problem-solving affair, without a larger long-range vision of the world. Bush's new world order suffers from the same malady.

A new world order has come into being, but we did not create it, we do not control it, and we are not in a position to dominate it in the future. Bush envisions statecraft to maintain the status quo, but it is apparent that much of the world is not interested in maintaining the status quo. The Bush version of the new world order is unrealistic, almost naive, and it will be ignored for the following reasons:

1. It places great faith in military power, but Japan and Germany stand as evidence that monetary power has replaced military power as the efficient way to shape world politics.

2. It ignores the aspirations of the majority of the world's people who do not share our goals for the future. Neo-liberal "free market" economics leaves the poor of the world in a position of despair, and threatens the ecological order necessary for the well-being of the human race. Human need and human greed press the resources of the globe, and will destroy the conditions necessary for the good life of this planet unless addressed on a cooperative global scale.
3. Unless corrected, the weakened economic condition found in the United States will lead to our being "out of the loop" as far as economic development is concerned in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, or on the Pacific rim and in other parts of the Third World. This may lead to serious disagreements.

Any serious assessment of U.S.-Japanese relations points to rough waters ahead. Writing in *The New York Times*, Zbigniew Brzezinski (1987) summarized the situation: "The Japanese feel victimized, the Americans feel exploited, and the resentment is reciprocal. . . . If history is any guide, there can only be three outcomes to the emerging financial dilemma: war, bankruptcy or inflation" (p. A31).

A new world order has come into being, and we deceive ourselves if we believe we control it. Two statements about deception seem relevant. In *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, anthropologist Robert Sussman (Raymond, 1991) says, "All animals are able to think, and many can use tools. What sets humans apart is our ability to deceive ourselves" (p. A6). The second comes from Barbara Tuchman (1981) in *Practicing History*, "[In 1941] we had broken the Japanese code, we had warnings on radar, we had a constant flow of accurate intelligence. . . . We had all the evidence and refused to interpret it correctly. . . . Men will not believe what does not fit in with their plans or suit their pre-arrangements" (p. 250). When President Reagan was asked by *The Wall Street Journal* to react to the "Black Monday" stock market crash in October 1987, he responded, "There's nothing wrong with the economy" (Gigot, 1987, p. 26).

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