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From time to time we publish articles that are relevant to current affairs. The following by Sir Shridath Ramphal may be of some interest to you.

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GLOBAL GOVERNANCE OR A NEW IMPERIUM: WHICH IS IT TO BE?

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to
**THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH
SOCIETY
and the
C O M M O N W E A L T H
A S S O C I A T I O N**

I suspect that among the many ways future historians may describe the first years of the 21st Century is the paradox they presented of a world community desperately in need of acting together, acting multilaterally in the interest of the enduring advance of human society – and one threatened with the emergence of new imperialism and the ascendancy of division, dominion and discord; a world set on a path of human regression. Will it be a history of how humankind chose the path of sustainable progress, or will that

history chronicle the beginning of a dark era of human decline towards self-destruction?

September 11 2001 will feature in that history, but not as its commencement; for the first years of the 21st Century were a continuum with those that preceded it. The paradox was in the making for many decades – indeed, for most of the second half of the 20th Century, with the Cold War but an interlude. September 11 was gross in its criminality and, like all such horrors, enormously misconceived; but it didn't in itself change the world. What it did, was to bring into focus the way the world had already changed and, through its starkness, signal a new level of human contradiction and danger.

Is it true, however, that multilateralism is as essential to human progress as the assertion of a paradox implies? As most of you know, I was Co-Chairman of the international Commission on Global

News, Information and Views

Governance, a Chairmanship I shared with the former Prime Minister of Sweden, Ingvar Carlsson, the Social Democratic leader who succeeded Olof Palme when he was so brutally assassinated in Stockholm - and who carried with him into the Commission Sweden's, and Palme's, passionate commitment to internationalism.

One of the first discussions we had in the Commission (and this, remember, was in the early 90s) was about the epithet 'global governance' itself as used in the name of the Commission. There were many colleagues who had misgivings; they had misgivings about the meaning of governance, and even greater misgivings about the intimations of global governance. Did governance imply 'government', or 'regulation' and if it did not, what did global governance imply? Were we postulating the 'supranational global state'? Were we promulgating 'world government'? Were we proclaiming ourselves a Chapter of the World Federalist Movement? The questions were predictable and valid, and at an early stage in our Report we made it clear that by global governance we were not implying global government. This is a conceptual delineation I repeat here.

We called the Commission's Report *Our Global Neighbourhood*. In that global neighbourhood we believed the world had become, we were asserting the compelling need of states to work together effectively and in ever more areas – with a deeper commitment to consensus, less preoccupation with power –

political economic or military power. In the era of globalisation, 'one world' was palpably more reality than yearning.

Philosophers and visionaries over the centuries had shared this perception of 'oneness'. At the height of the notion of the 'City State', in the 4th Century BC, Socrates had declaimed: *I am a citizen, not of Athens or Greece, but of the world*'. Four centuries ago, protesting the narrow nationalisms of 17th century Europe with its pervasive sense of separateness and division, John Donne counselled memorably that *'no man is an island entire of himself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the maine'*. In our own time, Barbara Ward, one of the foremost humanists of the 20th Century but herself no wistful visionary, speaking of our interdependent world, asserted simply but powerfully: *We are either going to become a community, or we are going to die*'.

Today, Donne's 'maine' is our planet, and Barbara Ward's imperative is affirmed by the degree to which cooperation on a global basis has become indispensable on innumerable critical fronts. It is indispensable if we truly want to maintain international peace and order, alleviate poverty, expand economic activity, arrest global warming, combat pandemic disease, curb the spread of weapons, prevent deserts growing, preserve genetic diversity, save species from extinction, ward off famine, defeat economic recession, share scarce resources, defeat the culture of

News, Information and Views

narcotics. None of this, not any one, can we do alone; we can only achieve success by working together consensually, by acting multilaterally using the tools of global governance .

Globalization in its economic connotation is a central element, perhaps the central element, of the world's new realities; and globalization, involving as it does, both enlarged opportunities and heightened dangers, demands complementary global governance arrangements. The essential management of interdependencies and global risks cannot be rooted in yesterday's concepts of a hegemonistic world order. There must be effective multilateralism, more shared responsibilities, less paranoia about sovereignty, more genuine acceptance of the idea of global society. In short, globalization must not run ahead of global governance or it will become like wild horses un-harnessed from the chariot of human good.

In 1995 the Commission on Global Governance urged the international community to mark the 50th anniversary of the United Nations by beginning a determined process of rethinking and reform. We made recommendations for promoting security in its widest sense, including the security of people and of the planet. We urged reform of the Security Council and enlargement of its powers. We made recommendations for managing economic interdependence through an Economic Security Council and a start with 'global taxation'. And we

called for reforming the United Nations in other ways so that it would offer a larger role to people through the organisations of international civil society. We addressed the need for extending on the global stage the rule of law that has been so great a civilising influence in national societies. We proposed transforming the mandate of the Trusteeship Council into one of trusteeship of the global commons.

As important as anything else that we urged, the Commission drew attention to the world's need for enlightened leadership that can inspire people to acknowledge their responsibilities to each other, and to future generations: leadership that upholds the values we all need if we are to live together as neighbours and preserve the global neighbourhood for those who follow us.

The resistances have been as vigorous as they were predictable - especially from the strong whose instinct is to take from globalisation what it offers in enhancement of their power, but block its potential for enhancement of the power of others. Globalisation is still only minimally reflected in the structure of international relations; it does not yet inform the exercise of conventional power. The UN remains unreformed. Global governance which should be at the heart of globalisation is being relegated to its periphery.

The 21st century has not dawned well for humanity. Instead of going forward, for example, to a new era of

News, Information and Views

security that responds to law and collective will and common responsibility, we are going backwards to the spirit and methods of the sheriff's posse dressed up to masquerade as global action. There should be no question of which way we go; but the right way requires the assertion of the values of internationalism – including the primacy of the rule of law worldwide - and institutional reforms that secure and sustain those values. How to make life in the 21st century more democratic, more secure, and more sustainable has become the foremost challenge of this generation and, of course, it should not need emphasizing – but, alas, it does – that our vision must be of the lives of all the world's people.

So, now, the paradox. Self-evident as this is to many, including prominently the young, it seems threatening to some – to a few who aspire to being more than the many. In December 2001 Richard Perle expressed this aspiration with unusual frankness. As quoted in John Pilger's recent book *The New Rulers of the World*:

No stages, he said, This is total war. We are fighting a variety of enemies. There are lots of them out there. All this talk about first we are going to do Afghanistan, then we will do Iraq, then we will take a look around and see how things stand. This is entirely the wrong way to go about it ... If we just let our vision of the world go forth, and we embrace it entirely, and we don't try to piece together clever diplomacy, but just wage a total war ... our children will

sing great songs about us years from now.

This is no small ambition. Richard Perle is currently Chairman of the Defence Policy Board of the country which possesses (and has drawn on) the world's largest and most lethal supply of weapons of mass destruction. Small wonder at Pilger's assertion of *the importance of breaking the silence that protects great power and its manipulations.*

That silence is perhaps the most worrying of all. Americans have been in the vanguard of the human struggle for freedom on many fronts but, remembering their own torment of McCarthyism, remain silent patriots. Europe out of its bitter history knows the dangers of unbridled nationalism and the need for systems of global governance that sustain a world order rooted in internationalism; Jack Straw in the New Statesman conceded that much; but it has been left to France and Russia to speak out for it. The Downing Street/White House axis only made their work harder and the official EU line seems all too ready to sacrifice principle for what passes for pragmatism. The largely powerless world beyond considers silence the path of prudence.

It should be clear, save only to those who will not see, that what should be a glorious moment of human enlightenment could become a time of regression for *homo sapiens* that fails to be *homo sentiens* as well.

The ambition for world domination has ever been a global curse. A

News, Information and Views

century ago Lord Curzon as Viceroy of India had no compunction in saying *'to me, I confess that [countries] are pieces of chessboard upon which is being played out a great game for the domination of the world'*. And before Pax Britannica was Pax Romana.

But now a larger danger looms in the menacing shape of the American imperium. It is important that we keep it in historical perspective. More than 50 years ago George Kennan, the political analyst in charge of long-range planning for the US State Department in the years of the Cold War, asserted American supremacy in these terms:

We have 50 percent of the world's wealth but only 6.3 percent of its population. In this situation, our real job in the coming period ... is to maintain this position of disparity. To do so, we have to dispense with all sentimentality ... we should cease thinking about human rights, the raising of living standards and democratisation.

So September 11 is not the *fons et origo* of present dangers. As I said initially, it was an enormously criminal act of terrorism; but it was also enormously stupid. What it did in the result was to provide a timely opportunity for the new imperium to emerge with plumes of virtue and trumpets of righteousness. That combination of wrong and wrong headedness simply offered opportunities otherwise only dreamed of by the globally regressive forces of the right. So that today Kennan's ideologue equivalent

in the US media, Charles Krauthammer, writes in the New York Times:

The fact is, no country has been as dominant culturally, economically, technologically and militarily in the history of the world since the Roman empire.

He urged that Americans 'admit the truth' and face up to their 'responsibilities' as the 'undisputed masters of the world'. The Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has said that his mission in the 'war on terror' is to persuade the world that Americans must be allowed to continue their 'way of life' - presumably to maintain Keenan's 'position of disparity' as Krauthammer's 'masters of the world'. It is not a view with which the great mass of the world's people can ever be comfortable.

The American assertion today is that it acknowledges no constraint on any action it chooses to take in whatever it asserts to be the interest of America. Of course, if every nation made a similar assertion, our world would be in chaos. But America will contend that no other nation has the capacity or should have the right to act as it chooses in its own interest. In other words, the much vaunted principles of democracy at the national level have no place on the global stage. Centuries of steady progress away from a feudal world - progress, deepened we believed in enduring ways by the establishment in 1945 of the United Nations

News, Information and Views

system - are being undone.

Pax Americana has no place for multilateralism, and hence for 'neighbourhood values'. So neighbourhood structures are being dismantled. The Kyoto Protocol, so vital to human survival, implies change for America; and so must go. The International Criminal Court could call Americans to book for crimes against humanity; so the sheriff must be placed above the law – and Europe agrees, at least for the time being.

In Pax Americana all men are not equal; such oneness is not a self evident truth beyond the 5 percent of the world's people that are today Americans. To those other 95 percent, different rules apply; for their lives are not valued in the same way. A hundred years ago Tagore wrote perceptively of his world of the late 19th Century in which 'the few were more than the many'. Today he would have to write of their being more precious, more special, more privileged, more human even, than the multitude of humanity.

These distortions are peculiar to every imperialism and all who aspire to world dominion. In our own time, for the Nazis Aryans were the master race. Earlier, for the Romans *civis Romanus sum* was the password that separated Romans from lesser mortals. A cult of superiority underpinned European imperialism – British, French, Spanish. So it is with the American imperium

It is fashionable to speak imperiously

of these being 'defining' moments - for Iraq, for the UN. The truth is they could be defining moments for humanity. 'The future', Paul Valéry wrote, 'is not what it used to be'. How fundamentally different it might be is reflected ironically in how far we have come in 50 years from the five precepts chosen at one time by the United States to 'govern its conduct in world affairs' – the American foreign policy *credo* as proclaimed at no less than Presidential level:

First: no people on earth can be held, as a people, to be an enemy, for all humanity shares the common hunger for peace and fellowship and justice.

Second: no nation's security and well-being can be lastingly achieved in isolation but only in effective cooperation with fellow-nations.

Third: any nation's right to a form of government and an economic system of its own choosing is inalienable.

Fourth: any nation's attempt to dictate other nations their form of government is indefensible.

And fifth: a nation's hope of lasting peace cannot be firmly based upon any race in armaments but rather upon just relations and honest understanding with all other nations.

That was President Eisenhower in 1953 – himself no liberal slouch. And the Republican President, no stranger to the scourge of war, concluded with warnings uniquely relevant to our present time:

Every gun that is made, every warship

News, Information and Views

launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its labourers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. ... This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron.

Those precepts are gone. The world-view they signified is no longer the view from the White House. Under the cloud of threatening war humanity is hanging from a cross of iron - forged by the imperium that has replaced it.

But the victory for unilateralism may yet prove illusive. World domination in the 21st century is at odds with too much that is also part of the 21st century. It is too large a contradiction of the reality of global oneness and the evolution of human values of respect for life, for liberty, for justice and equity, for mutual respect, for caring and integrity. It is too much the antithesis of democracy within and between nations. It is too flagrant a derogation from the old but still sturdy norms of sovereignty and self determination. It struts the global stage with arrogance and even with revolutionary fervour. But the truth is that it is absurdly old fashioned.

No wonder the world's people are saying 'no'. People of all walks of life have marched in peaceful protest through the streets of the industrial world against war on Iraq. These are the people the American right dismisses as 'feckless moralisers'. In

fact, they are enlightened citizens of the world playing their part in a great struggle for the soul of internationalism.

And they could be winning. The American call was for a pre-emptive unilateral strike against Iraq; they have been forced to go to the UN. At the UN. they were for the Security Council authorising force to produce a 'regime change' in Iraq; they have had to accept the return of the Inspectors. In the Security Council they were for an automatic resort to force if the Inspectors found Iraq wanting; they have had to accept a consideration by the Security Council of the report of the Inspectors and the Council's role in determining follow-up – and by whom. There may yet be other successes for internationalism. If so, have no doubt they will be successes for the great majority of countries and people that have resisted the American Imperium in their many different ways – including some within America - a success not for the few who were with President Bush but the many who were against him.

Still, the Imperium is not yet halted. After the Security Council's resolution was passed the Bush Administration asserted that it would not wait for the UN Security Council to approve an attack on Iraq. *The President, Condoleeza Rice asserted, has given broad authority to a variety of people to do what they have to do to protect this country, It's a new kind of war. We are fighting on a lot of different fronts*'. And Britain, too, implies that it can attack Iraq without a further resolution of the

News, Information and Views

Security Council authorising its use of force – international law notwithstanding.

It is as if all the lessons of Suez have been forgotten. Then it was an American President that had to recall Britain (and France and Israel) to internationalism and the primacy of the United Nations. How much has changed; how much remains the same. In 1956 internationalism did prevail. We shall see whether it does in 2002.

All the lessons of my experience in the Commonwealth taught me that standing steadfastly and without apology for the values the Commonwealth espoused was the only way to be true to those values and the only way to ensure that they eventually prevailed. Their bed-rock was internationalism and an end to dominion. A new Imperium, under whatever guise and from whatever quarter, is an assault on those values and a challenge to the Commonwealth as their embodiment. Remember, there is no such thing as 'liberal imperialism'; it is an oxymoron unworthy of the 21st Century. So, from the historic resolution of the paradox that confronts humanity the Commonwealth cannot abstain; any more than can any part of our larger global neighbourhood.

Indeed, the future of the Commonwealth, with multilateralism as its credo, cannot avoid the implications of which way the world goes. If the wider world comes under the sway of a new imperium with a few members of the Commonwealth

among the new rulers of the world and others, the great majority, among the ruled, the Commonwealth itself will suffer a sea change which may prove too much for even its resilience. All the more reason then for a Commonwealth stand for multilateralism now.

Finally, let us remember some of the great traditions of the American nation and be mindful that, in time, it will return to more virtuous ways in the spirit of those traditions and stand once again on the side of internationalism. We must not then look back on this time of challenge as one in which we failed to be true to ourselves. ■

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