

your deeper question regarding the genuineness of the Iranian revolution of 1979. Let me nevertheless raise a few questions.

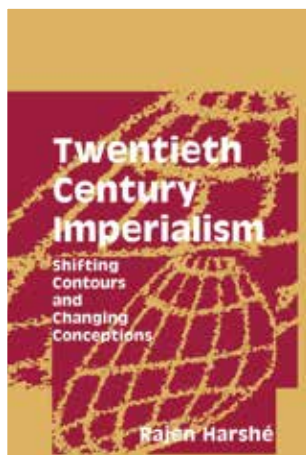
For instance, how does one define a revolution? Does it signify transfer of power from one set of ruling classes to another? Does it involve transition from one mode to another mode of production? Does revolution imply democratic functioning of a polity where human rights, especially those of minorities, are protected? Does it imply gender equality? The term revolution begs more questions which cannot be answered satisfactorily. Since I have not studied the ongoing course of Iranian revolution in depth, let me refrain from answering this difficult question.

■ ■ In your book, you talk about the Non-Aligned Movement as a response to imperialism. In a recent interview, I asked Indian ambassador to Tehran Gaddam Dharmendra about the movement's contemporary role and relevance. He told me that "the NAM's priority is to bring about the long overdue reforms of the UN Security Council." To what extent do you think the UN structure reflects the realities of international imperial relationships of the 20th century which need to change?



Jawaharlal Nehru, Kwame Nkrumah, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Sukarno, Josip Broz Tito meet to form the Non-Aligned Movement.

Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) certainly sprang up as a response to imperialism. The growing number of the NAM states in the General Assembly of the United Nations (UNGA), at one level, democratised the UN. Moreover, G77 groupings and North-South dialogue underscored the significance of the New International economic Order (NIEO). The post-colonial countries wanted the industrialised countries from the north to transfer technology, credit and get just price for their primary products by addressing the issues related to deterioration in terms of trade. However, the project of the democratisation of the UN will be truly meaningful if the UN gets restructured and starts reflecting the power configurations of our times. For instance, there is a need to restructure the UN Security Council (UNSC) where influential countries from different regions find representation according to their actual power. Thus, some of the emerging countries such as India, Brazil, South Africa, Nigeria, Iran, Turkey and Indonesia etc are among the possible candidates for the permanent membership of the UNSC. Along with the UNSC the other international regimes such as the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO also need to be restructured according to new power configurations.



In this context, the NAM still is relevant as a pressure group. It may not be powerful enough to subvert the structures of world capitalism but it can cause reforms by building pressures on significant issues such as climate and environmental changes. 5. In your book, you argue that "the neo-colonial phase of imperialism ensured a compatibility between the structures of external domination and formal political independence of states." One may argue that your observation still sounds true in that many formally sovereign states are still trying to establish their autonomy vis-à-vis powerful foreign influences and, therefore, are under neo-colonial dominance. What's your take on that?

Indeed. This statement is valid till date. Nevertheless, late me give one clarification. I had used the term neo-colonialism as concept to shed light on the relationship between 'ex' metropolitan countries and their former colonies. This definition then and even now applies to France's relationship with its former colonies in Sub Saharan Africa. Moreover, colonialism is personal and the metropolitan population physically settled down in colonies to run the colonial administration in colonies as it happened in cases of Britain, France, Portugal etc in Afro-Asia. If one restricts the scope of neo-colonialism, then only a former colonial power and its continued dominance over its former colonies can be termed as neo-colonial.

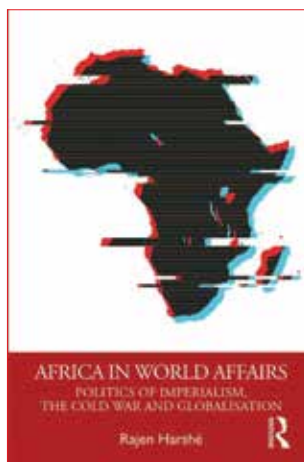
However, there can be imperialism without colonies. For instance, apart from the Philippines, the US had no colony. In other parts of the world the US ran a non-territorial empire by controlling its objects indirectly by deploying economic, commercial, military, political and cultural instruments of power.

■ ■ In regards to the US-led wars in the Middle East after 9/11 terrorist attacks, were they manifestations of imperial ambitions? If so, in retrospect, did they actually serve their imperial purposes or turned out to be counterproductive?



Smoke and flames erupting from the twin towers of New York City's World Trade Center after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.

The fall of twin towers on the 9/11 in one sense was tantamount to fall of the prestige of the US power in world politics. The US led invasions in Afghanistan in 2001 was an obvious attempt to bring the terrorist outfits and the state that sponsored it to book. The



US also intervened in Iraq in 2003 on the pretext that it possessed weapons of mass destructions and that the Saddam Hussein's dictatorial regime was violating human rights. Both these invasions had imperial purposes. After toppling the regimes in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) the US led project of building democracy in both the states did not succeed. By 2011 the US military intervention in Iraq was over but it was constrained to combat transnationally/regionally dominant terrorist outfit such as the Islamic State (IS) in west Asia. Besides, the US could not participate with its international and local allies in the process of nation building in Afghanistan effectively. Its unceremonious withdrawal from Afghanistan with the advent of Taliban on the 15th August, 2021 abundantly highlighted this proposition. I think democracy cannot be exported and no alien powers can participate in the nation building processes in the distant lands.

■ ■ You also observe that "capitalism and imperialism stepped into the post-cold war world with a sense of triumph." Some observers argue that the 2008 financial crisis seriously damaged the credibility of neoliberal global order, thus putting an end to that 'triumphant' moment. What's your take on that?



An image, taken in 2004, of the Paraisópolis favela next to its wealthy neighbour, Morumbi, that came to symbolize the gap between São Paulo's rich and poor.

You are asking two questions in the same breadth. Let me first comment on capitalism. First, capitalism is quite resilient and has enormous potential to co-opt the agenda of its most radical adversaries. During the past hundred and fifty years it has witnessed important transitions. For instance, laissez faire capitalism of the late 19th century, after the great depression of the inter war period, had paved the way for welfare state in Europe. Welfare capitalism in the post war Europe worked owing to compromise between wage labour and capital. What is more, during President Mitterrand's socialist regime (1981-95) in France there were four ministers from the French communist party (PCF) in his cabinet. In effect, capitalism was functioning in France with collaboration of the PCF. Second, the international donor agencies like the World Bank while disbursing loans began to emphasise the role of gender equality, participatory and consultative mechanisms, and the significance of human rights by the 1990s. Many radical groups and political parties have had a similar agenda of development. Third, these donor agencies also defined poverty in social terms by paying attention to socially excluded and the marginalised sections of any society. Finally, capitalism is being constantly critiqued by its ardent supporters. For instance, George Soros a financial magnet wrote a famous article with a title "The Capitalist Threat" in 'The Atlantic' in 1997. The article criticised unbridled exploitation under capitalism of the marginalised in the Post-Cold War world. Evidently, capitalism has built-in mechanism to create, destroy and recreate itself.

Coming to your second question regarding the credibility of the neoliberal global order, it is obvious that its features such as the rolling back the role of state from business, cutting welfare subsidies, promotion of free market and trade ties have inevitably met criticism. The kind of inequalities that it has generated across the world apart from making sizable population poor and jobless will build pressures on the very functioning of world capitalism internationally. Even though neoliberalism has lost its credibility capitalism still has a capacity to re-emerge in a new form that will contain growing discontent against its unfair practices.