



India in the aftermath of Covid-19: Diplomacy and domestic politics

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Abstract

COVID-19 is the fear inducing name of a virus that has taken a hold of terror across our planet. Since the middle of 2019 this virus has spread over two hundred countries of the world. It has caused a deep impact on global politics, international relations, multilateral trades and the foreign policies and diplomacies of many governments around the world. Mankind has been faced with unforeseen circumstances. Lockdown, isolation and quarantine have become the most used phrases in the globe. However, humans need to survive and mankind has to move on to the next step of living. Therefore, the flow of supplies whether of food or of other means of livelihoods must not cease. In order to keep the above circulation going, nations are taking serious steps to fight back. India, also affected by the deadly COVID - 19, must not lower its guard in terms of security and safety precautions. Rather it should try to sustainably use its valuable assets to fight back, amid the Pandemic and justifiably help other countries to survive the situation. This article tries to analyze post COVID - 19 India's diplomacy towards the great powers of the World especially towards the countries of South Asia United States of America (USA) and China; the diplomacy arising out of the pandemic and the need to undertake sustained and futuristic reforms in various sectors of the government.

Keywords: coronavirus, covid-19, economic reform, world order in post covid-19, diplomacy, domestic policy, aftermath of pandemic

Introduction

Coronavirus, also known as COVID - 19, has become everyone's nightmare. It has sparked such a state of affairs that mankind has seen in centuries. World's greatest military might has surrendered before this pandemic; the countries with high Human Development Index (HDI) have seen thousands of deaths and millions of people infected. The definition of security is being written accordingly. Under these circumstances, the haves and have-nots both have come under the same umbrella evoking cooperation. The trades have been called off with international and national transportations being ceased. Many countries are facing disastrous economic and domestic conditions. The wheel of world order has already begun to roll. As the West or the so called countries of the 'North' are facing heavy losses due to the larger number of COVID - 19 deaths than the developing countries which are facing comparatively lower number of COVID - 19 deaths, the world order seems to be shifting aside. However, predicting what is going to happen in the post COVID - 19 era is just like formulating hypotheses right now, or it can be said that it is too early to predict the post COVID - 19 scenario. Nevertheless, looking at the number of casualties, evaluating the economic stability of several countries and examining the swiftness of them in handling and fighting the pandemic, one can make assumptions and hypotheses about the situation. The current world order was created by the victors of the Second World War. All of them are more or less heavily affected by the outbreak of coronavirus. However, the world has been stunned by the rapid counter measures taken by some countries including India. Hence, it can be said that the distribution of power among the countries of the world has a possibility of shifting and a new hegemonic nature of the world order may arise from it. Theory of Hegemonic Stability proclaims that the world acts like a stable

nexus when a dominant power is present in the pivot of world politics. This article would try to look deeper into the facts that hint at the probability of change in the post COVID - 19 world order, and will try to evaluate the future perspectives of Indian foreign policy diplomacy while looking at this through the lens of hegemonic stability.

The situation of India during the last pandemics were different from the situation India is currently dealing with. Also India's power, policy and diplomatic relations with other countries are much different now. So, taking up a retrospective policy would not be very pertinent for this post COVID - 19 assumptions. Even many scholars assume that the outbreak of the pandemic is already pushing backward the process of globalization, but there are numerous chances in front of India to set up a stable diplomatic position in the arena of the world while simultaneously developing the sectors in which India is lagging behind. The biggest competitions that India might face could be from the countries such as USA, China and EU as a whole but these developed countries are also suffering from some serious issues while fighting with COVID - 19. In the end of the nineteenth century, the bubonic plague commonly known as Bombay plague, spread in the urban areas of Bombay province causing many people to die while large numbers of workers evacuated the city. Jamshetji Tata gave accommodations to some people who were fleeing the city (an example of the private sectors playing a voluntary role during a national crisis), and about some 12 million people died in the world due to this epidemic. If this was not a viable example like what we are facing now then the viability of the next one cannot be denied. 'Spanish flu', a.k.a. '1918 flu pandemic' killed almost 17 million people in India. The freedom fighters thought it was conspired by the

British in order to stop the Indian National Freedom Movement. The virus mutated several times and returned with a deadlier form. There were second and third waves of this flu in 1918 and 1919 respectively followed by a minor fourth wave in 1920. However, the India of 1920 is largely different from the India of 2020. So is the approach of this country when fighting with COVID - 19. The average literacy rate of India is much smaller than the literacy rates of the countries of Europe and North America, but the way India has been handling the situation is nowhere less brilliant than the developed countries. The main challenge that would catch nations off guard is more economic than socio political. Many countries are already facing economic recessions. Healthcare systems have broken down in most developing countries; even in the developed countries the picture is almost same in the ground zero areas. European nations have faced several violent pandemics throughout history but this time the European leaders are expecting that the situation will become much worse than it is now. As this article is being written the death toll from all over the world is rising thick and fast. Meanwhile, China has declared that Wuhan is mostly out of danger as the infection has depleted drastically in the area. President Xi visited the place declaring "We are certain to win this battle. Wuhan is sure to win, Hubei is sure to win, and China is Sure to win" (Fifield). So, the battle of nations is not only against COVID - 19 but also a battle among themselves. There exists a battle to win the battle against COVID - 19 before others do. It's a battle to reach normalcy before other countries. However, we need to remember that the Chinese media is highly monitored by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and cannot be trusted on every account. India's approach towards the COVID - 19, on the other hand, is guided by spontaneity and swiftness in taking serious decisions through a true democratic setup. India, after independence had tackled two virus outbreaks. One in the 1960s and 70s Cholera Pandemic and the other was the 1974 Smallpox epidemic which took nearly 15000 lives. With the help of both World Health Organization (WHO) and Soviet Union India eradicated the global epidemic Smallpox, of which sixty percent cases were found in India. In comparison the COVID - 19 has still not been able to wreck a similar percentage of havoc in India.

Post COVID-19 Economy

Soon after the outbreak of COVID - 19 in India, the government proclaimed counter measures and declared the following:

"Setting up of a COVID-19 Task Force and announcement of a series of 'social distancing' and other serious measures followed suit. A few such important measures are listed below.

Started tracing contacts of COVID-affected people.

Suspended all existing visas (except diplomatic, official, UN/international organizations, employment, project visas).

Suspended all international and domestic flights, trains and bus services until April 15.

Initiated economic measures targeting the poor so that none goes hungry during this period.

Converted the coaches of Indian Railways as isolation wards" (Ministry of Science & Technology).

If preparedness is what every nation should exercise then economy would be the heart of it. A country loses life and resources when confronted with a war and this pandemic situation is nothing less than that. The whole world is in a

lockdown. Biggest cities are now witnessing largest number of casualties. Trade and transports are stopped, factories are closed, and industries have halted, while important basic commodities such as food, fuel and especially sanitizers, soaps are on high demand. So, how do we fight the economic tension arising out of the COVID - 19 pandemic? More importantly, what steps would lead India into a secured position in the post COVID - 19 world order? Former governor of Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Dr. Raghuram Rajan mentioned three point plans to get India out of the grip of coronavirus (Bhusnurmath). He describes COVID - 19 as the worst economic emergency for India and when he was asked to choose the primary duty of a nation in this scenario between saving lives or saving livelihoods, he replied that we need to save both and it's not a choice between lives and livelihoods. In order to create a stable economy, citizens have to understand that the government is looking after them and they are secure from any kind of shortage of foods. However, Dr. Rajan points out that in India we do not have a proper distribution system that reaches out to everyone, especially those who are very needy and very poor. In the post COVID - 19 world order India needs to protect the most valuable wealth of its economy i.e. its people. We need to secure our economic stability first and then think about the post COVID - 19 usage of resources. Anyway we also need to make our industries and farms ready to reopen, so that as soon as the situation gets normal, people will have their workplaces ready to reappoint them. No matter what happens protecting the lives of the citizens comes first of all duties of the country. Prior to the outbreak of coronavirus Dr. Rajan had declared a ten point plan to revive India's stagnant economy. Once the situation comes under control India's vision would be to achieve those steps to revive the economy of the country. By that time, every other economic giant of the world will be doing so by promoting their own policies and deals. After the Great depression, President Roosevelt promoted New Deal to revive USA's economy. Similar steps would become a necessity for India too. Along with that India should focus on the sectors like power, telecom, agriculture, real estate, and land acquisition etc. in the post COVID - 19 era. India's aim would extend to the protection of firms and agriculture as this pandemic in the beginning of the twenty first century has helped us realizing the need of a self-sufficient agricultural base of economy. Lockdown is not an easy thing to maintain over a few months. In a country like India, where the poverty level is high and people need to move out to earn their daily needs, everybody needs to be fed regularly for a successful lockdown of few months. The healthcare and supply of medicines should be available too. Otherwise the quarantine procedure would face complexity. By the month of May governments of some areas in India were suggesting infected people to stay at home while they will send nurses and doctors to those patients. This happened due to the lack of sufficient beds in the hospitals. India would have to concentrate on the healthcare budgets as these types of incidents could create a rupture in the image of India in a long run. The post COVID - 19 economy would focus on the research and developments in the healthcare system. The outbreak of coronavirus has triggered a fear of biological weapons. It was not very clear and there was no reliable source of information that can assure that COVID - 19 was not developed in a laboratory of Wuhan and the virus was not biologically mutated by the scientists with over a decade's effort until a group of scientists in

US claimed it was not. Moreover, WHO said in reply to the doubts of President Donald Trump that the virus is “natural in origin” (Aljazeera). Whatever the reality is, the world would be prepared for furthermore virus outbreaks, and by the word ‘World’ we generally mean the developed and developing states. They might create a bio-weapon of their own, but to survive further attacks and to develop a nation immune against these kinds of pandemics a country needs to develop preventive measures i.e. the ability to deal with the situations of pandemic through medical supplies, PPE kits, sanitation, hospital facilities etc. India has a lot to achieve in this account. So it is expected that even if the situation becomes under control and everything seems to be normal again, a consecutive amount of Gross Domestic Production GDP would be spent in the healthcare budget. COVID - 19 caused a surge in unemployment in India. Most of these unemployed are workers who are migratory in nature and move from one place to another by trucks, rail and other mediums to make their ends meet. Center for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) report says India’s urban unemployment rate reached to 30.9% and the overall unemployment rate rises to 23.4% (Sreevatsan). Some speculate that this figure will rise to 27 percent by the month of June, 2020. The current government will have to make sure that this category of unemployment is an example of seasonal unemployment and workers must have a place to go to and work to join as soon as the lockdown is removed. Till then there should not be any shortages of food in their homes and the minimum necessary finance at their disposal. By the month of April, 2020, finance minister announced that the Pradhan Mantri ‘Garib Kalyan Yojana’ would come into effect which will provide rice, wheat and pulses to the poor. By the Pradhan Mantri Jana Dhan Yojana women will get 500 rupees in their account for three months by direct benefit transfer (DBT). “Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) will transfer Rs 2,780 crore in the bank accounts of 37 million customers by Saturday so that they can get the first cooking gas cylinder free of cost as announced by the government last month” (Jayaswal). Despite these steps we have seen how workers got off their home and protested in the streets of Maharashtra and several other states due to the shortages of supplies of food and ration. India will have to keep helping the poorer section during the pandemic, and also provide necessary supplies for another 2 or 3 months in the post COVID - 19 to ensure domestic stability and a prosperous diplomatic relation in the arena of international politics.

About Other Super Powers in the Post COVID-19 Era

The world has been affected by pandemics and epidemics over centuries. As we can see, none of the pandemics stood in the way of colonization, imperialism and wars created by the greatest powers. Hence, we might expect the same once COVID - 19 is gone; except colonization is past now and we are living in the era of neo-colonization, neo-imperialism and globalization. However the question still arises- whether this COVID - 19 is going to affect the process of globalization and neo-liberalism. USA and Europe being the epicenter of the pandemic, debate emerges whether USA and West will continue to follow the policies of integration or they would adopt isolation in terms of trade and commerce. The Trump era has seen many withdrawals of US from international communities and agreements. After getting exhausted battling this pandemic, if USA continues to withdraw,

then the situation might lead the world to land into an uncharted territory. A new world order led by China or EU or some nexus of other powers may begin from there. However, the USA does not seem to be exhausted as the European colonial powers were after the Second World War. Even if the west is the epicenter of COVID - 19, they seem to be handling the shock successfully and they are prepared for an aftershock (second wave and a probable third wave) as well. From another point of view the EU is divided by China’s ‘Facemask Diplomacy’; some countries are seeing China’s supplies as skeptical and others are accepting them generously. A report in Asia Times says that “Even before the pandemic, EU officials warned that the bloc was unwilling to sign a deal unless Beijing offered major concessions,” (Crispin). So, China has not only helped the EU countries amid the crisis but they have also earned skepticism by supplying ‘faulty’ medical assistance. There are various assumptions being made about the plan of the EU countries regarding the relaxation of their lockdown. The longer they impose restrictions the longer it would take everything to become normal again. Right now every country is looking at China as people are on the streets of Wuhan again and the Chinese industries are producing necessary components to fight COVID - 19 and selling them abroad. However, a second phase of virus outbreak has already occurred in China confirming over twenty to thirty positive cases. Despite being the origin of the coronavirus China has managed to limit the damage within minimum. Needless to say that China has a big agricultural sector that backs up and provides supplies for the biggest populated nation on earth. Also the authoritarian regime has managed to issue an extreme lockdown situation on its citizens which is a tough job for the truly democratic countries like USA, UK, India and many others. So, question arrives, do we have to become authoritarian to fight with situations like this? Well, according to the author of “*The Future is Asia*”, Parag Khanna, in the post COVID - 19 world order economies will be continuing to shift outwards China. For instance Japan and the Asian Tigers are already moving their investments in South East Asia and India for free market and lower labor cost, so even with the help China is currently providing to other countries the view of other big economies will not change (BOOM, 03:15–05:21). Another aspect that India should give attention to, is ‘Make in India’ policy. Investments in India is much lower than it could be. The ‘Make in India’ project has not seen any big developments in its beginning years. In the post COVID - 19 world order Modi government should pay heed to the blossoming of ‘Make in India’ policy and attract the attention of industries. With the help of globalization’s new trend ‘make it where you sell it’, India should simultaneously use its huge domestic market for the demand creation on one hand, and boost the ‘Make in India’ policy with foreign investors and use the ‘make it where you sell it’ trend to fulfill that demand on the other. ‘Asian Tigers’ and Japan also investing in the ASEAN countries. Transnational Corporations (TNCs) like Intel and Samsung have been relying on Vietnam more than they do on China. India’s diplomatic relation with the countries of ASEAN is going to be a crucial factor in shaping India’s policy towards the countries of South East Asia. USA being the largest economy of the world spends a ransom amount of their GDP for healthcare development, yet faced by the virus outbreak it could not contain it initially and it has lost most number of lives in the world. The decision making process is very crucial while fighting with pandemics like this. Daily death tolls

have risen as high as couple of thousands in the US, France, Spain, Italy, Britain and several other countries. Developed countries asked for medical aids and nursing aids from the world like never before. In Britain even after the commencement of lockdown people got out of their homes, especially the younger generation who thought that they wouldn't be infected by the virus; and as a result we have seen how Britain's population got infected including their PM Boris Johnson. Somewhere the usual behaviors and images of the developed countries have created an exception in this pandemic era. People in the US got out of home, violating the lockdown and social distancing norms, holding placards written "We need a haircut" – is a clear example that and money and literacy cannot bring education and consciousness everywhere. In India, initially the virus was spread by the wealthy people coming from abroad and their lack of responsibility while staying in self-isolation. It's very clear that we need a more responsible population if we try to head towards a pivotal position in the post COVID - 19 world order.

India needs to blossom in all three aspects of diplomacy, commerce and military in the coming years but everything depends on how we are dealing with the lockdown and how soon we have an environment free of COVID-19.

India among SAARC

The Modi government arranged a video conference with all the leaders of the member states of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in the very beginning of the COVID - 19. Only Pakistan abstained from participating in the video conference. This kind of behavior should be gauged by the SAARC as the whole region is in crisis right now. The South Asian nations are always fighting with many crises. COVID - 19 is a big addition to them. India's policy should give a serious amount of attention to the SAARC countries from a problem solving approach. China is playing its cards as well by investing in Pakistan and Sri Lanka amply with Chinese aids. "China has pushed a charm offensive in South Asia both through offering medical teams, sending test kits and protective equipment and offering to build hospitals. However, the results have been a mixed bag"- said Aparna Pande, Director of the India Initiative at the Hudson Institute ("India's Offer of South Asian Response to COVID-19 Counter to China's Attempts to Change Narrative"). International Relations are always characterized by actions and reactions and in most cases the reactions are more fruitful than the actions. India's reaction to the Chinese card would let India to formulate diplomatic ties with the remaining countries of SAARC vis. Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. India offered a regional South Asian response to fight COVID - 19 in the middle of March. In the post COVID - 19 world order this approach must not stop. Currently, India is providing rapid response teams to its friendly neighbors. Separate teams of 14 and 15 members have already reached to Maldives and Kuwait respectively for assisting them in building laboratories, quarantine centers, and train them to fight the pandemic. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) tied up Sri Lanka and Pakistan closely with China. Despite the fact that Sri Lanka had made a USD 500 Million deal with China, India 'gifted' a 10 ton package of life saving medicines to Sri Lanka (India readying rapid response teams to help neighbors deal with COVID-19: Report). The supply of anti-malaria drug hydroxychloroquine will be remembered by the countries that received the same in the middle

of the crisis. Fifty five recipient countries have asked India for the drug and by the month of May, 2020 countries like USA, Mauritius and Seychelles received the drug though the oppositions were protesting the decision amid domestic situation that was not confirming enough storage of the drug for patients in India. Nonetheless, India is sending the drug to the neighborhood countries and sent a cargo plane with medical assistance to Serbia. There was a time, when faced by severe drought and famine India was helped by USA's huge amount of grain supplies; now half a century later India is providing lifesaving medical supplies to USA. This creates a path towards two things. One, the supply of medicine made in India would create a space for the future research and development in the medicine sector. Two, India's relation with its neighboring countries will be revived and the narrative of China's hegemony in terms of medical aids would be countered. Also the SAARC countries except Pakistan might look forward to make new deals in the healthcare system with India in the post COVID - 19 world. Linking the military capability with the soft power is a very well-known strategy in International relations. The soft power capability of USA and China are dominating factors of their diplomacy in South and South East Asia. Combined with their military might they have proclaimed a strong smart power rivalry in the zone of Asia Pacific. Post COVID - 19 India's diplomacy would combine its newly revitalizing soft powers like, healthcare, medicine, drugs, research and development assistance, scientific collaboration etc. with India's overseas military capability and use them as a tool of smart power projection. India has deployed two of its naval ships ready to deploy to any country that needs them in the region. Back in 2015, India rescued 5600 persons including 960 foreigners of 41 countries from Yemen during the Arab invasion of Yemen (Operation Raahat). India began another mega evacuation process from May 7, 2020, of rescuing 1.8 Million stranded citizens from abroad by deploying commercial flights, warships and military planes. This figure by far outnumbers the airlift from Kuwait in 1990 of 170000 people when Iraq invaded the country. "At least four Navy ships, including two large tank landing vessels, sailed on Tuesday, three to the Gulf region and another one to the Maldives, which will bring back stranded Indians. The Indian Air Force has prepared about 30 aircraft, including Boeing's C-17 Globe master and Lockheed Martin C-130J Super Hercules, for the mission. Air India, which has a fleet including Boeing 777 and 787 Dreamliner aircraft, will also operate special, non-scheduled commercial flights from London Heathrow starting May 7"- a report states (Kotoky *et al.*). As this article is being written, the world's largest evacuation procedure is taking place out there. The power of Indian Navy and Indian Air Force will be contributing a lot in the post COVID - 19 world order as India would still have an Ocean where China's hegemony must be countered and a neighbor that violates seize fire deal even amid the COVID - 19 pandemic. Apart from these immediate interests India's naval presence would become vital near the South China Sea as the territorial dispute would resume in the post COVID - 19 situation. Among the members of SAARC, India being the second largest population on Earth and having a dangerous density figure, has dealt with the earlier impact of COVID - 19 quite successfully from the regional point of view. It has declared a nationwide lockdown on March 25, 2020 when the number of confirmed positive cases were under 500. On the very next day the Indian

government declared a relief package of \$22.4 billion for the poor citizens and workers that went jobless by the inception of 'the stringiest lockdown' in the world. WHO said that India's reaction to the COVID - 19 is 'timely, comprehensive and robust'. The private sector has also come up with aids, the Reliance Industry built a 1000 bed hospital in two weeks, the companies like ITC, Dettol have lowered the prices of hand sanitizers, soaps and hand washes significantly, although the price rates were not available in every part of the country due to the immobile situation of certain goods. These actions of India have been well acclaimed by the developed countries and specialists around the world. Within India, the example of Kerala is outstanding. Kerala almost contained the virus by the month of May when new cases figure has dropped to the negative. Even the first flight of 'Vande Bharat' Mission has landed in Kochi Airport with 181 Indian citizens including 49 pregnant women and 4 children. So even if it's too early to predict the post COVID - 19 India's diplomacy amongst SAARC countries, it can be said that the examples India has created so far against COVID - 19 have influenced its neighbors by its hard power and smart power combined. All of these action and reactions are leading us to the obvious questions – Is India going to be the guiding nation among the SAARC members while promoting brotherhood in the post COVID - 19 world order? What is going to be India's prime focus on the regional perspective and what policies will India promote to maintain its monopoly within South Asia while tackling Pakistan's opposition in every step?

There would be economic crises among the SAARC countries once the situation gets back to normal. Countries like Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan would suffer from mass joblessness and poverty as a considerable number of workers, farmers and subalterns would be left without sufficient livelihoods. India would have to come forward to develop a joint plan and find out a solution that would help these countries and also India mutually. However, the extreme opposition of Pakistan that creates complexities in the region would have to be handled diplomatically. For now, India has been looking into these initiatives as outsider to the SAARC calendar of approved activities; as a standalone gesture.

Strings that are pulling the Nation Behind

India, as the biggest democracy of 1.4 Billion people, has been running by a democratic constitution since the independence. There is a saying that with great power there must also come great responsibility, and the power of the biggest democracy when characterized by immensely diverse socio cultural history causes the responsibility to lose its tracks. The Indian democratic setup has its drawbacks too and it is highly corrupted. Also the gap between the rich and the poor is increasing rapidly. The media in a number of cases has cooperated with political parties and has become their tools of propaganda. A lot of territorial instability can be seen in several parts of the country, and political cleavages are further promoting regionalism and fake nationalism. Specialists are saying that the number of positive cases throughout the country will reach at its peak in the middle of June to July due to the limited testing capability of the government. India has promoted e-learning for the schools, colleges and universities, however, the effectiveness of this step is under question as many people are still out of the reach of television network and high speed internet facility. Only 34.4% people use

the internet in India in recent years lagging far behind countries like USA and China. Many companies of both the public and private sectors have institutionalized 'work from home' for their employees to circumvent the initial work pressure and avoid unemployment. One problem for India is when we compare India's figure with the rest of the world it seems that we are in an advantageous position, but taking the population into consideration we can see the gaps in between. Farmer suicide rate in India has decreased in recent years but in the southern part (especially in Karnataka, Maharashtra, Kerala and Tamil Nadu) of the country the rate is higher than the rest of India. The importance of agriculture and lives of farmers is still left to be re understood. Post COVID - 19 India would still strive to fill these gaps by endorsing new domestic policies that would take into concern sustainable plans for the middle and lower classes; or otherwise political instability, corruption, illiteracy and degrading environment would not allow its diplomacy to thrive internationally.

The Visakhapatnam Gas leak incident is an example of the miss management of India's industrial infrastructure. It created a crisis within a crisis and reminded the world of Bhopal gas Tragedy of 1984. India is going to be the largest population by 2025. Being the largest population on earth have its own problems like illiteracy, low HDI, limited healthcare facility, dense population, malnutrition etc. India in the aftermath of pandemic would need to promote a stable nationwide population control measure. The overall public health in India is continuing to deteriorate due to the lack of proper sanitization habit among the population. The Ganga is being affected by domestic, agricultural and industrial wastes for decades and the current government's 'Namami Gange' policy has failed to bring any reform. Therefore, the important rivers being directly connected to public health and the living environment, their cleanliness should be an integral part of domestic policies of the government in the post COVID - 19. Furthermore the habit and system of proper sanitization for all citizens should be a matter of foremost concern of the government.

Conclusion

In a report, UN said that the world economy would go to recession except the economies of India and China. There was no further explanation of the same. The perspective of India towards the world order in the Post COVID - 19 era, hence depends on some possible developments of some countries including India's own. One key aspect is the geopolitical impact of other superpowers and their changing narratives towards the post COVID - 19 global order. USA spends almost USD 7000 per person every year on their healthcare systems. Yet they are the worst affected country by the pandemic right now. In reply to every problem US has faced so far they have always came up with binary answers or a reaction. US declared 'War on Terror' while the rescue operation of 9/11 was still in process. They replied to the Gulf War, Afghanistan War in a same manner except this time the COVID - 19 has crippled US's reply policy. India might look into this situation from a zero sum game's perspective. Two things are possible from this point on, firstly, If US withdraws from the global order in near future then China and Russia could become the new leaders of the world. Though the chances of Unipolarity are less as EU will still be a commercial and manufacturing economic hub of the world. US would still be a

military might and NATO's relevance would resurrect by the passage of time. India in this case will try to build strong diplomatic ties with US, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. Military drills of these countries will be performed at a higher rate. South China Sea would still be a disputed territory and China's aggression can be opposed by a joint force of the above countries along with Vietnam and Philippines. Joint military exercises like 'Exercise Malabar', 'AUSINDEX', and 'IBSAMAR' would be more relevant than these are now. India would also encourage military exercises like 'SLINEX', 'Sampriti', 'Surya Kiran' etc. with the SAARC countries. Towards Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan it would be cheque book diplomacy that India might adopt while for Pakistan and China India would have to rely either on appeasement or on coercive diplomacy. India has already opposed China's BRI initiative for many reasons, and amended Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) rules to restrict Chinese capital's control over India's business industries. After the Doklam incident rivalry of India- China has renewed into a new avatar. India in the post COVID - 19 and post USA-led world would try to mitigate with and extend its ties with the countries of EU that labeled China's economy as a rival as well as with USA, because of the USA vs China's trade war that had begun prior to the pandemic. India would perhaps comfortably lean towards the liberal democratic states for trade and commerce rather than autocratic China. Secondly, if USA does not fall back and performs the same monopoly in the world trade and commerce, military and diplomacy, India would still have to counter Chinese economic invasion and soft power – smart power hegemony in the south Asia primarily, and may be in South East Asia to some extent by its military diplomacy or defensive diplomacy. Post COVID - 19 India's economy will depend a lot on China's economic policies. India's 'act east' policy would face a big question mark as the future of ASEAN countries; their collaboration with China and the impact of Chinese soft power upon them is a mixed situation. The software industry of India will need a boost to back up the 'Make in India' policy. 'NITI Aayog' remains an integral part of the current government and it would have to come up with fresh agendas and plans to fight the poverty, malnutrition and other problems of the rural India. Among the SAARC countries India would try to maintain the promotion of India's Smart power at the same rate. The scientific achievement of Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) would help other regional countries by launching their satellites at a low cost into the orbit. Manufacturing companies like TATA, BIRLA, Reliance Industries Limited and Ashok Leyland will continue to extend the sale of India made vehicles, goods and other stuffs to foreign countries. Other government agencies and companies like DRDO and HAL can tie up with foreign companies like Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Dassault Aviation etc. to produce high tech modern fighter jets and defense equipment in India or just indigenously produce MMRCAs like HAL Tejas and sale them to the friendly countries. India's endeavor in this sector would be challenged strongly by the Russian Mikoyan and Gurevich (MiG) and Sukhoi or China's Chengdu jets, but we have to keep in mind that the COVID - 19 has changed the reliability on China drastically. Many scholars assume that China has manipulated the figures of infected persons and deaths and those figures cannot be trusted as the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) cannot be trusted fully. China could have warned the world

about the discovery of the virus, about the so called transmissibility of the virus during the Hubei lockdown but it did not. Right now the world is silent about the negligence China has demonstrated because every country whether European or Pan American is busy with the fighting and many are exhausted by the battle. Some Italians have claimed 'War Damages' from China. US State Department referred the virus as 'Wuhan Virus', adding to which President Donald Trump tweeted about COVID - 19 as 'Chinese Virus'. On other hand, China's foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian tweeted "It might be US army who brought the epidemic to Wuhan" (Tyler and Liu). So the blame game is on and no one knows where it is leading to. India's name has been selected as an executive member of WHO from South East Asia for next three years. Therefore, India in the post COVID - 19 era will have the power to recommend WHO in medicine and health care systems.

What is noteworthy is, in the post pandemic era terrorism, whether state sponsored or international in nature, would have to be countered by the joint ventures of the victim countries. Indian Navy and Indian Coast Guard would have to secure the vast water body of the Indian Ocean from pirates and illegal trade of narcotics and drugs. COVID - 19 has helped us to understand the importance of a pollution free environment. Affecting by the degrading environment both the rural and urban lives of India are becoming victims of air, water and land pollution. Therefore, with the help of UN or other international organizations, and with cooperation of Non-Governmental Organizations India would have to deal with the degrading environment and pollution and also formulate domestic policies and international agreements accordingly. In his book 'Long Cycles in World Politics', George Modelski stated the cycle of 70 – 100 years of a hegemon power. This war against the coronavirus is a natural destabilizer in this long cycle. It's been 75 years since the end of WW II and the shifting in the world order seems to have begun. In any way if China becomes the new hegemon then India would have to become the Counter Hegemon arising from the age old rivalry. The diplomatic relations, the foreign and domestic policies of India, all would be the products of the actions that result jointly by the current superpowers and regional powers that matter to India the most.

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