

Random Thoughts

2019-2020

To ideate for exceptional and
extraordinary times ahead

S Gurumurthy
Chairman, VIF



Vivekananda
International
Foundation

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Published in August 2020 by
Vivekananda International Foundation
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E-mail: info@vifindia.org
Website: www.vifindia.org

ISBN: 978-93-90061-06-8

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Think that the whole work is upon your shoulders
Think that you, young men of our motherland,
are destined to do this. Put yourselves to the task.
Lord bless you.

- Swami Vivekananda

Random Thoughts

To Ideate For Exceptional and Extraordinary Times Ahead

The scale, intensity and impact of the massive changes the world is witnessing now because of the Covid-19 phenomenon is unprecedented in human history, unthinkable anytime before in the past and constitutes perhaps the greatest challenge to the future of humanity. Greater and bigger disasters in scale, natural and man-made, have hit the world in the distant and recent past. But their immediate and long-term impact was far less than what one sees now, because the world then was far less integrated for the scale of devastation to be as widespread as it is in the world today that sees itself as a global village. The contemporary world was, in some sense, ambitiously integrated and tangled by powerful political actors in the 1990s, based on multilateral political and economic guarantees. The collective multilateral guarantees had conceptually and systemically rendered all past ideas, structures, scales and people's lifestyle outdated and irrelevant, and built a futuristic world order that seemed largely disconnected from the past for most of humanity. It is precisely those fundamental guarantees intended to sustain the contemporary world that now appear to be at risk because of the huge distrust in relations among the high and mighty of the world today. India, which has one-sixth of the world's population, and which has, in the recent past acquired global stature, virtually had no role in the shaping of the contemporary world order. India had for long, till it undertook the risky mission of exploding the atomic device in 1998, been a passive acceptor of rules framed by an oligarchy of powerful nations. It is those rules of the game the world powers set for themselves and for the world, which now seem to be falling apart, calling for a reset out of which would emerge a new world order. That what now appears to be a paradigm shift holds for the immediate and distant future is deeply hidden in the womb of the present, which is incomplete and the future, which is yet to unfold. It calls for honest introspection as to where the world erred in the past and so does India have to contemplate on the changes and corrections likely and inevitable, desirable or not, in the contemporary world order, to strategise its role in the framing and shaping of a new world order. It equally calls for a deep introspection by India on the opportunities it has missed in the past and the opportunities it has now and should not miss.

I. India needs to regain its position as a contributor to global commons of ideas

That thinking as a standalone concept without physical power itself was power has been proven in ancient human history. That was how ancient Indian thought drew the attention of the world of thinkers. It was because of the power of Indian thought that great thinkers of the West and the Rest, who explored India, were attracted to it and its civilisation. Ancient India has been celebrated by many great men of the contemporary West as a great exporter and contributor of ideas to the global commons, but contemporary India has largely been

an importer and consumer of ideas in the last several decades, much of which seem to be losing relevance in the present context. A Covid-19 ravaged world, which is running out of ideas, provides both the context and ecosystem for India to regain its position as a contributor of ideas to the world.

It is time to recall India's forgotten virtue as one of the greatest contributors of thoughts of eternal value to the world in ancient and contemporary times. A look back at how great thinkers of the contemporary world looked at India that was not free is necessary to understand where India should rebegin its mission to become a contributor to the world rather than being a consumer that it has been particularly after it attained freedom.

Ancient India as a thought giver to the contemporary world

Here is a brief and illustrative, not exhaustive, account of how the thinking world was attracted to ancient Indian thought and thinkers:

American scholar Mark Twain: "India is the cradle of the human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend, and the great-grandmother of tradition. Our most valuable and most instructive materials in the history of man are treasured up in India only."

American author Henry David Thoreau: "Whenever I have read any part of the Vedas, I have felt that some unearthly and unknown light illuminated me. In the great teaching of the Vedas, there is no touch of sectarianism. It is of all ages, climes and nationalities, and is the royal road for the attainment of the Great Knowledge. When I read it, I feel that I am under the spangled heavens of a summer night."

American historian Will Durant: "India was the motherland of our race and Sanskrit the mother of Europe's languages. She was the mother of our philosophy; mother through the Arabs, of much of our mathematics; mother through the Buddha, of the ideals embodied in Christianity; mother through the village community; of self-government and democracy. Mother India is in many ways the mother of us all." "India will teach us the tolerance and gentleness of a mature mind, understanding spirit and a unifying, pacifying love, for all human beings."

German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer: "Vedas are the most rewarding and the most elevating book which can be possible in the world." On the Upanishads, he said: "It has been the solace of my life -- it will be the solace of my death."

German scholar Max Mueller: "If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions, I should point to India." "There is no book in the world that is so thrilling, stirring and inspiring as the Upanishads."

French Scholar Romain Rolland: "If there is one place on the face of earth where all the dreams of living men have found a home from the very earliest days when man began the dream of existence, it is India."

British Historian Arnold Toynbee: “It is already becoming clear that a chapter which had a Western beginning will have to have an Indian ending if it is not to end in the self-destruction of the human race. At this supremely dangerous moment in history, the only way of salvation for mankind is the Indian way.”

American Author Ralph Waldo Emerson: “In the great books of India, an empire spoke to us, nothing small or unworthy, but large, serene, consistent, the voice of an old intelligence, which in another age and climate had pondered and thus disposed of the questions that exercise us.”

Scientist Albert Einstein: “We owe a lot to the Indians, who taught us how to count, without which no worthwhile scientific discovery could have been made.”

German Physicist Werner Heisenberg: “After the conversations about Indian philosophy, some of the ideas of Quantum Physics that had seemed so crazy suddenly made much more sense.”

Chinese Ambassador to US Hu Shih (1946): “India conquered and dominated China culturally for 20 centuries without ever having to send a single soldier across her border.”

Biblical scholar and ordained priest Edward Pococke wrote a book “India in Greece” that India was the origin of the Greek civilisation, Sanskrit, the mother of Greek languages and the Greek mythologies and names of peoples, mountains and rivers explainable only by Indian and Sanskrit names, and finally the forefathers of Greek, known as Pelasgians, ought to have come from Palasa, that is Bihar!

Not an ordinary celebration this, by the conquering races, nations and peoples, of a country that was not even politically free.

Exporter and Contributor to Importer and Consumer

It is matter for introspection for Indian thinkers as to how India, which was a great exporter and contributor to global thought and culture for millennia when it was not a free nation and people, and because of that, it was celebrated by the great minds of the world, has, after it became free, slipped into a one way importer, acceptor and consumer of thoughts generated from outside, almost uncritically. How could India, which was not free, and its education system and public discourse, produce a Swami Vivekananda, Maharishi Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi but independent India and its education system and public discourse could produce none to match them. A profound question indeed to ponder? And, it is equally also a matter for concern and introspection. Is it because India lost its connect with what made the world to look at it and celebrate it, and so lost its position, or is it because the world which celebrated India for the values it had, has changed its own perspectives of what it needs, which is not what it believed India could offer? A close look at India within and at the world outside seems to answer both questions in the affirmative.

Post World War II World changed and Independent India did not

It is undeniably true that India in its quest for economic development for which the West had emerged as the model, appeared to blame its past for all of its present problems and was keen to disconnect from it. It is equally true that after World War II, the world had shifted to the idea of power -- military, political and economic -- over thought, and by the end of the Cold War, to the idea of power without principles, openly. It is in this game of power that an independent India further lost out. Why? Independent India instead of changing to match and suit the world order based on power, held on to its ancient values of non-violence and attempted to globalise its ancient and pre-Independence idea of non-violence in a world that was ruled by violence, particularly when it was in no position to influence a world ruled by might rather than what was right.

India's ambivalence about war and power -- the psyche of Kurukshetra and Kalinga Wars

Over millennia, India has always had a degree of intellectual ambivalence about war and power. A telling example was the most successful pan-Indian empire builder Emperor Ashoka. Ashoka, who won the Kalinga War, gave up war altogether after seeing the violence it had produced, and became a pacifist. The Ashoka Pillar, with its idea of non-violence, became the brand of independent India. But the Kalinga War was not the only great war in ancient Indian history. India witnessed two great wars -- the Kurukshetra War and the Kalinga War. In Kurukshetra, Arjuna was the warrior, while in Kalinga, Ashoka was the warrior. Arjuna's confused state of mind and distress before the Kurukshetra War matched with Ashoka's ambivalence and pain after the war. Both wars had a deep impact on the Indian psyche. A comparison of the two wars and warriors, and their contrasting psychological outcome, are important to understand the complex and confused Indian psyche about war and violence. The state of mind of Ashoka after the Kalinga War was the same as the state of Arjuna's mind before the Kurukshetra War. Arjuna was in confusion about whether it was right to wage the war he was to wage and Ashoka was in confusion about whether he was right in waging the war that he had waged. It was Krishna, through a long lecture in the Bhagwad Gita, who removed Arjuna's confusion about the need for war, which was a rarity. But there was no Krishna and no one else to remove the confusion of Ashoka, who experienced deep guilt and distress for the war he had waged, about the very need for wars. As the victor, Ashoka gave up war. The Indian psyche was heavily influenced by Ashoka -- to think of wars altogether as an evil and mentally to give it up. A little reflection would have made Indian intellectuals realise that had Ashoka lost the Kalinga War and given up war, he would have never have been a hero, or a model for an independent India. A defeated Ashoka would have had nothing to give up. Only a victor could do what Ashoka did. That was how he became an icon of both victory and peace. Ashoka's non-violence was a victor's philosophy and not a loser's refuge, As Mahatma Gandhi, the contemporary icon of non-violence, asserted that non-violence emerges from strength and courage, not weakness and cowardice. Unfortunately, independent India's psyche was moulded by wrongly construing a victorious Ashoka's non violence as a glorious model for it -- a civilisation wounded by defeats -- and turned not just against the idea of war, but also, against the very idea of having a military itself. As a consequence, independent India did not understand that a nation needed to be battle ready even if it hated wars.

Misconstruing Ashoka proved disastrous for Independent India

The post-Kalinga War Ashokan confusion about the need for wars, rather than the post-Gita clarity of Arjuna to wage wars as an exception, extended via the non-violent freedom movement into Indian statecraft itself post freedom. The first Prime Minister of India did not even believe that India needed an army as, in his view, being committed to non-violence, even lathi-wielding police were sufficient for India. Independent India's leadership never realised that its brand ambassador Ashoka gave up wars but he did not disband his huge military as there is evidence that he used his military might to continue putting down rebellions and for maintaining the peace. Ashoka was battle ready even after he gave up wars. Independent India's Ashokan model of statecraft was sans Ashoka's practical wisdom to have a strong army to ensure non-violence. Anyway, within a couple within of months after the Prime Minister felt India did not need an army, Pakistan invaded Kashmir and alerted him and India to the need for a military to defend its own philosophy of non-violence. Still India, though alerted, did not learn the lesson that the 1948 war had taught it. Very soon its enemies made India understand why and how much an army was needed for it, even to protect India to remain non-violent within and to preach non-violence to a violent world. It took a humiliating defeat and a loss of land equal to the size of Kerala and Tripura put together to China to know the importance of an efficient army to defend an India which did not want to offend anyone.

The impractical idealists who took charge of independent India from the British did not understand that non-violence could perhaps work, though not always, within the borders. But certainly it would not work with an enemy on the border which had no great love for non-violence. Thus not clear about the role of power in national and international statecraft, India kept losing its leverage in the world of power. It was also reflected in India's reservations about being in international positions of power. According to new evidence produced by the Wilson Centre, India turned down the US offer of a permanent UN Security Council seat for it as it did not want it at the cost of China! ["Not at the Cost of China: New Evidence Regarding US Proposals to Nehru for Joining the United Nations Security Council" by Anton Harder, March 2015 Working Paper #76 Wilson Centre]. And this after China had already gobbled up Tibet. India virtually gifted Hanuman's Mace to its enemy! And more, India did not go nuclear earlier than it did, either. A confused and ambivalent India kept escalating the grammar of its non-violent freedom movement to its defence and external policies. Although its adversaries had taught it the inevitability of wars and military strength, having military inevitability is far from acquiring the will to have power in a world of power play. The Ashokan psyche wrongly interpreted by independent India needed a shift which came much later than it should have.

Pokhran II -- India's intent to join global power play

Independent India went wrong in making it explicitly clear to the world that it lacked the sense of power. It is true that Indian civilisation is not a natural power player, like the Abrahamic and Chinese civilisations, which have an inherent agenda to turn the world to their views and build empires. Indian civilisation had never had and will never have the 'Will to Power' which is being talked about in strategic circles in the contemporary world

as a virtue despite its evil origins. The 'Will to Power' strategic idea is sourced in the "drive of the superman in the philosophy of Nietzsche to perfect and transcend the self through the possession and exercise of creative power. It is internal impulse inherent in an aggressive civilisation to conquer the world for itself or for its world view. It actually powered the Nazis in Germany into the Second World War. Indian civilisation has no religion or ideology which impels or mandates it to conquer the world. On the contrary, it is rooted in the converse idea of Vasudaiva Kutumbakam, which is based on the conviction that the whole world is one family, rejecting the "them vs us" ideologies. All the efforts of Kautilya, who encountered and understood Alexander and the Greco-Roman conquering mind, to change Indian thinking through his treatise -- the "Arthashastra" -- to build a pan-Indian empire through the use of power failed. Because Kathambhari Bana trashed his thoughts as unethical [adharma] and delegitimised once and for all the idea of power in Indian civilisation altogether. Kautilya's efforts to inject a sense of power in Indian civilisation failed against the high sense of values that dominated the Indian mind. Indian civilisation rejected the idea of dominance through physical power. Ancient Indian civilisation also conceptualised comprehensive unconquerable defensive power. The idea that implied a sense of the highest defensive power was in the concept of Ayodhya, which was an adjective that became a proper noun as the capital of Sri Rama. Ayodhya meant that no one could dare think of a war to conquer it, that it was unconquerable. It meant building such a comprehensive national power so that no aggressive force could cast an evil eye on India. It is the very antithesis of the wrongly interpreted Asokan concept of no war because he had given up war. The ancient Indian concept of Ayodhya meant that possessing such comprehensive power; no one could dare launch a war against it.

As the non-violent freedom became too distant from the very idea of power, independent India lost its connect with the comprehensive power philosophy of Ayodhya. Post independence, India lacked strategic thinking, which is a necessary adjunct to power to deal with the world of power. But in the world of today, dominated by power over thinking than by the power of thinking, it is the geo--political space a nation enjoys that draws the world's attention to its thinking and not by the merit of its thinking. This is the world of power that India, which could not come out of the pre-Independence Ashokan paradigm of non-violence, failed to relate to. After four wars forced on it by its adversaries, India made a first and tentative attempt to show it was not averse to power by undertaking the first Pokhran nuclear test in 1974. Realising the huge cost of keeping away from power in a world that respected power more than high values and by exploding atomic devices in 1998, post-Pokhran II India made its intent to join the global power game clear. Pokhran II was India's final departure from its misconstrued Ashokan psyche of dispensing with war and violence altogether. Pokhran II is the recall and reinstatement of the Ayodhya concept in Indian strategic thinking -- that no one should dare to undertake a war of conquest against India.

Time for India to prove Warren Hastings wrong and become a contributor to global thought

Having successfully disconnected itself from its psychological constraints and reservations about power and explicitly announcing to the world that it is keen on acquiring power -- and comprehensive power in the sense of Ayodhya -- India has to reconnect itself to the days when it was the thought giver and contributor to

the world, and not continue to remain an importer and consumer of thoughts generated from outside. It is most appropriate here to recall the words of Warren Hastings (1754-1826), the first governor general of British India. Deeply impressed by and overwhelmed with Hindu philosophy, Hastings wrote a near prophetic and resounding pronouncement on Indian philosophy: *“The writers of the Indian philosophies will survive when the British dominion in India shall long have ceased to exist, and when the sources which it yielded of wealth and power are lost to remembrances.”* (Philosophy of Hinduism - An Introduction - By T. C. Galav, Universal Science-Religion - page 19). Hastings words that the sources of Indian philosophy which yielded the wealth and power of India would be lost to memory would have nearly proved to be true, but for the emergence of Swami Vivekananda, Maharishi Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi, and many others, who shaped the Indian freedom movement along civilisational lines and almost reinstated ancient Indian values. Unfortunately, after the British dominion ceased to exist, independent India failed to reconnect to the sources that those great men revived contrary to Hastings prognosis that they would be consigned to remembrances. It is time that India reconnected itself to its long tradition of being the celebrated contributor to the world commons of ideas, rather than being merely an importer and consumer of ideas generated from outside. The post-Covid-19 world provides India with a unique and historic opportunity to emerge as an idea giver to a new world order even as it follows the counsel of its sages who said thousands of years ago -- “Aano Badraha Krutavao Yantu Vishwatah” -- meaning “Let Noble Thoughts Come To Us From All Sides”.

II. The background to Random Thoughts -- Where the world is heading and India's response to it and role in it

A world, which has run on the West-centric course without course corrections for centuries, seems to be running out of ideas for quite a while. The West, which made the world obsessed with and centered on itself, even went to the extent of declaring almost arrogantly in 1951 through an advisory to underdeveloped nations by the United Nations, that a non-Western society which seeks to develop like the West should copy and emulate the West and cease to be itself. This finally manifested as a universally accepted idea through globalisation. Covid-19 has exposed the hollowness of assumptions of the world order based on Western experiences which were experimented on the Rest from the 1990s, which the Rest, particularly India, accepted uncritically, unlike China, which refused to dismantle its Marxian State to accommodate the Western concept of Market Economy. Instead, it aligned the Marxian State to a Market Economy. When momentous changes were taking place in the world in the 1990s, India, which had not built any significant military or geopolitical power since Independence, was just a rule acceptor -- helplessly following rules framed by the high and mighty. Now, a quarter of a century later, India's stature has altered to its advantage and the global structure and its perceptions about India too have changed. With the Covid-19 threatening to alter the contemporary world order forever, and the democratic world feeling the heat of a non-transparent China it has promoted, the investment India has made in its democratic institutions and rule of law is now both a matter of global attention and attraction. Even the pre-Covid-19 world has begun changing fast, but the post Covid-19 world promises never to be the same as the pre-Covid world.

The bandwidth of the emerging world order triggered by Covid-19 was prophesied by Francis Fukuyama. He postulated in the 1990s a world free of ideological conflicts forever from “erosion of the liberal World order” to “resurgence of Fascism” to “rebirth of liberal democracy with elements of both visions emerging in some places.” It demonstrates more the prevailing chaos now than any clarity emerging from the present. It is against this background that Indian strategic thinkers, particularly the VIF, will have to focus their energies in the coming years.

Random Thoughts illustratively ideates on where the emerging world order is likely to alter and even bound to look for alternatives and variations for contemporary domestic political, economic, strategic and geo-political thoughts, ideas, institutions, models and even associations. The suggestions for Indian thinkers, particularly nationalist think tanks like the VIF, to ideate for a contemporary and rising India’s role in global affairs, cannot be exhaustively listed or discussed. The basic intent of Random Thoughts is that Indian thinkers need to shift gears from being lethargic acceptors and willing consumers of ideas from outside as they have been for so long, to being active contributors of ideas for India and the world as well.

Random Thoughts is an effort to bring forth background and factors driving the Covid-19 impacted world and to illustratively discuss the areas where a global shift is bound to occur and where the VIF should focus on alternatives to contemporary global narratives and discourses.

Transition from Cold War to the present

In the context of the Covid-19 challenge, the world has opened an unprecedented opportunity for an emerging India’s role in the future world order. Random Thoughts traces the origin of the post-Cold War global shift from ideology to unprincipled balance of power and how that was the foundation for the world’s turmoil today. It also recalls how when the socialist order collapsed, a euphoric West prematurely claimed its final victory against the Rest and treated the latter, mainly the socialist world, as a defeated lot and co-opted a non transparent China with Marx in Politics and Market in Economics into the transparent global market architecture, which led to unresolved and irresolvable transparency challenges for the West and the world. In contrast, during this period, we see how a Marxist China marketed itself, while an India with Marx in Economics and Democracy in Polity could not market itself as a democracy because the West was more keen on market than on democracy. It exposes how the West, after pretending to sleep, pretended to wake up in 2015 to realise that China was not a market economy at all 15 years after it was made a member of the transparent global market economy. It also sees Trumpism lasting beyond Trump because of the emerging bipartisan consensus against China, globalism and the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Factors and Players likely to influence the Post Covid-19 world order

Seeing Covid-19 as only the context and not the cause for ongoing change of the world order, Random Thoughts discusses whether the Post-Covid-19 world order would evolve from globalisation to Cold Peace or

Cold War 2.0; on what kind of developments will shape the Post Covid-19 world order and India's role in shaping it, it lists illustratively --

- China's new expansionism and the US and global response
- The possible death of US-China engagement
- Likely Alliance of Democracies with India as a critical component
- Weakening of elite and "liberal" Western Democracies
- Liberal democracies shifting emphasis to the civilisation paradigm
- Liberal Democracy ceasing to be the measuring standard for democracies
- Vibrant India to redefine the new democratic paradigm
- Civilisational compatible democracy as the narrative of India
- Shift from unbridled human rights to the duties-based paradigm of Mahatma Gandhi
- Weakening a West-influenced UN and UN group of global institutions
- WTO already under stress becoming irrelevant
- Response of the Transatlantic Alliance to the China Challenge
- The China challenge and the need for a new technology paradigm
- India's emerging apex level eminence and its effects
- China's efforts to defocus India from growth and development
- Development: "One-Size Fit All" paradigm to cultural paradigm

By no mean exhaustive or exhaustible, the factors and players shaping the future world order is illustrated largely as an issue centered on the transparency of polity and market -- as democracies Vs autocracies -- and from the perspective of India whose brightest and the biggest asset and attraction in the emerging world will be its civilisational compatible democracy, which will never countenance or accept dictatorship. A non-transparent autocratic China, having taught a bitter lesson to the West and the World how dictatorship can overawe democracy in an open world, Indian democracy is the only hope for the free world. This is a most serious and profound aspect for investigation and investment of time and energy by strategic think tanks, including the VIF, seeking to study the emerging world.

Civilisational compatible Indian democracy as the narrative of India

The issue of transparent democracies Vs non-transparent autocracies is likely to emerge as an important issue in geo-political, economic, trade and strategic alliances of the post-Covid-19 world order, which, according to Francis Fukuyama may see the “erosion of the liberal world order”. For preventing the erosion of the liberal world order and to strengthen divisive and weakening liberal democracies, the West will need to recall and align its civilisational assets with democracy. Unbridled individualist democracies rest on the strength of state architecture. Atomised ultra-individualists who live sans communities and societies, and even families, have become so self centered that they do not even care to vote (which is their only explicit and authentic expression of loyalty to the liberal state). Particularly the youth in the West are not taking interest in social, political and state affairs. The majority of minorities, less educated and less fortunate for whom the liberal order claims to plead, keep away from electoral processes. Individualist democracies in the West are weakening both ways. In contrast, the deliberative civilisational democracy that has been working on the ground over millennia in ancient India has always been vibrant. India is the only democracy where dictatorship imposed by a government was voted out. The way the ordinary and illiterate masses of India threw out the only attempt at imposing dictatorship in India in 1977 is a model of civilisational democracy at work for the world of democracy. This was when four years later the general literacy rate of India was 43.5 percent and female literacy was less than 22 percent. The general literacy rate in the four states with over 200 seats which wiped out the Emergency regime were Uttar Pradesh (33 percent) Bihar (32 percent), Madhya Pradesh (34 percent) and Rajasthan (30 percent). Female literacy rates were Uttar Pradesh (17 percent), Bihar (16 percent), Madhya Pradesh 19 percent and Rajasthan 14 percent. As compared to the previous election, 10 percent more people voted in 1977 to destroy the dictatorship -- as the national voting percentage rose from 55.5 percent in 1971 to 60.5 percent in 1977. It was not education, not high income or any upper criteria, but civilisational forces that brought about the defeat of the most feared and strongest of governments and, perhaps, the strongest leader of India in the 20th century. The civilisational narrative of Indian democracy needs global attention and exposition and the crisis in liberal democracy, which is already visible, and according to many, including Francis Fukuyama, will intensify and provide the most appropriate context for it. Random Thoughts extensively analyses the encounter between liberal democracies and civilisational Indian democracy in the context of the emerging global order and India’s role in it.

Covid-19 and post Covid issues and challenges of India

On the Covid-19 and post-Covid-19 issues and challenges of India, Random Thoughts postulates that the time has arrived for an AtmaNirbhar Bharat – a self reliant India. It also speaks of the need to build a national consensus in India and the need for national introspection and debate to re-build institutional moral authority. Finally, in tune with the VIF motto of harmony in diversity, it hypothesises that the world needs a civilisational paradigm that recognises human and natural diversity, and builds a world order that recognises it as an alternative to the pure and homogenising materialist ideologies which seem to have played themselves out. It ends with an appeal to the VIF to play an active role in shaping it.

Before the ideation process begins, it is necessary to understand how Covid-19 is bound to make an unprecedented impact on the world. Random Thoughts sees it as an unparalleled disaster in the history of the world. It is also necessary to show how India under the present dispensation is a different India, which has achieved landmark developments and built a huge domestic economic infrastructure and political strength. This has changed and upgraded global perceptions about India, which provides the context for India to play a role in a world challenged and forced by the Covid-19 to rethink.

III. Covid-19 unparalleled compared to all bigger human disasters of the past disturbing the contemporary world order

The monumental changes taking place now -- some of them seemingly without continuity and making a complete break with the past -- are unprecedented in human history, and were unthinkable even months earlier. It is true that many disasters in terms of human toll have been worse than Covid-19, most notably the Black Death, when hundreds of millions died, or even the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic when 50 million died, 20 million of which were in India. As compared to those disasters, Covid-19 is far less in terms of its human loss impact. But the impact of Covid-19 is incomparably more disastrous than any of them not only because of its sheer size, but also by the degree of interdependence and complexity of the human world as compared to a century before. The world is today incomparably more complex than even a quarter of a century ago. The human population in 1900 was 1.6 billion; today it is almost five times that, 7.8 billion. More than the far smaller size of the population then, the interdependability of the world in trade and economic terms was limited and the economies were organised more on national lines with limited global trade. For instance, according to Our World Data based in Oxford University, in constant terms, the index value of global trade was 75 in 1918 when the Spanish flu struck the world, and in 2008, it rose to 4915, by 65 times. Likewise, according to World Bank, the international migrant population rose from 71.9 million in 1990 to 243 million by 2015 -- equal to the total population of England, Germany France and Canada -- a rise of four times in 25 years, showing how globally interdependent and complex are human and economic relations in terms of migrants and their remittance incomes on which not just their families, but even their native countries depend. According to UNCTAD, International remittances were \$126 billion in 2000 and rose to \$689 billion in 2018 -- three times in 18 years; annual cross border investment rose from \$20 billion in 1990 to \$215 billion in 2015 -- almost 21 times in 25 years; Total cross border asset holdings increased from \$5.9 trillion in 1990 to \$103.5 trillion in 2017 -- 18 times in 25 years. This should give an idea about how human livelihood and national economies had become dependent on the distant and global and how disturbance in one place would torment all other places through chain impact. This high degree of global interconnectedness and interdependence of nations makes the Covid-19 disturbance a multi dimensional human disaster. Even more disastrous than the scale of destruction that Covid-19 is causing to the world, is the fallout of the phenomenon which is believed to be disturbing the current world order and changing it forever. This is likely to be far more costly to the world in the near and medium terms than the actual destructive impact of Covid-19 to humans, families, economies, societies and nations. The twin effect of the current destruction and the future devastation that it is likely to lead to makes the impact of Covid unparalleled in human history. And, that is what many think is threatening to overturn the contemporary world order.

Before we look at the depth and sweep of the far-reaching changes that are taking place at the global level, it is necessary to evaluate the development and the state of domestic politics for developing an Indian perspective to the global changes. This foreword about India is necessary to know from an Indian point of view how the country can and should respond to the global changes, what role it should play in shaping the changes and how far its domestic polity has the potential to support India's enhancing role at the global level.

IV. Landmark developments in domestic politics and governance that have enhanced the stature of India for its due role in the world

During the year under report, the National Democratic Alliance headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi was re-elected to power with a greater majority in the 2019 parliamentary elections than in the previous 2014 election. It was a landmark event in the history of Indian politics, as it was after 30 years, that the lead party in power got re-elected with an absolute majority again. Also, it was after 50 years that a Prime Minister in office with an absolute majority of his own party, won the elections again with absolute majority. This ended multi-party and negative coalition politics to keep a major party out of power -- unstable and sometimes even bizarre -- that had undermined India's political will within and diluted the sovereign power of India outside for decades. It had also stymied India's voice in the global fora and impacted on its growth prospects as the continuity of policies suffered from uncertainties in the domestic polity. But the last two elections have proved to the world that given a clear programme and the right leader, the Indian electorate can choose a strong and stable government despite a diverse range of political parties competing for power in a country of greater diversity than the rest of the world put together. The last two elections have also explicitly called out the religious and other narrow votebank elements that hid behind fake ideological politics that actually split the nation's polity, and brought about consolidation of national political power. Political stability is also reflected in the scale of performance of the government in diverse areas of development.

During the first tenure, the Modi government transformed the traditional incremental scale of thinking of the government into giant leaps in its thought and action. The opening of 380 million bank account by the poor, of which two thirds are women, with a total balance of Rs 1.36 trillion; making India substantially open defecation free in five years by subsidising and installing over 92 million toilets; delivering over 72 million free LPG connections for rural poor; building 15 million homes again for the poor; laying highway roads at more than double the pace at which the earlier governments used to do; transferring cash benefits of Rs 7.27 trillion to the poor through bank accounts since 2014-15, eliminating the middlemen who used to steal most of it earlier; delivering free health insurance for 157 million; accomplishing 100 percent rural electrification; connecting 1.2 lakh villages through optic fibre and finally and most importantly, introducing General Sales Tax (GST), which is perhaps the boldest of reforms to have been taken since the liberalisation programmes of the 1990s -- are some of the high points of scaled up governance. This scale of performance was unthinkable in the recent past, given the rickety alliance politics, bureaucratic lethargy, red tape and delays.

In less than a year after it won the decisive mandate in May 2019, the Modi 2.0 government has resolved four of the most challenging issues facing the Indian polity. One, the amendment to the Indian Citizenship law, which

conferred citizenship on persecuted minority refugees from Pakistan and Bangladesh awaiting justice for over half-a-century. Two, the unanimous judicial resolution of the Ayodhya Ram Temple construction issue, which first split and later redefined Indian polity. Three, the modification of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution -- one of the worst outcomes of the heavily compromised partition politics, which had weakened India within and outside -- and the repeal of Article 35A. Four, the banning of Triple Talaq considered politically too risky a reform in Muslim law, even though it was mandated by the Supreme Court which had outlawed the most unacceptable form of Islamic divorce and its consequence of Nikkah Halala incompatible with contemporary times. It was against the law to grant citizenship rights for the persecuted minorities of Pakistan that large-scale violence were let loose by anarchic forces, seemingly as part of a conspiracy which is being investigated.

Within eight months of Modi 2.0 government assuming office after the 2019 general election came the Covid-19 crisis, which has cut the normal governance process and posed the biggest ever economic, social and political challenge to India as indeed to the rest of the world. The way the Indian government has handled the challenge so far, lent its support to global efforts to manage the crisis, taken the initiative to constitute a SAARC Fund and also pressed and got the G20 to meet on the issue, has won the universal appreciation of nations and international bodies. The unprecedented proactive role of the Indian government to which others responded positively has demonstrated India's rising stature in the world. It has also catapulted India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi as the most popular among global leaders.

In any view, the changes that are taking place in India's domestic politics in the last six years are unprecedented and unscaled in comparison to the past. These developments have also profoundly influenced the perception about India in the rest of the world.

V. Domestic Political Developments changing and upgrading Global Perception about India

The last two Indian elections have also changed the perception of the world, particularly the democratic ones, which, because of shaky coalitions over decades, had unasked questions in mind like whether democratic India would at all ever have a strong government and leader. The Indian electorate has convinced a sceptic world about the potency and efficiency of Indian democracy by electing a strong and viable government and leader. Narendra Modi's global initiatives in the last six years have also raised India's stature and influence among the community of nations in a manner unprecedented in her strategic and diplomatic history. Also thanks to collateral global developments, India is now a significant global player because of its undoubted and non-conflicting soft power supported by its rising hard power. India, which was being equated to Pakistan till about a decade ago, has overcome that ignominy. That the Kashmir issue, which is almost regarded as an international issue and beyond the capacity of any government in India to resolve, has been reduced to domestic issue and resolved by the Indian parliament modifying Article 370 to make all provisions of the Indian Constitution and laws applicable to Jammu and Kashmir, is again no mean achievement. India has also been closing the wide gap between itself and China in terms of global influence. The change in India's geo-political position in the last six years can be best judged by how from being among the "Fragile Five" in 2014, it transformed into the

second fastest growing economy, or at times even the fastest and a respectable, hopeful and emerging global power. Three reasons have contributed to this change of perception. One, the remarkable political stability in India after 30 years of unstable politics. Two, the rise in its economic performance and efficient governance. And three, the rise in the relative stature of India and of its Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, in the global arena.

VI. Covid-19 challenge and Global rethink -- the context for India's role

The world economy has come to a standstill and global trade is expected to shrink by almost a third in the current year due to the Covid-19 havoc, the end of which is nowhere in sight. More importantly, the Covid-19 disaster has shocked the world into questioning its continued move on the superfast highway of globalisation on which it has been travelling at breakneck speed for two decades. The world which was seen as getting irretrievably integrated through technology, finances and supply chains of goods and services, and becoming a global village, is seemingly tending to question most of it. Since the turn of the 21st century, the world has been waking up from the dream of the end of ideological conflicts generated by the grand vision of the final victory of the West over the Rest. And even before the Covid-19 phenomenon struck the world, the US was in a withdrawal mood partly because of its own increasing fatigue over the global responsibilities it was bearing and partly because of the impact of the 2008 financial crisis. The changes in the US attitude towards globalisation post the emergence of Donald Trump, particularly in the face of the challenge posed by a rising China, has removed the facade of the pretended mutual trust of the 1990s, that had diluted the post-Cold War world order, which was based on the presumed victory of free global trade, investment and finance and their emergence as the future paradigm. And this also led to "One Size Fit All" economic and financial model paradigm. The inadequacies of the trade vehicle for managing a complex world got implicitly exposed when Islamist terror struck at the US in 2001. This exposure became more evident in the US post the 2008 financial crisis. Under the political changes heralded by Trumpism, the proponent of globalism, the US, began celebrating patriotism, not globalism -- read globalisation -- as the future paradigm. Covid-19 has infected Europe also with open distrust because of unanswered questions over the role or negligence of China in the virus spread which has strangled the global economy. The deepening distrust has not left even global institutions like WHO unaffected. The origins of today's distrust were inherent in the pretension of trust that rationalised the utterly unprincipled balance of power theorised by the US to end the Cold War. This is where the background of the post-Cold War world order that is functional today. It is necessary to diagnose what changes are likely and what will be the post Covid-19 world order. The inevitable melting of the post-Cold War order is the context for the much delayed role of India in global affairs.

And now onto the mainstay of the Random Thoughts exercise to capture the emerging scenario from ongoing global developments that threaten the contemporary world order, which relates back to and sequences from the Cold War and post-Cold War order, to the influencing factors and actors who are likely to shape the new world order, to India's role in the shaping of the new world order and its place in it.

VII. Post Cold War Shift from Ideology to Unprincipled Balance of Power

The present world order originated in and moved from the unprincipled strategic approach that ended the Cold War. The existing world order was no natural and seamless transition from the Cold War order. It was shaped by contextual compulsions of geopolitics of Cold War power players -- the rich US on the one side and poverty stricken China on the other. It was power that mattered. Power that mattered was no benign power but a destructive power. If only China had not had an atom bomb in its hands, no one would have touched it, much less the US. The Cold War, which was the outcome of World War II, was an ideological conflict between Western liberal democracy and free market economy on one side and single party Communist dictatorship and socialist economy on the other. The Cold War games were played out mainly in Asia, and finally in Vietnam, which exposed the limitations of the remote US-led alliance.

In the late 1960s, the US, the head of the free market and democratic bloc in the Cold War, was desperately in need of respite from the Vietnam War. In the early 1970s, the US sensed that, devastated by the Cultural Revolution that was still on, China too, with no love lost for the USSR which was no great help, was equally desperate for a survival kit to save itself from a socialist economic disaster. It was then that Henry Kissinger's theory of realpolitik as an alternative to ideological politics struck a chord with Richard Nixon, the then US President. Kissinger's key propositions were: (i) International system is anarchic, with no controlling entity; (ii) States are the principal actors in the international system; (iii) States pursue their national interest – power and/or security; (iv) Relations between states are determined by relative power, both military and economic; (v) Peace would come from a balance of power among states, an equilibrium within a generally accepted “legitimate” World order; (vi) Realism ought to be the core policy for America between the extremes of isolationism and Wilsonianism; (vii) Importantly, issues of human rights, democracy, freedom are secondary.

Simply stated, Kissinger counselled that no moral or ideological principle other than balance of power and convenience can define the global order. Kissinger's formulations convinced the US to accept ideological differences as they were and deal with the world as was where it was basis, on the logic of relative power even though it might run contrary to the core principles of the West. One of the proximate causes that forced China to look to the US were the skirmishes with the USSR in the Ussuri region in 1969. It rested on the US acceptance of China as a strategically in return for China to work with the US to end the Vietnam War and to split and break the Communist bloc to restore the balance of political and economic power, which was clearly shifting away from the US in the early 1970s, in its favour. The huge drop in US gold reserves from over 700 million troy ounces to less than 300 million troy ounces by 1970, the high inflation and money expansion, had weakened the US dollar and the US economy. This, besides the no way out war in Vietnam, was one of the compelling reasons for the huge compromise that the US opted to make with China -- the primary objective of which was to divide the enemy and to secure exit from Vietnam. Though it finally did end in a humiliating exit for the US in Vietnam, it was an exit still. The only thing that the monumental move by the US did was to split and create rivalry in the socialist bloc and weaken the post-World War II world order founded on the Cold War divide.

Its own desperation to end the Vietnam War forced the US first to accept China as it was, which it thought might enable China, through trade and economic relations with the US, to reform away from socialist economics but not give up its one party dictatorship. This is where the US theorised the possibility of market economics coalescing with the Marxist state -- namely cat and mouse living in harmony in the same house! This strange logic nevertheless rationalised the democratic and free market West to align with Marxist China to shift the balance of power from the Soviet bloc to the West, or at least to neutralise the Socialist bloc. Later, as a final assault to demolish the divided Communist bloc, the US created and used Islamic extremism to inflict a humiliating setback to the USSR in the Afghan War [1979-89]. It also enacted the Star War theatre [1983-93] to break the nerve, confidence and economy of the Soviet Union. These developments forced the eventual collapse of the USSR as they were indeed calculated to. In less than two decades from the US-China detente, aided by the theoretical inadequacy and the practical inefficiency of Communist system, making it incapable of competing with the efficient free market mechanism, the Cold War collapsed. And the West, with its institutions of liberal democracy and free market, persuaded itself to believe that it had won not just against the Socialist bloc, but also against the entire Rest of the World to the extent, that a great thinker like Francis Fukuyama, imagined that the Hegelian idea of a perfect state had indeed been realised by the West.

VIII. Euphoric, premature and unwise claim of final victory of the West against the Rest

Had the West stopped at seeing this as only the defeat of the Socialist bloc that would have been practical and probably correct? But that is where it got excited by theories like the end of all conflicts and final victory of the Western values over that of the Rest. In the euphoria of the collapse of socialist economics, the West embarked on the over ambitious project of globalisation and the WTO, which rested on the assumption and conviction of superiority of the West over the Rest, and this was where it erred. Western market economics certainly won against socialist economics, but it was not the victory of the West over the Rest, because the world was not and would never be completed only by and between the two materialist ideologies of Marx and Market. The world was and even now, far too diverse to be packed within the campus of two materialist ideologies, one of which had succeeded against the other and the other which had failed against the first. But on the self-generated belief that there was no competition for it from anywhere, the West went ahead to include the Marxian polity in the market-centric globalisation and WTO structure. In its excitement, the West was oblivious to the fundamental fact that while both market and democracy individually and together complement, are transparent and verifiable, Marx is not, and a market aligned with Marx too is not, and cannot be.

The process of accepting the Marxist state of China into the market mechanism of WTO in 2001 was preceded by the West accepting even a more complicated mix of democratic polity within Marxist China. To facilitate the merger of Hong Kong and for giving comfort to Taiwan for its eventual unification with China, a more sophisticated theory of One Country Two Systems was evolved in the early 1980s and implemented in 1997 and sold to the West. Deng Xiaoping, the Chinese reformer dictator, committed, *“We are pursuing a policy of “one country, two systems” . . . [T]his means that within the People’s Republic of China, the mainland with its one billion people will*

maintain the socialist system, while Hong Kong and Taiwan continue under the capitalist system". Trusting this oxymoron logic, the US traded off its ally of two decades Taiwan and orphaned it, for a strategic partnership with China. But fortunately even though the US government sold out Taiwan between 1971 and 1978, the US Congress negated that with the Taiwan Relations Act, also of 1979, before the one-country-two-systems was finally promulgated in 1982. The West overlooked the fact that the socialist market idea was oxymoron and the mix of Marx in politics and market in economics was equally so.

IX. China: Marx in Politics and Market in Economics -- transparency challenges to the world and West

If there is any convergence between free market economist Milton Friedman in his *Capitalism and Freedom* [1962] and Left economist Amartya Sen in his *Development as Freedom* [1999], which won for him the Nobel Prize, it was on the relation between democracy and market economy and how one is a necessary condition, or at least the facilitator, for the other. The US flouted this basic rule of market economics in two stages. First, to break the Communist bloc and to gain the balance of power it was losing to the USSR-led socialist alliance, by coalescing China and giving annual extensions of Normal Trade Relations since the early 1970s and Most Favourable Nation treatment to it from 2001 once it joined the WTO, thus partially recognising the Marx-Market mix. It continued this even after the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989, when, in its own national interest, the US condoned China killing thousands. Thereafter, in its post Cold War euphoria of the victory of the West over the Rest, the US facilitated the integration of China into the WTO. The induction of China into the WTO eminently suited the geopolitical and strategic interests of the US/West. The US progressively intensified strategic engagement with China, which even included arms sales to China in 1983. It equally admirably suited the aspiration of western corporate lobbies to penetrate a market which was as large then as the population of US and European Union (EU) put together. This aspiration found reflection in the US/EU rationale for the admission of China into the WTO, which was self-evident in discussions with the WTO. The fundamental drive for both is the over confidence of the West about the universality and infallibility of its own values, which casually and presumptuously persuaded it to accept and integrate within the structure of free market globalisation the Chinese model of Market with Marx -- that is Market without Democracy or freedom -- a cocktail that separates economic freedom from the larger idea of freedom, economic democracy from political democracy. The cocktail of non-transparent Marxian Polity at home and the transparent global market allowed China access to global capital and technology almost as one way traffic in an ecosystem where China knew everything that happens in all developed nations without them knowing what happens in China. China denied the West transparency of information which is the very breath of market economics. It suited global MNCs to shift their operations to China to escape the transparent rules of their domestic polity. Despite knowing that transparency is at the heart of market economics, the West admitted a non-transparent China into the WTO. This is where the presumptive West badly miscalculated. They never anticipated that a non-transparent autocratic China, unlike a transparent democracy, had all the advantages of ensuring that it did not become the market for the West as the latter had thought, but instead become a cheap producer and turn the West into its own market, depriving the West of its production infrastructure. But long after admitting China, the West realised that a Marxist polity would not

reveal or admit any information or data transparency into the transparent global trading system other than what it allowed. China went from strength to strength and the West began pleading with it for transparency, a demand China kept on evading.

In a paper titled “China’s Transparency Challenges” published by Foreign Policy [8.3.2016], Ben Bernanke, the former Governor of the US Federal Reserve, wrote about how the world was struggling to make China transparent. The Bernanke Paper starts with saying empathetically that it is “a difficult transition for a government accustomed to secrecy” and proceeds to discuss just two important forms of transparency namely (i) Data transparency (producing believable numbers) and (ii) Transparency about the rules of the game (being clear about the rules and policies that affect participants in commerce, the markets etc). On data transparency the paper suggested that “to increase the credibility of Chinese economic data, increase the credibility of the data collectors”. Who are the data collectors? The government! How to increase the credibility of the Marxian Polity which collects the data? On the second, namely the transparency in the rules of the game, the Bernanke Paper says “the absence of clear and transparent rules and policies—in financial markets, as well as for activities such as commerce, capital investment, and trade, is a major problem because it dissuades participation, adds uncertainty and can even foster corruption.” The paper concluded:

“There is great value in good communication about policy. Indeed, in the words of a recent Wall Street Journal Article, investors are putting “more clarity from China’s central bank over its currency policy and better communication from its stock-market regulator” at the “top of their wish list.” But transparency is more than press conferences. Data transparency provides investors, the public, and even Chinese policymakers greater confidence about the state of the economy, and transparency about the rules of the game is critical for the economy and for financial markets. The more transparency and consistency the Chinese government can provide in these spheres, the better will be China’s economic performance and the greater its ability to integrate with the global marketplace.”

This is as late as in 2016. More than four decades after US-China detente started, more than three decades after the US began developing deep investment and trade relations with China and over 15 years after China was admitted to the transparent WTO, the world was still pleading for an assurance of transparency from China. With its non-transparent Marxist polity, and operating in a transparent global market (WTO) and in national markets of other countries, China gained immensely. The cocktail of Marx and Market has been a big factor in the rise of China as the global factory first and in developing product technology next. But this suited the US and the West so long as the US could confidently lead the world with its financial supremacy and elite technology.

X. India: Marx in Economics and Democracy in Politics

The stark contrast was between China and India and how they respectively were treated by the US and West. In China, it was Marx in Politics and Democracy in Economics. It was the other way round in India, Marx in Economics and Democracy in Politics -- till the early 1990s when China was almost 15 years into development mode. The increasing strategic involvement of the West with China since the 1980s when India was hooked to the USSR, the main adversary of the US, gave China a head start over India. The undisclosed factor that attracted

the West -- which actually meant the MNC lobbies -- to China was, as an authoritative study put it, “the image of political stability (single party dictatorship in China)”, “as foreign capital is a shy deer which needs trust and stability to be tamed”. This is where -- apart from the geopolitical strategic alliance of China with the later winner West, and India with the later loser USSR -- even as its autocracy worked in China’s favour, its democracy and freedom worked against India. This is particularly because, with its single party dominance ending in domestic politics, India entered a prolonged period of 25 years of coalition from 1989, of which almost 20 years were of unprincipled and even rickety coalitions, inevitably resulting in instability till 2014. From 1989, at the most crucial time in China’s and Indian economies, democracy became synonymous with unstable coalitions and instability. In contrast, during this entire period, and even from a decade earlier, an autocratic Marxian polity worked heavily in favour of China.

Here is a telling example of how Marxian polity worked in favour of China for MNCs’ to rush there. In July 1994, the Chinese Congress passed a “labour law” which reaffirmed control of individual enterprises over the hiring and firing of workers, their wage scales, their social welfare benefits, and replacement of lifetime employment with a limited contract system. “A one-party state and restrictions on freedom of association gave Chinese workers no opportunity to play a part in formulating a new law”, said Human Rights Watch China [August 2002]. Such a law could never have been passed in the constitutionally declared socialist state of India, even after the much trumpeted liberalisation of the 1990s, and cannot be passed even today! The West, with its compelling business lobbies also keen on avoiding market discipline, moved away from its commitment to political freedom and dissent, and preferred the Chinese model of Market in Economics with Marx in Politics. In the process, India’s model of Marx in Economics and Democracy in Politics became a double whammy point against India because of the answerability to dissent in democracy. China had the best of both worlds -- all the advantages of a non-transparent Marxian Polity with no disadvantage of democratic dissent at home and at the same time access to a rule based and transparent global market in which it could participate to take abundantly, giving little in return.

XI. West realises too late in 2015 that China is a Non-Market Economy

Shockingly, 15 years after China joined the WTO, i.e. in 2015, the EU woke up to realise that the WTO, was not a market economy at all. Five years back, the EU had raised a dispute because China is a Non Market Economy [NME] where economic decisions are taken by state rather than by the markets and had levied anti-dumping duties on Chinese products. China rightly threw the West on the defence and contended that its admission in the WTO amounted to accepting its market economic status and challenged the EU action. China had also challenged a similar action by the US which has not moved to the hearing stage. Last year, in an interim ruling, the WTO had upheld the EU view. This was a case which many saw as making or breaking the WTO. The WTO was virtually threatened by the West that if the ruling went against it, that would be the end of the WTO. China could have asked for a final ruling, but recognising that its case rested on West’s assumptions rather than facts, told the WTO to suspend the proceedings. China lost its case for recognition as a market economy so badly that it did not want a final finding on the issue. China has quietly shelved the issue. This shows how short sighted the euphoric West had been in inviting China into the WTO.

XII. Emergence of Trumpism in US -- antithesis of globalisation -- likely to last beyond Trump

It was more on the euphoria and overconfidence of the West which deluded itself to believe it as the final win against the Rest -- and not so much as on the strategic mutual trust between world nations which joined the WTO -- that globalisation rested. If there was any show of trust, it was more pretended for strategic convenience than factual and truthful trust. A non-transparent China had got the better of a confident West, particularly the US, in exploiting the transparent global order and ran huge current account surpluses for decades and built huge forex reserves and made investments all over the US, EU and across the world. The West enjoyed the efficient market delivery of China's Marxian polity till the financial meltdown in 2008 shocked the US into realising that its efficient and strong financial architecture and technological superiority were not adequate to keep its economic and consequently economic, supremacy if it continued to lose real economic advantage and manufacturing capability, and ran current account deficits with China that sequenced the latter into becoming a huge investor in US treasury securities and in US companies. This realisation led to the advent of the Trump phenomenon and Trumpism in US politics, which now looks certain to last beyond Trump by bipartisan consensus on China, whether Donald Trump wins a second term or not. The US has realised that the mismatch and contradiction between Marx and Market had helped China's rise not as just a competitor, but as a challenger to US techno-economic might and even to US influence in the world. The US, which had earlier become a fan of China as also many European nations, began to reverse its unusual softness towards China and began a trade war which was unthinkable till the advent of Donald Trump.

The emergence of Trumpism though contextually associated with the election of Trump, had its roots in issues which emerged from the global financial meltdown of 2008. Hidden behind this huge setback is the questioning of all macroeconomic theories of the last three decades on which the Western financial model had rested. On the assumption of the infallibility of mathematical formulae founded on financial modelling, the West had ceded real economy [a job-oriented production economy] to others relying on its control over the global financial architecture which, it thought, would enable it to control the real economy. This overlooked the critical fact that if a non-transparent Marxian polity took over the real economy, as the financial economy is not really independent of the real [production] economy, it was only a matter of time that the winner in the real economy gained control of the financial economy. The West has realised that the shift in real economic power to a non-transparent China has also enabled it to acquire substantial real financial power, leaving the US/West with largely phony financial power. This realisation is at the heart of Trumpism, which questions the foundations of globalism and goes back to patriotism, which is actually a euphemism for nationalism. Trumpism in the US is sure to last beyond Trump as it has transcended bipartisan divisions, as two Democratic Party Senators supported a Bill to withdraw the US from WTO, which is the very symbol and outcome of globalisation. This realisation inevitably means that the great idea of global supply chains sourcing from the cheapest nation on which globalisation functions today is not the future game. The future paradigm seems to be national self reliance in regard to whatever is necessary in the national interest and in the national security interest -- which is the very antithesis of the contemporary idea of globalisation.

XIII. Covid-19 only a context, not a cause for change of world order

Given the shift that was taking place in the balance of techno-economic power from the West to East i.e. to Asia, particularly China, and the rise of Trumpism in America which had set off economic and political forces which will ensure that Trumpism will last beyond Trump, changes that were already taking place were indicating a clear U-turn from rule-based multilateralism which is the foundation of globalisation. The unilateral trade and tariff action of the US against China, Europe and even India were in line with assertive economic nationalism in the US and expressive trend against globalism. The pre-Covid developments in trade and economics had actually set off the changes, which in a way indicated the alteration in the world order that was emerging. The advent of Covid-19 provided the most justifiable context and expedited the move for a change of the world order that was already taking place unnoticed and undeclared.

XIV. Post-Covid-19 World Order -- Globalisation to Cold Peace or Cold War 2.0?

Even as the pre-Covid world was already showing cracks in the post-Cold War global order, the Covid-19 disaster exposed the fragility of the latter. The Covid phenomenon has not only bared the hollowness of post Cold War order based on the euphoric idea of the end of history and conflicts, it has also stripped open the also strategic and pretended trust and has showed that it was actually driven by the political expediency of Western nations and business interests of Western MNCs. It needs no seer to say that the very basis of the post Cold War order has ceased to exist. The pretence of trust which forced the US/West to accept, to cite just one big outcome of it, namely the delegitimisation of Taiwan for instance, now cannot work, as US warships have begun hovering around Taiwan Strait stirring tensions to the extent of China talking of war. The very strategic substance of the current world order has collapsed.

That is why the main architect of the post-Cold War world order, Henry Kissinger, himself in a short article of 828 words in Wall Street Journal, said “The Coronavirus Pandemic Will Forever Alter the World Order”. Even though he uses powerful words like forever to qualify the change in the world order, he does not even remotely hint what kind of changes it will be. This is where past history is important to show what the picture in future will be. Past history remembered and recalled is the best teacher when the present is chaotic and the future looks confusing. That is why a bit of recall of post- Cold War history was necessary to have a clue about the changes that are likely in the present context. Undeniably, the very foundation of the new world order of the 1990s, based on the shaky foundation of pretended mutual trust and conflict free world seemed to have abruptly become questionable in the Covid-19 devastated world. Consequently, the Covid-19 crisis is making the world and many important nations of the world introspect and rethink their immediate and distant future and also on the way forward during and after the Covid-19 crisis. But the extent and depth of the change that will result from the rethinking, will also depend on the length and the expanse of the damage that the ongoing and unending Covid-19 phenomenon is likely to cause. Whether the impact and effect of this sudden shift from an integrated world of strategic and pretended mutual trust to a divided and distorted world of open mutual distrust, and how deep will be the division, whether it will be a replay of Cold War 2.0 or Cold Peace as someone said, which will precede Cold War 2.0, only the post-Covid-19 events will show as they unfold. If the Covid-19 changes lead

to Cold War 2.0, the remedy will take long. How deep and how far this introspection will go and whether this will bring about fundamental changes, is unclear at the moment. Whatever the outcome, far reaching long term changes seem inevitable. The world after Covid-19 will be different, very different, from the world before -- in terms of global, political, economic and strategic relations.

XV. Developments that will shape the Post Covid-19 World Order

Attempted guess work by minds that are trusted to give clarity on what will be the shape of the new world order post-Covid-19 is one of confusion worse confounded. Prognosticating on the shape of the post-Covid-19 world order, this is what Francis Fukuyama has to say in his article in the latest Foreign Affairs magazine [July-August 2020]

Over the years to come, the pandemic could lead to the United States' relative decline, the continued erosion of the liberal international order, and a resurgence of fascism around the globe. It could also lead to a rebirth of liberal democracy, a system that has confounded sceptics many times, showing remarkable powers of resilience and renewal. Elements of both visions will emerge, in different places. Unfortunately, unless current trends change dramatically, the general forecast is gloomy.

The bandwidth of the prognosis -- from erosion of the liberal world order and resurgence of Facism to rebirth of liberal democracy with elements of both visions emerging in some places -- demonstrates more the prevailing confusion than any possibility of clarity emerging from the present.

One thing seems to be fairly clear. The post-Covid-19 world order is likely to be characterised in varying degrees by direct and indirect reversals of the basic postulates of the post-Cold War world order, which seems to have outlived their utility after the assumption of the final victory of the West over the Rest proved to be spurious. The past seems to be guidance only to show how decisions in euphoria will mislead. It is in times of euphoria and despondency that even an individual, or a corporate, needs and more so the world needs both cool and calm contemplation. Whether the leading nations of the world are capable of that, or like the euphoria did in 1990s, the despondency of the present will again mislead the world in a wrong and unsustainable direction, remains to be seen. No sustainable decision can be taken in euphoria or despondency. But world nations are more reactive to crisis than they are proactive to avoid them. With only confusion all around, what are the circumstances and what are the factors that are likely to influence and shape the future world order post-Covid-19 and who are likely to be the actors and players in shaping the future world and its order or even disorder needs to be surveyed. e. Here follows an illustrative list of some of them, and on how they can impact on the emerging global discourse and global order.

XVI. US and global response to China's new expansionism

One of the important factors that will shape the post-Covid-19 world order is China's rising global ambitions, which are rooted in its traditional empire building instincts and in the efforts of the US/West and

other democracies to respond to it and contain it. When an inward looking and semi-isolated China began its detente and engagement with the US in 1971, its initial declared position was against not just itself becoming a superpower, but against the very concept of super power itself. This was how Deng Xiaoping, who had accused the US and USSR as superpowers which exploited the world in his speech at the United Nations General Assembly [July 10, 1974], concluded it:

*China is a socialist country and a developing country as well. China belongs to the Third World. Consistently following Chairman Mao's teachings, the Chinese Government and people firmly support all oppressed peoples and oppressed nations in their struggle to win or defend national independence, develop the national economy and oppose colonialism, imperialism and hegemonism. This is our bounden internationalist duty. China is not a superpower, nor will she ever seek to be one. What is a superpower? A superpower is an imperialist country which everywhere subjects other countries to its aggression, interference, control, subversion or plunder and strives for world hegemony. If capitalism is restored in a big socialist country, it will inevitably become a superpower. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, which has been carried out in China in recent years, and the campaign of criticizing Lin Biao and Confucius now under way throughout China, are both aimed at preventing capitalist restoration and ensuring that socialist China will never change her colour and will always stand by the oppressed peoples and oppressed nations. **If one day China should change her colour and turn into a superpower, if she too should play the tyrant in the world, and everywhere subject others to her bullying, aggression and exploitation, the people of the world should identify her as social-imperialism, expose it, oppose it and work together with the Chinese people to overthrow it.***

The concluding sentences in bold letters of Deng Xiaoping, which expounded China as a nation that disfavoured the very idea of superpower, formed the basis of US-China engagement. Deng Xiaoping had made two points in his celebrated address at the UN. One, China would continue to be socialist. Two, China would never seek to become a superpower. On the first, he changed in 1992, as he approved the building of a Socialist Market for China, which was a key theme of Jiang Zemin's political report to the 14th Chinese Congress. On the second, namely becoming a super-power, which, he said, China disfavoured, he had himself initiated steps for the inclusion of Hong Kong and Taiwan within the Chinese state by proposing and successfully selling to the US and West in 1997 the "One Country Two Systems" idea. By this one-nation-two-systems oxymoron, he indeed achieved the integration of Hong Kong and so delegitimised the geopolitical position of Taiwan, which became the principal sacrificial goat in the US-China engagement to the point that Taiwan lost all its leverage in global affairs.

At that point of time the West and the Rest believed Deng Xiaoping as China was an underdog. But when everyone was arrested by the context in which China stood, one person saw far into the future in the backfound civilisational urges buried deep in its psyche. A least noticed Indian thinker M.S Golwalkar, the chief of the Rashtriya Swayasevak Sangh, regarded as the largest cultural and social youth movement and NGO in the world and the inspiration behind the present ruling party the Bharatiya Janata Party was almost prophetic about today's China when he said as far back as in 1972 that "*China has not broken up with their past. Wait for some more time. All their traditional ways will become patent once again. Their present desire to spread their*

tentacles of power and influence are in keeping with the tradition of their old emperors. A little of Confucius and a lot of their old emperors form the mainstream of their life. Communism is only a temporary phase.” He said this when the context in which China had been placed was in total repudiation of what he had said. This was when the cultural revolution in China was in full swing and Chinese had been totally evangelised against Confucius and Lin Biao had been humiliated couple of years before Deng Xiaoping thundered before the UN that China was against the very concept of superpower and decades before China began unveiling its hidden empire building instincts, with a little of Confucius as Golwalkar had foreseen. Every word that Golwalkar uttered then has proved to be true now. No one could have said at that point that communism would be only a temporary phase and China which had been turned by massive cultural revolution against Confucius completely would return back to him. Both have happened in contemporary China. It needed a philosopher like Golwalkar, not arrested by the context, to study deep and unravel the Confucian philosophy and empire building urges buried deep in a civilisation pretending to be a communist state in China. Geopolitical strategists like Kissinger who presumed communism, which sees history as product and irreversible progress of dialectical materialism that breaks from the people’s previous ways of understanding, as the terminator of their civilisational past, could not see the Confucian philosophy and civilisationally conscious China lying underneath. It was Francis Fukuyama in his book *Trust* [1995] who first talked about Confucian China surviving a communist China, but no one ever foresaw an empire building China emerging from an underdog China till very late, as late as 2013.

Post Deng Xiaoping, China has explicitly begun unveiling its agenda not just to be counted as a superpower, but also exhibit its global hegemonic ambitions, all thanks to the promotional role played by its Cold War benefactor -- the US. In a seminal article titled and subtitled “China: Empire Building in the Age of Globalization How has China systematically taken advantage of U.S. mistakes and policies?” in the *Gobalist.com*, Behzad Yaghmaian, an Iranian-born author living in the United States and a professor of political economy who has taught in the United States, Iran, and Turkey, wrote as far back as April 2013:

China is replacing its main economic rivals around the world largely without the use of force. China’s success marks the first case of empire building in the age of globalization. The United States helped China’s economic ascendance by promoting globalization and embracing, in recent years, a free market orthodoxy. In the annals of history, it will be noted that it was the United States itself that championed a new economic structure which ultimately undermined its own position in the world. How did this happen? China’s decision to open its economy to the world coincided with the U.S. drive for globalization. U.S. and Western corporations opened the economic floodgates to China through direct investment and subcontracting agreements. As Western capitalism globalized, China became the factory of the world. Meanwhile, its free market ideology and obsession with balancing the budget became policy straightjackets that hobbled the United States’ ability to spend strategically on its future. As a result, money that could have been spent on education, research and development, modern infrastructure and other requisites for out-competing its rivals was in short supply. Unencumbered by a free market orthodoxy, the Chinese opted for the opposite choice. They poured resources into areas pivotal for building a robust and competitive economy. China became the unintended winner of the limits of the United States’ free market ideology.

This prognosis was made when no one was thinking that China would ever challenge the US. Behzad Yaghmaian was no theorist. In 2007, he travelled to China to live among the growing population of internal migrants working in the country's sprawling factories and authored the book "The Accidental Capitalist: A People's Story of the New China" (Pluto Press, 2012) which is a narrative of China's economic and social transformation told through the personal biographies of migrants. China's empire building, which he had foreseen in 2013, became more and more explicit when it proposed transnational ventures like the \$900 billion Silk Road project [*China's Xi lays out \$900bn Silk Road vision amid claims of empire-building Guardian UK 14.5.2017*]. China's simultaneous actions like its South China Sea forays, Hong Kong annexation, threats to Taiwan and Asian nations and its open clashes with India are clearly illustrative of not just its assertive global ambitions, but even global hegemony, which is completely contrary to the China that Deng Xiaoping presented before the world in 1974. China's global ambitions and the global response to that will be one of the factors that will shape the post Covid-19 world order.

XVII. Possible Death of US-China engagement

The unprecedented rise of China, particularly post the 2008 financial meltdown in the US and West, sent alarm bells ringing in the US. But it took the rise of Trumpism in the US to raise questions as to who benefitted from the US-China engagement. The result is that the US-China engagement that commenced in 1971 through the Kissinger Formula, which replaced the world of ideologies by global balance of power and mainstreamed China, and caused its rise, is now at great risk of deterioration, if not termination. There are such gloomy forebodings that the engagement is facing death or is even dead. The WireChina, a digital news magazine dedicated to understanding and explaining China's economic rise, and its influence on global business, finance, trade, labour and the environment as one of the biggest stories of the contemporary world, has virtually written an obituary for the US-China engagement in its long essay titled "Death of an Engagement" [7.6.2020] The Wire China says 'the policy of "engagement" which has defined US-China relations for almost half-a-century, didn't have to end this way. The death of US-China engagement will have far reaching consequences not only to the US and China, but also to the whole world of trade, business and politics.

XVIII. Likely Alliance of Democracies with India as a critical component

The most likely and the most crucial development in the post Covid crisis is the alliance of democracies of all hues without distinction between 'the upper caste' elite western democracies and the different hierarchies of 'lower caste' eastern democracies as less liberal, illiberal on the norms of the West, as the West has been classifying and branding the democracies. Data shows that all hues of democracies constitute less than half of the world's population, while autocracies constitute more than half. This interesting development has a lot to offer to India and India has to work for shifting the world to democratic paradigm as global institutions, like the Brookings, have of late begun seeing India as "the silver or even the golden lining" the world of democracies with many liberal democracies in distress or decline.

With the rise of autocratic China, the new world order may centre around democracies. In the post-Covid world, the balance of power idea may create new divisions between electoral democratic nations and non-electoral autocracies. The likely expansion of G7 into G10/11 that does not include China, but includes Russia, India, South Korea and Australia, is a pointer in this direction. With the undeniable failure of working trust between western democracies and the Chinese combination of Market Economics and Marxian Polity, the future paradigm may be an alliance of democracies of the world as a more desirable and stable foundation for a new global order. Accordingly, plurilateral trade and investment pacts, and strategic relations between democracies, may emerge. In the past, the West was seeing stability of regimes as more important than democracy for forging strategic and business relations. Studies in the past have shown that nations with single party dictatorships have attracted more foreign direct investment (FDI) than democracies and that FDI has ensured the survival of dictatorship. This was obviously because of seeking higher profits without regard to what risks a nation without transparency can cause to the world at large. In future, political and cultural comfort more than mere profits in commerce may determine the alliances. With the bitter experience of Western nations with the single party dictatorship of China, the future world is, therefore, more likely to see alliances of democracies of varying hues and types, with India playing a most consequential role.

A recent pre-Covid paper [February 2019] titled “Democracy and Disorder” by Foreign Policy, which had analysed the impact and the role of democracies in preserving the contemporary world order in the context of the efforts of China and Russia to undermine the Western democracies, thinks that with the West weakening during the post-2008 financial crisis, is a fairly good assessment of the pre-Covid-19 world order, which was founded on the dominance of democracies. It sees India as the silver lining in the world of disturbed democracies. It asks the most pertinent question, “*If both advanced and emerging democracies are reeling from a combination of political, economic, and cultural challenges, what are the implications for the international order?*”. Responding to the question, it emphasises the role of emerging democracies, and says: “*This moment in history calls for rising democratic powers to play a greater role in preserving the international order*” and, while saying so, it specifically points to India as the silver, even golden lining, and says: “*The silver—perhaps golden—lining here is that the least distracted of these countries is also by far the most consequential: India.*” The background analysis for this observation in the pre-Covid-19 state of the world, being more important, given the transformation that is taking place in the post-Covid-19 world order, is extracted here:

If both advanced and emerging democracies are reeling from a combination of political, economic and cultural challenges, what are the implications for the international order?

If the present moment of democratic stagnation came at a point of relative stability in the international order, its implications would be less substantial. In fact, internal setbacks are occurring when the stakes could not be higher: China has begun to turn its economic weight into political influence, and to compete with the West at a global political level; Russian President Vladimir Putin is willing to take substantial risks and use the country’s military and technological capabilities toward destabilizing Western democracies and the Western alliance; and the Middle East is in turmoil (partially of the West’s making), with significant spillover effects for other regions.

In the decade since the global financial crisis, the international order has transitioned from a time when democracies had significant leverage, moved through a fleeting phase of global cooperation, and has landed in a reality characterized by an escalating contest between the powers, in which authoritarian states are making a concerted effort to weaken the role of democracy in international affairs.

The energy, focus and unity of the West would be sorely tested by these challenges in even the best of times. Instead, right off the starting blocks, the West and the democratic world more broadly is de-energized, distracted, and in disarray. And in the face of an alliance-skeptical, unilateralist policy under President Trump, it is even more disunited.

What of the emerging democracies? This moment in history calls for rising democratic powers to play a greater role in preserving the international order. Were the West both stable and unified, and its leverage still high, one might have anticipated a gradual but growing contribution to the multilateral order by the democratic rising powers. Instead, early misfires during the Obama administration, uncertainty in American policy during the Trump administration, the high costs of getting caught in the crosshairs of U.S.-China tensions, and their own internal setbacks are combining to place sharp limits on these states' capacity and willingness to contribute to the defense of democracy either within their regions or globally. The silver—perhaps golden— lining here is that the least distracted of these countries is also by far the most consequential: India.

Indeed, it is notable that democracies in the Indo-Pacific and Asia are less troubled by the populist tide than their Western counterparts. Countries like India, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan were less damaged economically by the global financial crisis, or recovered faster, and have limited exposure to the recent turmoil in the Middle East. At the same time, they are motivated to maintain the regional order because they are most directly challenged by China's assertive turn. Perhaps they have most to lose from uncertainty in American foreign policy, but Asia has also been the place where President Trump's initial anti-alliance rhetoric and instincts gave most ground to more conventional approaches to strategy (except on trade.)

What the Foreign Policy paper calls as the challenges of democracy in advanced nations is in a sense an understatement of the risks the Western democracies run. The elite and liberal democracies are weakening gradually, and shockingly, the very philosophy of liberalism delivered by liberal democracy is eroding liberal democracies themselves. This emerging risk for the democracies of advanced nations calls for a closer look at liberal democracies and the movement from individualistic liberalism to towards collective civilisational consciousness in Eastern and Central Europe. There is a need for comparison of the depth of Indian democracy and the risks that liberal democracies run. From the global perspective, India must assess and evaluate its deeper and entrenched democratic spirit and not bench mark its deeper democratic consciousness on the standards of the risky liberal democracies of the West which seem to be running out of steam. A comparison of the weakening state of democracies in the West with a vibrant Indian democracy will point to the need to revisit the individualist concept of unbridled human rights and liberal democratic order with the Indian narrative of civilisation defined individualist democracy as a contrast to the liberalism defined individualist democracy. This profound discussion will mark the post-Covid-19 democratic world order.

XIX. Weakening elite and “liberal” Western Democracies

It is interesting to compare the depth of democracies in the West, including the US, which self certify their democracies as liberal and democracies like India’s as illiberal. How ridiculous the classification is may be easily established by looking at irrefutable facts which show the decline of civil society interest in political process in the liberal democracies and further show their elite and top of the pyramid structure, while, in contrast, Indian democracy labelled as illiberal, is grounded and participatory, deep from bottom of the pyramid.

Voter interest falling in liberal democracies

A study titled “Voter Turnout Around the World ” by the International [IDEA] Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, shows that world over there is a decline in voting percentage in all democracies. The global average has declined from about 76 in the 1950s to about 65 percent in 2010. The International IDEA data shows that the decline is across all types of democracies. In Free Democracies, from over 75 percent in the 1970s to less than 65 percent in 2010s, and in the Not Free Democracies, almost an identical fall. In Partly Free Democracies, the fall is from about 73 percent in 1970s to about 63 percent in 2010s.

Regionally, in Oceania, from over 95 percent 1950s to almost close to 70 percent in 2010. In Europe, from about 85 percent to less than 65 percent in 2010. In the Americas, it has remained the same from 1950s to 2010. In Asia only, it has risen from a little above 60 percent in 1950s to a little less than 70 percent in 2010. In Europe, established democracies [other than those which became free after the Cold War], the voting percentage which was around 85 percent in the 1970s, has come down to about 70 percent in 2010-15. In post-Communist countries, the fall has been from over 75 percent in 1990s to far less than 60 percent in 2010-15, a fall of 25 percent.

The voter interest in the US is declining even in the presidential elections in the US. The voting percentage in 1962 was almost 63 percent. It slid below 60 percent in six elections from 1972 to 1992, fell to 49 percent in 1996, 50 percent in 2000 and now hovers around an average of 55 percent. This shows the people’s general fatigue with democracy in all liberal democracies. Some of the liberal democracies have compulsory voting. Countries with compulsory voting, show seven to eight percent higher voting than countries without compulsory voting.

The secular fall in the participation of people in liberal democracy is only one half of the story. The other half of the story is even more important.

Young Voters -- future of democracy -- have declining interest in politics

The IDEA data also shows that only 43 percent of voters less than the age of 25 vote, 33 percent of them never vote at all and 23 percent of them vote occasionally. It means that 57 percent of the youth do not take serious interest in political affairs at all. This demographic feature of voting does not augur well for democracy. Unless

youth are socialised into political participation, neither will they have proper training as a constituent of the polity, nor will democracy be meaningful.

The conclusion is irresistible that liberal democracies are declining in depth and are turning into elite and top of the pyramid affairs, which itself shows its illiberal character, and Indian democracy is deepening both in mass base and bottom of the pyramid affair, which itself shows its liberal character.

Researches show liberal democracies are failing because of the very idea of liberalism

A research paper focussed on the United Kingdom by Qasir Shah [UCL Institute of Education] titled “The Democratic Paradigm: A Vanishing Act”, published in *Glocalism: Journal of Culture, Politics and Innovation*, explains why Western democracies are fatiguing, if not declining. It says:

Firstly: the modern state is so complex that great expertise is required on the part of those who govern; secondly: people are too busy to engage in the sort of participatory democracy practised in ancient Athens; thirdly: the heterogeneity of modern society precludes such participation; and finally: a neo-liberal vision of the world which sees the individual possessed of superior rights, unencumbered by state interference.

Given that 54% of the respondents in the Audit of Political Engagement report stated they were too busy for political involvement, one might agree that many citizens no longer see politics as being central to their identity, due to their many social and economic interests. However, there is a sizable minority who expressed a desire to participate both at a local level (43 percent) and national level (38 percent). These proportions increase in the upper two socio-economic groups AB (50 percent and 43 percent) and C1 (50 percent and 45 percent).

The scary findings -- that the “majority people are too busy for political involvement”, that, “due to their many social and economic interests, politics is not central to their identity” -- point to the emaciation of the collective idea of nation and state in the name of individual liberties. And based on his finding that liberalism makes the society heterogeneous, the author finally concludes:

I believe the heterogeneity argument, in its extreme form, can lead to the neo-liberal idea of the primacy of the individual, and the prioritisation of individual liberties. This is because individuals are unique and have different wishes, desires and needs. Since the 1980s, with the rise of Thatcher and Reagan, politically the individual has been held at the heart of society, with a radical rollback of the state, with laissez-faire economic policies leading to deregulation of markets, privatisation and radical tax cuts – citizens have been encouraged to become more self-sufficient and self-interested.

Nothing more needs to be added. The very liberties, which the democratic polity guarantees to the individual, makes the individual so self-centred that nothing, including the very system of which the individual is the beneficiary, is more important for the individual. Result, the individual does not feel part of even the collective that grants him all that he enjoys. This is the state of liberal democracies in the West. In contrast, the “less

liberal” Indian democracy is robust, with the socially, economically and educationally marginalised bottom spread groups dominating the democratic process.

XX. Liberal democracies shifting emphasis to the civilisation paradigm

A Google Scholar research blog by two scholars on the subject of “democratic backsliding” in Central and Eastern Europe published by the the London School of Economics and Political Science [titled “We must go beyond the “backsliding paradigm” to understand what is happening to democracy in Central and Eastern Europe” dated 17.4.2020] says: “The issue of Democratic Backsliding” in Central and Eastern Europe has received substantial attention in recent years and many observers are now concerned that the corona virus could exacerbate the problem.” The authors say that:

In recent years, Central and Eastern European (CEE) democracies – once hailed as remarkable success stories of democratic transformation – have increasingly attracted media and academic attention as cases of democratic reversal. The consensus is that democracies across the region are in decline and some might be “backsliding” towards semi-authoritarian hybrid regimes or even full authoritarianism. Since the election of illiberal populist governments with absolute parliamentary majorities in Hungary in 2010 and Poland in 2015, these two once model democratisers are now seen as models of democratic backsliding – a trend that some fear may be turbocharged by the ways in which these government have dealt with the coronavirus emergency.

The authors find that mention of democratic backsliding has risen four- fold between 2016 and 2018, and say that all democracies in Central and East Europe, namely Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia and the Czech Republic have “become potential backsliders into semi authoritarian hybrid or even full authoritarian regimes. The reason for this is civilisational rather than economic or political.”

The key findings in a research by the popular Freedom House, founded in 1941 by Wendell Willkie and Eleanor Roosevelt as its first honorary Chairpersons, which conducts research and advocacy on democracy, political freedom and human rights, titled ‘Freedom in the world, 2019 Democracy in crisis’ shows:

- ***Democracy faced its most serious crisis in decades in 2017 as its basic tenets, including guarantees of free and fair elections, the rights of minorities, freedom of the press, and the rule of law, came under attack around the world.***
- ***Seventy-one countries suffered net declines in political rights and civil liberties, with only 35 registering gains. This marked the 12th consecutive year of decline in global freedom.***
- ***The United States retreated from its traditional role as both a champion and an exemplar of democracy amid an accelerating decline in American political rights and civil liberties.***

- *Over the period since the 12-year global slide began in 2006, 113 countries have seen a net decline, and only 62 have experienced a net improvement.*

And, it specifically noted the US withdrawal from promoting democracy and freedom, and mentioned that:

Even when he chose to acknowledge America's treaty alliances with fellow democracies, the president spoke of cultural or civilizational ties rather than shared recognition of universal rights; his trips abroad rarely featured any mention of the word "democracy." Indeed, the American leader expressed feelings of admiration and even personal friendship for some of the world's most loathsome strongmen and dictators.

This marks a sharp break from other US presidents in the post-war period, who cooperated with certain authoritarian regimes for strategic reasons, but never wavered from a commitment to democracy as the best form of government and the animating force behind American foreign policy. It also reflects an inability—or unwillingness—by the United States to lead democracies in effectively confronting the growing threat from Russia and China, and from the other states that have come to emulate their authoritarian approach.

A clear sign of fatigue with a pure politico-economic paradigm is visible in the democratic world. It is true that equally clear signals of fatigue with autocracies are perceived in non-democratic parts of the world. Because of transparency in democracy, the fatigue is openly seen in democracies. The fatigue remains concealed underground in autocracies. Autocracies will look strong till hours before their collapse, just as it happened when the Berlin Wall collapsed, or the Soviet Union. So, neither of the two pure politico-economic materialist paradigms -- one wedded to democracy and the other wedded to autocracy -- will sustain in the long run. As for the sustainability of the capitalist order and democracy, it may be worthwhile to recall Professor Lester Thurow's theory in the late 1990s that Communist nations which disregarded competition, failed the test of efficiency in the competition from the more efficient capitalism, but capitalism without national competition like firms, will grow resistant to change and stagnate. His prescription to arrest the decline was a civilisational approach --- transition from the individualist democratic paradigm to the collective civilisational paradigm. He told Western society in no uncertain terms that it needs long-run communalism to supplement its short-run individualism -- which virtually meant aligning the individualist democratic paradigm to the collective civilisational paradigm. Communalism -- even though its meaning in India is distorted and even perverted -- is civilisational collectivism, while individualism is atomising and destroying civilisational assets, consisting of families and societies.

Actually, there is and should be no contradiction between democratic and civilisational paradigms. The short term, even better said the short sighted, liberal democratic paradigm, which has been for long ignoring the long term civilisational paradigm, is increasingly beginning to come under stress. Civilisational paradigm is not anti-democracy, but actually it builds a morally sound normative democracy in the palace of individualism liberal democracy. The proponents of liberal democracy are wrong in thinking that mentioning civilisation or culture promotes illiberal democracy. The decline that is being noticed by studies like the Freedom House study, which graphs the decline from 2010 and steeply from 2014, is based on the liberal democratic perspective. It is not the decline of democracy, but the decline of liberalism. Liberalism is actually tending to destroy the civilisational

foundations of democracy and in the process democracy itself. Liberalism has injected hostility between civilisation and democracy. The reason for the decline of liberal democracy, which the Freedom House study sees, and its tendency to slide into autocracy, is rooted in the hostility of liberal democracy to the underpinnings of the civilisational urges of the people. The contradiction between the democratic and civilisational paradigms needs to be resolved in the larger interest to save the world of democracy from decline. The world needs a review of and relief from the pure politico-economic paradigm and be replaced by an alternative which integrates it to the civilisational paradigm. Only if the West stops grading democracies as liberal and illiberal can democracies be saved. So long as liberal democracy ignores the long-term civilisational urges of the people, democracies will slip into autocracies.

XXI. Liberal Democracy to cease to be the standard for democracies

Post-World War II West began setting standards of not just democracy, but also graded what is liberal democracy and what is illiberal and so on. The West had held out its brand of liberal democracy as the universal standard for all, and to grade, credit and discredit different democracies in the world. In the post-Covid-19 world order, it is bound to recognise the diversity in democracies -- as democracy doesn't work in the same way everywhere. If democracy has to emerge as the paradigm for the future world order as it seems likely, it cannot be on the basis of Western understanding of what democracy is.

The test of what makes a society democratic is the capacity of its core society to live with diversities and differences in ideas, beliefs and lifestyle. From this perspective, the core Indian society -- consisting of Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains -- has demonstrated the capacity to live with different beliefs and divergent Gods without conflict. In fact, even in terms of illustrative personalities who guide core societies, both Rama, who obeyed his father implicitly, and Prahalada who explicitly defied his, are considered divine and revered; both Sita, who totally obeyed her husband, and Mira, who totally defied hers, are considered divine and revered; Lakshmana, who surrendered to his brother, and Vibheeshana, who defied his, are considered respectable and accepted. The capacity of a society to accept total contradictions without enforced model behaviour is basically democratic and liberal. The test of a democracy is whether there is a culture of tolerance. From Swami Vivekananda in his address to the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago on September 11, 1893, to the Supreme Court of India's decision to revisit the apex court's earlier definition of Hindutva as a way of life and hear arguments for and against the plea in March this year, all are uniform in their assessment that ancient Hindu society has been tolerant and that was why other religions could take root in India and flourish. This is something unheard of in other societies or nations, particularly in Western nations, which have taken on the sole responsibility of standardising and grading democracies, and certifying them as liberal, partly liberal and illiberal, and so on. There is a huge difference between the individualism-centric democracies of the West, which have no doctrinal tolerance and demand individual tolerance, and doctrinally-tolerant society-centric democracies like India. The West needed to promote unbridled individualism to counter the doctrinal intolerance which Indian society was not needed to do.

With the result, Western democracies and even economic models founded on the Anthropology of Modernity, which is defined by unbridled individualism, delegitimise communities, societies and families. That will work where long-held traditions are destroyed, but not in Asian and African societies which have live traditions and are family and community-oriented. Save China, which is a special case because of its authoritarian philosophy with empire building instincts within and outside, Asian societies have an inherent sense of democratic functioning because of social, racial and religious diversities. Asian nations are not homogenous socially, racially or religiously.

A 2014 Pew Research Center study says Asia leads in religious diversity. Living in harmony with diversity, and not elections through ballot papers, is the essence of democracy. A society of diversity, which lives together in peace, is socially and culturally democratic. Despite being regarded as not liberal democracies, Asian democracies seem to have performed better than liberal democracies in terms of public order. According to a UN study, the Asian homicide rate, which is a critical index of peace in society, is the lowest in the world. A 2019 UN report on Homicide shows that the homicide rate in Asia is not only one tenth of the Americas, but since the 1990s, the Asian rate has fallen by 36 percent.

If in the emerging post-Covid-19 world there has to be an alliance of democracies, the first condition for that will be that the West must cease to think it is the norm and the centre of the democratic world. According to Seraphine F. Maerz, Anna Lührmann, Sebastian Hellmeier, Sandra Grahn and Staffan I. Lindberg Department of Political Science, V-Dem Institute, [University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden] in their research paper “State of the world 2019: autocratisation surges – resistance grows” the Western democracies constitute just 14 percent of the world’s population. India added, it becomes 30 percent. All hues of electoral democracies put together, it is 46 percent. Western nations need to be educated on how their model of individualist democracy is fatiguing and threatening to fail so that they would hopefully stop grading democracies of non-Western nations as liberal, partly liberal and illiberal, while accepting the Maxist polity for respectful engagement and making true and innately socially tolerant democracies feel inferior. This western hypocrisy should stop in the larger interest of an alliance of democracies. The West should accept that all democracies evolve according to the socio-cultural conditions of the societies in which they are rooted.

XXII. Vibrant democratic India to redefine the new democratic paradigm

Even as Western liberal democracies seem to be fatiguing in more than one criterion, Indian democracy is becoming increasingly vibrant. In contrast to the falling voter participation in the liberal democracies of the West, Indian democracy started with less than 50 percent in two Parliament elections in 1950s, then it began averaging 60 percent till 2009 and in 2014, it topped 66 percent and rose to 67.4 percent thereafter, testifying to the people’s rising participation in the democratic process. It is not just in higher voter participation, but also in terms of participation by the financially, educationally and socially weaker segments of voters that Indian democracy has shown its bottom spread character, in contrast to the liberal democracies of the West.

Top down elite liberal democracy Vs Bottom spread Indian democracy

A comparison of Federal Election Commission data via the National Voter Turnout in Federal Elections: 1960–2008 from the most liberal democracy in the world, the US, and the data of Linz, Juan; Alfred Stephan; Yogendra Yadav (2007). *Democracy and Diversity*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, shows how liberal democracy in the US is elite in character and at the top of the pyramid in structure, while Indian democracy, labelled as not so liberal, is mass in character and is bottom of the pyramid in structure.

High Income Group Votes more in the US, Low Income group votes more in India

In terms of voters of high and low income level participation, while 36 percent of the lowest [20 percent] Quintile voters vote in US, 57 percent of them vote in India; 57 percent of the next Quintile vote in US, 65 percent of them vote in India; 59 percent of the next Quintile vote in US, 60 percent of them vote in India; 63 percent of the highest Quintile vote in US, only 47 percent of them vote in India. It shows that income level wise, the higher the income, the higher is the voting percentage in the US, while it is the inverse in India, the lower the income, the higher the voting percentage.

Lower the income, lower the voter participation in the 18 EU nations is brought out in a study titled “Income, inequality, and electoral participation” by Christopher J Anderson [The University of Warwick]. It says:

“Based on individual and macro level data collected in eighteen OECD democracies, we find that income significantly affects electoral participation. At the level of individual citizens, we find that the effects of income differentials are essentially linear, such that individuals who are below the median income in society are less likely to participate in elections, while those above the median income are more likely to do so. Moreover, our results show that the effect of income on electoral participation increases monotonically.”

Educated people vote more in the US, while the less educated vote more in India

In terms of education, while 38 of the ‘no high schooled’ US voters vote, 57 percent of the illiterate vote in India; 43 percent of ‘some high schooled’ US voters vote, 83 percent of up to middle school Indians vote; 57 percent of high school graduates and 66 percent of the some college graduates, 79 percent of the college graduates vote in US, 57 of the college graduates vote in India; while 84 percent of the post graduates vote in US, only 41 percent of post graduates in India vote. Here again, higher the education, greater the voting percentage in the US, lower the education, greater the voting percentage in India.

Socially higher ones vote more in the US, Socially weaker ones vote more in India

In terms of social criteria, 56 percent of Whites vote. In contrast, 50 percent of the Blacks and only 27 percent of Latinos vote. In India, 60 percent of Hindus [upper caste], 58 percent of Hindus [OBC], 75 percent of Scheduled Caste, 59 percent of Schedule Tribes and 70 percent of Muslims vote. It shows that minority participation in

voting is less in the US and more in India. The deprived Scheduled Caste voting is 25 percent more than others'. Likewise, Muslim voting is 17 percent more than others'.

Not just US, in UK too lower segments of voters participate less in the democratic process

In the context of the UK, Qasir Shah notices the same trend as in the US. Qasir Shah says: "However, the even greater scandal is the marginalisation of the lower two socio-economic classes in political participation with C2 (34% and 28%), and DE (31% and 30%) professing a desire to participate."

In terms of income, education and social criteria, democracy in the US is elite and top of the pyramid in structure, while Indian democracy is mass-based and follows the bottom of the pyramid in structure. And yet, in the Western discourse, US democracy is liberal and Indian democracy is illiberal.

The Indian democratic spirit is civilisational and is a millennial evolution, whereas, the idea of democracy in the West is a product of the 19th century. Unless this element is discussed, the emerging threat to the democratic world from within and outside cannot be handled and nor can democracy be saved.

XXIII. Civilisationally compatible democracy as the narrative of India

The contemporary Indian democratic spirit, temper or structure is no accident of post-Independent history. It all evolved over millennia. India's democratic spirit was a product of ancient India's religious and spiritual discipline of dialogue and deliberation on the differences between religious groups rather than settle them through force. This was the crucial difference between India and other religious civilisations. The cultural differential of democracy has been found in the survey of the oldest global think tank on democracy -- Freedom House.

Freedom House sees "Strong Correlation between Hinduism and electoral democracy"

Freedom House, in its Report on the "World The Annual Survey of Political Rights & Civil Liberties 1999-2000", has revealed an interesting and instructive aspect of the world of democracy and its relationship with cultures and religion with reference to all major religions of the world, Christianity, Islam Hinduism and Buddhism in all countries. The Annual Survey "continue(d) to reveal interesting patterns in the relationship between cultures and political development" It said that while there are broad differences within civilisations, and while democracy and human rights find expression in a wide array of cultures and beliefs, the survey shows some important variations in the relationship between religious belief or tradition and political freedom." The survey found [as of year 1999-2000]:

- A predominantly Christian country is more than five times as likely to be free and democratic as it is to be repressive and non-democratic.

- India is predominantly Hindu and has the world's second largest Muslim population.
- The Islamic world remains the most resistant to the spread of democracy and civil liberties, especially the Arab countries. Only one country with a Muslim majority (Mali) is free, 14 are partly free and 26 are not free. Only eight have electoral democracies.

On India, the survey said:

There is also a strong correlation between electoral democracy and Hinduism (India, Mauritius, and Nepal), and there are a significant number of free countries among traditionally Buddhist societies and those in which Buddhism is the most widespread faith (Japan, Mongolia, Taiwan, and Thailand).

Traditionally, India's deliberative democracy, religious and cultural impulses, seamlessly transformed into contemporary India's participative democracy. This is the short statement of Freedom House.

On the Freedom House Survey Report, Tunku Varadarajan former editor of Newsweek and presently Virginia Hobbs Carpenter Research Fellow in Journalism at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, and a contributing editor at [POLITICO](#) Europe, wrote in belief.com [2000], leaving aside the vexing question of whether India is truly democratic:

"I would like, nonetheless, to look favorably on the assertion that there is a strong correlation between electoral democracy and Hinduism. The more relevant question to ask, therefore, is this: does a society in which Hindus predominate--a civitas in which Hindus are the preponderant religious group--furnish conditions in which a modern democratic political system can flourish? The answer, in my opinion, is yes."

The correlation between the Hindu -- read Indian -- civilisation and electoral democracy of contemporary India was no accident or subject of the Encyclical or Fatwa of any religious authority. It was a cultural evolutionary process with continuity over millennia tolerant religious philosophies played a key role. This process yielded grass root social deliberative democracy in India long before the advent of the Greco-Roman model of political democracy.

Indian Culture of debate and dialogue and Deliberative Democracy

In a perceptive policy research working paper titled "Deliberative Democracy in India", Ramya Parthasarathy Vijayendra Rao [World Bank Group Development Research Group Poverty and Inequality Team] dated March 2017, the authors have

"unpacked the historical roots of Indian deliberation in the pre-colonial and colonial periods, emphasising the ways in which religious traditions fostered a culture of debate and dialogue."and have traced the roots of deliberative democracy in ancient India.

The paper, which is under the aegis of the World Bank Research Group, is significant for three reasons, which are not normally found in Indian public discourse, or in the discourse outside India. One, it compares the different ways contemporary democracy works in the West and in India. Two, it traces the origin of deliberative democracy in India and the evolution of participatory democracy in the West. Three, it sees the alignment of deliberative democracy and participative democracy in India.

The authors preface their concept of deliberative democracy by first asking how defying all preconditions at the rise of Western democracy, India has a distinctly Indian democracy.

*India, as is well known, has a resilient democracy. Indian elections have been hotly contested, widely inclusive, well conducted, and integrated into a robust and active political sphere. The consistency and quality of Indian democracy is not only anomalous in the post-colonial world, but also stands as rebuttal to much of Western liberal democratic theory, which posits a set of preconditions to democracy that India sorely lacks. As historian, Sudipta Kaviraj, has noted, “Viewed from the angle of conventional political theory, Indian democracy is inexplicable. It defies all the preconditions that theory lays down for the success of democratic government” (Kaviraj 2011, p. 2). These preconditions are defined by those that were present at the rise of Western democracy – “namely, the presence of a strong bureaucratic state, capitalist production, industrialization, the secularization of society (or at least the prior existence of a secular state), and relative economic prosperity” (Kaviraj 2011, p.2) – but are relatively absent in contemporary India, where poverty and illiteracy are still widely prevalent. **Despite these conditions, however, India has sustained democracy, and done so in ways that are distinctly Indian** (Khilnani 1999)*

Then the authors unpack, as they say, the deliberative democracy in India.

A large body of literature has sought to understand why democracy has thrived in the Indian context (e.g. Khilnani 1999; Kaviraj 2011; Keane 2009; Chatterjee and Katznelson 2012). One proposed and contested component of that explanation has been the long history of public reasoning and debate on the subcontinent – an “argumentative tradition” that is intimately connected with the development of democracy (Sen 2005, Guha 2005). Indeed, deliberation has its roots in classic normative conceptions of democracy; it derives from the premise that “democracy revolves around the transformation rather than simply the aggregation of preferences...” (Elster 1998).

What the authors mean is that “religious traditions fostered a culture of debate and dialogue” such as the distinctly Indian religious cultural practice of Tarka Shastra and Poorva Paksha, which are extraordinarily disciplined methods of dialogue and debate. This needs to be explained to make the foundations of the Indian worldview itself understandable in the contemporary democratic discourse which is actually sans enlightened and disciplined discourse.

Tarka Shastra and Purva Paksha foundations of deliberative democracy

Ancient India’s discipline of Tarka Shastra, which laid the rules of the dialogue between two opposing religious views and Purva Paksha, which formulated how to critique the other view, were the main reasons

why India avoided wars, violence and bloodshed over religion. The debates between Hinduism and Buddhism, and within Hinduism and among different Hindu schools of thought, were founded on the principles of Tarka Shastra and Poorvapakha. The most celebrated debate was between Adi Sankara and Mandana Mishra 2500 years ago or 1500 years ago, depending on the wide divergence over the date of Adi Sankara's birth, in which the debater who gets heated up because of anger was declared the loser! The chief principle of a debate was the total absence of heat and anger. This tradition prevented wars over which God was superior.

Pawan Verma in his book "Adi Shankaracharya: Hinduism's Greatest Thinker" expresses his conviction that the Advadic vision developed by Sankara offers an ideal matrix for the unity and integrity of India. Sankara, by his concept of six systems of philosophy, brought about unity and harmony among the diverse schools of Hindu philosophy, and also by expounding the impersonal Brahman beyond all forms of Gods as the Ultimate Truth. Sankara's formula of harmony and unity did not invalidate any form of worship but set the idea of one unifying Impersonal Truth as the ultimate point of self realisation beyond all forms of worship. That is what made the Indian religious fabric tolerant. Deliberative culture was the basis of tolerant religious traditions of India. That is why two judges of the Supreme Court of India went to the extent of saying that it was because of the culture of Hinduism [which fostered tolerance through dialogue] that enabled other religions to find shelter in India. Bharucha, J. in *Dr. M. Ismail Faruqui and Ors. etc. Vs. Union of India & Ors. etc.*, 1994 (6) SCC 360, (Ayodhya case), in the separate opinion for himself and Ahmadi, J. (as he then was), observed:

"...Hinduism is a tolerant faith. It is that tolerance that has enabled Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism to find shelter and support upon this land..."

This celebrated tolerance, unknown elsewhere in the world when it evolved in India, was the direct product of dialogue and debate. Religious tolerance in India rooted in the ancient Indian tradition of dialogue and debate extended to other spheres of life. This is what made deliberative democracy work in India despite all inequalities

Tolerance is the foundation of deliberative culture

The combination of monotheistic philosophy -- Advaita [Monistic] and Visishtadvaita [Qualified Monistic] philosophies on the one hand - and divergent approaches, understandings and Gods is what makes India' religiously tolerant. It is such an extremely strange combination that Western religious, philosophical and secular scholarship rooted in the monotheistic worldview cannot easily digest or unravel.

Actually, a large body of emerging writing sees intolerance rooted in the monotheistic worldview and the divergent approaches to Gods as tolerant. Jonathan Kirsch, an American attorney, and a writer and columnist for the Los Angeles Times, and a best-selling author of books on the Bible and Judaism, says in his book "God Against the Gods: The History of the War Between Monotheism and Polytheism" *"that only a single deity is worthy of worship for the simple reason that only a single deity exists"*, and is responsible for three millennia of religious intolerance and persecution, up to and including the attacks of September 11, 2001 on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Those events he terms as *"only the most recent example of the violence that men and*

women are inspired to commit against their fellow human beings by their true belief in the Only True God”, and says that Polytheism is tolerant. The issue in the Indian context is no Monotheism Vs Polytheism which is again a Western construct. Hinduism is not Polytheistic.

The scholarly view [e.g. “Hindu Deities” [2019] by Julius Lipner Cambridge University; A Guide to Hinduism by Maya Warrier [2006] Warwick University; Hinduism in Modern India by Vinay Lal UCLA Social Studies] is that Hinduism is not Polytheistic [worshiping many Gods] but Polygnostic [having many understandings]. Arguing in her scholarly paper “The One and Many Gods of Hinduism” in Cross Roads [2007] -- an interdisciplinary journal for the study of history, philosophy, religion and classics -- takes that view says in the Abstract to her paper:

Hinduism is commonly thought to represent polytheism. This label reflects a superficial perception of how the gods were and are understood. This essay explores the idea that Hinduism, (itself a relatively modern, externally imposed label), has many understandings... that it is polygnostic. It takes a journey through the evolution of a range of Hindu conceptions of deity, from the philosophical and abstract through to the deeply personal. Although such modern commentators as Richard Dawkins claim that the possibility of Hinduism including a monotheistic stream is deceptive, this essay traces monotheistic stances through a range of India’s rich theological and philosophical trends. Noting that individual Hindus are just as likely to think that: ‘There are many gods’; ‘only one god’; ‘many gods in one’; or that ‘god has two aspects’; ‘god is a trinity’; ‘The world is god’; ‘I am god’; ‘I am close, but different to god’; ‘god is love’; ‘god is beyond qualities’, and even, ‘there is no god’, the essay supports the now famous quotation from Crooke, that “among all the great religions of the world, there is none more catholic than Hinduism”.

Cathy Byrne, Research Project Manager, Southern Cross University, has to her credit several positions and is a publisher of several scholarly papers, Cathy is interested in all aspects of religion as a powerful, (and understudied) sociological, ethical, structuring presence. Therefore, Hinduism is a religion with many understandings rather than a religion with multiple gods. In its innate capacity of “many understandings” inheres in the tolerance in Hinduism.

XXIV. Seamless integration of India’s deliberative democracy into electoral democracy

The Indian institution of local governments, the Panchayat system, dating back to more than 4000 years, has survived numerous political changes and upheavals in the ancient and medieval periods till the advent of British colonial rule under which the pattern of working of local bodies underwent marked changes. The British actually re energised and leveraged the traditional Panchayats, making efficient use of them.

Panchayats in Ancient India

The Second Administrative Reforms Commission Report [2007] on Local Self Governance says:

“The concept of local self government is not new to our country and there is mention of community assemblies in the

Vedic texts. Around 600 B.C., the territory north of the river Ganga comprising modern day north Bihar and eastern U.P. was under the suzerainty of small republics called Janapadas among which Lichhavis were the most powerful. In these Janapadas, the affairs of the State were conducted by an assembly consisting of local chieftains. In the post Mauryan times as well, there existed republics of Malavas and the Kshudrakas where decisions were taken by “sabhas”. The Greek Ambassador, Megasthenes, who visited the court of Chandragupta Maurya in 303 B.C. described the City Council which governed Pataliputra – comprising six committees with 30 members. Similar participatory structures also existed in South India. In the Chola Kingdoms, the village council, together with its sub-committees and wards, played an important part in administration, arbitrated disputes and managed social affairs. They were also responsible for revenue collection, assessing individual contribution and negotiating the collective assessment with the King’s representative. They had virtual ownership of village waste land, with right of sale, and they were active in irrigation, road building and related work. Their transactions, recorded on the walls of village temples, show a vigorous community life and are a permanent memorial to the best practices in early Indian polity.”

India’s deliberative democratic traditions are rooted in India’s religion, culture and sociology.

British leverage on the village deliberative democracy

The policy research working paper of the World Bank Group Development Research Group Poverty and Inequality traces how the Panchayat system in India was integrated with the colonial administration. It captured the British policy on the Panchayats thus: Henry Maine, who was sent to India in the 1860s to advise the British government on legal matters, came across thriving indigenous systems of autonomous village governments, whose structure and practice shared many characteristics of participatory democracy (Maine 1876). Maine was influenced by J.S. Mill, who argued for democratic participation at the local level (Mill 1869). Maine theorised the village governments and community as an alternative to the centralised state; these village communities, led by a council of elders, were not subject to a set of laws articulated from above, but had more fluid legal and governance structures adapted to changing conditions, while maintaining strict adherence to traditional customs (Mantena 2010). This argument had a profound impact on the colonial administration: As India became fertile territory for experiments in governance, the liberal British Viceroy, Lord Ripon, instituted local government reforms in 1882 primarily for providing “political education,” and reviving and extending India’s indigenous system of government.

Mahatma Gandhi’s proposal for Panchayat Raj rejected

Beyond influencing colonial policy, Maine’s description of self-reliant Indian village communities came to shape the thinking of Mohandas Gandhi, who made it a central tenet of his vision for an independent India. Gandhi’s philosophy of decentralised economic and political power, viewed the self-reliant village as emblematic of a “perfect democracy,” ensuring equality across castes and religions and self-sufficiency in all needs. These villages would come to form “an alternative Panchayat Raj, understood as a non-hierarchical, decentralised polity of loosely federated village associations and powers”. Stressing non-violence and cooperation, this

Gandhian ideal elevated local participation — not just for the political education of India's new citizens, but as a form of democratic self-governance. Gandhi's proposal, however, was defeated during the Constituent Assembly Debates.

In 1992, Constitution Amendment aligns the deliberative democracy of Panchayat and aligns it with the contemporary participative democracy

Thus the World Bank Group paper traces the historical roots of Indian deliberative democracy to culture of debate and dialogue fostered by religious traditions and explores the interplay between Western liberal philosophers and Indian political thinkers, including Gandhi and Ambedkar on participatory democracy in India. Outlining the fraught debate around local village democracy in the Constituent Assembly and highlighting the continued dialogue between Indian and Western ideas in the push for greater participatory development, finally ends the probe with the current incarnation of state-sponsored deliberation in India – namely, village assemblies known as gram sabhas under the constitutionally mandated system of Indian village democracy or Panchayati Raj to align the deliberative democracy of the past with the participatory democracy of the contemporary times.

This ancient deliberative democratic model of India was delegitimised when the Constitution was being made. It was kept on a life support system by making it a non-mandatory vision in the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Constitution which said that the State shall take steps to organise village panchayats and endow them with powers and authority to enable them to function as units of self-government. This vision was realised by Constitution amendments in 1992. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment has provided constitutional status to local village bodies in India that had existed for thousands of years as a unit of self-rule at the village level.

India, the largest participatory democracy in the world with 3.1 million elected representations

The outcome of the implementation of Panchayat Raj was the phenomenal participation of the bottom of the spread distant society in India in the villages, hills and forests and self-governance unmatched in any part of the democratic world. India is today not only the largest voted democracy, but also the largest elected representative democracy in the world.

As of summer 2017, there are a total of 267,428 local government bodies of which 262,771 are rural and 4,657 urban. Of the rural local governments, 632 are zila parishads at the district level, 6,672 are panchayat samitis at the block level, and 255,466 are gram panchayats at the village level. Urban local bodies include municipal corporations for cities, municipalities for larger towns and town panchayats for smaller towns. Both urban and local governments are governed by state-level legislation, which determines local tax-raising powers. Following the 2013 local election, 37.1 percent of councillors were women, and in the 2015/16 local elections, government expenditure was 16.3 percent of the total government expenditure. Presently, there are 3.1 million elected representatives and 1.3 million women representatives.

For a total of 101 city corporations and 1,430 municipalities and 2,091 nagarpalikas in the country, elections have now been held two to three times across the country. The number of elected representatives for all the urban local bodies is about 70,000. Of the 3,640 chairpersons of these bodies at least one-third are women. The All India Council of Mayors is also presently headed by a woman.

As compared to any other democracy claiming to be liberal and modern, Indian democracy has the latest and unmatched bottom spread voting and is a democracy with the largest number of elected representatives in the world. In contrast, the USA, the second largest democracy in the world, according to the US Census, the number of local body units in 1992 was 85006 and the number of elected representatives was 5.13 lakhs. In 2012, the number of local bodies was 89004, but the number of elected representatives is not published by the US Census. Even if a proportionate rise is taken, the number of elected representatives cannot exceed 5.38 lakh. Data indicates that local bodies in India are three times that of the US and representatives are almost six times that of the US -- which demonstrates the incomparable depth and reach of democracy in India.

More than three million elected representatives have a direct stake in the national administration as representatives with powers at the national, state and local levels.

Financial allocation Rs 2 lakh crores [\$30 billion] for 5 years

The local bodies are not just active social circles, but also have financial muscle. They also receive huge fund allocations from the Finance Commission, which is appointed under the Constitution to distribute national revenue to Central, State and Local governments. Over the last three decades, successive Finance Commissions have assigned more funds to Panchayati Raj institutions at all three levels – village level, block level and district level. In order to strengthen self-governance at the local level, more than Rs 2 lakh crore has been allocated to Panchayati Raj institutions in five years. The aggregate amount allocated to Panchayati Raj institutions in 26 states of the country works out to be Rs 2,00,292 crore and per capita allocation works out to be Rs 488 per person (\$30 billion) in five years.

Panchayat at the forefront of the war against Covid-19

Village panchayats of India have been at the forefront of the battle against Covid-19. The Prime Minister congratulated village headmen for preventing the spread of Covid-19 in their respective places by creating awareness and arranging checking and quarantine for migrants coming from outside. Millions of Panchayat officials ensured that the spread of Covid-19 is largely an urban phenomenon. One of the reasons why India's record in tackling the spread of Covid-19 is less than half of the world's average, it's mortality rates less than a fourth of the world's, its recovery rate is 63 percent against the world's 60 percent, is the reach and spread of the deliberative democratic structure of India which dates back to millennia. This could not have been achieved without the formal integration and recognition of the traditional Panchayats in the larger constitutional state. The Indian media has extensively reported on the phenomenal role of Panchayats in confronting the Covid-19 challenge. The Times of India newspaper [15.5.2020] reported in detail the briefing of the National Institute of

Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR) on the Covid-19 management by Panchayats. The report said:

With migrant workers making their way back to homes, Gram Panchayats are ensuring that returning workers adhere to a compulsory 14-day quarantine along with family members in the villages so that there is no possible transmission of COVID-19.

The National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR), which is assisting the people with crisis management amid Coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak, said that in case the workers do not have a house of their own to self-quarantine or their house is too small for the same, the Gram Panchayat (GP) will have to make necessary arrangements by converting Anganwadis or schools into quarantine centres or by establishing a makeshift quarantine space.

NIRDPR, vide a release, revealed how the sarpanches are dealing with the migrant workers' exodus to villages amid the COVID-19 crisis. The GPs have issued the same guidelines as the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and are recording the details of each returning worker, including their name, sex, age, family details along with where they work and how they arrived at the village. They are also recording symptoms of Covid-19 if any.

They are also ensuring that the workers should sanitise themselves and their belongings (mobile phones, bags, luggage) before entering the village premises.

As per the guidelines issued by GPs, if anyone exhibits symptoms of COVID-19, they should be referred to the nearest health centre. Only one family member can take care of the patient in this case. Further, nobody should touch the patient's clothes or hang them in public places or should be allowed to meet the patient at any cost.

Some of the don'ts include no crowding at places, no spitting in public, do not venture outside unnecessarily, etc.

They are also ensuring that no villager goes hungry in these difficult times by making sure that the poor have access to the ration promised by the government, starting community kitchens to feed the poor, and by engaging volunteers in food preparation and distribution.

This phenomenal work by Panchayats, which through elected, are almost a voluntary body of millions of people's representatives who invest almost their whole time, has resulted in rural India being largely safe from the Covid-19 spread.

Indian intellectual, strategic thinkers and think tanks need to be sensitised about, and they need to expound to the world about, the depth of Indian democracy which dates back millennia and change the global narrative of democracy as defined by unbridled liberalism and ultra liberals as the only legitimate and write an Indian narrative of democracy as defined by individualism linked to civilisation, not individualism divorced from civilisation. This inevitably calls for a relook at the contemporary sense of unbridled human rights which is altogether divorced from human duties to the alternative idea of human duties linked to human rights as Mahatma Gandhi envisioned.

XXV. Shift from unbridled human rights to duties based paradigm of Mahatma Gandhi

There is no doubt that the [ultra]liberal social and democratic paradigm is clearly weakening and fatiguing because of unbridled liberalism. Unbridled individual rights sans ordinary normative moral duties even to parents and children, and others near and dear, has made humans so self-centred, as Qasir Shah's findings show, that it is weakening the very liberal democracy and the state which dispenses the liberal order. This exclusive focus on self has also eroded the civilisational foundations, which is the collective consciousness of the people. There is a clash between ultra liberal individuals and the collective civilisational consciousness of people which manifests developments within Europe like the rise of contrarian illiberal thoughts in Eastern Europe, particularly in Hungary and Poland, ["Caesarean politics in Hungary and Poland" Robert Sata & Ireneusz Paweł Karolewski] which are not to be taken lightly. The concept of human rights based on atomised individualism has been taken to such an extreme by the West, to the extent of even breaking nations and communities, that it cannot be sustained. The world order needs nation-state actors and nation-states cannot exist with liberalism eroding and dominating over the very idea of a nation-state.

Unbridled human rights needs review

This is particularly so when the UN Declaration of Human Rights is impotent against an autocratic state which suppresses human rights like China, but it can be used by international bodies like the UNHCR, Amnesty International and a host of semi-government and non government bodies only against democracies like India, which has the greatest diversity of ideas and people. Diversity, not individualism, is the best safeguard against human rights violations. Human diversity is the legitimacy for the collective. The philosophy of human rights founded on ultra individualism which erodes all collectives right down to individualism needs review.

Need to recall the Gandhian paradigm

The world, and for that India, should go back to the days when the philosophy of human rights was being formulated by H G Wells. When HG Wells sought Gandhi's opinion on the "Rights of Man " drawn up by him, Gandhi argued for a "Charter of Duties' ' instead. The text of the cable that Gandhi sent to Wells sets out his views regarding rights and duties in no uncertain terms. In his cable response to H G Wells Mahatma Gandhi said:

"Received your cable. Have carefully read your five articles. You will permit me to say you are on the wrong track. I feel sure that I can draw up a better charter of rights than you have drawn up. But what good will it be? Who will become its guardian? If you mean propaganda or popular education you have begun at the wrong end. I suggest the right way. "Begin with a charter of Duties of Man and I promise the rights will follow as spring follows winter. I Write from experience. As a young man I began life by seeking to assert my rights and I soon discovered I had none - not even over my wife. So I began by discovering and performing my duty by my wife, my children, my friends, companions and society. I find today that I have greater rights perhaps than any living man I know. If this is too tall a claim, then I say I do not know anyone who possesses greater rights than I."

The concept of human rights, which has worked, has not only atomised human societies, but also families which transferred the economic and social responsibilities of non-formal moral institutions of families to formal state and institutions, which has not been a happy experience in the West and elsewhere. It is time that India came out with a bold alternative to the contemporary idea of human rights which places huge responsibility on formal institutions which are already facing decline.

As Western democracies seem to be losing their fervour within, the global institutions powered and influenced by the West in the post World War II world are weakening dangerously which will impact on the emerging post Covid-19 world.

XXVI. Weakening West-influenced UN and UN group global institutions

Global institutions like the UN are already weakening and the UNGA has become merely a debating club without any geopolitical stature or authority to make an impact on issues of significance. Even the UN Security Council [UNSC] too has become ineffective as the post-Cold War balance of power, with the West as the fulcrum, clearly stands disturbed by the emergence of China. While during the Cold War the UNSC was stymied by use of veto power by the superpowers, in the post- Cold War, things changed little. During the Cold War period the USSR used its veto power on 45 percent of occasions, the US 32 percent, the UK 14 percent and France 8 percent. In the post-Cold War period, the US used it on 43 percent of occasions, the Russian Federation 33 percent and China 24 percent. Just an example, with the change in the balance of power of the world in which France and England are in the UNSC and India, which is an emerging global power, is not, and Japan and Germany which are global economic powers, the irrelevance of the UN was already becoming self-evident. The WHO is already under great difficulty with the US suspending its funding for alleged bias towards China. The US and Israel have exited UNESCO, () co-founded by the US, again alleging bias. The UN itself is structured as -- to use an Indian term -- a Panchayat of top global powers where a decision is possible only by agreement among them. Indian panchayats still reach a unanimous decision which the UNSC has not been able to. Unless there is a major reform, the future irrelevance of the UN seems to be inevitable.

The decline is not limited to the UN group, the latest Western Project to run the world, the WTO, too is stressed. Whether the WTO will thrive or fail will also have a great impact on the post Covid-19 world order.

XXVII. WTO already under stress becoming even irrelevant

Long before Covid-19 struck the world, the US Trade Representative stated in his 2017 report to the Congress “The US erred in supporting China’s entry into the WTO...on terms that have proven to be ineffective in securing China’s embrace of an open, market oriented trade system...It is now clear that the WTO rules are not sufficient to constrain China’s market distorting behavior.” The EU Trade Commissioner observed, “There needs to be a thorough and quite radical reform...if nothing happens in the coming years (the WTO) will be more and more weakened and it will become irrelevant.” This demonstrated the underlying tensions between nations which are transparent and a non-transparent China, particularly when it rises and tends to acquire power that challenges

the transparent ones. That the US, which promoted the WTO, has fatigued even before the Covid-19 onset, is evident from its refusal to participate in the appointment of judges for the Dispute Settlement Mechanism [DSM] of the WTO. The DSM, which is celebrated as the crown jewel and heart of the WTO, has been rendered dysfunctional, as it now has only one judge instead of three. That the US had also threatened to block the approval of the budget of the WTO also showed its exasperation about the multilateral organisation.

The US/EU complaint that China has not embraced an open market oriented system and its behaviour is market distorting only stops short of pointing to the underlying, but unstated fact that China, with its Marxian polity, cannot operate in an open market economic system within nor participate in a global market system honestly.

The implicit decision by China to bury its market status case in the WTO, which had held that China is a Non-Market Economy, will probably break the WTO as anti-dumping actions against China will massify. It is highly unlikely that WTO can be reinvented to become an effective mechanism for multilateralism, particularly with the participation of non-transparent single party dictatorships in it. Multilateral treaties like the WTO are likely to weaken through unilateral actions and even disappear into oblivion, though how soon will depend how fast alternatives are in place.

With globalisation weakening and the epitaph of WTO likely to be written over a period, multilateralism may yield space to plurilateral and bilateral trade and economic relations. But dismantling the integrated financial architectures and supply chain will be a painful and highly disturbing process unless calibrated properly.

The West, which has realised its folly of focussing on controlling the financial economy and undermining and ceding the real [production] economy to others, is trying to recover back the lost space in production it has lost through globalisation. While writing the obituary of the WTO, this will push nations into a self-reliance paradigm -- to use the Indian Prime Minister's idiom Atma Nirbhar. It would mean that the global economic order will rest partly at least on policies of protection of national economies and building national production capacities of what it considers as essential items for national markets. This will adversely impact in the medium and long-term, particularly China. This is because China, which has set up factories for the world with less than 40 percent of its production for its own consumption and the rest for the world, is over dependent on globalisation. The individual nations which will increasingly look to go more national and local, and will, therefore, tend to deglobalise, which will have its own consequences on the current economic and political order of the world.

If the global Western projects are stressed and weakening, the very backbone of Western power, the Transatlantic Alliance too is not in good shape, and how it shapes up soon to take on the China challenge, will be an important factor in the post Covid-19 world.

XXVIII. Response of Transatlantic Alliance to China Challenge

The leadership of the US and the support of the G7 nations, particularly the Transatlantic Alliance between the US and Europe, formed the fulcrum of the post-Cold War world order. On the geopolitical side, Europe, which was shocked by the emergence of Donald Trump in the US four years ago, now has serious questions about American leadership. But after Donald Trump got elected, the Transatlantic Alliance has psychologically weakened considerably because of Trump's "America First" policies and really because of the US levying a tariff on the EU for security considerations and further claiming that national security issues are not justiciable by the WTO. Trump's unilateralism forced French President Emmanuel Macron to even talk last year of a Euro alliance with a defence budget matching its strength and responsibilities for the EU to become independent of the US. These developments seem to be gradually eroding the strength of the Transatlantic Alliance which had ensured the West-led post Cold War global order. But the Covid-19 hit European Project is equally in trouble with no hope of the Schengen borderless travel within the EU being restored fully in the post-Covid-19 European order. If the European Project weakens, then the post-Covid-19 Europe's confusion could get worse,

The Transatlantic Alliance has faced many ups and downs right from the time of the US engagement in the disastrous Vietnam War. Even though Covid-19 has increased divergences between the US and EU on the US attitude towards the WHO, multilateral efforts to contain the virus are a blessing in disguise, and must be seen as an inevitable response in mutual interest. The China challenge is likely to revive and restore the Transatlantic Alliance. The election of the US President this year will have a far reaching impact on the Transatlantic Alliance.

Yet another important factor that will influence the emerging world order is the vital issue of technology which needs a new paradigm of ownership regulation and management in view of the China challenge.

XXIX. The China challenge and need for a new technology paradigm

More than any single phenomenon, technology and the Internet have forced tectonic changes on consumers, businesses and governments on national and geopolitics the world, enmeshed peoples, tastes, values and morals and impacted on personal, family, social and community life, linking the local to the global, which was unthinkable in human history a quarter of a century ago. That the Technology Revolution is Industrial Revolution 2.0 is actually an understatement, as it is equally and more a social, cultural, political trade and economic revolution. Today, everyone's personal privacy and business life, every business and research organisation's and every state's secret is loaded onto public data space and privately managed, yet not impervious to predators. Private and confidential data has become the single most profitable asset, rather than any real asset. And therefore, data security will become the single biggest challenge for all persons, businesses and states. The Internet has become the storehouse of all technologies, the legal and illegal access to which gives access to data. The question of technology and its ownership, which was just commerce once, is now an issue of life and death.

This most critical issue of the present will be the new and most aggressive battlefield threatened by stealing by businesses, spying by governments, and sabotage by both, to theft and misuse by different players as we look into the future. Over decades technology and innovation have been nurtured and developed in universities laboratories and businesses of the West. But thanks to decades of weak regulation and oversight aided by predatory funding and corruption, critical technologies have been illegally spied away and stolen by China. The recent US action to close down the Boston Consulate of China for technology espionage and theft and the reported FBI investigation into some 1000 complaints of Chinese espionage is a pointer to how technology issues are becoming geo-political issues which can trigger a Cold War again. There is enough empirical evidence to show that China's flagship technology company Huawei was built on such illicit and secret flow of technologies from the West. China has in the past tried to use its proxy power in the UN to move control of the Internet to the UN and exert its influence on it and control it like it is exerting influence on the UN and its institutions by increasing its funding -- playing the role that the US was playing thus far. That China sees the Internet and technology space as a frontier to be conquered, dominated, influenced and misused is no more a secret. Its companies are notorious in collecting consumer data and surveillance. However, the world and particularly democratic nations of the world have been merely helpless complainants and have not responded to this challenge effectively so far. In the post-Covid-19 world order, democracies of the world need to create a new, transparent and accountable paradigm of oversight and control over the future of technology and the Internet. New cooperative models for democracies to work on research and development and development of standards and technologies is required.

It is in this background that the emerging apex level eminence of India is a factor in the new world order post-Covid-19.

XXX. India's emerging apex level eminence and its effects

The post-Covid-19 world will likely see the emergence and rise of India to apex level global eminence. India, which was long seen as a rickety democracy, has already shocked the world with its democracy of diversity demonstrating the capacity to produce stable government -- something which was thought to be impossible given the shape and structure of federal Indian constitution and democratic institutions. With a non-transparent China has proved to be a costly experiment and an emerging challenge to the West, the natural alternative of the Western World is India, which has a size matching with China, and also a military and emerging economic strength next only to China's in the region and in the world. India, which has a long tradition of being a non-conflicting civilisation and is a celebrated soft power, has also become a hard power which the world respects. India's rise in the last two decades since the Pokhran atomic blast which put her on the hard power map has been gradual. Its relative importance has indeed been less as compared to the more aggressive and autocratic China, whose importance since the help it provided to the West to break the Cold War, gave it a lead over India, which the latter has not managed to narrow. The post-Covid-19 world seems to open up the possibility which China got in the 1990s. This may prove a major break for India for emerging at the apex level eminence in geopolitics.

The emergence of India and the resistance of the Western and democratic world to China will alter the dynamics of India-China relations.

XXXI. China would defocus India from growth and development

Post-Covid-19, the rise of India will be countered by China aided by Pakistan and vice versa to defocus the former from development. The emerging geo-political importance India has gained over a period through its soft and hard power mix, and its techno-economic potential makes India a competitor to replace China for those who are seeking an alternative to it, and thus, it is clearly the target for China. China, in its ambitious project for power and wealth and with a low national consumption, has become over dependent on world markets and globalisation for its growth and survival. In contrast, India's domestic consumption is close to 70 percent. If India begins to produce for the world, it will be at the cost of China, and this is what China is worried about in the post-Covid-19 situation. China is indeed running a huge current account surplus with India, but as a proportion of the total current account surplus that China runs with the world, it is less than one tenth. China can afford to forego the surplus with India if that will help it to prevent the rise of India in a strategic partnership with the West -- which is seeking to decouple from -- as its challenger in the medium term at the regional and global level. How can China prevent the rise of India? China is using a reformulated gunboat diplomatic model, innovating border threat diplomacy to impede the rise of India which it sees as a threat to its empire building at the regional and global level. What Bruno Macaes, a former Secretary of State for European Affairs in Portugal and the author of "Belt and Road: A Chinese World Order" wrote after the border flare up in Ladakh in June is so appropriate that to a substantial part of it is relevant.

One month before the Doklam standoff, China had gathered about 30 national leaders at its first summit devoted to provide guidance for the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) – a vast project aimed at creating a new Chinese world order. India announced just one day before the event that it would not be participating, explaining that in its current form the BRI will create unsustainable burdens of debt, while one of its segments, the economic corridor linking China and Pakistan, goes through the disputed areas of Gilgit and Baltistan and therefore ignores Indian core concerns on sovereignty and territorial integrity. The decision was received with foreboding in Beijing. In my view, Doklam was a direct response to the Indian move against the BRI.

Something similar happened this time. In the weeks prior to the first Chinese troop movements in Ladakh, India had attempted to deepen its strategic relationship with the United States and Japan. More ominously, it had openly declared its intention to attract manufacturing away from China, now that the country appeared vulnerable to the coronavirus epidemic and the growing trade tensions with America. On May 19, the Chinese Global Times wrote: "Tensions between China and the US are not an opportunity for India to attract relocating industrial chains, because the South Asian country is not prepared to receive such a manufacturing shift given its poor infrastructure, lack of skilled labour and stringent foreign investment restrictions."

It is tempting to link events in the Galwan valley to local considerations. Its proximity to the vital road link to Daulat Beg Oldie is no doubt important, but Beijing does not make decisions of this importance in abstraction from more

general goals. China continues to see India as a major obstacle to its global plans. If anything, the consequences of the original Indian decision to oppose the BRI continue to reverberate. Other countries have followed Delhi and opposition to the initiative grew very considerably in the years after Doklam. An ambitious and successful India, capable of directly rivalling Chinese economic power, would constitute a death knell for the project.

The strategy is to create a war psychology. If China wants to stop India from taking certain decisions contrary to Chinese interests, it can achieve this by raising the risk of kinetic conflict. If Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his inner circle come to believe that war can follow upon their decisions, they will be increasingly reluctant to act and/or even become paralysed. In large measure, this is a subtle and repetitive exercise in psychological conditioning.”

Bruno Macaes seems to be closest to the truth. The easiest way China can keep India de-focused from the development agenda for which peace is needed is to keep its border hot, so that India will always be conditioned by a threat from two-front war, with Pakistan ever willing to be a partner of China to keep India under pressure. China will always try to keep the mind of India occupied around its security more than development that will enable India to challenge China. China will also work to ensure that the neighbours of India are either hostile or neutral to India. It will try and humiliate India through small nations like Nepal which will psychologically dampen the neighbourhood support for India. China, in a sense, seems to suffer from a kind of complex in relation to India and lacks the skill and wisdom to deal with India as an equal partner. It seems keen to project itself, and be accepted as dominant and superior, which is clearly an outdated Cold War geopolitical model which will not be appropriate for the contemporary and emerging global order for harmony. Consequently, in the medium and long run, China with its empire building instincts intact, will tend to regard India as a threat to its regional and global ambitions.

The post Covid-19 world order will most likely see a reversal of the one size fit all global social, political and economic models that the West has been thrusting on the rest of the world in the post-World War II and more after the Cold War.

XXXII. Development: “One-Size Fit All” paradigm to cultural paradigm

Another significant fall out of the post-Covid-19 world is the likely shift from the West-centric “one size fit all” model of economic development to nationally compatible models. The post-World War II global economic thinking was based on “one size fit all ” development approach. This idea was based on the Western Anthropology of Modernity which was incorporated in the then powerful United Nations 1951 as an advisory if not a mandate for development of underdeveloped nations. The UN had commended that a nation desirous of development would have necessarily give up its ancient philosophy and bonds of caste and creed, and if could not, its aspiration for a comfortable life would remain frustrated. After the Cold War, this approach even extended to generate a utopian vision of a world accepting the Western world view to live without conflicts and that became the founding philosophy of economic globalisation and global institutions. The exclusive west-centric economic approach founded on a pure market- centric approach and based on a world free of conflicts, received a civilisational shock though the 9/11 attack. Almost immediately, in 2005, the firmly established idea

of “One Size Fit All model” for the entire world and humanity came to be reviewed by global institutions -- particularly touching upon economic and human development issues. In October 2005, G20 nations recognised *“there is no uniform development approach that fits all countries’ ‘ and “each country should be able to choose the development approaches and policies that suit its specific characteristics while benefiting from the accumulated experiences in policy making over decades.”* Later, in May 2008, just ahead of the global meltdown, the World Bank, on review of its own experiences, said: *“In our work across the World, the World Bank has learned the hard way that there is no one model that fits all. Development is all about transformation. It means taking the best ideas, testing them in new situations, and throwing away what does not work.”* Subsequently, the United Nations, which in 1951 had commended to the underdeveloped nations in the garb of one size fit all economic model and a one size fit all cultural and civilisational model, reviewed its position drastically in 2010 and again in 2013 *“Development must be nationally-driven, Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro stressed today, rejecting the “One Size Fit All” approach to eradicate poverty and foster economic growth”*. Even though these declarations were made from time to time, there was no practical shape given to nationally driven models of development. Before any work could be done on nationally driven development models, came the 2008 crisis, which even more seriously questioned the economic theories of the West, and particularly, the Anglo-Saxon economic theories. With multilateralism weakening, the one size fit all models, which rested on it, will also undergo an expedited change towards a national and cultural paradigm. The VIF, which is engaged in the big task of a civilisational perspective for India has to take serious note of this huge and welcome shift in its future strategic studies.

It is against this background that India has to prepare for the post-Covid-19 internal and external challenges -- contain and eliminate Covid-19, handle the border threat from China, work out a Covid relief and stimulus and address economic growth.

XXXIII. Covid-19 and post Covid Internal and external challenges of India

The challenges that India faces in the Covid-19 onset period, which is still on and even deepening, and in the post Covid-19 period, are multifarious, multi-dimensional and extraneous in the form of security threats from China and Pakistan, individually and together. As we look at the challenges, fortunately the most positive tool to face and manage the Covid-19 and the post-Covid-19 national and global challenges, are a strong single party government under a strong leader who is globally respected. This was in place at the time when the virus hit India and it is even more fortunate that it has a further four year tenure till 2024. It would have been a disaster had the Covid-19 phenomenon occurred last year, or if Indian elections were to be held this year like the American presidential election which is taking place amid raging fury of Covid-19. Here are some of the immediate and inevitable challenges which India has to face and handle, which is not exhaustive, but merely illustrative.

1. Containing and eliminating Covid-19

The foremost challenge for the central and state governments in India is to contain and stamp out the Covid-19 spread expeditiously so that the nation can move on from Covid crisis management to handle

the post Covid-19 challenges and the reconstruction of the economy. This will call for a concerted effort by the state and central governments with the active support of the social capital of India -- the 2.5 lakh village panchayats and communities.

2. China's border threat diplomacy

Even as the Covid-19 crisis is persisting, China has launched border threat diplomacy against India -- like the gun-boat diplomacy of 19th century against Japan -- to distract India away from development and growth and condition its mind psychologically to focus on the borders and work more to prevent escalation into war at one end and to prepare to wage a war at the other end. This conditioning will also deepen, because from India's perspective, China can force India to face a dangerous two-front war with both China and its closest ally Pakistan. That Pakistan is itching for revenge because of its defeat on the Kashmir issue, which has been the soul of its anti-Indian nationalism. The resoluteness with which India has handled China's bullying tactics is a clear reversal of the 1962 psychology which has always weighed on its mind when dealing with China. An actual war between two nations is followed by a psychological war. In the psychological war which is on between India and China, India has matched the Chinese threat. The Prime Minister's visit to Ladakh and his comprehensive message is sufficient proof of India standing up to China like it never has been prior to this government and before Doklam.

But just India entered into a defence treaty with Russia ahead of the war with Pakistan, which ensured that the US did not intervene in the conflict that eventually led to the creation of Bangladesh, this time around India should work out appropriate military and economic alliances with the G7 nations which have equal concerns about the threat from China. This will be a natural alliance of democracies. India should forget the non-alignment kind of geopolitics and go for strategic trade and defence alliances to resist China and its proxy Pakistan.

3. Covid-19 crisis Relief, stimulus and financing in India

The Covid-19 crisis is an ongoing issue. Unless the Covid-19 war is won, the relief and stimulus will remain a continuing affair. The last word on relief and stimulus will come only when the Covid-19 crisis is over. Therefore, any comparison of Covid-19 relief and stimulus by different countries, will not lead to correct conclusions. Be that as may, a comparison between the Covid-19 relief and stimulus in India and in the world shows that on the face of it many western nations have announced bigger fiscal stimuli than India. But a deeper and closer look at the extent of comparative stimulus in India and the advanced nations would show that the comparison is inappropriate and even wrong. All governments, including Germany, are in deficit. That means any government has to borrow and spend. The US has \$22 trillion in banks assets and \$38 trillion in stock market capitalisation, the EU has \$48 trillion in banks assets and \$16 trillion in stock market capitalisation and Japan has \$18 trillion in bank assets and a stock market capitalisation of \$6 trillion. Yet none of them accessed a single dollar from either banks or stock markets, but announced fiscal stimuli without a dollar in their pockets. How? They funded the Covid-19 crisis by

just borrowing from and issuing bonds to their central banks, which means just printing money. They wanted the whole world to refrain from doing so but have themselves violated their own rule time and again since 2008. But India has not done that. It has borrowed from the state-owned banks and funded revival from public sector banks funds. It is appropriate to mention here that the rating agencies include the unprovided non-performing assets of public sector banks in their sovereign rating of India, which means that the public sector bank risks are borne by the fiscal authority, namely the government. If that is factored in, then two-thirds of India's relief and stimulus is fiscal. In contrast the entire G7 stimulus is by printing money, which in economic terms is called as monetising deficit. While the Reserve Bank of India has not ruled out monetisation of deficit in the future for Covid-19 relief, so far the government has been very prudent, perhaps keeping the powder dry for the still continuing Covid-19 crisis.

4. Economic Revival and growth:

The pre-Covid economic downturn induced by global factors as well as by domestic situations has been accentuated by the huge adverse and ongoing impact of Covid-19. The growth for the current year 2020-21 is bound to be negative with the total and partial suspension of economic activities for months. But rural India, largely free of the Covid-19 crisis, seems to be doing well. The reported 27 percent rise in pre-monsoon sowing of Kharif crops as compared to the previous year is a healthy sign that agriculture may drive the growth of India in 2020-21. A recent report [July 1, 2020] by the Centre for Monitoring for Indian Economy [CMIE] has indicated that rural employment has risen back to pre-Covid levels. On a broad view, economic growth in the coming months in India will be partly driven by internal impulses and partly by favourable external factors.

Even though internal security issues in India have an external dimension, in the last few years there has been considerable improvement in internal security.

XXXIV. India's internal security issues

There has been perceptible reduction in terror incidents in India since 2014. According to the South Asian Terrorism Portal, the number of incidents have come down from 2163 in 2014 to 490 in 2019, civilians killed from 1910 to 566, security personnel killed from 680 to 275 and terrorists killed from 3756 to 441. There has been no major Islamist terror incident outside of Jammu and Kashmir. Left extremism is still active but the incidents as well as killings have shown reduction.

National security issues in India are mixed up with external security because of the hangover of the partition of India, the creation of Pakistan, which measures its nationalism by its hatred for India and the unfortunate wrong handling of the Kashmir issue while framing the Constitution of India, which gave unwarranted special status to the border state of Kashmir. Reports indicate with the decline in terror incidents and in the recruitment for terror, and the elimination of important terror leaders, the stage is now set for the government to consider conferring statehood for Jammu and Kashmir and hold elections to complete its Mission Kashmir.

The internal security issues in India are increasingly getting mixed with politics, which is in itself a serious risk for national security. The political transformation which is taking place in India from the late 1980s is to infuse a more intense idea of India in public discourse, which is redefining the concept of secularism practised earlier, which had become virtually competitive vote-bank politics. The degeneration of constitutional secularism into vote-bank politics is one of the biggest risks of internal security. This has tended to bring about divisions within the society and polity on every issue as the nation witnessed last year -- whether it was the Triple Talaq law, Article 370, Citizenship Amendment law, or even an issue like the Ramjanmabhoomi, which was the subject of a judicial verdict.

The nation needs a robust and honest debate on the limits to politicisation of national interest and national security issues as breaching the limits divides both the polity and society. This cannot be merely the subject of political discussions or discourse. It calls for wider participation by the entire polity, consisting of political parties, the judiciary, executive, society, media, social and spiritual leaders. The government should activate interactions like the National Integration Council and expand its scope to discuss and bring about a national consensus on this critical issue.

With the global order which made the world overly inter-dependent and under stress with great questions hanging over it, it is time for India -- which is 1/6th of humanity, to think of being more self dependent and less dependent on the world in its own interest because of its sheer size and in the interest of the world.

XXXV. Time for AtmaNirbhar Bharat -- Self Reliant India

Almost anticipating the stated and unstated global signals, and as a futuristic Indian response to the Covid and post-Covid global developments and challenges, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has expounded the idea of AtmaNirbhar Bharat -- Self Reliant India. He has been emphasising on this agenda repeatedly for the nation to internalise and work on. This does not appear to be a short term idea or a knee-jerk reaction. He seems to have been preparing the nation for it since he assumed office in 2014. Even though he chose to unveil this agenda before the nation and the world only now, when his government decided to abolish the Planning Commission and institute a think tank in its place in 2015, he had laid the seeds for an AtmaNirbhar Bharat in the cabinet resolution which instituted the NITI Aayog. The NITI Aayog's overarching philosophy was set out in the Union Cabinet resolution dated 2.1.2015, which went on to emphasise how external transplants cannot work in India and directed the NITI Aayog to focus on Self Reliance. It said: *"Perhaps most importantly, the institution must adhere to the tenet that while incorporating positive influences from the World, no single model can be transplanted from outside into the Indian scenario. We need to find our own strategy for growth. The new institution has to zero in on what will work in and for India. It will be a Bharatiya approach to development. The idea of AtmaNirbhar Bharat expounded in the NITI Aayog resolution was not an exclusive autarkic. The resolution calls for effective participation in the global commons. On the influence of the world on the comity of nations and on Bharat, the NITI Aayog resolution said: As India 'contributes' to global endeavours, it is also influenced by happenings far removed from our borders. Global economics and geo-politics are getting increasingly integrated.... India needs to be an active player in the debates and deliberations on the global commons, especially in relatively*

uncharted areas”.

The critical word is “to contribute” -- which means a contributing India. For a nation of India’s size and importance, self-reliance is inevitable and India being self-reliant is the best way it can first make its effective contribution to the world commons. If India does not do it, how it would be not a contributor, but a consumer can be easily explained taking just one instance. India with a huge population, which was one sixth of the world’s and with over 11 percent of the globe’s cultivable land, was importing food in the 1960s. That India was a consumer [of food] from the world and not a contributor [of food] to the world. Now India is not only self reliant in food, but also adds to the granary of the world. AtmaNirbhar is not to remain independent or exclusive from the world, but to contribute to the world and not just remain a consumer. An India dependent on the world will be a consumer, not a contributor. Moreover, an AtmaNirbhar Bharat is founded on the national effort as the core and the global input as the additive, and not the other way round, i.e. the world input as the core and the national effort as the additive. Globalisation was wrongly understood and emphasised to mean that development will happen by the very force of global market activated by mere liberal laws and policy prescriptions by a municipal government to facilitate global trade and FDI. Fortunately this wrong perception of globalisation is being righted by the intervention of Covid-19.

A nation like India, which has 17.5 percent of the world’s population, has to be self-reliant on core human and national demands first to make its effective contribution to the world. If India were one hundredth of its size, like Singapore or Hong Kong, it need not be self reliant on core demands of people. It can rely on the world and other countries and move on. An India of the size that it is, if it is reliant on the world for its core human and national demands, will be a liability to the world. It has to be self reliant to be an effective contributor to the world. India has to follow the Nation First rule even to participate in the world as that itself means taking care of one-sixth of the world population. But till the advent of Trump in the US, any talk of nation first was itself considered blasphemous in the field of economics and the very idea of self-reliance was considered as an anachronism in the world that was dreamt of becoming a global village. But swimming against the current, some eminent economic thinkers like Norwegian economist Eric Reniert had been contesting the idea of globalisation centred on the supremacy of finance and financial instruments and arguing for industrial growth, manufacturing as more critical for development and jobs -- in short for sustainable development. AtmaNirbhar Bharat, which is the sustainable development alternative to globalisation, is also the inevitable model as anyway with globalisation becoming weak and even irrelevant.

For affecting such significant changes as India needs, including climbing on to the paradigm of Atmanirbhar Bharat, there has to be a substantial degree of national consensus than seen at present in the national polity.

XXXVI. Need to build national consensus in Indian polity

It is also time efforts are made to strengthen the national polity and for that purpose build national consensus on important issues like electoral reforms, including funding of elections, internal democracy and elections in political parties, relations between political parties inside and outside parliament, orderly conduct

of parliament, relations between the judiciary and the executive, judicial appointments, probity in public life and in the federal polity and on issues. But the debate should centre on India and the tendency to look for borrowed ideas and solutions from outside India which will not suit Indian conditions should be avoided even though the best practices from all over the world may be of guidance. The VIF should promote discussions and programmes aimed at building a national consensus.

The future world will need a higher degree of moral values than it has been able to demonstrate post-World War II and more so after the Cold War. India, which has been for millennia a nation which has run on moral order and for which it was respected in the world, has somewhere weakened in its moral underpinnings. It has to address this as the world would need a morally resurgent India which needs to build institutional moral authority.

XXXVII. Need for national introspection and debate to re-build institutional moral authority

Nations are built on moral character. The freedom movement was led by men of high moral character who had no desire for power or office. No nation had such illustrious moral leadership in the 20th century. But how is it that India as a nation lost its moral foundation first in politics and how it quickly spread to all areas of the polity, including the executive, judiciary, media and, of course, business? This question calls for national introspection dispassionately to analyse where we erred as a society and a polity to lose the connect with the moral underpinning that formed the foundation of the freedom movement. A brief recall of how moral values in public life was compromised first for political success, and deliberately undermined for acquiring absolute power and how it ended up destroying the moral fibre of national polity is necessary for any effort to rebuild moral values in a polity. This recall is necessary because the present generation of Indians are unaware of how moral values collapsed in the polity from the late 1960s. The Indian polity which had inherited high values from the freedom movement suddenly lost its high sense c

The national polity had broad moral underpinning till mid-late 1960s when the monolithic Congress party that inherited not only goodwill, but also the values of the freedom movement, had remained united. With the split in the ruling party, engineered by the ruling regime using state power against dissenters within the ruling party, unfortunately it was the Prime Minister, whose responsibility it was to uphold moral values, who herself, in total breach of political morals and by blatant use of state power, personally worked to defeat and actually defeated the presidential candidate her party had proposed, and she had endorsed. She had signed the party candidate's nomination and defeated him, dealing a body blow to political morality and claimed the victory of the opposition as her victory to show her own party for what it was -- a rump -- without power and her. At one stroke, power and success became the political norm. The collateral result was that the large spectrum of national and regional leadership which represented the party's federal organisational pyramid was destroyed at one stroke and a host of ruling party leaders who constituted the party's natural succession model were driven into political oblivion. The president so elected by breach of promise was used to undermine the institution of the presidency till then occupied by illustrious men of high public character. This open repudiation of public

and political morality by the highest political authority led to further and irreversible decline in democratic and moral values and gradual acceptance of such decline as part of politics.

The idea of inner party democracy disappeared with the split in the Congress, leading to coterie politics, which gradually and finally yielded itself to dynastic politics. It was then that the practice of branding those who dissented began as part of political discourse. The ruling regime began innovating concepts of committed bureaucracy and committed judiciary, and in the process undermined the independence of both. The discourse ended with the ruling regime destroying the independence of the judiciary by superseding judges and delegitimising the judiciary itself. All this led to the acquisition of absolute power by the ruling regime and, as the ruling party's organisational structure weakened and inner party democracy became extinct, absolute power came to be concentrated in the hands of a few. This soon led to extra-constitutional authorities exercising constitutional powers and sequenced corruption on a scale unheard of till then and a loss of legitimacy and credibility of the national and regional leadership. This was how moral values became irrelevant and success became the touchstone in politics, the bureaucracy and the judiciary, and generally in the polity. Political decline infected businesses where once values were respected and this led to a celebration of buccaneers who succeeded by testing the limits of law. When all this was resisted in the mid-1970s by a mass movement of opposition led by Jayaprakash Narayan, the ruling regime, threatened with loss of power by an adverse judicial verdict for corrupt practices and a national revolt, imposed the emergency, clamped dictatorship and arrested all national leaders opposed to the coterie, subordinated the judiciary and virtually brought constitutional democracy to extinction.

In a bid to acquire electoral legitimacy for the dictatorship, the ruling regime ambitiously ordered elections which it thought it would win given the bizarre state of the opposition and ruling party. But the people of India threw out the ruling regime and the dictatorship in the most shocking manner in the history of democracy. The quick fix Janata Party formed by the opposition parties combining, which won the elections, collapsed in under three years, paving the way for the return of the very perpetrators of the emergency back to power. This proved that morals are a burden and basis for politics and the polity. The trend has been irreversible since then. Except in patches, there has been no effort or possibility in a competitive politics based on lower and lower values. The collapse of values is also reflected in the fractured politics and bizarre coalitions that lasted almost three decades.

Recalling this sordid story of how the Indian polity was bereft of morals that infected and affected all institutions, is a condition precedent for responsible political parties, leaders and intellectuals to dispassionately introspect on how to recover moral values and the foundation of institutions of polity. Fortunately, the people of India have given a stable government since 2014 and re-elected the present government again in 2019. Despite the multiple problems it is facing and the unfair criticism it is subjected to, this government has a fairly clean image and a record of success on diverse fronts. It is seen to be uncompromising on national interest issues. It has leadership which has global acclaim. This government, which has the potential to course correct the

derailed polity, owes a duty to the nation to reverse the destructive moral degeneration which has haunted our polity and people for almost four decades.

Nationalist institutions like the VIF should endeavour to promote discussions and debates and involve important intellectuals and nationalist thinkers to create an ecosystem which will enable the basis for moral regeneration in the country.

And here comes finally the most critical role of the VIF. The VIF has to work on national and global civilisational issues to conceptualise a non- conflicting civilisational order which draws more from the spiritual aspects of human life and less from the pure material urges of human beings to build a world order founded on a collective of humans rather than a collection of humans.

XXXVIII. The World needs a non-conflicting civilisational paradigm as an alternative to the pure materialist ideologies which seem to have played themselves out -- and the VIF role in shaping it

Covid-19 seems to have physically and mentally stunned a world moving at supersonic speed and stopped it and forced into introspecting and realising whether the social, political and economic trends and lifestyles that was becoming universal in the last century and more in the last quarter of it through the blinding idea of globalisation, is sustainable in the future. Of the two powerful and competing pure materialist ideologies, one was perceived to have failed at the end of the Cold War and the other, whose validity came to be questioned in 2008, seems to be failing miserably as its foundations appear to be not durable enough to handle a crisis that has reached beyond pure material economics. Pure materialism founded on individualism appears to have reached a dead end. Both materialist ideologies have failed. The intellectual world has repeatedly spoken of the end of ideologies. So long as secular thought systems claim to be the repositories of truth and declare others as false, which is true of both Karl Marx and Adam Smith, there will not be an end to the ideological paradigm. The world needs an alternative philosophic model as distinct from ideological models. Philosophy includes dialogue and ideology rules it out. Both Marx and Market ideologies were founded on the view that they were infallible and all other views fallible and false. That is why both of them rule out dialogue that will question their infallibility. One could at best argue within the allowed limits of their belief that they were only right and perfect, but not questioning that belief. In a sense, both Market and Marx ideologies are like religions which will consider any questioning their belief as blasphemous. Both are homogenising in effect.

Increasingly, the political order of different nations, particularly democracies and even more importantly liberal democracies, is now becoming more fragile. Western liberal democratic societies are not able to produce stable governments. Most governments are formed by compromises and cobbling together post-coalition alliances. Domestic political perspectives and domestic geopolitical perspectives are ever shorter. A domestic political regime's perspectives in a democracy, is limited to the electoral term of the government or the leader. Elections in most democracies are yielding such split outcomes that government formation through a post-poll

coalition becomes difficult. For example, the delay in such a mature democracy like Germany took as many as six months to thrash out an alliance to make a government. Therefore, politicians whose ideas and goals are circumscribed by the limits of the term of their office and who operate and succeed or fail in a particular context, are not best qualified to think of durable solutions for the problems of humanity. A national and global order founded on greater durability than mere political institutions is needed.

Again, the shelf value of thoughts propounded and expounded by geo-political forces in the last few centuries are declining in their useful validity period. For example, Colonialism ruled for 200 years. Its successor, Capitalism, ruled for 100 years. Its counterpart, Communism, lasted for 50 years. Finally, globalisation, which capitalism and communism yielded, lasted for just 25 years.

The ever declining shelf value of successive ideas shows that the founding ideas of these institutions have short duration validity, even though their contextual power is so high that each one of them looked like ruling the world forever.

The world needs a philosophy that transcends the power of the context for ideas to increase their useful shelf life. The West is obviously running out of long term ideas and is arrested by a shorter and shorter span of attention. Here is a business economic example commonly known to investors in corporate stocks 25 years back, investors were once looking at annual results and in the years before to make or keep their investments. Then they began to look at half yearly results to keep or sell their stocks, and then quarterly results to decide whether to keep or sell, and now, overnight, interest rates decide buying and selling. After quarterly results and overnight interest became the deciding norms, there are very few investors who would bank on a company on a long-term basis. The world, which was working on long-term interest several years back, is now working on short term interest and interest arbitrage between one overnight regime and another. Just as this has destabilised the investment business and robbed it of durability, the world desperately needs a durable long-term view transcending short term considerations. Political leaders given to short-term electoral and governance issues are not trained to think long-term. We need to involve civilisational experts, historians and other segments of the society in a dialogue to shape the emerging global order. Here is where the VIF has a different and unique approach.

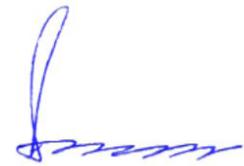
The post Covid-19 world needs a civilisational philosophy which will recognise the diversity of the world and seek harmony amid diversity. This is the biggest challenge before world thinkers. The Western world, solely led by the power of religion first, politics next and pure materialism later, has only produced wars and conflicts. To get away from the ill effect of its tradition of conflicts, the Western world has embraced individualism and liberalism which atomised societies and even families. What the world needs today is not just a civilisation paradigm, but a non-conflicting civilisational paradigm which transcends the pure materialist view of life. Civilisational paradigms which foster diversity of non-formal normative orders around the world, transcend the limits of the durability of the political order.

With this background in view and transcending the contemporary trends in intellectual and strategic thinking, the VIF has made some significant progress in this regard through the Samvad initiative, which is founded on

ancient Indian philosophy of conflict avoidance based on dialogue. Time is ripe for the VIF to deepen its work in this area and interact with other think tanks. The times ahead are not only interesting, they are risky and challenging. With the increasing relevance and importance of India in geopolitics and geo-economics, the VIF, which is the most prominent of India centric think tanks that is independent of the influences which many think tanks are risked into, will have a significant role to play in shaping and developing the alternative paradigm which the world desperately needs.

As I end I appeal to Team VIF to launch into understanding, unravelling and expounding that what the most challenging year has unveiled thus far and has not as yet and the period ahead thereafter in human history.

August 2020



S. Gurumurthy
Chairman, VIF

If faith in ourselves had been more extensively taught and practiced, I am sure a very large portion of the evils and miseries that we have would have vanished.

- Swami Vivekananda

About the VIVEKANANDA INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION

The Vivekananda International Foundation is an independent non-partisan institution that conducts research and analysis on domestic and international issues, and offers a platform for dialogue and conflict resolution. Some of India's leading practitioners from the fields of security, military, diplomacy, government, academia and media have come together to generate ideas and stimulate action on national security issues.

The defining feature of VIF lies in its provision of core institutional support which enables the organisation to be flexible in its approach and proactive in changing circumstances, with a long-term focus on India's strategic, developmental and civilisational interests. The VIF aims to channelise fresh insights and decades of experience harnessed from its faculty into fostering actionable ideas for the nation's stakeholders.

Since its inception, VIF has pursued quality research and scholarship and made efforts to highlight issues in governance, and strengthen national security. This is being actualised through numerous activities like seminars, round tables, interactive dialogues, Vimarsh (public discourse), conferences and briefings. The publications of VIF form lasting deliverables of VIF's aspiration to impact on the prevailing discourse on issues concerning India's national interest.



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