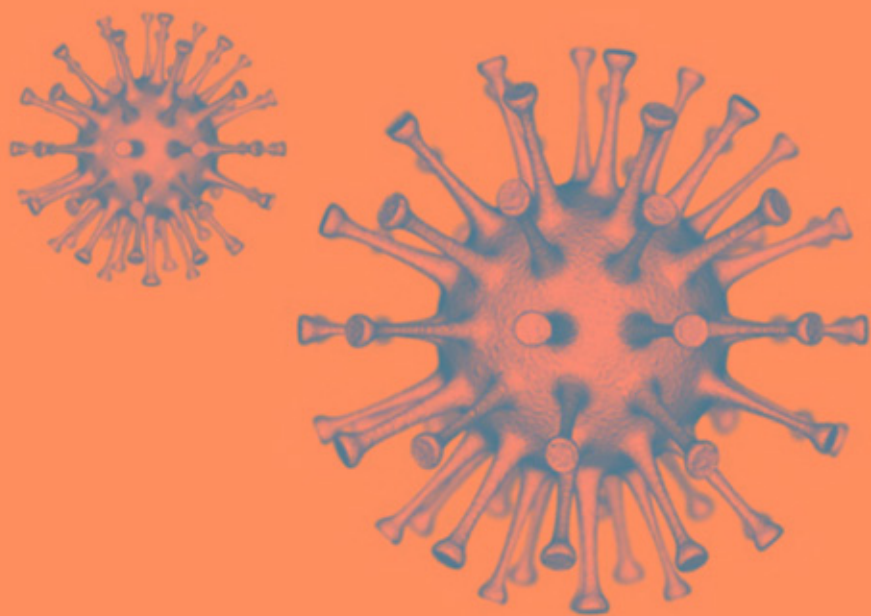

POST COVID-19 WORLD ORDER: AN OVERVIEW



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Vivekananda
International
Foundation

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Published in 2020 by

Vivekananda International Foundation

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Abstract

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has been described to be the most disruptive global event since the Great Depression and the Second World War. Since its rise, the pandemic has impacted the world in many ways. For instance, its impact on global economy has been disastrous so much so that to get the economy back on track will be an arduous task. Additionally, the global politics have also been shaken up by the outbreak of the disease and has raised concerns about the future of the contemporary world order. The liberal world order that has been in place since the end of the Second World War was already losing its ground even before the rise of the pandemic because of several reasons. The COVID crisis has exacerbated the issues that have dominated the existing U.S. led world order. In fact, the crisis can be attributed as the ‘tipping point’ as it is likely to change or alter the rules-based liberal world order. Several factors are becoming a part of the discourse which would most likely to dominate the shaping of the new world order which is likely to emerge post the crisis. India, too, is expected to play an important role in shaping the order of the world once the crisis is over. Over all, the coronavirus pandemic seems to be a game-changer for the global politics.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has been described to be the greatest challenge for the world since the Great Depression and the Second World War. No country and its people had anticipated that they would have to deal with a crisis of such a large scale. The corona virus, which first originated in the city of Wuhan, capital of China's Hubei province, in December last year has now spread to almost every part of the planet and at the time of writing has infected more than forty million people worldwide and killed more than one million people.¹ Once the virus outbreak was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO), the immediate actions taken by most of the countries was to close its borders and ban any kind of movement into and out of the country. Within the boundaries as well, strict measures were taken to ensure that the spread of the virus is controlled. The crisis has impacted the world beyond imagination and is likely to affect it further with far reaching consequences. One of the most discussed subject matter in the present time has been the impact of the COVID crisis on the existing world order. It is being argued that the crisis has exacerbated the underlying issues that had been building up for some years now as far as the order of the world is concerned. Experts are also apprehensive about the future of the world order and are debating that the pandemic may alter the order of the world once the crisis is over. At the moment, it is not feasible to assert as to what kind of order is likely to emerge

post the pandemic, however, several factors are being put forward which are likely to influence the Post COVID-19 world order. This paper is an overview of the perspectives of the experts with respect to the world order which is likely to emerge post the COVID-19 pandemic. It focuses on some of the major geopolitical factors which are likely to shape the order of the world post the crisis and also on the role which India is most likely expected to play. However, before diverting the attention towards the debate, it is important to have a greater understanding about the liberal world order established by the United States post the Second World War, which still holds a ground in the contemporary world but its basic tenets are slowly fading away.

Background

It is in the wake of the Second World War, the United States established a liberal world order with the support of other Western democratic countries especially the United Kingdom.² The order was supposed to be the one which would be open and based on a set of norms, rules, and institutions and values such as respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of other countries, and the protection of human rights.³ It was based on maintaining peace, prosperity, and stability around the world.⁴ In this regard, institutions like the United Nations, World Bank, and the World Trade Organization were built to promote peace, economic development, and trade and investments.⁵ Apart from establishing institutions, the United States also formed alliances and developed relationships with other countries. It is argued that the liberal order expanded and evolved further after the end of the Cold War. For example, the NATO was expanded, the G20 took center stage, and there was also an establishment of U.S. led security arrangements.⁶ Additionally, the United States took in its hands to spread democracy and other liberal values as far as possible.⁷ Thus, with the end of bipolarity, the West assumed that the liberal order was now global. One of the biggest achievements of the liberal order has been that since its creation no other World War has been fought. It is also believed that the world has made great progress especially under the banner

of globalization, which is one of the most important elements of the liberal economic order. The order is also said to have lifted many people out of poverty all across the globe. However, just like the saying goes ‘not everything is perfect’, the liberal order too has its shortcomings which seem to have been building up since a long time now. For years, the liberal order has been criticized by both China and Russia for being extremely ‘west-centric’. Both autocratic powers have time and again challenged the basic tenets of the order. In China’s view, the U.S. led world order is ‘unfair’ and ‘unreasonable’ as it perpetuates western dominance while keeping China’s influence down and it is incapable of solving and sometimes even adds to world’s most serious problems.⁸ Russia, on the other hand, advocates a Westphalian world system which is tolerant of pluralism among nations. Additionally, the United States, since 2016 seems to have become disinterested in leading the world and is drifting itself away from the rules and values which were once established by it. Similarly, the West also seems to have moved in the same direction by showing less interest in maintaining the world order alongside the US and moving away from the basic principles of the order, one such example would be the Brexit. Another issue concerning the liberal order is the rise of new authoritarianism in countries such as Poland and Hungary of Eastern Europe. Along with these factors, the pandemic seems to have added to the chaos impacting the liberal order. It is being argued that the COVID-19 pandemic might be the first global crisis with a complete absence of the U.S. leadership. It is an event where there has been no sign of global cooperation and even the international organizations seem to have failed to deal with this catastrophic situation.

The COVID-19 Crisis is further Challenging the Liberal Order

Many developments have taken place in the world since the outbreak of the pandemic and they seem to be testing every aspect of the liberal order. Some of them are mentioned in this section.

China's Erratic Behaviour

As mentioned above, China has been very critical of U.S. led liberal order. To understand the Chinese view with clarity, a speech delivered by Fu Ying, chairperson of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National's People's Congress, in 2016 in London is of great importance. According to her, the liberal world order comprises of three elements which are: American or Western values, the U.S.-led military alignment, and the UN and its institutions.⁹ She further adds that the Chinese support the third element of the existing order and rejects the first two.¹⁰ This interpretation of the world order has been quite visible in the Chinese foreign policy as it has repeatedly refused to adhere to the liberal values like that of the 'protection of human rights' and the 'respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity' especially with its claim on the disputed islands of the South China Sea and elsewhere.

Since the pandemic hit the world, China's behaviour has been unpredictable and it has come under scrutiny for all wrong reasons.

Firstly, it was slow to report about the outbreak of the virus which first originated in the city of Wuhan to the WHO and also resisted a full transparency regarding the whole situation.¹¹ Furthermore, China has taken this crisis as an opportunity to advance its expansionist ambitions. Beijing has aggravated its territorial disputes with countries like India, Japan, Taiwan, and with few of the ASEAN countries over claims in the South China Sea.¹² Beijing also recently introduced a new security law for Hong Kong which caused a huge stir not only within the region but also across the globe so much so that it made President Trump to sign an executive order ending U.S. preferential treatment of Hong Kong. However, in his speech at the 75th session of the UNGA, President Xi Jinping said that China will never seek hegemony, expansion, or sphere of influence and they had no intention to fight a Cold or a hot war with any country.¹³ He also emphasized that the COVID-19 pandemic reminds the world that the humankind should launch a green revolution to preserve the environment and make planet earth a better place for all.¹⁴ In this regard, the Chinese President added, that China will scale up its intended nationally determined contributions by adopting more rigorous policies and measures and aim to achieve carbon neutrality before 2060.¹⁵

The Absence of United States Leadership

Ever since President Trump came to power, his 'America First' policy has undermined the United States' role in global affairs. Hence, it is no surprise that it did go its own way ever since the pandemic struck the world. The United States is said to have not participated in the virtual summit of the G20 in the month of March.¹⁶ It has also attacked the international institutions rather than motivate them to take charge of the crisis.¹⁷ Additionally, the United States did not engage itself in a virtual meeting organized by the WHO for the global leaders to accelerate cooperation on the coronavirus vaccine

and to share medicines, treatment, and research.¹⁸ This action was perceived by many as a sign of President Trump's isolationism on the global stage.¹⁹ One of the reasons behind this action was that Trump has expressed his dissatisfaction with the World Health Organization (WHO) for being too China-centric and went further ahead and described the UN agency as a 'puppet of China'. This finally led him to announce that the United States would stop all its funding to the organization in the middle of a pandemic. Hence, the COVID crisis has seen a complete absence of the leadership of the United States.

Escalation of Tensions between China and the United States

Tensions between the U.S. and China escalated when both the countries got involved in a blame game regarding the origin of the virus and the U.S. became heavily critical about the Chinese covering up the initial outbreak of the virus in Wuhan and leading it to become a global pandemic. President Donald Trump accused China of being responsible for an attack on USA that is "worse than that of Pearl Harbour", and "worse than the World Trade Centre".²⁰ He went ahead and tweeted in late May that the Chinese incompetency in dealing with the virus is responsible for "mass worldwide killing".²¹ In his speech on May 29th 2020, the day he announced that the United States will be cutting the funding of the World Health Organization (WHO), he attacked China for taking advantage of the United States in trade for decades, for unlawfully claiming territory in the Pacific Ocean, for breaking their word to the world for ensuring the autonomy of Hong Kong, and its total control of the WHO.²² On the other hand, China claimed that the virus originated with the U.S. military.²³ In one of the press briefing, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson urged the United States to stop shifting the blame and turn to facts.²⁴ She further said that

Washington should “fight side – by – side” with Beijing instead of as “enemies”.²⁵ The United States has also been quite vocal about the expansionist behaviour exhibited by China following the outbreak of the virus. It has condemned China’s recent actions in the South China Sea and accused it of taking advantage of the whole situation in order to expand its territorial ambitions. President Trump was also seen targeting China over the latter’s decision to introduce a controversial National Security Law in Hong Kong. In one of his press conferences in the White House, Trump said that he no longer considered Hong Kong to be separate from China, and accused it of violating its obligations under the 1984 Agreement.²⁶ He told the reporters that “*China has replaced One Country, Two Systems with One Country, One System*”, and that this was a tragedy for Hong Kong and China had smothered its freedom.²⁷ Furthermore, in his speech at the UNGA 75th session, President Trump once again targeted China and said that the world must hold it accountable for unleashing the plague to the rest of the world.²⁸ He further added that Beijing has been destroying the environment by dumping millions of plastics into the ocean, overfishing other countries waters, damaging the coral reefs, and emitting more mercury into the atmosphere than any country in the world.²⁹

Asian Countries Overshadowing the West with their Response towards the Pandemic

The response of some of the Asian countries like South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan in dealing with the COVID crisis has been lauded by the world. In fact, both Taiwan and South Korea have moved forward with ‘agile responses’ which was based on collaboration, transparency, and accountability.³⁰ Japan, on the other hand, unlike Taiwan and South Korea went ahead with contact tracing and cluster-busting methods.³¹ On the regional level, Japan has also reached out to help other countries. It has supplied essential medical supplies and

personal protective kits to Cambodia.³² It has also pledged \$18.6 million for aid to Vietnam to fight the COVID-19 outbreak and has also offered an anti-flu drug for free to almost 20 countries ranging from Southeast Asia, Middle East, and Central Asia.³³ South Korea and Japan, both have close economic relationship with China which now seems to have been greatly impacted due to the ongoing crisis and have also started to 'reset' its ties with Beijing.³⁴ For instance, both Japanese and South Korean companies operating in China are being encouraged by their respective governments to consider relocating back to their respective home countries or to other neighboring countries of Southeast Asia and India, the impact of which is going to be huge for Beijing.³⁵ Similarly, the Pacific powers, both Australia and New Zealand, have followed onto the footsteps of the smaller East Asian countries and have been able to control the spread of the virus. They have also extended their regional diplomacy towards their small island pacific neighbours like Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste, and Fiji with personal protective equipment and other medical supplies.³⁶ New Zealand has also reached out to help some of the Southeast Asia countries such as Indonesia to ramp up their testing capacity.³⁷In a similar way, Southeast Asia without a doubt was quick to take remedial measures to control the spread of the virus in the region.³⁸ ASEAN as an institution opted for a joint and coordinated response in order to combat the disease by not only raising awareness of its member countries but by also cooperating with international organizations and other countries.³⁹

These Asian powers have shown that they have the ability to deal with a crisis of such large scale in a much better way than the West. In a post-COVID 19 world, it is quite likely that they will have a greater role to play in shaping the international politics. For example, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) which consists of India, Japan, and Australia apart from the USA may become an

important multilateral forum for the upkeep of regional security.⁴⁰ In a recent meeting of the foreign ministers of the four countries, they pushed for a rules-based world order and peaceful resolution of disputes.⁴¹

European Union Facing an Existential Crisis

The European Union is an integral part of the rules based liberal international order. The COVID-19 crisis seems to be challenging the very existence of the multilateral institution. This, however, is not the first time that the Union has faced such challenges. In the past, it has dealt with the 2009 debt crisis, the 2015 migration crisis, and the much publicized Brexit. However, the COVID crisis is said to be the Union's biggest challenge since it was created in the wake of World War II.⁴² The initial response by the member states was that they went their own way in order to deal with the crisis instead of cooperating with each other. This however, seems to have changed as the wealthier countries like Germany started sharing medical supplies and also allowed patients with critical conditions from its neighbouring countries for treatment purposes.⁴³ Additionally, the members of the Union have also had a consolidated response for the public health sector crisis in the region.⁴⁴ However, there opinions are divided as far as the economic recovery of the region is concerned. The economic impact of the COVID crisis across the region has been asymmetric, impacting some countries like Spain and Italy harder than others.⁴⁵ The less-wealthy southern European nations are pushing for the issuing of the so called "corona-bonds" which is a proposed Eurobond that would provide liquidity to countries whose economies are in need the most as a post pandemic support from the wealthy north European countries who are in strong opposition of this common debt instrument.⁴⁶ On the other hand, leader of the populist nations like Hungary and Poland have taken advantage of the crisis to strengthen their grip on power. Hungary, in early

April, passed a law which effectively removed any oversight and silenced any criticism of the government and also gave the Prime Minister Viktor Orban the power to rule by decree for an indefinite period of time.⁴⁷ Hungary is the one and only country as a part of EU which has come to be considered as 'partly free'.⁴⁸ The EU seems to be failing the test that the COVID crisis has put it into. Its existence is under threat as the very principles and values that form the multilateral set up is being contested by its own members. The current crisis has definitely weakened the institution further.

The Post-World War II Multilateral Setup is Losing its Relevance

Questions have been raised on the role of global multilateral institutions especially the United Nations and its agency the World Health Organization (WHO) for not playing its part and initially mishandling the COVID situation. This has led for many to believe that the COVID crisis is threatening the very existence of such institutions. However, as a matter of fact, the post War multilateral architecture was already under crisis even before the rise of the pandemic. Several factors can be attributed towards this development. Firstly, U.S. president Donald Trump who is not a huge fan of the multilateral arrangement has been openly contesting it since the time he came into power. He has withdrawn the United States from many such important arrangements like the Paris Climate Accord, Iran Nuclear Deal, Trans-Pacific Partnership, UN Human Rights Council, and the UNESCO. In addition, President Trump has repeatedly threatened to withdraw from the World Trade Organization (WTO) which is a key component of the liberal economic order. In fact, the WTO's Dispute Settlement System has become non-functional as for roughly two years the United States has blocked the appointment of new judges to its Appellate body due to complaints over judicial overreach and concerns over

U.S. sovereignty.⁴⁹ This directly threatens the overall existence of the WTO. Additionally, the rise of China also impacted the global multilateral system by setting up parallel governance structures such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Global institutions like the United Nations are also weakening.⁵⁰ To illustrate this further the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) has become a debating club without any significant outcomes and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has also become ineffective.⁵¹

With the rise of the pandemic, nations across the world turned inward and abandoned opportunities for consultation, joint planning, and collaboration.⁵² Additionally, the initial response of the World Health Organization (WHO), towards the virus outbreak has not been satisfactory and has brought the organization under scrutiny so much so that the U.S. president decided to stop funding the UN agency on the grounds of alleged biases towards China.⁵³ The lack of concerted action by the multilateral groupings such as the G7, G20, and the UNSC has also raised questions about their relevance.⁵⁴ A pandemic of such a large scale required strong global cooperation which has been missing since the initial days of the virus outbreak and the disease has also exposed the flaws of these multilateral arrangements in particular of the WHO. As it has been very well described by Stewart M. Patrick who argues that “the pandemic has revealed both the limits of the multilateral system and the horrific costs of the system’s failure”.⁵⁵ On the other hand, it is being argued that the pandemic has strengthened the desire amongst most nations for greater global cooperation.⁵⁶ In the recent United Nations General Assembly’s 75th session, the member states via pre-recorded video statements overwhelmingly stressed the need for collective action to tackle common threats and “vaccine multilateralism” to combat the coronavirus.⁵⁷ For example, President Xi Jinping in his speech spoke about enhancing solidarity and getting through this difficult time together.⁵⁸ Few of the

member states also stressed on the fact that the pandemic has clearly demonstrated the need to reform multilateral systems including the UN.⁵⁹ Emphasizing this point, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his speech put forth that reform in the responses, in the processes and in the character of the UN is the need of the hour.⁶⁰

As far as the future of the multilateral set up is concerned, two kinds of views can be expressed in this regard. A more pessimistic view is that unless these institutions undergo major reforms, its future seems irrelevant.⁶¹ It is highly unlikely for organization such as the WTO to be completely reinvented especially with the participation of a non-transparent China.⁶² It is quite likely that the WTO will weaken further through unilateral actions and become extinct.⁶³ By contrast, it has been argued that the post Second World War multilateral institutions have survived difficult times in the past.⁶⁴ For example, UNESCO and the Human Rights Council survived the departure of the US and the WHO despite of its shortcomings will survive without the US funding.⁶⁵ It is quite unlikely for the current multilateral order to capsize completely.⁶⁶ More than anything, the world today needs a more dynamic multilateral architecture in order to deal with various other global issues like that of climate change, terrorism, poverty reduction etc.

Regions like the Middle East and Africa have also been hit hard by the pandemic. They are home to some of the most fragile states in the world which are already dealing with political, economic, and humanitarian crisis. The pandemic is likely to make the situation worse for such weak states. Similarly, the Latin American and Caribbean nations have been affected badly by the pandemic. It has been predicted by the IMF that the economic growth of the region will contract by 9.4% with almost every country going into a recession.⁶⁷ This decline in economic growth is expected to exacerbate income inequality and poverty throughout the region.⁶⁸

These occurrences have surely raised concerns about the future of the world order among the experts. The next section deals with some of the dominant factors which are likely to shape the Post-COVID 19 world order.

World Order Post COVID-19 Pandemic

The U.S. led liberal order at present is at risk. The pre-COVID era challenges that surrounded the order and the ones that are encompassing it now has had many observers and experts perturbed about the future of the liberal order. One important claim made by the architect of the post-Cold War order, Henry Kissinger, is that “The coronavirus pandemic will forever alter the world order.”⁶⁹ Many others have followed his footsteps and have repeated the same assertion. Although such claims are being made, there is no clarity as to what kind of world order is expected to emerge post the crisis. The discussions, however, do include the factors which are most likely to shape the global order in the wake of the pandemic. This section outlines some of the major factors which are likely to influence the world order post the COVID-19 crisis. Those are:

- **The China Factor-** Although Beijing has been criticized for its irresponsible behavior and expansionist policies, it will play an important role in shaping the world order post the COVID crisis. It is probable that China may emerge stronger from the crisis. So far, it has managed to bring the crisis under control and its industrial production is said to have increased even as that of every other country has been hit.⁷⁰ It is quite possible that the pandemic may push the international system into a world with Chinese characteristics.⁷¹ Even though the virus did emerge there, it seems that it will be the one to benefit from the crisis.⁷² Looking at its current expansionist behaviour,

China's rising global ambitions and the global response to that will also frame the post-COVID world order.⁷³ Post COVID-19, Beijing will also try to undermine its regional rival, India, from developing itself.⁷⁴

- **The U.S-China Rivalry Factor-** another and perhaps one of the most important factors which is likely to influence the post-COVID 19 world order would be the kind of relationship that unfolds between the two most powerful countries of the world. Even in the pre-COVID era, tensions between the two great powers had started deteriorating and the ongoing crisis has made the situation worse. The U.S.-China rivalry is expected to continue even when the crisis is over. It is quite possible that the world is heading towards an intersection of 'global recession' and a 'New Cold War'.⁷⁵ Since the onset of the pandemic, the U.S.-China great power dynamics have taken a new shape and the relationship between the two is consequential for global order and governance.⁷⁶ For instance, if the relationship between the two super powers continues to deteriorate, it will have a profound impact for the rest of the world. One of the regions where the rivalry will be most visible would be Asia and the continued straining relationship between the two super powers will put the region in danger.⁷⁷ For instance, the United States will try to make sure that China does not become a 'regional hegemon' in Asia and China accordingly will try to undermine U.S. ties with its Asian partners and reduce its role in the region.⁷⁸ It will also put Europe in a difficult spot to choose either side and although the European nations would prefer to remain neutral, they will not be able to do so and will continue to rely on U.S. protection.⁷⁹ Hence, a continued deterioration of the relationship between U.S. and China will have far reaching

consequences not only for them but also to the whole world of trade, business, and politics.⁸⁰

- **The United States Conduct as the Leader of the World** - another important determinant which is likely to restructure the world order post the crisis is the conduct of the United States as the leader of the world. Thus far, it seems to be disinterested in continuing with its responsibilities as the leader of the liberal order. The absence of the United States in leading the international response to the pandemic has strengthened the perception that it cannot be relied upon to uphold the international order that it once created and if this narrative continues then it will have an impact on its allies who in turn will have to stick to self-help rather than cooperative action.⁸¹ In other words, if the United States continues with its current policies, it may lead to a complete collapse of the liberal order.

At present it is difficult to come to a concrete conclusion as to what type of world order would emerge once the crisis is over as events are still unfolding at the moment and is expected to develop further. For instance, the upcoming U.S. elections will also have a huge role to play in shaping the post COVID-19 world order. However, there are a few experts who have attempted to make an effort. For example, Francis Fukuyama has argued that the post-COVID 19 world could either see the United States' relative decline, the continued erosion of liberal international order, and a resurgence of fascism around the globe or, it could see a rebirth of liberal democracy.⁸² Similarly, G John Ikenberry asserts that the next global era would be that of the great power competition in which Washington will struggle for dominance with China and Russia, and other rival powers.⁸³ He describes this new era as a 'fractured world' which will offer little space for multilateralism and cooperation and would destroy of what

is left of the global institutions indicating a further deterioration of the liberal world order.⁸⁴ However, according to him, the new era also gives an opportunity to the United States, to reverse its course and choose a different path to reclaim two centuries old liberal international order which is open, multilateral, and anchored in a coalition of leading liberal democracies.⁸⁵

Although, the liberal world order is in crisis, and if the above arguments are to be trusted, some experts believe that it is still the best for the world to prosper. It has been perfectly stated by Qingguo Jia that no matter what flaws exists in the current world order; it is still the best that humankind has created.⁸⁶ She adds that most nations have a stake in the existing order and are therefore, more likely to stick with it.⁸⁷ Another view has been expressed by Vijay Gokhale, a former Indian Ambassador to China, that the world needs American leadership to remind it that respect for freedom and human dignity provides the best path to a shared future of humankind.⁸⁸ He further states that the Beijing model, where an authoritarian party-state single-mindedly exalts economic betterment over free political may look attractive to some but it cannot be widely emulated and democracy by contrast is based on universal principles that can be followed everywhere, and by everyone.⁸⁹

India in the Post Covid-19 World Order

India's rapid response in order to control the virus has been lauded by many.⁹⁰ India led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has guided many countries, regional forums like SAARC, and even initiated a virtual meeting with the G-20 countries to discuss the challenges posed by the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and to forge a global coordinated response.⁹¹ In addition, India has also shown compassion, togetherness, bonhomie collective

security, and humanitarian cooperation by sharing with the world the drug hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) on humanitarian grounds.⁹² Moreover, India has mobilized forces for disaster management drills, organized digital trainings to share its medical expertise with other affected countries, and has actively partnered on global efforts to develop remedies and vaccines against the virus.⁹³ In early June, India accepted the invitation from US President Donald Trump to attend the next Group of Seven (G7) summit that is to be held in the United States later this year.⁹⁴ Moreover, India was elected a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for a two year term.⁹⁵ On 22nd May 2020, Dr Harsh Vardhan, Minister of Health and Family Welfare, of India was elected as the Chair of World Health Organization's Executive Board.⁹⁶ Domestically, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan' also known as 'self-reliant' India which is about resilience and decentralization and not isolationism.⁹⁷ The Prime Minister announced a Rupees 20 lakh crore economic package under the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan, to aid the nation out of the COVID crisis.⁹⁸

While these are some major developments that have taken place since the outbreak of the pandemic at the global as well as the national level; at the regional level India seems to have been dragged into a territorial dispute with its giant neighbour, China. Tensions between India and China began in early May when there were reports of skirmishes in Eastern Ladakh's Pangong Lake region.⁹⁹ It escalated and took a violent turn when troops from both sides clashed in the Galwan Valley in Eastern Ladakh and India lost around 20 soldiers, including a commanding officer on 15th June.¹⁰⁰ Following this incident, there has been a wide-ranging anti-Chinese sentiment across the country especially for boycotting Chinese goods and services from traders' community as well as the civil society.¹⁰¹ New Delhi also banned 59 Chinese mobile applications

citing that these applications posed serious threat to the country's sovereignty and security.¹⁰² India, in April, imposed restrictions on Chinese financial investments into India from cheaply buying stakes in Indian firms by the cash-rich Chinese companies.¹⁰³ The situation at the moment is still very critical as there is a continuous manifestation of aggression from the Chinese troops at the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

India's Role in Shaping the Post-COVID 19 World Order

India did not have any role to play in shaping the contemporary world order as at that time it was, in no position to do so, either geopolitically or militarily.¹⁰⁴ A lot has changed since then and the COVID crisis gives India with a historic and unique opportunity to play an important role in shaping the world order which is likely to emerge post the crisis and New Delhi is most likely to do so.¹⁰⁵ India before its independence was known to be an exporter of its ideas and thoughts, however, in the contemporary world India has been an importer and consumer of ideas.¹⁰⁶ This pandemic does provide India the context and ecosystem to regain its position as a contributor of ideas to the world.¹⁰⁷ India today is home to one-sixth of humanity which makes it highly unlikely to not occupy a space in a post-COVID 19 world order.¹⁰⁸ However, this reasoning is based on certain pre-conditions, which is, that India's position will depend on how it deals with the crisis domestically and how it emerges from it.¹⁰⁹ India has been able to enhance its position globally in the past few years especially under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and has also been appreciated for the way it has handled the situation of coronavirus so far.¹¹⁰ This will definitely give India a leverage to play an important in a post-COVID 19 world order.¹¹¹ However, one of the most attractive assets of India is its vibrant democracy which is different from

the liberal democracy.¹¹² Time and again, India has demonstrated itself to be a nation of democracy in diversity and a capacity to produce a stable government.¹¹³ Hence, among many factors that are likely to shape the post-COVID 19 world order, one of them is that there is a possibility of an alliance of democracies with India as a critical component of it.¹¹⁴ The post-COVID world is likely to see the rise of India to an apex level global eminence.¹¹⁵ New Delhi's relation with Beijing will however, continue to be on the edge. It is quite possible that in a post-COVID 19 world India's rise will be countered by China aided by Pakistan to de-focus it from development.¹¹⁶ However, in the long run, on the one hand, both India and China will remain cautious and suspicious of each other and on the other hand, one might expect a reduced but subsisting antagonism between the two giant Asia neighbours.¹¹⁷

In his speech at the UNGA's 75th session, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, called for a larger share of India's representation at the United Nations.¹¹⁸ He also added that the vision of self-reliant India will act as a force multiplier for global economy.¹¹⁹ This clearly indicates that India wants to enhance its position on the world stage and the COVID-19 crisis provides India with an opportunity to do so. New Delhi should make the best out of this moment.

Conclusion

Covid-19 pandemic is proving to be a game-changer for the world. The debate on the impact that the pandemic has had on the world order has brought out many important issues that needs to be pondered upon. Out of many, the issue of the U.S. losing its interest in leading the world is the most concerning one. The world is now looking forward for the November 2020 presidential elections of the United States. A lot will depend on the outcome of these results. Trump, who is not fan of multilateralism, may end up sabotaging

the system. As far as Joe Biden is concerned, one needs to wait and see as to what path he might follow. The second important issue is that the international institutions that were formed in the wake of World War II needs reform. Most of them did not have public health in their agenda and the World Health Organization (WHO), a specialized agency of the United Nations which was formed to be responsible for international public health, clearly failed to control the breakout of the virus. The last issue would be that of the increase of Chinese aggression towards its neighbours in the midst of the pandemic. Its behaviour in the South China Sea and recent hostility towards India raises questions about its quest for expansionist ambitions in the post-COVID 19 world order. In order for a peaceful and prosperous world to exist even after the crisis is over, these issues need to be reviewed. At the moment, the order of the world seems to be in a transitional phase. As far as the future of the world order is concerned, at present, it is difficult to predict as to what kind of order would emerge post the pandemic as the crisis is here to stay and it is quite likely that several other factors may emerge which may play a decisive role in bringing a change in the world order. For a world order to exist the rules, norms, and institutions should be effective and legitimate and should be accepted and approved by most of its participants. If at all some major differences emerge among the major powers and the very basis of the order are being contested by them, then the order becomes less effective and durable. Hence, the liberal world order whose existence was already at risk in the pre-COVID era has been further challenged by the crisis. Its effectiveness is gradually fading away and if the United States does not gather itself to revive the order back which it once established, the world is likely to witness the collapse of the liberal order.

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