

“Post COVID-19 World- Change in Power Structures and Dynamics”

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Ever since the COVID-19 outbreak has been declared a pandemic, cottage industry has seen a rise amongst the viewers of foreign policy over the repercussions that the pandemic might have on the global order. More often than not, such deliberations end up being a probe in anticipating China and its likelihood of replacing US as world’s superpower. There’re contentions both in support of Chinese gaining an upper hand, and conversely that its leverage is on its way down.

Global order, the substantial issue that concerns us is the likelihood, that the outbreak has cultivated in the minds of global politics onlookers. It goes without saying, the pandemic will have afar reverberations and global diplomacy would have a greater influence by it. Critically enunciating, I am discomfited with this tale of change. Instead, an inquiry that is worth scrutinising is, whether the pandemic in itself is a manifestation of a greater change that the world has experienced ?

Global order is the constellations of the authority grading amongst several nation-states at a distinct point in time and space, in other words, the global order is circumstantial and rationalises where one stands. Having said that, it would be unseemly to suggest that there is no pattern to politics. Ever since the collapse of Soviet-Union, the conventional wisdom profess that the global serenity has remained one dimensional – with the United States as the world’s solitary superpower. For over 30 years, the world is existent under the US supremacy.

In several aspects, it could be asserted that the US supremacy is complete and it overshadows every facet of our lives. The US has thorough control over the primary institutions that regulates the global economy. It has a great influence on the United Nations and its specialised agencies, yet the US President Donald Trump accuses the World Health Organisation (WHO) for “covering up” the catastrophe, froze funding and threatens to perpetually withdraw from the WHO. In my perspective, this’s a key acknowledgement of the fact that in spite of its economic and political clout, the result of globalisation have surpassed the United States. The world’s superpower has become the worst hit by the outbreak of pandemic. There lies the solution to the question we’re exploring, *is the outbreak a hint that the global order has varied fundamentally ?*

For several years, China has be constantly portrayed as an alternative superpower. President Barack Obama in his final State of the union address, jubilantly proclaimed towards the end of his presidency that, “the United States of America is the most powerful on the earth”. His next-in-line, as per the SIPRI report, increased the military expenditure for the first time in

seven years in 2018 and this was over thrice more than its closest rival, China. If this were to be perceived in terms of power, then the US remains unquestioned and the global order is unchanged.

PANDEMIC BREAKS OUT

In the era of globalisation, Anne-Marie Slaughter opines that *power is diffused in networks and connections*. The high-powered is the most connected. She analogizes this to a consonance that an orchestra produces – contrasting harmonies from multiple instruments fusing in a rhapsody as a result of eloquent coordination. What does this ascertain about the COVID-19 ?

The pandemic is an alert and it has come at a juncture when analysts of foreign policy were optimistic of the American sovereignty to protect its citizens. The technological evolution of this century achieved a fair shrinking of the world- popularly described as globalisation. The two institutions that led this- the IMF and World Bank are in more than one way, US spearheaded. These institutions have also impacted the global economic progress since the cold war. While the US has made the most of it, what has been time and again overlooked is how many other countries have benefitted out of this. China is, indisputably one.

The virus that has emerged in China in December 2019 in a city that is not amongst the top 5 cities of China. In the late January, the BBC cited a professor who opined that there wasn't a need to panic. However, three months later, the US has turned out to be the worst affected. In 2020 as well, the US was equipped to capture China on trade and foreign policy, but was unsuccessful in shielding its own citizens from a pandemic. Lack of oversight, paucity of medical supplies, delay in imposing social distancing protocols, absence of aggressive testing has been contended as crucial aspects which has not been taken care of which has led US to devastating results.

The pandemic is a clear indication of the degree of Chinese influence and a changed global order. The SARS outbreak over a decade ago took the lives of as few as 8000 people from over 30 countries. The prevailing scale is far-reaching and entirely different. 6 million and counting in across 150 countries and counting. Barring Antarctica, no continent has been left untouched.

IS IT A SIGN OFF ?

The global order will not change after the pandemic, but the outbreak in itself is a symptom of a changed world order. While the borders are vigilantly created and patrolled, these are still susceptible to infiltration. Regardless of the best designs, boundaries in the contemporary world have turned out to be a failure in order to contain the virus. It uncovers

the issues regarding the efficacy of the boundaries in a globalised era. Is any country completely in constraint of its borders ? Is that even attainable ?

The outbreak has also brought to spotlight what for overlong has been altercation of the non-western intellects of foreign policy. The world cannot be precisely categorised into underdeveloped, developing and the developed. There're compartments of the developed world in the developed and the underdeveloped and contrariwise. The sheer mishandling of the pandemic in the United States is an obvious instance of this entanglement of the underdeveloped and the developing/developed. The world's powerful & prosperous nation has failed to secure its citizens, also recorded the most number of cases and deaths till date.

This leads the way to the final outlook of the new global order that the outbreak has revealed. The origin and the envoys of insecurities aren't situated in the defence proficiency of the rival states but in the aspects of livelihood, health or lack thereof.