Reimagining the Geopolitical Landscape: Halfway House between Post-Pandemic Perestroika and Conformity from India's Perspective

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Abstract

The COVID-19 Pandemic has accentuated pre-existing Geopolitical fissures and Geostrategic dissonance while signalling a seismic shift in the security architecture of the de facto Post-1945 Liberal International Order, while eroding the normative attributive elements of the present global order that is predicated on National Sovereignty, Rule-based Multilateralism and Economic Liberalism. In a dystopian atmosphere of trust deficit, pyrrhic rise of Ultranationalist Xenophobia, Polarized Pluralism, Authoritarian and Protectionist Policymaking behaviour embedded in an Autarkic nostalgia, the political imagination is being restricted to the monopolized ontological domination of the nation-state, that catalyses the retreat of "Hyper-Globalization" while crystallizing the language of securitization and militarization. As a perverse revenge of nature against the gross anthropocentric abuses made by mankind, the global leadership footprints and constellation of powers are witnessing a tectonic shift, among a vast array of cyclical transformations that are re-shaping the global landscape. In the context of a virulently debilitating Pandemic, heightened economic and technological decoupling between the USA and China and plagued with multidimensional security predicaments in its own neighbourhood that has germinated an existential crisis for the architectonic systems of collaboration and diplomacy, India needs to navigate its way forward and maintain strategic equilibrium and regional stability. The fundamental objective of this paper is to comprehensively highlight and assess the on-going Geopolitical trends, transformations and challenges, offer a kaleidoscopic insight into the future of the Post-Pandemic global order vis-à-vis a series of broad-based normative speculations on multiple empirical observations, deconstruct the global power equations, suggest policy prescriptions, alternate measures of international governance, as a

prophylactic against the radical alteration of the status quo. An additional emphasis has been placed on India and its South Asian neighbourhood, while reasserting the importance of strategic coherence and regional integration as its *Raison d'être.*

Keywords: *Re-balancing; geopolitics; regional stability; world order; multilateral cooperation.*

Introduction

"Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;

Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world…"

When William Butler Yeats in his seminal work, "The Second Coming" (1919) had painted a harrowing description of an impending and on-going catastrophe, of things spiralling out of control while getting enveloped by an overarching menacing anarchy, chaos and disorder, after the First World War and the Spanish Flu Epidemic, little did the world know about how exactly his prophetic vision would resonate with the present rueful state of affairs, exactly a century later.[1] In a dystopian climate propelled as a perverse revenge of nature against the gross anthropocentric abuses made by mankind, the de facto Post-1945 Liberal International Order is undergoing a tectonic shift vis-à-vis new kind of power balancing amidst Great Powers' contestation for hegemony and influence, with multidimensional ramifications for the architectonic international systems and security, and the strategic landscape of the international arena. The new pieces of the unsolved jigsaw puzzle primarily indicates the crystallization of a Bipolar World order and normatively, ideationally bifurcated one with a primarily Asia-centric epicentre of power, amidst the accentuated geopolitical rivalry between the USA and China. The COVID-19 Pandemic is undoubtedly the biggest global crisis after the Second World War, with far-reaching implications for every sphere of collective life, ranging from politics, economics, international relations, security, and society to geopolitics.

Signalling a paradigmatic shift in the structural architecture and constellation of powers in the international system, the COVID-19 Pandemic has dramatically altered global leadership footprints in the present Liberal International Order, that is predicated on the attributive or constitutive basic tenets of National Sovereignty, Economic Liberalism

and Free Trade, and Rule-based Multilateralism.[2] Accompanied with the pyrrhic rise in the form of China's hegemonic assertiveness, with its overt demonstration of strategic, economic, diplomatic, military capabilities, and the unilateral withdrawal of the USA, as exhibited in its unwillingness to project itself as the "Global Policeman" and architect of global trade, a "G-zero" de facto world system has crystallized in an environment that reeks of leadership vacuum owing to the manifestation of political lacuna at the international theatre. Almost in an Orwellian fashion, in a global atmosphere of acute trust deficit, alarming erosion or degradation of the multilateral institutional arrangements and frameworks of collaboration, ascendancy of Illiberal Populism, rise of Protectionist policy-making instincts and Authoritarian exercise of power, growth of Economic Nationalism and Ethnocentric political culture fuelled by Nativism, the fulcrum of the Post-1945 Liberal International Order is subjected to a plethora of cyclical and even structural transformations, that is germinating an existential crisis for the architectonic systems of international cooperation, collaboration, friendship and solidarity. Confronted with myriad negative catalysts like economic slowdown and contracting of global economies, breakdown of markets, unresolved social tensions, debilitation of social contract, secular decline of the dynamic designs of democratic political systems, rise of Xenophobic Ultranationalist political formations, increasing securitization and mobilization on the closures of borders, the COVID-19 Pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing geopolitical tensions, by deepening a series of cleavages and accentuating hostility, antagonism and confrontation on a global scale.[3]

Dissecting Indian Strategic and Security Architecture

Against the backdrop of comprehensive degradation, India is not an exception and has been severely plagued with multifaceted and multidimensional predicaments and a series of challenges ranging from its economic breakdown in a Keynesian tailspin fashion, skyrocketing unemployment and hyperinflation, severe migrant labour crisis, widening economic inequality, political mudslinging in a climate of polarized pluralism, that has enduring and wide repercussions for every societal strata, power structures, extending from the domestic state-centric space to the international arena, especially India's security and strategic realm.[4] Biren Nanda,

The COVID-19 Pandemic has accelerated on-going geopolitical trends and developments in the international system, from sharpening the trade, economic and technological decoupling in the pre-existing geopolitical spat between the USA and China, to exposing the retreat of Globalization, fuelling the rise of Economic Protectionism embedded in an Autarkic nostalgia, and highlighting the fledgling dilapidating institutional arrangements for regional cooperation, especially in the form of the South Asian Association For Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in the South Asian region, that has proved detrimental for regional stability and strategic coherence in the Indo-Pacific region. While the Pandemic has aggravated and has made a deep impact on various pre-existing regional conflicts, regional cooperation movement, insurgencies and insurrectionist movements, terrorism, migration, the pertinent question that looms in the horizon is that whether the COVID-19 Pandemic has led to more co-operation, collaboration, stability or increased competition in the South Asian region of India's immediate neighbourhood. With borders shutting down and cyclical lockdowns affecting the global market in a volatile climate of trade and tariff wars, India is faced with a vast array of challenges ranging from the impact of the Pandemic on the flow of regional migrants and refugees, to the maintenance of its diplomatic posture through its Soft Power designs.

To make things worse, the recent robust pushy foreign policy decisions of India has bred gratuitous provocation and hostility, and has soured its bilateral relations with its immediate neighbours, diluting the underlying importance of India's Act East and Neighbourhood First policies. Contemporary developments like straining India's enduring bonhomie with Nepal, the lack of generosity expressed with Sri Lanka, behaving unnecessarily impertinently with its longstanding ally Bangladesh, the culmination of confrontation and escalation of hostilities with China and Pakistan, while reasserting its territorial claims aggressively has illustrated a hawkish foreign policy behaviour on India's part. The inward-looking reactionary inconsequentialist attitude of India's foreign policy-making infrastructure and security architecture, with blatant disregard for deliberations, dialogue, diplomatic bargaining, has led to a series of tactical, strategic and diplomatic miscalculations, with not enough bandwidth in India's decision-making establishment.[5]

Following the COVID-19 Pandemic and amidst the on-going process of global economic slowdown, wherein major economies of the world are shrinking, contracting, suffering from acute global public debt crisis and demand crisis, dramatic decline in oil prices, skyrocketing unemployment and economic uncertainty due to insecurity, there has been a major change in terms of massive structural damage on India's domestic economic architecture, financial institutions and stock market, with massive negative impact on India's labour, supply chain, capital costs, job market, stalling of infrastructure and construction projects and financial transactions, halt in marketplace economy and fall in government revenue limiting the ability to provide stimulus packages. With a remarkable change in the overall demand for goods and services as a result of the comprehensive devastation occurring to India's economic activities, labour-intensive industries have been hit the hardest, apart from having dire consequences for business confidence, investment, lack of rent payments and non-payment of debts to banks. It is increasingly evident that the myriad economic changes will shape the political agenda in the Post-COVID world, and thus the creation of parallel financial global ecosystem that will diminish the structural disruptions, systematic bifurcation and fragmentation of the global financial architecture into America-dominated and China-dominated sphere, is the need of the hour, especially from India's perspective where negative growth rates are shrinking its economy to 23.9 per cent in the recent fiscal year. Further, taking into consideration the menace of economic breakdowns with glaring examples of worst-hit nation-states like India, the alarming condition can be ameliorated, if the Keynesian concept of Diminishing Marginal Propensity for Consumption is taken into account and the government is proactively engaged in the enactment of counter-cyclical fiscal policies, creating public works, transfer payments, inject liquidity and stimulate the demand from below by having a multiplier effect that will pull the economy out of recession.

Pandemic Predicament and Solutions

The immense economic burden will automatically play out in India's national security parameters and the ability to play national security cards and to make its defence expenditure stay up to date with recent efficacious capabilities will be adversely affected and magnified due as a result of the Pandemic. Confronted with repeated intelligence and logistical failures,

cross-border tensions in the form of Chinese and Pakistani intrusions, prevalence of turbulent and tumultuous atmosphere along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and the Line of Control (LoC), the COVID-19 Pandemic has overtly exposed the lack of military preparedness of the Indian army and the immediate urgency of a comprehensive military modernization programme, especially when it was compelled to abandon Ladakh military exercises with China and was plagued with Chinese intrusions into its naval space. With China's Belt and Road Initiative guaranteeing economic leverage vis-à-vis infrastructure and connectivity building networks and supply chain integration in the South Asian region, the hegemonic rise of China has commanded political deference as a by-product from India's immediate neighbours in the Indo-Pacific, and has further diluted the enduring significance and integrity of the SAARC project in fostering inter-regional and intra-regional diplomatic co-operation. A state of constant flux sans structural predictability in the Asia-Pacific region, with a Chinese centre of gravity in the recent past, has extensively witnessed putative order-building tendencies in the form of Chinese assertiveness, and China's empire-building instincts have been undeterred and uncurbed even by a devastating Pandemic. With the Chinese aggressive behaviour creating new dynamic power equations in the Asia-Pacific, in its quest to establish itself as the regional hegemon, as exhibited in the Korean Peninsula, naval intrusions into the Indonesian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), South China Sea or the East Asian Crisis, the COVID-19 Pandemic, additionally is bound to alter the security dynamics of regional stability in the Asia-Pacific, especially in the South Asian region of India's neighbourhood, and accelerate these on-going developments and trends in the strategic realm.[6]

With a crippling SAARC initiative, at the heart of which lies the contentious Indo-Pak bilateral relationship, the teleological pursuit of regional integration remains a mere utopian ideal due to practical constraints, pragmatic and grave geostrategic challenges. South Asia is an integer and is meant to be ideally integrated effectively by virtue of its historical, geographic, ethno-linguistic, cultural ties and civilizational commonalities, but the lack of focus on prioritizing on connectivity, collaboration, co-operation and friendship, totally beset with contradictions, have been further complicated by a disease of mass

destruction. India's acute governmental mismanagement, deepening cross-cutting ties and cleavages driven by prejudice, antagonism, hostility and despair in the time of Corona has pushed India away from cross-border co-operation and exercise of robust diplomatic practices at the international theatre, as an inhospitable climate of insularity and dissonance has erected barriers, shut down doors of collaboration, partnership and bonhomie, and signalled the death of diplomatic engagement. The COVID-19 Pandemic has also clearly exposed the lack of emergency preparedness and the troublesome condition of India's public health infrastructure, as reflected in one of the lowest medical testing rates and alarmingly low investment in medical research, development and infrastructural advancement. As a test of political legitimacy, vertical and horizontal accountability, good governance and stability, the Pandemic has been crucial in acting as a reality check for India's political process, having long-term fallout on a diverse range of ontological indicators that will shape India's political future.

India's border conflict with China might push its foreign policy stance towards adopting an asymmetric response, wherein flexing India's naval might in the Indian Ocean naval space, deepening cooperation with other powerful Liberal Democracies will deter Chinese aggression and bypass China's connectivity of oil and gas supplies to the Middle East. The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or the Quad, as an effective informal strategic forum between USA, Japan, Australia and India has strengthened its motivation by gaining traction in the face of Chinese belligerence, which will be crucial in shaping the geopolitical developments and it must assume a strict military role to combat crude Chinese pressure tactics. In order to contain and curb Chinese supremacy in its neighbourhood, as illustrated in the hugely significant power differentials between India and China, it is imperative for India to display willingness and pursue a change of attitude in drastically improving its systemic facilities, resources and capabilities and infrastructure, to play the game of rational deterrence with China, instead of going for a 1:1 capability mix. By avoiding the irrational practice of politicizing the origins of the Novel Corona virus while arguing and advancing on rhetoric filled unsubstantiated conspiracy theories that aggravate geopolitical spat and diplomatic chasm, it is an existential necessity for India to categorically subvert its recent display and exercise of

Protectionist trade instincts, as exhibited in important policy matters during the Modi regime, as a prophylactic against averting a potential trade war with the USA.

In the recent past, the practice of systematic imposition of increased custom duties, imposition of import-substitution rules on American goods, services and products, have been countered by the USA, especially in terms of the revocation of India's Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) benefits that has led to the creation of disillusionment and unnecessary frictions. India's tremendous importance and immense potential as a cog in the global supply chain of pharmaceuticals, Information Technology (IT) services as well as its significance as a huge export market for oil, gas and other minerals needs to be identified and addressed effectively, and India ought to be perceived and highlighted as a vital outlier in terms of global trade integration. With a prudent, pragmatic and coherent governmental approach and increased attention devoted to the definition of India's cross-border services that determine data protection rules efficaciously, India's limitations on its ability to enter the global data supply chain can be essentially avoided and it will significantly reduce the damage to its blooming IT services market. Further, the issue of workplace security – both individual and physical, respective definitions of essential services, smart infrastructure ensuring best practices, need to be recognized as immediate corollaries.

By avoiding and negating cognitive bias driven platitudes in foreign policy and decision-making exercise, investing substantially on public health, human and health security, shedding its past aversions to alliances, re-thinking, re-evaluating its strategic autonomy, developing multiple alignments and pursuing a dynamic Multi-track Diplomacy, India can at least aspire to inject a ray of hope by adopting a more imaginative teleological approach in international relations, that will revamp and rejuvenate its soft power apparatus and diplomatic posture in the international arena. [7]As a highly significant Maritime power, increased attention on the Indian Ocean naval space needs to be devoted with the expansion of India's foreign trade and booming economic potential, instead of just prioritizing, as per the historical record, on lengthy land borders with two Nuclear Power neighbours – China and Pakistan. Shifting the centre of gravity to the relative importance of the sea, as China has

started to make inroads into smaller South Asian nations for increasing its sphere of influence and preponderance of power, India must steadily intensify its military and diplomatic co-operation with Japan, France, the USA and Australia in order to check Chinese aggression around the "String of Pearls" in the Indo-Pacific. While resisting getting encircled, surrounded and constricted strategically, India must ensure that it has viable strategic space and strategic freedom in an environment where conflicts are becoming increasingly hybrid and the line of distinction between conventional notions of war and peace is getting blurred out. In this context, instead of politicizing violence as a tool of foreign policy, the recently acquired hawkish dimension to India's behaviour in its neighbourhood as exhibited in the legitimization of surgical strikes as a tactical strategy against Pakistan, needs to be replaced with multiple instruments of Track-II Diplomacy vis-à-vis its Soft Power apparatus.

Re-balancing, Future of International System and Hegemonic Rivalry

As far as the future of the global order is concerned, while deconstructing the "new normal" in the Post-Pandemic time, it can be speculated that the basic nature of world politics might not dramatically change in the sense the constitutive normative principles as cast-iron tenets are going to be obliterated permanently. The immediate emergence of some kind of effective global governance is highly unlikely and territorial states will remain the basic building blocks and key actors of world politics, wherein the competition for power, influence and regional hegemonic contestation will be the indistinguishable pattern of international relations. [8] However, the global backlash against Hyper-Globalization as exhibited in contemporary trends like Brexit, trade and tariff wars, decoupling of US-Chinese companies, illiberal nativist and statist instincts, rise of Apartheid states, Populist opposition to immigration and refugees, have weakened the Transatlantic Partnership, diluted the project of European integration and crystallized Euro-scepticism, while signalling the end of unchallenged popularity, prestige and assertive position of USA in the international arena, in the wake of gradual shift of power towards Asia. With increased authoritarianism and ultranationalist sentiments' pyrrhic rise in Poland, Hungary, Russia, Brazil, Turkey, and India, the Pandemic has accelerated the partial retreat of Democracy as a global initiative and in the absence of vaccination globally, rapid economic recovery will be sluggish and

insurmountably difficult to achieve. The COVID-19 Pandemic has revealed another major risk to increasingly integrated supply chains that had emerged as an offshoot of the Global Trading Order, and in this regard, countries and companies would parse out their supply chains to various other companies by becoming very tightly integrated and dependent, and perhaps on a single source of supplier because it was the cheapest and most economically viable. However, when individual companies attempted to diversify their supplies and tried to increase their stockpiles by bringing more production back home, especially medical supplies, a series of political risks, geopolitical turbulences, trade and tariff barriers were involved, making economies vulnerable to highly unpredictable political changes. It can be said that "Just-in-time" Economics, which was the hallmark of Globalization, will give way to "Just-in-case" Economics, with multiple supply chains to ensure continuity of direction in another major crisis, and as global economic growth will become tardy after the Pandemic, it will be not susceptible to political risks and other serious disruptions.[9]

The heydays of free-trade driven Globalization, wherein the effort to lower trade and investment barriers, lower the barrier to movement of people and create a seamless interconnected world dominated by market forces at the global level, has been subjected to a huge blow at the time of a horrendous Pandemic. The fear of infections in the future will inevitably strengthen the fear of Xenophobia and Ethnocentrism with the apprehension of foreigners and the concern that they might be bringing in diseases, ultimately reinforcing systemic racism, racial discrimination, and crystallization of scapegoating tendencies with erected barriers in an "Us versus Them" world, where the notion that some people from certain ethnicity, nationality and culture are inherently dangerous, will be prevalent. The COVID-19 Pandemic will usher in a less free world with securitizing emergency powers, De-globalization and increasing recursive border practices, all of which will ultimately lead to a constellation of political forces that are regressive with a dehumanizing effect.

In any kind of an emergency, states tend to limit any type of personal freedoms and civil liberties, government control inevitably increases and like in war times, governments impose censorship on the press and mass media, they tend to take over greater control of the economy and society and they impose secrecy laws to assume arbitrary exercise of power. The

Pandemic has led to cyclical lockdowns, irrespective of Electoral or Liberal Democratic regimes or Competitive Authoritarian or Totalitarian dictatorships alike, where governments have forced businesses to shut down, closed educational institutions, put more surveillance on people in public places, imposed mandatory testing with tracing programmes designed to spot those who might have the disease, and as an inevitable consequence of a national emergency, in some countries political elites have obtained "emergency powers", entitling them by giving them the right to override their Parliament or Congress, and in some cases eventually relinquished those powers. These restrictions are likely to continue and are justified as public health measures and governments in the future must have effective procedures, suitable institutional mechanisms to deal efficaciously with Pandemics. The record of governance of Democracies and Dictatorships has been mixed, and regime type has not determined the quality of response to the health disaster all over the world. For instance, Liberal Democracies like New Zealand can be hailed as examples of gold standard for effective Pandemic response, whereas the United Kingdom and the USA have been disastrous in combating the menace. Authoritarian regimes like Vietnam and Cuba were highly effective in dealing with the grave situation, whereas China had struggled initially. The arrogation of emergency powers has led to a disturbing political scenario in the domestic and international sphere, wherein the Pandemic has extolled the benefits of nationalism and statism, propelling the global competition among state actors in the realm of "Vaccine Nationalism". The rationale behind social and physical distancing norms, is essentially antithetical to the concept of politics as a whole, as politics is about popular engagement in collective decision-making; this physical distancing as a medical necessity can be taken undue advantage of by the authoritarian and ultranationalist political forces for their electoral gains, making the future seem bleak and disturbing, as the fear of the stranger, not only from different ethnic stock but also from within will envelop the social order.

Despite the Pandemic, the Great Power competition in the international system has gone undeterred, and although there has been a series of incentives to co-operate with a host of reasons why countries should work together to address the Pandemic, most state actors have gone it alone to respond individually. For instance, the USA has cut off funding to the

World Health Organization (WHO); Russia, China, USA and India have all declined to contribute to the European Union (EU) Vaccine Research Fund; and many countries have tried to protect their own national vaccine research efforts while advancing health nationalism, and being reluctant to share data and information about it. However, some signs of multinational co-operation and international collaboration are witnessed, as the international scientific community is sharing research and development related information to a large extent and the European Union has created a Rescue Fund to aid the recovery of multiple debilitating economies. Notwithstanding global efforts, the Pandemic is indeed a transformative event in world politics and has accelerated on-going geopolitical conflicts, for instance in Yemen, Syria, Ukraine, Afghanistan; border standoffs between India-Pakistan and India-China; and continued internal violence in Sudan. It is crystal clear that the future global order will likely witness the intensification of various pre-existing trends in the international system, especially the geopolitical rivalry between the USA and China being increasingly focused around Asia as the centre of gravity, with both the Great Powers vying for regional hegemony and dominant position in international affairs. China desires an unchallenged position without worrying about security issues in its immediate neighbourhood and over time, China will like to push the USA out of Asia, weaken or eliminate the security ties between the USA and countries like Japan, Australia and the Philippines. With a highly intense competition for global influence, the polarization of international politics will extend from the military, security, diplomatic, economic domain to the realm of cyberspace in the future, as it is a possibility that there will be one segment of the digital world with a China-centred internet probably using Huawei technologies and various Chinese applications, and the other segment of the internet will use more Western-oriented or American technologies, that will crystallize the creation of the "Splinter Net", where the world begins to bifurcate into two separate digital domains. [10]Europe is likely to be preoccupied with its immediate internal security issues and strategic challenges in its neighbourhood in the future, like Ukraine, North Africa, emerging dispute between Turkey and Greece over territorial claims in the Mediterranean Sea, Armenia-Azerbaijan skirmishes, etc. Ideally, Europe must chart its own way to avoid being squeezed between the USA and China, but

European countries will not be able to realistically remain neutral from Chinese influence and at the same time rely on American protection, which is politically beyond the frontier of possibility.[11]

Conclusion

Paradoxically, the risk of Great Power conflict both during and after the Pandemic, is increasing the optimism and incentives for international co-operation in a number of key issue areas, where collaboration and trust-building are essential and one of the major challenges will be to preserve those areas of co-operation, with the sole aim to bring the Pandemic to an end and try to be well equipped with all the necessary capabilities to deal with future ones with an emphasis to work together. [12]The second obvious area of co-operation is in the sphere of climate change, which will affect all the parts of the planet in different ways, and none of them in beneficial ways, and it will be a categorical imperative for global collaboration and co-operation between major Greenhouse Gas emitting nations like the USA, China, India, Russia, and Japan; otherwise this environmental challenge will remain unsolved, as it is impossible to tackle climate change unilaterally, as exhibited in the recent withdrawal of the USA from the Paris Climate Agreement under Donald Trump's presidency. Further, international co-operation needs to be extended to the realm of improving nuclear security, viz. controlling horizontal and vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons in their spread to different countries, and attempting to ensure that the existing stockpiles of nuclear arsenals in the world never gets used through the doctrine of rational deterrence, apart from ensuring that the nuclear weapons do not get stolen, nuclear materials do not get diverted to non-state actors, and that is a vital issue area where USA, China and Russia share similar interests in making sure that nuclear weapons are reliably controlled, whatever their political relationships might be.[13] Additionally, reforming the World Trade Organization (WTO) and Breton Woods Institutions must be viewed as a necessity and imperative for international co-operation, as the WTO is horribly out-dated, obsolescent in its functioning, as it does not deal with various important issues on the Global Trade Agenda, like it does not handle technology and digital markets particularly well. Thus, coming up with new rules of global trade and investment that can be unanimously agreed upon by state actors, having a universal application with an important priority for maintaining

productive and growing world economy, is highly necessary. International co-operation needs to be extended to revamping the dilapidating World Health Organization (WHO) as well, and by creating newer institutional arrangements and mechanisms for improving public health infrastructure, human and health security globally, as the WHO had failed horribly to combat the Pandemic effectively. Finally, closely related to that, international co-operation needs to be extended to attempts at developing a formal set of treaties and well-established set of norms, protocols, codes and standards of conduct in the Cyberspace – what sort of activities are permissible for governments to engage in and what practices might harm others that would not like to engage in, and come up again with a kind of rules of the road that govern the digital world.

Perhaps the greatest challenge in the future will be predicated on preserving, internalizing the biggest benefits and joint gains from co-operation among countries, that might be even rivals in an era of heightened geopolitical competition. It is easy for relationships between state actors to spiral down to increasingly hostile and suspicious level, and the enormous challenge of creating a more benign or beneficial world order is to embody the rationale behind international co-operation, collaboration, solidarity and friendship, when relations in other areas become more conflictive. It can be concluded that, by re-energizing and rejuvenating the existing nature of global institutions, practices, values and participation in a dynamic fashion, ensuring the proper diversification of supply chains, by keeping the structures and agencies of global governance afloat and functioning to the greatest extent possible in fidelity with rule of law, multilateralism and international co-operation, the radical alteration of the status quo into a degenerated bloody path can be avoided, and strategic equilibrium can be achieved especially from India's perspective, during the time of a horrifying Pandemic and a Cold War between the USA and China.

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