

CONSEQUENCES OF US - CHINA RIVALRY AND COVID -19: OPPORTUNITY FOR INDIA TO RISE IN GLOBAL ORDER

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ABSTRACT

India and the international community at large to witness transformations in the global order post-Covid-19 era and this provides large scale opportunities to the nation of 1.3 billion to play a dominant role in international geo-political map. Pre Covid-19 days, world witnessed the dominance of United States of America and newly emerging superpower China in the first two decades of 21st century. The international community, always, was sceptical of China's economic growth story and military might, worried about its muscular and aggressive foreign policy in Asian continent and across the boundaries. The business will no longer be equivalent to the pre-Covid days and other nations are looking for self-reliance or other sources for meeting their indispensable needs, apart from China. Therefore, in the post-Covid era in meeting these global expectations, India can be the global leader, whether in a health, economic, technological or pharmaceutical sector.

India, the largest democracy in the world, enjoys international support and cooperation and with US support can be the leading player in the international order, being better placed than any other nation in fighting this pandemic. India can be the new supply chain of the US and other western states. To become the global leader, India first need to act and survive this onslaught by Covid-19 and then thrive towards achieving the global leader status after taking advantages of opportunities such as new alliances in middle-east, rivalries between the United States of America and China.

Keywords:

International, Transformations, Geo-Political, Dominance, Nation, Economic, Technological, Campaign, Survive, Cooperation, Global, Superpower.

Article Received: 18 October 2020, Revised: 3 November 2020, Accepted: 24 December 2020

INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of this year, there were many incidents that bound to change the world order such as augment of rapid spread of novel coronavirus throughout the world, assassination of most powerful Iranian General Qassem Soleimani and other major actions such as drastic increase in United States led NATO forces attacks on terrorist establishments in Iraq and Syria, political instability in the Middle East region, Strategic alliances between states of divergent ideologies and erstwhile enemies, Maritime disputes between China and Japan and with other states of South East Asian region, Chinese invasion of Indian Union Territory of Ladakh and Indian retaliation to safeguard its territorial integrity and sovereignty. India can play a leading role in contemporary world order, in present scenario,

witnessing a growing suspicion on Chinese activities, misadventures and disputes with major economic powers of the world like United States of America and Japan.

HISTORICAL RIVALRY BETWEEN US and CHINA

The historical United States' aggression against People's Republic of China (PRC), since cold war, was due to the fact that it was sceptical of Chinese acts in the Asian continent and Indo – Pacific region and wanted to contain the spread of communist ideology led by erstwhile USSR and China. The United States of America, and its western allies such as United Kingdom, France and Germany, always acknowledged the fact that in order to contain the rise of mighty China, and its policy of expansionism and aggressive foreign

policy, they have to support India wherever possible against Chinese activities, as India is the only capable nation in the contemporary world that can stand tall against Chinese wishes, as it did in the matter of China's ambitious project of Belt and Road initiative and termed Chinese supported infrastructure installations, referred as so-called China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK), as illegal and violates India's sovereignty and territorial integrity and no country can accept a project that ignores its core concerns on sovereignty and territorial integrity.¹

The question of human rights abuse, ongoing protests and movements by various groups in Tibet and Taiwan, territorial disputes and expansionist maritime activities in the Pacific Ocean and South China Sea, disputes with US allies such as Japan and South Korea also is the major factor of rivalry between China and other western democratic states, led by United States of America. Since the second half of twentieth century, there were many instances that this rivalry came out in open on ground and the world witnessed transformation in American's view on China led by Mao Zedong. Two events, in the decade of 1960s, the famous Sino – Soviet split and the attack on Indian territory by Chinese Army, led to the conclusion within the American establishment that People's Republic of China's actions are expansionist and aggressive. The

¹ Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, "Official Spokesperson's response to a query on media reports regarding possible cooperation with China on OBOR/BRI", 2018 Retrieved from <https://www.mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/29768/Official+Spokespersons+response+to+a+query+on+media+reports+regarding+possible+cooperation+with+China+on+OBORBRI>

Vietnam war was also the focal point that led to reform in American's policy towards China, termed as expansionist and aggressive, by American establishment. The United States of America was troubled about china's support for revolutionary movements in South East Asia and was determined to meet this challenge and former President of United States John F. Kennedy considered "a more dangerous situation than any we have faced since the end of the Second World War."²

However, leaving behind the old grudges and due to international and diplomatic restraints, the phase of rapprochement between the United States of America and People's Republic of China (PRC) commenced after mid-1970s, continued throughout 1980s, under the presidency of Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, also influenced their relationship between the erstwhile Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) as both felt no longer threatened by the Soviet Union. There were many high-level visits between the officials of both the countries, various agreements signed by both the nations on development of trade, scientific and technological cooperation, nuclear cooperation and cultural and academic contacts. Therefore, China emerged as the leading nation for United States of American's investment. Despite the cooperation, high level contacts, between the political leaders of both the states, the disintegration of the erstwhile USSR, the human rights issue, suppression of uprisings in region of Tibet and the brutality by which famous students' movement was crushed and its criticism by US Congress dominated and shaped the future course of relationship between United States and China. Today, within the Washington policy community

² Warren I. Cohen, "America's Response to China: A History of Sino-American Relations", (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p.191.

and the Trump administration, one often hears the mistaken assertion that China's progress over the last forty years has come at America's expense.³ The rise of China stems from its ever-growing economic clout. The American side should increase pressure on China on the economic front, therefore, is understandable, bearing in mind Washington's determination to halt rather than manage China's ascendancy.⁴ Eventually, the recent outbreak of novel coronavirus disease (Covid-19) and misinformation by China with regard to the origin and rapid spread of this epidemic waged an international campaign, led by United States of America, against China.

SUPERPOWER RIVALRY: RISE OF INDIA

The international system witnessed major developments with the augment of new century, such as - rise of powerful Russia, after disintegration of former USSR, under the leadership of Vladimir Putin, rise of economic and military might of China, political instability in the Middle East Asia, and development of India as, nuclear armed, the fastest growing economic power in the world when other first world or developed economies were under the constraints of global recession in the first two decades of 21st century.

With the collapse of USSR, the United States remained as the sole major global economic and military power, seen as the only state in the world, not even United Nations, can accomplish the needs, strategic, security, economical,

³ Michael D. Swaine, "A Relationship Under Extreme Duress: U.S. - China Relations at a Crossroads". *CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE*, 2019.

⁴ Minghao Zhao, "Is a New Cold War Inevitable? Chinese Perspectives on US-China Strategic Competition". *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Volume 12, Issue (3). 2019, pp. 371-394.

technological, of the third world countries. India became the leading player in the world order as, the policy makers in the United States of America inclined towards India, to contain the expansion of China, in the Asian continent. The defence establishment in the US accepted the fact that rapid growth and expansion of communist China posed a great threat to its hegemony throughout the world. This fact led to reform in American policy towards India. In May 1998, India declared itself as nuclear armed state, former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee declared through media briefing, we have the capacity for a big bomb now, ours will never be weapons of aggression. These tests provide reassurance to the people of India that their national security interests are paramount and will be promoted and protected.⁵ The reason stated by India mentioned, endangered from its neighbours on northern borders and to protect its territorial integrity and sovereignty, were not accepted by Clinton administration. "They clearly create a dangerous new instability in their region and, as a result, in accordance with U.S. law, I have decided to impose economic sanctions against India," former President of United States of America Bill Clinton said,⁶ therefore, put forward hard sanctions against India. Indian diplomats presented the legitimate right to safeguard its people and state before the international community and due to this

⁵ Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, "Official Press Statement", 1998 Retrieved from <http://nuclearweaponarchive.org/India/Indianofficial.txt>

⁶ Steven Lee Myers, "NUCLEAR ANXIETY: THE POLICY; CLINTON TO IMPOSE PENALTIES ON INDIA OVER ATOMIC TESTS", *The New York Times*, 1998 Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/05/13/world/nuclear-anxiety-policy-clinton-impose-penalties-india-over-atomic-tests.html>

Indian diplomatic onslaught USA and other western states were forced to withdraw all sanctions against India. This diplomatic victory was considered as the major turning point in the story of rise of India, as both USA and China could not cease India from being the nuclear-powered state. Both India and United States' have become an important strategic partner of each other, keeping in consideration their mutual interests and to keep check on expansionist designs of China. The international organizations like World Trade Organization (WTO) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) witnessed the surge in growth of Indian economy, due to adoption of New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1991, as regarded India as the fastest growing economy in the world.

The international financial organizations like World Trade Organization (WTO) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) witnessed the surge in growth of Indian economy, due to adoption of New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1991, and regarded India as the fastest growing economy in the world. India is the fifth largest economy, presently, in terms of nominal GDP in the world. India's economic and trade relations with both USA and China have developed multi fold in the last two decades, however there are outstanding territorial disputes between India and China it never became a fierce contention in economic relations. There are millions of Indians operates and provides their services to other nations such as United States of America, Europe, in various states in Middle East region (or popularly called as Arab World), and in South East Asian states. The workforce of Indian origin is highly appreciated and remittances from them provide stimulus to Indian economy in terms of accumulation foreign exchange, that is considered as vital for judging in parameters of any nation's economy. India, being the largest democracy and fifth largest economy in the world, always

followed the notion of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, with no expansionist or imperialist design in any of its policy against any nation, enjoyed confidence of the most of the nations' in the world, big or small, always enjoyed warm and cordial relations with all major powers like United States of America, European Union, Russia and even China (on economic front). India opened its market for Foreign Direct Investment, proved to be a game changer, adopted multi-pronged strategy to develop its economy in predominately all sectors, such as, industrial, agricultural, technological, pharmaceutical etc.

In order to contain China, economically, US wholeheartedly cooperated with Indian policy makers, the development of high-tech defence cooperation, transfer of Information Technology, India – United States Civil Nuclear Agreement⁷, under the leadership of former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and Former US President George W. Bush, support to India in international financial forums like World Trade Organization, on various accounts proved that US administration and its allies like Japan and France, in present times, wishes India through its economic power to contain the spread of communist Chinese economic might in the Asian continent.

⁷ Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, "Remarks by External Affairs Minister Shri Pranab Mukherjee at the signing ceremony of the 123 Agreement between India and USA in Washington", 2008. Retrieved from <https://www.mea.gov.in/in-focus-article.htm?18799/Remarks+by+External+Affairs+Minister+Shri+Pranab+Mukherjee+at+the+signing+ceremony+of+the+123+Agreement+between+India+and+USA+in+Washington>

India always stand for political and economic stability in the Middle East region. India, the 3rd largest crude oil importer in the world, have always valued its warm relationship with the Arab states and all its rulers. Arab states namely Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Iran, Iraq, Oman etc has been the significant oil exporter states to India. Both India and China have been the important consumer of oil and Petro products of the Middle East region. This regions' stability has always been vulnerable to interior threats and external aggression. The recent US aggression against Russian interests in the region and economic sanctions against Iran led India to reform its policy with regard to the Middle East. The more comprehensive Russian and American cooperation in this region continues, would be more fruitful for India in present international order, as India cannot yield to jeopardize its interests, and India enjoyed cordial relations with both powers. Hence, both the United States' and Arab World countries are of considerable significance for India, to meet its demands and aspirations, in contemporary times. The Israel – United Arab Emirates normalization deal, signed on September 15, 2020, brokered by United States of America, if laid down on ground honestly, can bring peace and stability in the region and will play a major role in development of Indian economy. The bilateral agreements formalization of Israel's already thawing relations with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain in line with their common opposition to Iran. The "Abraham Accords" and the bilateral agreement signed by Israel and Bahrain fell short of more detailed formal treaties that are the diplomatic norm. Both documents were made up of general statements pledging to advance diplomacy, mutual cooperation and regional peace.⁸ Indian's strategic

relationship and cooperation with major Muslim dominated Arab states in various fields such as – petroleum, information technology, pharmaceutical, textile, technological, defence relations. The high level visits of political leadership of India and Arab states, diplomatic relationship, people to people contact, strategic policies of mutual benefits have been increased in the recent years, proved to be very useful for security and geo-political interests of India and for peace and stability of the whole of Middle East region, in general, and Afghanistan, in particular. The economic and social consequences of novel coronavirus could be far worse than the global recession of 2008/09 or even acute than the after effects of Spanish flu throughout the world. The world, specifically third world countries, witnessed major disruption in supply chain, as there was shortage of essential goods, such as food grains, pharmaceutical, lifesaving drugs etc, in their mainland or the remote areas. Millions of people suffered from the loss of jobs, sources of revenues of large scale industries were ruined, deprivation of employment opportunities in the public sector and/or private sector affected the marginalized section of society, government benefits did not reached to the last person who required due to the disorder in supply chain and other incomprehensible grounds, purchasing power of laymen diminished and overall it affected the socio-economic strata of the society. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his address to the nation on May 13, 2020, themed on making India self-reliant or AatmaNirbhar Bharat, laid down a robust framework for undertaking immediate reforms and planning for long-term growth and development, without being dependent on any outside power. India has a stable political leadership and rigorous demographic consumption levels in all sectors of economy, entrepreneurial zeal among its population, strong economic fundamentals. The agricultural sector marched ahead and demonstrated the fact that fundamentals of Indian

⁸ Deb Reichmann, Matthew Lee, Jonathan Lemire, "Israel signs pacts with 2 Arab states: A 'new' Mideast?". *The Washington Post*. 2020.

economy is somehow, even now, based on village production and in the time where all sectors of economy faced stagnation, made sure the nation of 1.35 billion does not face any scarcity of essential food grains. The system of chain of production, storage, transportation of essential items and goods to all states, during period of complete lockdown, proved the capability of vigorous Indian supply chain mechanism to the international community. The Government of India also supplied many pharmaceutical and lifesaving items, on humanitarian grounds, like medicines, drugs, specifically Hydroxychloroquine (medicine effective for fighting coronavirus), millions of N95 and surgical masks, PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) Kits, tonnes of essential food grains to more than 100 nations, as a noble gesture, to contain the spread of coronavirus and to meet the urgent demands of the weaker nations. Thus, India played a crucial and multi-faceted role, during international crisis, and came forth as a global leader, accommodative to the needs and aspirations of other states, without being dominant and aggressive, in any nature, towards any, big or small, state. The pivotal role of India also has been applauded by the international community, primarily by the World Health Organization (WHO), and all leading powers in the world.

CONCLUSION

Since the world witnessed the hostilities between United States of America and China and other major powers of world in the last century and in the present century as well. There is so much discontent and disceptation between the United States' and China, impenetrable to the needs and interests of each other, environment of suspicion and trust deficit between their leadership reached the level where there is a chance for India to take advantage and fill the vacuum in the international political order. The contemporary world cherishes and favours the philosophy of the liberal values such as- democracy, equality, justice, equality,

political and economic opportunities to all without any discrimination on the basis of caste, class, creed or gender. Therefore, all the aforesaid notions ought to be the integral part of present day social, political and economic stratum of any society and India, since independence, through its constitution, have followed all such credentials in letter and spirit. The mantra of India *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, have been deeply respected in the world, clearly states that India will not be part of any action that favours expansionism and imperialism, of any kind, always stood with the states that suffered due to the expansionist policy of any power of the world. India was the flagbearer of the policy of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and maintain equi-distance from both the power blocs during the world war. India, through the principle of Non-Alignment, testified to the international community that India can play a leading role in the international affairs without posing any threat, economically or militarily, to any nation in the world. However, China, through its military actions and aggressive economic policies, in the past few decades, posed the threat to the security and territorial interests of many states. The international community, in general, and the states in Indo Pacific region, in particular, are very much sceptical of the Chinese activities and its infringement and intrusion to their rights and looks upon India to play the key role to check the illegal and unacceptable activities of any big power that poses threat to their very existence. India must acknowledge this opportunity to take centre stage in the global affairs and world would acknowledge the rise of vibrant India as the dominant power in the international system.

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