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## Post Covid-19: Restructuring of the World Order

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### **Abstract:**

The Year 2020 will go down in history as an unpredictable year, which tested mankind on account of apparently a simple flu virus having significant and long-reaching consequences. The ray of hope in the form of a vaccine for the Corona Virus emerged only in 2021. The virus was contagious and spread all over the world with a high number of infections and death tolls. Mankind before the advent of Corona boasted of technological advancement; later it was literally at the mercy of a virus. Covid 19 or Coronavirus has within the initial days of 2020 changed the lives of human beings across the globe. Not only has it introduced a 'new normal', i.e., SMS (Sanitize, Mask and Social Distancing), it has put the entire world into the doldrums. It has not only impacted global politics but also has set the global economy into a downturn. Under such a challenging situation, a power game has emerged in the global scenario. The main player who has emerged is China; alleged to be the super spreader of coronavirus. Amidst the blame game regarding who is the spreader of the Virus and politicking around the origin of the crisis, is a competition for a global numero uno position that is lurking. China vies for a global position by any means. So it is spreading its tentacle amid these troubled times in South Asia, Asia-Pacific and the South China Sea. This has triggered actions from the US, Russia, Japan, South-east Asian countries and India. India is bearing the brunt of Chinese aggressive policies and is being guarded about her neighbors too, who are being used as pawns in China's scheme of expansion. India based upon its scientific prowess in the field of medical sciences is reaching out as a major power through 'vaccine diplomacy'. It is worth noting that India has started its 2-year term as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in January 2021 and is closely keeping watch over the global strategic developments. Many businesses are relocating, right sizing and searching for near-home solutions, thereby affecting the power relations in a globalized world. Therefore, a global power game has emerged. Covid- 19 times not only has

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challenged our normal existence as human beings but is also unfolding a global power game. Political challenges of the Post-Covid era will surely set the course of the world order. In this paper, we tend to look into the intricacies of the political and strategic matrix that are emerging in the Post-Covid era which might shape the current world order.

**Keywords:** World order, Corona Virus, New normal, Global power game, Vaccine diplomacy

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### **1.Introduction**

We have emerged from the horrifying days and months of the year 2020 only with the hope that a vaccine will help us to catch up with the challenge that has been posed by the Covid-19 virus. Our lives have changed. Mask, Sanitizer and social/physical distancing are at the best what we can have as preventive measures from the Corona Virus. Till February 15, 2021, there have been almost 109 million Covid affected people worldwide and the death toll across the globe from the deadly virus has been almost 2.4 million. The United Kingdom is facing the challenge of coping with a new strain of Corona Virus which seems to be more deadly than the earlier one. The origin of the virus is seen as Wuhan in China. This is very conspicuous as various conspiracy theories are doing their rounds in global politics about the origin of the virus. Instead of going into such controversy, the important job is to arrest the spread of the virus. This is necessary not because human beings are at peril but the economic, social and educational sectors, to mention a few, are in shatters.

Over and above that the reigning hegemon, the US, and the aspiring hegemon, China, are caught in a race of holding on to and climbing up to the number one position in the global order. Former President Donald Trump and his hardline policies were met with stern responses from President Xi Jinping of China. Even before the crisis, the two

were caught in a trade and tariff war and the Corona Virus episode just made matters worse. As China tried its expansionist policy in Ladakh, India, the balance of power of the region also got disturbed. In the Asia-Pacific, the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean, Chinese designs of expansion led to the emergence of new alliances to deter China. In international institutions like the World Health Organization (WHO), there were allegations of Chinese manipulation by the US as well as the rest of the world. All these have created the stage of the competition, the risk making and risk-taking along with sustaining the existence and visibility of the states in global politics.

Therefore, even after the vaccine is made available to all, the economic and political challenges of the Post-Covid era will surely set the course of the world order. The economic performance of the major and middle players in the world order will be of much significance because economic strength in the post-Covid times will surely be decisive. Change in the US Presidency and the coming of Joe Biden will have to be watched carefully as to how he tackles China as compared to the turbulent phase of Donald Trump. This paper will look into the intricacies of the political, economic and strategic matrix that may emerge in the Post-Covid era which might shape the Post Covid 19 world order.

### Theories of Global Politics shaping the World Order

First, let us explore the meaning of World Order. When we talk about 'order' then it is usually referred to as an arrangement of things in a pattern or the way of doing things or the structure of existing things. Now if we look at global politics there is also a structure or an order of arrangement of the most vital thing and that is 'power' at the international level. Power does not exist in a vacuum but rather is possessed by actors in global politics. By actors, we refer to the most important players in global politics the states. So by 'world order' we usually refer to the arrangement of these states in a hierarchy that is determined by power (Nayar & Paul, 2003, p. 249).

Post-Second World War, world order was characterized by the Cold War between two Super Powers, the USA and the USSR. The rivalry was all for creating spheres of influence around the globe. The \*Truman Doctrine, 1947 and the \*\*Marshall Plan, 1947 were geared to contain the spread of Communism. The USSR also had its \*\*\*COMINFORM, 1947 to hold onto its sphere of influence. If politically both the Superpowers tried to match each other's step, the USA was successful in establishing its hegemony in the international political economy by creating the Bretton Woods institutions. The Post-Second World War, Bretton Woods institutions like the IMF, the World Bank and the GATT came up to establish the American hegemony through creating a fixed rate system. In this fixed-rate system, the currencies were pegged to the US Dollar and the Dollar was as good as gold as it was convertible into gold. The US hegemony got a jolt in the early 1970s and the Dollar was devalued several times and simultaneously the oil embargo of the OPEC countries in 1973 put the

major economies of the world under a stress. Therefore, Dollar was no longer trustworthy and a flexible float exchange rate system was introduced in the international trade and financial system with several other currencies like German Mark, Swiss Franc and Japanese Yen along with Dollar. Therefore, the world was becoming multipolar with a declining hegemon - the USA. The other power centers being Europe, the erstwhile USSR, Japan and China which were gradually emerging as powerful economies with the strength of influencing global politics (Krugman et al., 2018, pp. 584-604).

With the disintegration of the USSR in 1991, the world became unipolar with only the USA remaining as the single Super Power. Many Scholars like Francis Fukuyama predicted the end of history and the triumph of liberalism. However, Russia even after the initial shock and several years of transitional hiccups remained and remains a major power in international relations. There was the rise of a new bloc in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century —BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). The world truly became multipolar as in 1992 with the signing of the Maastricht Treaty; the European Union (EU) emerged from its predecessor European Community (EC). It was not only an economic union but also a political union with the Schengen visa and the Euro as the currency. Thus alongside the US, regional blocs and global blocs are becoming important in the Post-Cold War world order like the G-7, ASEAN, African Union, SCO, SAARC, Organization of American States and OPEC although NAM lost its earlier glory in the Post-Cold War global politics (Kegley & Wittkopf, 1997, pp. 94-98).

The global economic crisis of 2008 had put the global economy and the great economic giant like the USA into tough times

but it was able to tide over and hold on to its position of being a major power but now it was facing competition from China which is an aspiring major power and wants to become a global hegemon like the USA. This competition intensified during President Trump's regime and the Covid crisis had made the competition even more intense and exhibiting of expansionist strategy on part of China is being witnessed in South Asia, South East Asia, the Indian Ocean and the Asia Pacific regions. The great game is on between the reigning hegemon and an aspiring hegemon.

With the overview of the world scenario in Post-Second World War history, let us now look into some theoretical orientations to understand the behavior of states in global politics. In the world order comprising states as major players, what becomes evident is the presence of a near-oligarchy of powerful states, which play a decisive role in global politics. Therefore, at every historical trajectory, we find a handful of states enjoying the position of great power or major power because of possession of capabilities, both military and economic. There is almost a hierarchy of power status in global politics. After the major powers, there is the existence of middle powers who aspire to become major powers as they do have the potential or capabilities to become major powers. These middle powers can be found to have a pre-eminent position in their regional settings and can resist the policies of the major powers made globally. Even they can thrust upon their own decisions or create pressure on the major powers in the event of a collision - short of war at global platforms and international bodies. Next, are the minor powers that can be played by both the major and the middle powers as the situation may dictate (Nayar & Paul, 2003, p. 250). To give an il-

lustration of such a hierarchy, the best examples of major powers are the USA, Russia, the European Union (EU) and the UK. The middle powers can be identified as Japan, China, Brazil, India, Australia, North Korea (though some would call it a nuisance power), South Africa to mention a few. The minor powers can be illustrated as the weak states of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The power matrix which works in global politics has been best represented in the **Political Realist approach** to international relations. Although it is not foolproof and has been criticized it gives us a near idea of the working of the world order based on the 'national interests' of the states, who may be of the stature of major, middle and minor power. Hans J. Morgenthau was the main proponent of Political Realism and in his book *Politics Among Nations: Struggle for Power and Peace*, he outlines the very basic principles of Political Realism in international relations. Morgenthau in his six signposts (principles) propounded how international politics is governed by national interest determined by the amount of national power a state possesses in an anarchical world. National interests are accommodated or resolved based on war or diplomacy. For Morgenthau, "The concept of national interest presupposes neither a naturally harmonious, peaceful world nor the inevitability of war as a consequence of the pursuit of all nations of their national interests. Quite to the contrary, it assumes continuous conflict and threat of war to be minimized through the continuous adjustment of conflicting interest by diplomatic action." This in a nutshell summarizes the basic motive of actions behind the states in global politics (Morgenthau, 1985, pp. 4-14).

Therefore, national interests determine the foreign policy objectives of all states. National power and capabilities, a state pos-

sesses condition its presence, role and influence in global politics. Further, Neo-Realists like Kenneth Waltz in his *Man, the State and War* (1959) and *Theory of International Politics* (1979) came up with the idea of security dilemma which states face in an anarchical world. In such an anarchical world order, Waltz proposes a self-help model which will be based on boosting one's capabilities but sure to arouse security dilemma in others (Baylis & Smith, 2017, pp.88-90). The best example we can give in the South Asian region is the Indo-Pak rivalry and beefing up of Indian defense sending tremors in Pakistan leading it to align with India's adversaries like China.

Another important theory that emerged in the Post Second World War times is the **Hegemonic Stability Theory (HST)** to describe the world order that came into being after the Bretton Woods Institutions were created and America was able to establish its hegemony. A hegemon is a major power that utilizes its power and capabilities to 'manufacture consent' amongst the current world order. For this, a hegemon utilizes its allies, international organizations, both political and economic and construct a world order which is then made acceptable among other states by some amount of consent. Robert Cox puts the concept of hegemony by utilizing the Gramscian notion of hegemony. Cox comprehends hegemony as an international system where there is a dominance of a major power that makes effort to create a world order based on its ideology and aspirations conducive to holding on to its pre-eminence (Kegley & Wittkopf, 1997, pp. 216-230). The hegemon secures some degree of consent from the other states through coercion or promise of a future full of prospects. An example is the popularization of neo-liberal economics and the opening up of the economy with an idea triggered by the 'Washington consensus' of

promised development at all levels with a trickle-down effect. Though this myth has been busted the reigning hegemon -the US and its allies still use the international economic institutions to sustain the neoliberal economic policies (Friedman & Lake, 2000, pp. 223-243).

**Post-Structuralism** articulates a critique of mega-narratives or grand narratives and advances a meta-theoretical approach to international relations. David Campbell forwards a critical attitude to comprehend the nature of international politics with a post-structuralist outlook. Post-Structuralisms while pointing at the power relationships in international politics contend that global politics is produced, conducted and understood in certain ways only. Reality is diverse and complex and power and knowledge are intertwined in all representations of politics. It is not one dimensional as Realists and Neo-realists view in the form of states, power and interests in an anarchical world (Dunne et al., 2013, pp.187-203). Here comes **Constructivism** as another critical theory which contends that international politics is a world of our making'. Interactions among actors create distinct realities. These actors are not completely free to choose their circumstances and the process of interactions makes it possible for them to determine their choices. In other words, international politics is a consequence of social construction. Usually, this construction is a creation of the major powers/a hegemon in international politics which is legitimized through manufacturing consent (Dunne et al., 2013, pp. 223-246).

Primarily, these theories in International Relations have been focused on as they are considered to be the major approaches in understanding world politics. The main point for referring to these theories is to try to un-

derstand why particular states behave in certain ways while others do not and how these create or restructure the world order of contemporary world politics.

### **Dimensions of World Order in Post-Covid Times: Strategic Realities**

Keeping in mind the theoretical perspectives one thing becomes clear that at any point of history the dominant power/s in international relations try to hold on to the reigns of global politics and make efforts to establish hegemony through control over international institutions and use or threat of use of force. However, there are also emerging powers that challenge the status quo and disturb the balance of power in international relations and aspire to establish their hegemony by replacing the dominant hegemon. When there are two rising hegemons in a region - competition and clash go on unabated. The clash and conflict of aspirations and national interest followed by anarchy therefore mark global as well as regional politics.

Post-Second World War global politics witnessed the Cold War between the two Super Powers, the US and the USSR. Post disintegration of the Soviet Union, the world order became unipolar although there has been a rise of regional blocs/powers creating a tendency towards multi-polarity. Since the turn of the new millennium (2000), an aspiring power China has arrived in the international scenario and is in the mood of competing and replacing the reigning hegemon — the USA. Other emerging powers like India, Brazil, South Africa, Japan, the South East Asian countries and the European Union do not disturb the world order by incursions into the territory of other states or expanding into the Oceans and Seas so much so that they threaten the Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOCs).

China primarily under Xi Jinping who by a constitutional amendment (2018) passed by the ceremonial Parliament of China, the National People's Congress, has got an indefinite extension of his term as a President. The two-term limit of the President was removed and Xi Jinping now can serve for an endless number of terms as the President of China. Outwardly, Xi has embarked on adventurous expansionism in all directions through various ambitious plans. The OBOR, BRI and Maritime Silk Route (MSR) are a few to mention. China's One Belt One Road' (OBOR) initiative now known as 'Belt and Road Initiative' (BRI), is designed to use Chinese 'soft power' strategies to win over countries along this belt. This includes giving soft loans to the participating countries to help them build infrastructure for the BRI. The whole strategy is quite a design of what can be dubbed as a neo-imperialist strategy. The objective is to get these countries entangled in a debt-trap so that their dependency on China would turn them into neo-colonies of China and link its mainland to Central Asia and extend up to Europe. As India invests in developing the Chabahar Port in Iran, China, sensing it's \*\*\*\*Hormuz dilemma alongside developing the port of Gwadar, has embarked on ambitious plans with Pakistan like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the string of pearls strategy.

India is the rising hegemon in the Indian Ocean Region. Therefore, containing India is a prime motivating factor behind the adoption of the 'string of pearls' strategy by China. This involves massive Chinese investments in developing or managing strategic stations and ports all along the Indian Ocean Region to counter India and compete with the US. In Sri Lanka, China has built the port of Hambantota. Another container port is underway in Chittagong, Bangladesh. These are



said to be linking the main east-west SLOCs in the Indian Ocean and of course the Gwadar Port in Pakistan. Territorially China disturbs India through repeated incursions into Ladakh, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. Even at the peak of the Covid 19 crisis in 2020 China made aggression into Ladakh and Sikkim and no clear or long-term resolution of the crisis seems to be in sight even in 2021.

As far as the South China Sea and the East China Sea are concerned, China currently claims the territorial sovereignty over Taiwan and other ROC-controlled islands as well as over a large number of other small islands in the South China Sea (Paracel and Spratly Islands), East China Sea (Senkaku Islands), and claims to maritime resource jurisdictions that might pass on to China if its claims to the land territories were recognized by the adjacent states. It is asserted by some scholars and other analysts that China claims sovereignty over almost the entire South China Sea.

Even in the Maldives, the invisible Chinese hand was at work to push off India from its periphery of influence as it engages with the Maldives to materialize its BRI initiative. The Maldives holds strategic importance for India as an archipelago in the Indian Ocean Region. Ties between India and Maldives got a jolt with former President Abdulla Yamen pursuing a pro-Beijing regime. In fact, in 2018 a climax was reached when India was speculating a military intervention in the Maldives. However, with the new regime and the new Foreign Minister of Maldives, Abdulla Shahid, there has been a reinforcement of mutual trust. As the Maldives balances both India and China, Shahid makes it clear that Male's relationship with New Delhi is "outstanding" but Beijing has also been "generous" to the Maldives in terms of social development projects sponsored by China.

As far as the territorial expansionism of China is concerned, India has to bear the brunt of Chinese incursions into its territory. In the wake of the Ladakh conflict, India was able to garner the support of the trio - USA, Japan, Australia and develop a new alliance of the four - the Quad (the USA, Japan, Australia and India) which was able to balance of China, unlike the 1962 crisis. The main activity of the Quad is initiating naval exercises which are going on in the Indian Ocean region to send a signal to China to curtail its aggressive expansionism. The Malabar exercise had started in 1992 between Indian and the US Navies which was joined by Japan in 2015. In 2020 Australia joined the Malabar exercises and thus the Quad has been formed to counter China's adventurism in the Indo-Pacific region. November 3-6, 2020, marked the first Malabar drill of the Quad. The Ladakh experience has taught India the necessity of refreshing its ties with Russia too. So along with the Quad, the fifth dimension of Russia, a longtime ally of India needs to be nurtured which India is doing. Here also comes the US presence in \*\*\*\*\*Diego Garcia as it always tries to maintain stability in the India Ocean Region by its heavy presence and collaboration with major states like India and Australia and in the Asia Pacific region with Japan. Therefore, the US is also interested in an emerging alliance of the Quad.

India to revamp its defense along the LoC acquired the Dassault Rafale fighter jets from France. The first five arrived at Air Force Station, Ambala in July 2020. The second batch arrived in November 2020 and the third batch of three Rafale fighter jets landed in India in January 2021 after flying non-stop from France. Now the total number of Rafale aircraft possessed by India has increased to 11. These are India's first major acquisition of fighter planes in 23 years after the Sukhoi

jets were imported from Russia. The new fleet of Rafale jets is all out to carry out sorties in eastern Ladakh to ward off any Chinese incursions. Simultaneously India has also banned 267 Chinese apps including PUBG Mobile, TikTok, Weibo, WeChat, Ali Express and others which were largely used in India. India even encouraged developers to come up with indigenous versions of such app. This meant a heavy blow to the Chinese economy and China tried to get these bans relaxed. India even capped FDI in India's neighborhood during the pandemic. This hinted at China.

As China is a big neighbor, with Tibet gone as a buffer, only Nepal and Bhutan remain as the twin buffer states, the chances of clashes become higher. China clashed with India in Doklam, a Bhutanese territory. It tried to woo Nepal and directly got involved in the domestic politics of Nepal and encouraged it to incite the Kalapani crisis following the inauguration of an 80-km strategically crucial road connecting the Lipulekh pass at a height of 17,000 feet in Uttarakhand with Dharchula. This area is quite sensitive bordering China and Nepal. Nepal under Prime Minister Oli tried to instigate a crisis with India but he was caught in an imbroglio within the Nepalese Communist Party.

SAARC has failed to deliver its goal due to the India and Pakistan tension and structural weakness of SAARC which debar it from raising bilateral issues. India now has bypassed SAARC. It is now using BIMSTEC for furthering its relationship with the Bay of Bengal rim states; India hosted the 2019 BIMSTEC Summit at Vishakhapatnam. India is also trying to mobilize the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) Association for garnering an alliance to balance off China. Madagascar and Comoros are being wooed by India as China makes rapid inroads into

the Western Indian Ocean. These two island countries are now a bird's eye for India. These countries agreed to participate in the Indian Ocean Region Meeting (IOR) of defense ministers which India hosted in February 2021. The theme was *Enhanced Peace, Security and Cooperation in the Indian Ocean*, alongside Aero India 2021 in Bengaluru, India.

Post-Covid 19 and India with its Covid vaccines on the roll, S. Jaishankar, the Foreign Minister of India, in his book *The India Way: Strategies for an Uncertain World* refers to India as the 'pharmacy of the world'. The world too has acknowledged India as the 'pharmacy of the world'. India's leading pharmaceutical companies either in collaboration with foreign partners or indigenously are developing Covid 19 Vaccines tirelessly (Jaishankar, 2020, p. 11). The Serum Institute, a Pune-based pharmaceutical company collaborated with British-Swedish pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca to manufacture of Covid-19 vaccine developed by the University of Oxford. Bharat Biotech is developing an indigenous Covid 19 vaccine which is awaiting end trials. India's foreign ministry is planning to supply over 160 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines to 60 countries and UNICEF by the end of March 2021.

The vaccine supplies from India include about 10 million doses as gifts in the first round towards India's neighbors and extended neighborhood. 30 countries have formally requested the supply of Covid Vaccine. Informally also there have been requests for vaccine supply. Then there are countries like Afghanistan that have not formally requested but India is committed to supplying to them too. India's vaccine diplomacy' post-Covid 19 crisis is sure to make a difference as India does not like China follow aggressive expansionist policy towards her neighbors and ex-



tended neighbors. The vaccine supply is crucial for all and the world looks at India for a huge supply for Covid-19 Vaccine. Therefore, 'vaccine' and not force or aggression can win a prestigious position for India in the world. Here also China is trying to compete with India's supply of vaccine to China's target countries like Nepal, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and others. Never-the-less, India's role as a vaccine supplier to the world has won her a dignified position in global politics which cannot be denied.

India already has started its term in January 2021 as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. This shows the recognition of India by the world as a major power. Vaccine diplomacy shows India's superior pharma technology which is now acknowledged by the world. Also at the World Health Organization (WHO) in May 2020 at the peak of the Corona crisis Dr Harsh Vardhan, Minister of Health and Family Welfare, India, was elected the Chair of the Executive Board of WHO. America floated the conspiracy theory of the Corona Virus being generated in China and also dubbed it as Wuhan Virus and the war of words continued. Even the WHO was accused of manipulating the spread of the virus and failure of early warning and other allegations which came to such a point that Trump decided to withdraw from the WHO and started the process of withdrawal in July 2020. Still, India has borne out its strong presence in WHO and is working towards collective leadership to be provided by WHO in the Post Covid world.

The above can be seen as a part of preparedness by not only India but also the USA to contain and balance the Chinese expansionism. Therefore, much of the focus of world politics is centered around China with a concern to ward of Chinese threats in the Post

Covid 19 world order. China, on the other hand, is the anti-status quo power. China is ready to take on the position of a global leader by any means. It's a revisionist state. It also has allies like North Korea and Pakistan and is on a spree of creating several dependencies like in South Asia - Sri Lanka, Nepal and African countries like Djibouti. The top 10 African countries which are the destination for Chinese capital are Egypt, Nigeria, Algeria, South Africa, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Angola, Niger, Zambia and Morocco. China is desperate to embark on adventurous expansionism in all directions as pointed above with its aggressive policies. The global politicking that emerges out of such expansionist adventurism of China is an ensuing struggle for world leadership between the USA and China in the Post-Covid 19 world order.

The theatre of strategic competition now in the Post Covid 19 world order will mainly centre around South Asia, the Indian Ocean, Asia-Pacific and the South China Sea. The setup of the contemporary world order has many focal points. The European Union (EU) is now under stress after BREXIT and the Covid crisis. Still, the EU and the UK will be major players in the Post-Covid world order. Hong Kong, Taiwan and South-East Asian countries are under a Chinese threat so they will be also at the centre stage of Sino-US tensions. Asia-Pacific has the Quad (the US, Japan, Australia and India) now, though India is not included in the APEC. It is hoped that the Quad will be active in 'containing' China. In West Asia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran are key regional players and will be so. US-Iran relationship which was set on a track by Barack Obama had struck a preliminary nuclear framework agreement with Iran. This was arrived at with P5+1 (Permanent members of the Security Council and Germany) and the European Union with Iran in 2015

which was assumed to be able to ensure the peaceful use of nuclear power. However, this was shaken by Donald Trump and he abandoned the nuclear deal. Almost a clash was inevitable between Iran and the USA after the ascendancy of Presidency by Donald Trump and striking off of the deal and withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in May 2018. At no point, Russia should be underestimated as it has a strong presence in the politics of West Asia. Further, the world is witnessing severe political and humanitarian crises in Syria and Yemen which can also be dubbed as a proxy war between two major powers, the USA and Russia. This will continue alongside the great game between the USA and China. The new dimension added to this is the current Sino-US rift in world politics. America under President Donald Trump got embroiled in a trade and tariff war with China and the conspiracy theories around the origin of the Corona Virus are continuing and has to be watched carefully how President Joe Biden handles them. Therefore, balancing and counterbalancing will go on and the world order would be an uncertain one rigged by tensions. The fight of retaining and capturing hegemonic position will continue to be a flashpoint of rivalry between the reigning hegemon, the USA and the aspiring hegemon, China.

Politically if the above seems to be the strategic realities of the Post Covid 19 world order, then alongside the political, the international economic scenario could be also being a place of challenges and competition. By October 7, 2020, the World Bank had projected extreme global poverty following the outbreak of the pandemic. It estimated that there will be an increase of poverty from 88 million to 115 million to extreme poverty in 2020 with the total rising to as many as 150

million by 2021. The World Bank pointed out that the resultant increase in numbers will depend on the severity of economic contraction globally. The January 2021 updated estimates show that the expected COVID-19-induced new poor in 2020 may rise to between 119 and 124 million, more than what was predicted earlier. The increase in global poverty in 2020 has been unprecedented in recent history was the reflection in the report.

The global economy was caught in the worst recession since World War II. The World Bank Global Economic Outlook for 2020 had projected a contraction of the global economy by 5.2% and for the U.S economy 6.1%. The growth rate of East Asia and Pacific was to fall by 0.5%, Europe and Central Asia by 4.7%, Latin America and the Caribbean by 7.2%, Middle East and North Africa by 4.2%, South Asia by 2.7% and Sub Saharan Africa by 2.8%. By August 2020 India could witness a negative growth of 4.5%.

With the Corona vaccine becoming operative, the World Bank in its January 2021 Global Economic prospects predicts recovery of the world economy. The global economy is expected to expand 4% in 2021 following the vaccine rollout. World Bank Group President David Malpass believes that public health, debt management, budget policies, central banking and structural reforms are required to lay the foundation of recovery. As far as the US economy is concerned the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meeting on Dec. 16, 2020, predicted that the U.S. GDP growth is expected to contract by 2.4% in 2020. It is estimated to then rebound up to a 4.2% growth rate in 2021, and slow to 3.2% in 2022, and 2.4% in 2023 as the economy slowly reopens and the restrictions on activity are fully eased. As far as China is concerned, according to preliminary

data published by the National Bureau of Statistics of China, the growth of real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in China amounted to about 2.3 percent in 2020. Forecasts by the IMF published in October 2020 expect a GDP growth rate of 8.24 percent for 2021.

Now coming to India, it witnessed a contraction of GDP by -23.9% in the April-June period of 2020 (1<sup>st</sup> Quarter) due to the lockdown following the pandemic. The key industries came to a halt and millions of people became jobless. However, in the Second Quarter of 2020-2021, the contraction was by 7.5% which was a significant development over the earlier growth rate. The IMF in January 2021 has predicted that India's growth projections would be higher citing a recovery in the economy after lockdown restrictions were eased. After revising the earlier projections, the IMF in its latest World Economic Outlook predicted that India's GDP is expected to grow at 11.5% in 2021, compared to its earlier projection of 7.8% made in October 2020. India will be the only major economy that is predicted to register double-digit growth in 2021. China will be the next with 8.1% growth in 2021 followed by Spain (5.9%) and France (5.5%). The Economic Survey 2020-21 published in January 2021, also predicted a "V-shaped" economic recovery for the nation, spurred by the COVID-19 vaccination program. The survey also cautioned that it would take at least two years to revert to pre-pandemic gross domestic levels.

Therefore, in the coming years' global politics will not only witness a struggle for hegemony or even a major power status but on the economic front, the battle will continue. The triumvirate of action and reactions will mainly be China vis-a-vis the US and because of its proximity to India, China will be troubling India in the coming days too. If

the Indian economy recovers at the rate as predicted, then China surely will feel challenged with single-digit growth. The biggest economy in the world, the American economy will also come to occupy the center stage of Chinese attention. So a turbulent global politics and economic competition between the current major power and between two aspiring major powers will mark the Post-Pandemic World Order.

### Conclusion

As S. Jaishankar, the Foreign Minister of India has predicted in his book *The India Way: Strategies for an Uncertain World*, in reality, world politics is going to be uncertain. The world is going to be multipolar with the presence of the declining hegemon yet a major power, the US alongside several power centers (Jaishankar, 2020, pp. 3-17). European Union, even after BREXIT, will continue to be a major power bloc with the UK. It could be seen that in January 2021 the EU put limits on the export of Covid vaccine, especially to the UK. The UK is ahead in the vaccine roll out but this decision of the EU comes as AstraZeneca apprised the EU about its inability to supply as many vaccines as expected to EU countries in the immediate time. Although this decision was reversed later yet EU is engaging in measures to oversee that the vaccines manufacturing in member states are not diverted like those manufactured by the Biotech Pfizer made in Belgium. This would somehow affect the UK's access to supplies. Never-the-less, despite such ups and downs, the EU would be a major force in global politics.

Russia will be also an important player in global politics and it cannot be ignored as the Ladakh crisis showed how significant Russia is to balance off China. However, all eyes will be set on China and its expansionism in Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Asia, Indian

Ocean, South China Sea, Asia-Pacific and Africa. India has to position itself in such an uncertain world mainly vis-à-vis China and therefore, must team up with the major players in international relations. The Quad, a newly evolving group with India as a major partner is a pointer in that direction. EU and Russia should also be on the top agenda of India. The Middle East and African countries should also be taken into consideration post-Pandemic as they will help to boost up India's image in global politics. The flashpoint of rivalry and of actions and reactions as has been pointed out earlier will be South Asia, South China Sea, Asia Pacific and the Indian Ocean stretching as far as the Persian Gulf and India may have to be geared up for continuous brunt of Chinese aggression in its territory as well as Chinese meddling in its neighborhood.

The authors believe that there is likely to be a restructuring in the world order in the post-Covid 19 world with India gaining ascendancy on the base of its reviving economy and strategic geopolitical craftsmanship coupled with its vaccine diplomacy. The core

strength of its Democracy grounded in Constitutional Supremacy and a mature world view would further enhance its acceptability and credibility in the comity of the nations. Though this period would also be marked by the attempt on the part of China to shake off the US from its *numero uno* hegemon status and challenge the emergence of other powers including India, the authors predict that the tangibles and intangibles are loaded in favor of India more than ever before. Having said that the US, China, Russia, UK, France, Germany, Brazil, South Africa, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, key Groupings/Unions and Regional Blocs around the world would continue to assert and exert their zones of influence in the new world order. To conclude, the authors foresee the re-structuring of the world order with a major role for India based on its inherent strengths in terms of demographic dividends, democratic values, rich cultural heritage, the spirit of the welfare of all reflected in vaccine diplomacy outreach, economic, military and technological progress coupled with strategic leadership.

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### Notes:

- \*Truman Doctrine, 1947: Policy of containment of the spread of Communism as the Cold War began to unfurl in the 1940s. Military help to those countries facing disturbances from Communist threats pointing towards especially to Greece and Turkey and subversive threats of being taken over by Communism.
- \*\*Marshall Plan, 1947: Economic aid package given to European countries to model their economy liberally and bring about development. The logic was a strong Europe will act as a bulwark against Communist expansion.
- \*\*\*COMINFORM, 1947: Economic response to Marshall Plan by the Soviet Union to preserve its sphere of influence.
- \*\*\*\*Hormuz Dilemma: The chokepoints closure or disruption of the Strait of Hormuz will hit the Chinese energy supply from the Persian Gulf hard.
- \*\*\*\*\*Diego Garcia: It is a naval support facility of the United Kingdom. This defense facility has been leased out to the *United States* Navy. Strategically located in the Indian Ocean, Diego Garcia an atoll, is in a commanding position in the Indian Ocean in all directions say it South Asia, northwest into the Middle East, east into Asia, or west into Africa.