India and Emerging Global Challenges

As World Rebalances,

A much Complex World follows

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**PREFACE**

The World is going through a period of rapid and wrenching changes. The emergence of IT revolution vis-à-vis Globalization altered the conventional definition of every Geopolitical variable. Globalization is driven by technology. Information technology render nations and individuals better mean of information sharing, while better connectivity and greater flow of people across the world create a diverse culture. In turns, it transformed an individual into “A Global Citizen”.

Technology reaches everyone so is globalization and creates an integrated world (Global village). But unlike technology, globalization is a force that stimulates counterbalances. In search of the right balance, globalization often creates paradoxes. Globalization levels the playing field for nations around the world but often in favour of developed nations and create discontent among developing nations so it calls for an integrated world but not a uniform or equal one. Consequently, countries try to defend their national interests against globalization. In other words, globalization provokes nationalism as nations are becoming more nationalists in the present scenario as it may be endangering the socio-economic landscapes and cultural demography of the nation.

The study of global issues is more complex than ever now that we have truly become a “global village”. We need a collective commitment to resolve the problem for a better and brighter future. The decision we make today will determine our future generations. Together we are confronted with many pressings and often competing challenges that demand thoughtful responses and solutions. We have a long list of challenges like increasing population and dwindling resources, poverty and hunger, security crisis vis-à-vis national security and ever new emerging challenges like environmental issues, cybersecurity and many more. These crises certainly represent problems facing our world today; on the other hand, I see these with a sense of optimism as it renders opportunities to bring forth required changes that will uplift the current quality of life.

The world is more interconnected than ever, so these problems don’t concern a set of nations but the whole world, but the key player has to step in leading other nation to achieve the common shared objective for a better world. Apropos India, where people embrace “Sarva Dharma Sama Bhava” which roughly embody secularism. This is very relevant to the contemporary world where we witness conflicts over differences of race, religion, caste, language etc every then now. Presently we talk about the “global village” but our approach to the problem is not quite global. On the other, India always believes in “Vasudhaiva kutumbakam” which means ‘The world is one family”. This is evident from the participation of India in world war to UN peacekeeping for the greater cause of world peace and tranquillity. These values which are deeply entrenched in the Indian society, signifying the importance of India in this world in developing a sense of global empathy where there is so much chaos everywhere.

To address the topic, first, we need to identify key global challenges and its impacts through political, economical, social and environmental lenses and try to address key global challenges. Finally, there will be one epilogue which summaries the key role that India can 3 provide to overcome these emerging global challenges for a better world as I want to term India as natural “world leader” for its unique and unprecedented achievement of unity in diversity. This can be evident in recent time as of now the whole world starts recognising the role of INDIA.

**PART ONE**

**The Global Challenges**

Currently, the world is facing multiple challenges. It would not be appropriate to refer to any particular problem as most dangerous as it carries the highest threat to the world without considering its long term consequences and its nature of inter-connectedness. But, one can infer overpopulation as the mother of all problems as it is inherently connected with every problem, be it poverty and hunger or migration crisis, rise in unemployment, crime rate and violence, dwindling resources like water, land, minerals, forest to global security concerns like rising of extremist terrorist groups further up to ecological and environmental concerns. We have some stringent and pressing challenges.

1)Overpopulation is a state whereby the human population rises to the extent such that ecological settings get adversely affected. It can be caused by unplanned family management, lack of awareness, a breakthrough in medicine etc. It is estimated that about 81 million people add to the world’s population annually. Regions with higher population density like Indian subcontinent can feel the dire effects of overpopulation ranging from putting so much stress on natural resources, environmental deterioration, worsening of quality of life to even the disintegration of population.

2)Poverty and hunger - One of the goals of UN sustainable development. Poverty is the biggest impediment to the growth and development as individuals are being deprived of two square meal a day and basic facilities like, access to education and health, equal opportunity etc, to live life in some stead and on other hand individuals overconsume resources which is meant for everyone, such as economic disparities all over the world.

Poverty is a veil behind which, a lot of talent get wasted as they never get the opportunity to showcase their talents. For the namesake, we live in the era of globalization, where so many dies of hunger. It’s a shame we have to share as around 821 million people afflicted with hunger every year (2018). Amartya Sen correctly said, “hunger is not about availability of food but politics”. This paralyzes people to even think rationally.

3)Environmental and ecological concerns- this is serious implications of the blind race of technological advancement and affluent use of limited resources. It concerns major issues like a) Availability of freshwater, b) Amplified climate change and global warming, c) loss of biodiversity, d) Accelerated habitat loss, e) ozone layer depletion, f) desertification etc.

4)Health issues- it is frightening to look into data of people dying from curable and preventive diseases in low and lower-middle-income countries due to inefficient or no health-supporting infrastructure and skilled doctors. These countries have very high infant mortality rate and maternal mortality rate. Malnutrition is another ubiquitous disease. For just curiosity, data according to world health organization (WHO) suggests globally 50% of children under the age of five who die of pneumonia, measles, HIV, tuberculosis and malaria are in Africa. This suggests about the severe asymmetries of distribution of health facilities around the world.

5) Global security- From North Korea nuclear and missile threats in the Korean peninsula to increasing militarization in the south china sea region have taken a toll on global security. There 5 are myriad real threats to the world like the destabilization of middle-east, India-Pakistan-china trilateral issues in which Pakistan is certainly combining with china to dismantle India’s sovereignty and robust democratic practices, wargames in Africa, etc. Since world war-2, this is probably the first time that so much violence is on the verge of happening in the wake of the multipolar world if robust steps have not taken. Arm race further aggravates global security concerns all around the world. Conflicts between Russia, USA and China have already increased the number of warfare machinery and artillery in their arsenal. Now, every country is competing to purchase weapons to safeguard its border. Increasing nuclearization and chemical weapon pose a serious threat to the world as the whole world has to pay the price for someone recklessness.

6) Artificial intelligence- This is an opportunity as well as a threat. What do we need to understand is, this unequivocally favours elites. But We live in a world, where extreme poverty is reality, basic education is distant, health facilities are only in dreams for a very large population. So, we can say it’s not feasible to think of A.I. at this hour as it will cut employment, further widen inequality within societies, increase singularity, promote totalitarian governments and begin global arms race and autonomous weapons that are capable of everything- from assassinations to genocide.

7) Chinese hegemony- It’s presence can felt from the Chinese approach to its neighbours, south china sea region and African countries. China is an export-driven economic machine and has a major share of the world’s total supply chain due to unfettered access to the world’s vast market which provides them with the opportunity to meddle in other country’s internal affairs. The world has an array of middle power partners like India, Japan, Taiwan, Australia, etc in Asia who detest Chinese expansionism and whose survival as a sovereign state is in peril due to Chinese president Xi Jinping’s totalitarian quest for power and grandeur. The new reality conflicts rather than coexistence with china are going to define the horizon for countries that are unwilling to accept its hegemony and its false claim of territory.

8)prejudice and equality- it has been a persistence feature of modern human societies over time and space. We claim to get over the slavery system but not so much still Blacks are discriminated and the recent incident of killing of George Floyd in United states proves it. But it’s not only blacks, but Uyghurs Muslims have also been put up in concentration camps in china, minority like Sikhs, Hindus, Christians etc are exploited and converted to Islam in Pakistan and Afghanistan, conversion in Africa in wake of a better life, etc happening all over the world. Human right violation can be easily traced all around the world. Western nations coercing other nation to accept the western ideology and paint as best. This destroys the native culture as it creates confusion in peoples in people’s mind and leads to transgression. 9)Governance and leadership- International organizations like UN, WHO, WTO etc seemingly becoming less relevant than ever. These bodies have become merely an institution for geopolitics for influence in the interest of superpower like the USA, China, European union etc to serve their cause. They don’t care about weak nations. Like recent pandemic of coronavirus exposed the accountability of WHO to inform the spread to every other nation to stop the virus at earliest. Every international organization works on someone’s behalf to promote their propaganda. It needs relooking and major reforms as world order are rebalancing with the emergence of significant regional organizations.

These are some key challenges I want to address but it’s not the end. There is a long list of challenges, the world currently faces.

**India’s relevance to challenges**

A nation with 1.35 billion people of diverse ideologies, classes, races, castes, etc with so many differences, still live in harmony with each other. This is the beauty of this nation which could not be found anywhere. There is no other nation with this much diversity and still hold democratic values as a whole. This nation cares about everyone as there is a proverb in Sanskrit treatise “Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah” which can be translated in to as happiness and prosperity to all. Value like this is deeply entrenched in Indian societies and they believe in karma which says you are the only one accountable to your life, if you do good, good will happen to you and vice versa. This is not like that India is free of problems but the irony is, on the contrary, we have all sorts of problems but still we always mend a way out of every possible problem presented to us and it makes us very relevant to this modern complex world.

I want to start with the problem of Chinese hegemony and their expansionism at the global level. China is bullying every small neighbouring country either by its military might or making them fall into the debt trap and not leaving any stone unturned to promote their coercive propaganda. India has been hesitant in the past to attempt the formation of any overtly anti-china bloc but no more, India has realised the mistake and now sheds inhibition to take responsibility to convince partners and trying to bring a loose miniature grouping to fruition to checkmate Chinese imperialism.

India has been successful in lifting 271 million people out of poverty in 10 years from 2005/06 to 2015/16. This is an outstanding achievement and an example for the world to follow but despite that still, it has a long way to go and this remains a persistent problem of society and recent coronavirus is also not helping the cause. India also a leader in imparting basic education to its population and came a long way to attain 75% literacy rate and recent proposal of National education policy (NEP) helping the Indian education system with some innovation reforms and flexibility given to students. One of the major upshot of NEP is the promise of a minimum 6% contribution of GDP to education. With education and awareness, there will be direct consequences in helping the matters of overpopulation, internal security like radicalisation of youth, Maoists etc and their occurrence will be less likely. The recent declaration of health id card and Ayushman Bharat for citizens of the country are helping highly anticipated health system of the country especially to the poor.

India’s visions to develop themselves inclusively, as well as exclusive competing global trends like 5G development and artificial intelligence, are very impressive. Now India tries to make for the lost time as we have let pass by two revolutions 1) industrial revolution and 2) IT revolution. But now India is keeping in mind of next revolution so that we shall be ready when the time arrives as India continuously promoting research and development by public-private collaboration.

Innovation and technological advancement are two ways India can help themself as it helps to curb inflation as well as provide employment to a large population. India has been a pioneer in the production of clean and renewable energy. India initiated the International solar alliance in 2015 is a big step in reducing carbon emission of the world. India’s large share of energy production comes from renewable sources. India is also very active in protecting ecology and biodiversity as recently India has made ecological sensitive zones and rolled out an environmental impact assessment. India has a clear intention to make the planet better.

Importance of India in the world has always been significant. So, it’s not merely the nature of India to be “world Guru” but it’s a duty also. Many countries are counting on India to lead them through, to check Chinese expansionism and totalitarian approach. World organization needs renewal with the inclusion of India as a major stakeholder at all cost as the world approaches multipolarity now. The world is driving towards Human-resource based knowledge economy and India have around half of its population below the age of 25 years, given proper education and skillset they can lead the world to a greater height. Now the time has come to India to fully realise that it is potential and triumvirate world leader with China and the USA. The world will surely take notice of India’s challenges and learn.