

At a time when America's role is tragically missing and as the world steps up its scrutiny of China, the global leadership is suffering from a crisis, it is India that step in to fill the void

US-China tussle - humanity is the loser

Great powers in different points in history have a history of a tussle for enforcing their vision of an ideal society, economy and thinking has put humanity at risk, be it the thirty days war of the mid 15th century which led to the formation of Westphalian world order or the first and second world war which resulted in a devastating loss of human lives and property. This context appears to have an eerie similarity in the prevailing US-China tussle over the origin of the COVID-19 and other related issues have shown that humanity is the common loser during these trying times. At a time when China and the US should join hands to combat the common pervasive threat of a virus which has wreaked havoc on humanity, they are busy quibbling amongst themselves. These incidents not only put a serious dent on the collective ability of nation-states to put their aside their differences and work together but also creates a deep schism in global response to put up a united front against COVID-19.



Image: REUTERS

The emergence of void in global leadership

A serious dearth in global leadership has emerged- the European Union is also virtually absent in this situation as it grapples with the rising death toll and the debilitating impact on its economies owing to the highly contagious virus, Russia grapples with its own set of problems, the Gulf countries are struggling hard to keep their economies afloat amidst the resulting oil demand glut and price crash, all these situations have led to a serious crisis at the global level, although China is exporting kits and personal protective equipment (PPE) to other countries, the quality of these products is so substandard that numerous countries have banned them and are shipping orders from elsewhere.

Besides this, countries like [Australia](#) and other European countries have raised red flags about the predatory nature of Chinese takeover of foreign companies, all these matters have raised credibility issues about the ability of the dragon to lead the world in these trying times.



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi with NSA Ajit Doval and External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar/ Image: Twitter

India- to the rescue

However, *where is there is a will, there is a way*. India is the country which can steer the world through these difficult times, the way India showed the resurrection of the South Asian regional grouping SAARC through a videoconference summit to discuss a united South Asian approach to fight COVID-19 shows immense potential in India's leadership. When narrow jingoistic nationalism seems to have a new normal in the developed countries, India is leading by example. The export of the [anti-malarial drug hydroxychloroquine](#) to over 50 countries has shown that India knows how to use myriad ways of uniting humanity in these trying times.

Foreign policy experts and global policy experts have unanimously predicted that the 2020s will be the Asian age, the exemplary leadership India has shown can very well lead to the establishment of India- led global order. China's discomfiture could just be the 'tide in the affairs of men' for India. The situation is an opportunity for India to "rediscover manufacturing prowess". China may not lose relevance as a destination for global businesses overnight. Therefore for India order to seize the moment would require proper planning. Economically, India can also emerge as the new leader, although the national lockdown has hit the Indian economy hard with businesses registering huge losses in the initial days of the lockdown, the crippling impact of the pandemic is taking a toll on economies globally, China's economy contracted significantly for the first time in decades, the US unemployment rate is at a record high. Europe is in the grip of its worst recession since the Great Economic Depression of the 1930s. IMF has predicted that the Indian economy will grow at 1.9% in the [fiscal year 2020](#) and will rebound to 7.4% in the fiscal year 2021-2022. Certain steps that India can take to emerge economically advantageous position after the pandemic are-

Firstly, projecting the country as an attractive and extremely lucrative destination for companies to invest by reforming the labour laws, streamlining GST system and reducing bureaucratic red tapping would bolster business prospects in the country.

Secondly, decongesting the judicial system by giving more power to *lok adalats*, increasing the age of retirement age of judges would help in reducing litigation in the courts of the country which will help in improving India's image.

Thirdly, providing tax holidays, setting special economic zones(SEZ), reforming the export promotion schemes will give India a much-needed boost to India's image as a land of

economic opportunities.

Conclusion

India has the capability, will power and resources to tide over the crisis and can help her fellow countries come out strong in these trying times. A pax Indica world order seems to be very much possible.

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