

## **India @ 75 - The Emerging World Order and India's Aspiration**

Delhi School of Transnational Affairs (DSTA), Institution of Eminence, University of Delhi organized an online panel discussion (24 March 2022) on the theme "India @ 75 - The Emerging World Order and India's Aspiration". The event was chaired by Prof Ashok K Acharya, Joint Director, DSTA. Prof. Bipin Kumar Tiwary, OSD, DSTA welcomed the distinguished guests and panellists of the event, Dr **C. Raja Mohan**, Senior Fellow, Asia Society Policy Institute, Delhi; **Ambassador Dr. Mohan Kumar**, Chairman, Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), New Delhi and **Prof. Madhu Bhalla**, Governing Body Member, DSTA & Editor, India Quarterly journal.

The first speaker of the event, **Dr C. Raja Mohan** highlighted following points during his address.

- International order is not physics/science or in other words it is not a definite thing.
- International order helps to understand the broad trends in the international system.
- Russia's President Putin is trying to restore what he thinks is the legitimate sphere of the Russian civilization. It could be costly for Russia as these actions could trigger upsurge for nationalism in Ukraine.
- There are three aspects of India's role in this fast-changing world - first, India's great power relations with rest of the world and how India is adapting to them; second, the economic aspects of globalization and how India is going to deal with it and; third, how multilateral and international institutions have reacted to this conflict.
- First, India has capabilities to shape the nature of the equations between the other great powers (India is three trillion-dollar economy with fourth or fifth largest defense budget and third largest armed forces). India is strategically autonomous enough to take foreign policy decisions based on its interests (it makes little sense if India talks about neutrality or non-alignment).
- Second, India adopted a very different strategy of globalization which is not going to globalize uncritically and that uncritical globalization has exposed domestic vulnerabilities in large parts of manufacturing. India has fundamentally shifted from last 30 years to integrate with the global economy that has supported creation of national as well as our standing at the international system. Today, India is actually liberating the domestic capital and inviting foreign capital to do things in the country.
- Third, India is shifting from a blind faith in multilateralism to mini-lateralism (where we are members in the BRICS as well as QUAD). India is also moving away from a traditional emphasis on the collective non-alignment movement, emphasizing global institutions and democratization etc.

The second speaker, **Ambassador Dr. Mohan Kumar**, Chairman, RIS, New Delhi, out emphasis on following issues.

- February 24, 2022 was a hinge moment and last nail in the coffin of liberal order. China, it seems, holds the cards in terms of the direction and contours of the emerging world order. China could throw its weight behind Russia that could create a binary block situation in the world where we have a Sino-Russian block and a NATO-West block. In response to this, India and ASEAN will engage in strategic hedging and this kind of hedging will not only prove difficult but it could prove to be unviable as well.
- Unlike many experts who believe that a G-2 could become real to some extent, there would be no G-2 as there will be many twists and turns and hence, there will be no partnership between US and China.
- India should do three things for achieving its aspirations in the next 10 to 15 years:
  1. Become a leading power not a balancing power, at least in Asia.
  2. Rule shaper rather than a rule-taker particularly at institutions like - WTO and also taking decision on other matters like- shaping the rules for digital sphere, personal data protection, sustainable development, cyber security etc.
  3. India should aim to be an independent pole in the multi-polar world.

Solutions for India:

- India should try to achieve the \$10 trillion economy mark as quickly as possible. In such a situation, India would have money that it can spend on big projects within the South Asian countries.
- Niti Ayog report of November 2021 (the first report on multi-dimensional poverty in India) says clearly that 1 out of 4 people in India live in abject poverty; India is looking at a staggering figure of 600 million people who live in abject poverty or multi-dimensional poverty. This has to be reduced in coming years.
- Domestic consensus is needed on certain issues like - foreign policy and national security which represents India's national interest and those should not be politicized. Social cohesion is needed and all should try to find a way to achieve greater cohesion which contributes to comprehensive national power.

The last speaker, **Prof Madhu Bhalla**, highlighted following points.

- In terms of foreign policy and future globalization; the world is more interdependent rather than multilateralism; It is not a question of how we get along with the major powers but also how we get along with all of the smaller powers in our periphery and across the world; interdependencies have to be rethought and reconceptualised.
- Conceptualizing the Indian Ocean world and India needs to reach out to major as well as small partners in the Indian Ocean because the Indian Ocean domain is the one that is built on interdependencies and a great deal of interaction.
- The notion of interdependencies goes beyond the notion of multilateral institutions which must have a longer reach in terms of long-term perspectives.
- India is trapped between the Pakistan and China syndromes and we need to focus on diversifying.

- We have to integrate our policies on different geographies into a holistic kind of foreign policy agenda which will link us to new geographies in Indo-Pacific. At the same time, we need to focus on the domestic drivers or events that will actually drive our foreign policy in many ways.
- Create an India where the world has a stake with India and they will be willing to be part of our supply chains.
- For the next 10 years, we should try to achieve 8 percent or ten percent annual economic growth rate.

*This event report has been written by Dr. Beena, Post-Doc Fellow, Delhi School of Transnational Affairs, University of Delhi.*