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Is global unrest manifests the perils of inherent institutional policy fissures through misallocation of resources and distributive injustice?: A critical analysis

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Abstract

The Celebrated American Statesman Adlai Stevenson had once remarked that, "We can chart our future clearly and wisely only when we know the path which has led to the present". In the light of this enlightened thought, we need to examine that whether the Past occurrences of sporadic tensions, mass mobilization, specific and localised regional frustrations and mass protests of higher dimensions such as the French Revolution, Civil War in USA, Russian Revolution or the decolonization of several developing countries in the middle of 20th century and other such events clearly indicates and corroborates that the contemporary global unrest of varied categories are actually "Old Wine in New Bottle". This paper attempts to study that "is global unrest manifests the perils of inherent institutional policy fissures through misallocation of resources and distributive injustice?". This Study attempts to figure out the root causes of the widespread civic unrest across the globe and to analyse that whether there exists common threads which connects these developments of global dissatisfaction and discontent. This paper also attempts to study the link between the economic growth and civic unrest. This study takes help of axiomatic findings, literature review, empirical evidence and reaches at a conclusion that the factors influencing the global unrest or decline in growth or institutional challenges are interrelated. The paper observes and concludes through causative factors such as (a) Increased defence spending of major economies since Atomic Bombing Catastrophe and Strategic blunders in resource allocations, (b) Leadership crisis, (c) Rise of Hawkish, irresponsible and politically tilted social media, (d) Border Challenges of India and economic growth (e) Failure to learn lessons from History.

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Introduction

The Data Model research report, released in January this year by socio-economic and political analysis firm Verisk Maplecroft, has predicted that almost 40% of the World's 195 countries will witness Civil Unrest in 2020. The report cites the examples of Hong Kong, Chile, Nigeria, Bolivia, Lebanon, Sudan, Yemen, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Pakistan and India which have become hotbeds of civil protest and mass demonstrations. The other major countries which includes in the same category and witnesses Civil Unrest are China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Thailand and Brazil. It is expected that about 75 countries are at the verge of facing serious civic protests and unrest. The British Consultancy firm mentions in its report that there would be tremendous pressure on global firms to exercise corporate responsibility and particularly in those countries which are rich in natural resources where mining and energy projects often need high levels of protection. Moreover, the report also expresses fear that such companies are at substantial danger of complicity if they employ state or private security forces that perpetrate violations.

A select group of scholars support this idea, citing World Inequality Database, that the fundamental cause of global unrest is rising gross inequality produced by global capitalism. The prevailing socio-economic inequality in most of the countries may validate to this proposition to certain extent but indeed there are other socio-politico-economic and technology factors which add fuel to the fire.

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Increased defence spending of major economies since atomic bombing catastrophe and strategic blunders in resource allocations

Around the World, mounting geopolitical instabilities are matched- and frequently exacerbated – by continuing domestic political strains. With multilateralism weakening and relations between the World’s major powers in flux, the current geopolitical backdrop is inauspicious for resolving the many protracted conflicts that persist around the world. In Afghanistan, for example, civilian deaths in the first six months of 2018 were the highest in 10 years, according to the UN, while the share of districts controlled by the United States- supported Afghan government fell from 72% in 2015 to 56% in 2018. In Syria, multiple states are now embroiled in a civil conflict in which hundreds of thousands have died. And in Yemen, the direct casualties of war are estimated at 10,000 and as many as 13 million people are at risk of starvation as a result of disruptions to food and other supplies, according to a UN warning in October 2018. One positive geopolitical development since the last edition of this report has been an easing of tensions and volatility related to North Korea’s nuclear programme, following increased diplomacy involving the United States, South Korea and North Korea. This may have played a part in a sharp fall- from 79% to 44% - in the proportion of the survey respondents expecting the risk of “state-on-state military conflict or incursion” to increase over the next year. Nonetheless, for the third year running, weapons of mass destruction ranked as the number one global risk in terms of potential impact. (The Global Risks Report 2019, 14th edition, World Economic Forum).

It is pertinent to note that the global military expenditure was \$ 1822 billion in 2018, an increase of 2.6 per cent from 2017 in real terms. Total military spending accounted for 2.1 per cent of global gross domestic product in 2018. The five biggest spenders in 2018 were the United States, China, Saudi Arabia, India and France, which together accounted for 60 per cent of global military spending. Russia was the sixth-largest spender in 2018. US military spending rose for the first time in seven years, to \$ 649 billion in 2018. China increased its military expenditure by 5.0 per cent and India by 3.1 per cent. Military expenditure increased in Central America and the Caribbean, Central Europe, Central and South Asia, East Asia, North America, South America, and Western Europe. Although, according to the World military expenditure database, April 2019 of SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute), few countries reduced their defence spending but still the expenditure is relatively higher in absolute terms. Global military spending has been gradually rising following a post-2009 low in 2014. It is now 76 per cent higher than the post-cold war low in 1998. Military spending per capita increased from \$ 230 in 2017 to \$ 239 in 2018, as the 1.1 per cent growth in world population was surpassed by the growth in military spending.

The increased defence spending of major economies since Atomic Bombing Catastrophe in Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6th August and 9th August 1945 respectively is a categorical expression that although the possibility of Third World War has become rare but the proxy war, hostility and mutual hatred among the enemy countries continues which reflects in the form of Strategic blunders in resource allocations which leads to all sorts of political, social and economic inequalities among the societies and common

people. If the resources, man power, research works, finances etc are deliberately wasted as inputs for unproductive purposes, then quite expectedly these inequalities of real inputs would drag down the curve of production possibility frontier (PPF) of the economies and subsequently social inequalities are bound to rise. In nutshell, “It’s the inequalities of real inputs which ultimately generates and increases inequalities of real output among the masses”. This condition arises because of loss and wastage of immensely valuable resources of physical, financial, technological and human capital for political ideologies, war mongering and defence augmentation which reduces and adversely impact the productivity of consumer goods items and consumer services for the common people. A large number of literatures corroborates that real inputs, such as all sort of resources which are spent on societies have a positive and significant effect on welfare. Social spending and the policy strategies that facilitate the process of innovation, knowledge creation, and information are found to have profound effects on the long-run patterns of economic growth and development (Barro, 1991; Rebelo 1991; Benhabib and Spiegel 1994). On similar lines, Studies such as Anand and Ravallion (1993) and Hojman (1996) find that health expenditure has a significant impact on health status. This has been corroborated by Bidani and Ravallion (1997), who show that health expenditures have a significantly positive impact on the poor.

A large number of scholars talk about rising inequality as a major cause of Global unrest, civil protests and mass demonstrations but if we analyse a bit deeper, then we find the inequalities exist in the use of real inputs which arises due to increased defence spending, which is actually a waste of time, energy, lives, efforts due to the weaknesses of the political parties and governments which flourish on the ideology of hatred. It’s the clear-cut case of strategic blunders in resource allocations. If manipulation prevails in inputs, then real output falls which results in social inequalities and unmet expectations.

Leadership crisis

A fake leader creates followers; whereas a true leader creates more leaders. The era of Stalwart and statesman like Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin D Roosevelt, John F Kennedy, Mahatma Gandhi etc are bygone years. The World is facing leadership crisis. Even in Indian context, in contemporary India, we do not find ‘National leaders’. All leaders have become regional leaders and teach distorted history of British colonial interpretation. The regional leaders do not possess global perspective. On the contrary, they have borrowed the idea of “Divisive politics” from British era and negatively influence the local populations by promoting hatred among the states. Once, President Simon Peres of Israel had said that, ‘although a leader controls the situations but sometimes, it’s the situation which controls the leaders’. In 21st century, there has been the deterioration and decline of political class and standards which are evident everywhere across the globe. The Sino-US tensions, Iran’s and North Korea’s Nuclear ambitions, India-Pakistan standoff over Border issues, China-Japan historical tensions, USA Russia rivalries Brexit etc and other such episodes have always indicated that our world leaders are more vocal about their respective ideologies and hardly concerned about the real issues of the people and world at large such as

unemployment, health, education, basic amenities and facilities, fluctuating stock markets and decline in growth rates across the globe. In Contemporary context, in the era of globalization, we live in a unipolar world and the United States of America has the biggest responsibility to check the rising trends of global unrest because the world looks at the USA as the ultimate Hope. "With Great Power, comes great Responsibility 'and the United States being the most powerful country in the world today has the major challenge to identify the problems of global unrest and usher the world in the realm of economic prosperity like Thomas Moore's Utopia. Leadership Crisis is evidently visible and can be cured by strengthening the institutions and the pillars of modern democracies across the globe. The World body like United Nations Organizations (UNO) can play more proactive role by punishing those countries and their leadership where the roots of democracy is weak and democratic principles are not being followed.

Rise of hawkish, irresponsible and politically tilted social media

The rise of hawkish, irresponsible and politically tilted, politically inclined, politically motivated social media platforms such as Facebook, twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp etc are controlled, manipulated, influenced by the millions of workers of political parties across the globe in their respective countries for mass mobilizations and civil protests and demonstrations in order to topple the incumbent regimes and to capture power. For example, the incumbent state government of west Bengal leadership in India actually engineered mass protests and civic unrest throughout the west Bengal state in 2008, 2009 and 2010 against the then ruling communist regime. Nandigram episode and Singur controversy which ultimately led to the final exit of Indonesia's Salim group chemical company and the closure and exit of Indian company Tata motors respectively from such places. This is a categorical example which is equally an eye opener that how the social media acts as a catalyst in such incidents of civil protests and dissatisfaction against the ruling establishment. On similar lines, the mass demonstrations and protests against any established body, governments, companies etc are actually being facilitated by the pressure groups, trade unions, Non-Government organizations and opposition parties for the sake of grabbing power.

Border challenges of India and economic growth

The social and economic backwardness in the peripheral regions of India particularly in the North-East region and Kashmir clearly indicates and corroborates that the institutional policies to effectively enhance the economic growth of these regions have been questionable. The social spending has been relatively meagre in comparison to the military spending in order to contain the civil protests, mass demonstrations and to check infiltration and defence threats from the hostile neighbours. The decline in economic growth leads to unbalanced development in different regions of the country. This decline of economic growth in specific Indian regions or any other such regions need to be studied and visualised from global perspective. The empirical evidences categorically establish the linkages between economic growth and civic unrest. India, being a major political and economic power in the era of globalisation has enormous potential to create the ripple effects. It is

equivalent to zero sum game, "when the high level of economic growth diminishes the occurrences of civilian protests or unrest in the region; similarly the decline in the level of economic growth enhances the possibility of such disruption and social tensions on frequent basis".

Failure to learn lessons from history

The famous historian Will Durant has remarked long ago that in the hostility between Sparta and Athens, the former lost in oblivion whereas the latter flourished. Sparta focussed only on warfare whereas Athens also believed in cultures, followed other creative pursuits and therefore flourished accordingly. At the time of writing this paper, the whole world is facing the brunt of Corona Virus pandemic worldwide. Interestingly, the novel 'The eyes of Darkness', written by Dean Koontz, which was published few decades ago talks about Wuhan-400 as a biological warfare agent which many people relate with Corona Virus disease prediction. It's unthinkable that the US-China trade wars and rivalries have reached to such a low level that indirect proxy war is continuing. It reminds us the famous statement of Aristotle who remarked, "Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all". It's high time for everyone to realize the significance of Unity. United we stand, divided we fall. If all the countries take lessons from the past horrors of two World Wars, then the humanity may stand united as a singular force. If the world becomes united and focus on real issues such as illiteracy, poverty, unemployment etc, then only the human civilization would attain peace and prosperity. Global unrest is nothing but the outcome and result of all such leakages in terms of resources which the major powers lose due to hostility.

Conclusion

We are connected by Technologies only, not by hearts. Technologies simply transfer the data and information but the real issues are missing in between the linkages. The unrest of different varieties, are all man-made. When the policies, programmes, process of implementation of global rules such as climate change pacts, strategic reduction of weapons of mass destruction pacts, politico-economic international pacts, multilateral or bilateral trading pacts among the nations are not genuinely dealt with, then the outcome and results are mass protests and global unrest which are obvious. This paper implicitly presents a hypothesis which critics may accept as a conjecture only but it's an axiomatic fact that a large number of global unrests manifest the perils of inherent institutional policy fissures through misallocation of resources and distributive justice. The purpose and objective of globalisation and common institutional policies need to be redefined. The Global unrest is a universal phenomenon with local and national linkages. The big powers like USA, UK, Russia, China, India and other such nations which dominates and enjoys enormous political clout need to revise their political perspective and institutional policies in order to attain shared prosperity for the people of whole world.

Although the paper concludes that the above enumerated factors for this global unrest, however the paper has certain limitations such as to excessively generalize the nature, implications, and ramifications of respective civic unrest which are deeply rooted in geo strategic regional politics. This Study has dealt with the topic in an elaborate discourse but leaves enough scope for further research through

statistical tools. Lack of elaborate statistical tool is a major shortcoming of the paper. However, this paper has opened new vistas and a broader horizon of understanding that “Good Economics is vitiated by Bad Politics “.

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