

A Critical Analysis of the New World Order and the Role of India in Promoting Multilateral Diplomacy

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Abstract: Traces of cultures and societies maintaining 'order' within their communities can be found in history. Today, there is an increasing discussion around the idea of a 'New World Order' - a concept which was first indirectly proposed in 1918 by President Wilson in a speech where he was iterating the importance of an international post-war system enabling collective security and cooperation among nations. Post that, the New World Order was greatly re-defined in the Cold War and post-Cold War era by the likes of Gorbachev and Bush. This research paper conducts a thorough critical analysis of the New World Order with a particular focus on the role of multilateral diplomacy in further enforcing this. The latter part of the paper evaluates the role of India - the largest democracy and most populated country - in facilitating this New World Order through their various bilateral agreements and initiatives in the space of international trade, climate change, security and sustainability and reduction of the gap between developing and developed countries.

Keywords: new world order, multilateral diplomacy, united nations, India, bilateral agreements, international trade, climate change, security, sustainability.

1. Introduction

The phrase 'New World Order' has become increasingly common in today's political discourse. However, in order to fully comprehend what it entails, it is necessary to first define the concept of world order. So, what exactly is world order? Simply put, it is the concept of establishing a system that maintains order in global affairs and sets guidelines for international relations (Grinin, 2016). There is no single period in history where world order began. In fact, when analysed historically, there have been several examples of different cultures and societies establishing systems of norms and government to maintain order within their communities and also in their interactions with other ones. For instance, empire formation in different regions, such as The Persian Empire and The Roman Empire among others, played a vital role in shaping world order as they were established to maintain order within their respective territories and exert influence beyond the borders.

The 1648 Treaty of Westphalia - which finished the devastating Thirty Years' War in Central Europe - is commonly cited as a milestone in the development of the modern-day

concept of world order as it led to significant changes in international relations by establishing principles pertaining to state sovereignty, mediation between nations and diplomacy, all of which shape the global system till date (Patton, 2019). That being said, a prominent figure associated with the New World Order was President Woodrow Wilson. Whilst he did not explicitly use the term, the president's call for a post-war international system based on principles of self-determination, collective security, and cooperation among nations during his Fourteen Points speech delivered in January 1918, during World War I, resonated greatly with the concept (National WWI Museum and Memorial, 2019). The President's vision was then particularly embodied in the creation of the League of Nations, established in 1919, with the aim of maintaining global peace and resolving disputes diplomatically.

Since then, the concept of the New World Order has evolved greatly, particularly post the Cold-War era. Of all the principles that underlie the concept, that of multilateral diplomacy - "*the practice of involving more than two nations or parties in achieving diplomatic solutions to supranational problems*" (Mahbubani, 2022) - is of particular interest as it has practical implications for the management of several areas including climate change and international trade. Moreover, in promoting multilateral diplomacy, the role of specific institutions and countries such as India, is especially highlighted. In light of the aforementioned, this research paper aims to answer the question '*How does multilateral diplomacy in the New World Order influence the management of supranational issues and what is India's role in promoting this?*'

This paper argues that the role of institutions and India in enforcing global governance through multilateral diplomacy as part of the New World Order is vital in combating events like climate change as well as strengthening international trade dynamics.

2. The New World Order

As mentioned in the introduction, it was the political ideology communicated by President Wilson in association with the League of Nations that first resonated with the concept of the New World Order. The league was initially created by

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the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 and formally established in 1920 but failed due to a myriad of reasons with the primary being rejection of membership by the United State Senate with Senator Henry Cabot Lodge arguing that it would weaken US sovereignty (Rust, 2023). Despite thirty-two nations joining the league, the absence of the United States was felt with votes about disarmament amidst other matters seeing the former central and allied powers deadlocked in ties (Blakemore, 2020). Moreover, the League's credibility was also weakened by its inability to effectively intervene and address the geopolitical tensions that were emerging including the rise of Nazi Germany and the expansionist ambitions of Japan and Italy. Therefore, the world's first attempt at founding an international body to promote peace and diplomacy struggled to accomplish its goals and ultimately failed by the late 1930s - greatly signified by the outbreak of World War II (Rust, 2023).

The League of Nations is considered the predecessor of the United Nations (UN) - the UN was founded in 1945, post World War II, and by 20 April 1946, The League of Nations ceased to exist with all assets having been handed over to the UN (UN, 2023). The main aim of the UN was to create a more effective global governance system by directly addressing the failures of the League of Nations. In line with this, the UN provided a platform for member states to collectively discuss and address global challenges i.e. engage in multilateral diplomacy and work towards common goals. The UN, therefore, served as a key institution in furthering and shaping discussions regarding the New World Order.

For many years, the concept of the New World Order was undefined. However, it saw significant redefining in the latter years of the Cold War era. Literature commonly points to three distinct periods to explain the aforementioned and these are detailed below

- *An initial redefinition by the Soviets:* Bipolarity is recognised as an empirical condition that occurred during the Cold War wherein two superpowers, the USSR and the United States, dominated the world (Nadkarni, 2010). However, Mikhail Gorbachev, who was appointed the de facto leader of the USSR in 1985, was keen to reform the Soviet system and promote cooperation with the West, and thus introduced policies such as glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring) (Waxman, 2022). In December 1988, Gorbachev made a speech to the UN General Assembly wherein he communicated an extensive list of ideas for creating a New World Order. As part of this, he strongly advocated for the strengthened role of the UN and the active involvement and cooperation from all member states in dealing with matters relating to environmental protection, debt relief for developing countries, and disarmament of nuclear weapons, amongst others (The New York Times Archives, 1988). This triggered a conversation around a new world order based on pluralism, tolerance and cooperation
- *Redefinition at the Malta Conference:* In 1989, the Malta Summit was organized with the aim for the two

superpowers, i.e., USSR and the United States, to reevaluate their relations and establish a new course for the future. Bush, who was the newly elected President of the United States at that time, had previously been reserved in appraising the major transformation of the USSR throughout 1989. However, this summit saw Bush showing support for Gorbachev's new policy of the new political reality. Consequently, conversations around pressing issues including German reunification, disarmament, intervention in Europe and Soviet ties to the West (Zubok, 2010), saw the two leaders conversing in an open and diplomatic manner wherein both sides were respectful of each other's political ideologies whilst discussing how they might be transformed to fit the New World Order.

- *A final redefinition after George H.W. Bush's speech of September 1990:* On September 11, 1990, President George H. W. Bush gave a speech in which he outlined his vision for the New World Order in the aftermath of the Gulf War. The president claimed that this new order would be "*Freer from the threat of terror, stronger in the pursuit of justice, and more secure in the quest for peace. An era in which nations of the world, East and West, North and South, can prosper and live in harmony*" (Knott, 2017). Bush emphasized the importance of multilateralism in achieving the aforementioned.

This speech played a significant role in shaping the discourse around the New World Order, for post this speech, there have been many developments regarding the same. Most importantly, the accelerated pace of globalisation and the increased interconnectedness of economies and societies has further highlighted the need for international cooperation and coordination to address global challenges - this has also resulted in the evolution of international institutions with the UN having played and continuing to play a central role in the facilitation of such discussions.

3. Role of Multilateral Diplomacy in the New World Order

One of the key principles of the New World Order is multilateral diplomacy. Multilateral diplomacy emphasizes the importance and seeks to facilitate cooperation amongst nations within international frameworks - primarily provided by the United Nations - and institutions (Muldoon and Aviel, 2010). By promoting the idea that inclusive and participatory processes are vital to addressing global challenges and issues, multilateral diplomacy helps to achieve the objectives of the New World Order i.e., international cooperation, collaborative problem solving and collective security.

In this century, we are inundated with several interconnected and complex global challenges such as climate change, terrorism, pandemics and poverty. Moreover, as globalization and technological advancement continue to occur at an unprecedented rate, it becomes vital to have established regulations and norms in the areas of international trade,

intellectual property and cybersecurity for the protection of stakeholders. By providing a forum for countries to collaborate, engage in open dialogue and negotiation and invest time and resources in joint problem solving, multilateral diplomacy is able to aid the addressal of global challenges, foster trust between nations, promote peace and enhance global governance.

4. India's Role in the New World Order

India is the world's most populous and largest democracy. The country is a stalworth advocate of multilateralism and the upholding of the principles of the UN. The country's participation in several multilateral forums, including the UN General Assembly, has implications not only for India's global strength but also for the New World Order and the manner in which global governance is shaped and enforced.

Multilateral trade agreements are a crucial element of the New World Order as they provide a framework for stable, predictable and equal trade between countries. The June 2023 meeting between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Biden in Washington, USA, is vital in the conversation of multilateral trade. Whilst this meeting resulted in substantial deals across various sectors, there were three significant developments that occurred - the termination of outstanding disputes at the World Trade Organization (WTO), India joining the Minerals Security Partnership (MSP) and investments in India by the biggest US chip makers (Tembey, 2023). The removal of the WTO disputes, particularly, has the potential to not only strengthen the already thriving economic relationship between the two countries - trade levels between India and the US have almost doubled over the past decade to more than \$191 billion (Singal, 2023) - but more importantly further India's trade imperatives and become indispensable for the success of the multilateral trading system. The aforementioned was highlighted by Mark Linscott, Senior Advisor with the Asia Group and former Assistant US trade representative, who stated that "*joint efforts between India and the US to collaborate on WTO issues could be a game changer in addressing systematic concerns of trade multilateralism*" (Economic Times, 2023).

Other than the country's trade relations with the US, India has also been actively working on furthering their multilateral approach by strengthening their bilateral engagement with other countries. For instance, binding relationships with the Middle East have been witnessed in recent years. The UAE and India, particularly, have made great progress in their relations. In February 2022, the two countries signed the historic Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) which entered into force in May 2022 and has allowed the economic engagement between them to increase exponentially - it has been reported that in just one year, the trade has gone up by 19% and total trade value stands at \$85 billion (PTI, 2023). In fact, during his visit to Abu Dhabi in July 2023, Prime Minister Modi signed agreements with the country for trade settlements to be in national currencies. Such developments are vital in facilitating greater economic collaboration between the countries whilst also providing opportunities to transcend the

bilateral and acquire multilateral dimensions (HT, 2023). Such can also be said for India's relations with the far east (seen in their Strategic Partnership with ASEAN in 2012) and countries in Europe and UK as well as their long-standing relations with Russia.

Another issue at the core of the New World Order is the fight against *climate change*. India plays a big role in reducing the worsening impacts of climate change whilst also facilitating and condoning the creation of regulations and policies that allow other countries to join the fight effectively. For instance, in partnership with France, India launched the International Solar Alliance in 2015. The aim of the ISA is to bring together solar-rich nations to enable the worldwide use of solar energy through the mobilisation of resources and large-scale facilitate technology transfers (CCAC, 2023). Furthermore, India has and continues to actively participate in international climate change negotiations and especially played a significant role in the adoption of the 2015 Paris Agreement. What is most vital, however, is that true to India's philosophy, in the fight against climate change, the country very clearly advocates for "*common but differentiated responsibilities*" (Epstein, 2019). This suggests that whilst all countries are responsible for addressing climate change, there is a greater need for developed countries to take the lead in mitigating greenhouse gas emissions as they have the necessary resources to be able to do so. Encouraging a united stance to combat climate change reflects India's commitment to multilateral cooperation.

Continuing from climate change, there is an increasing level of dialogue surrounding the importance of *security and sustainability* in the New World Order (The Economist, 2023). India's presidency of the G20 - one of the most prominent multilateral groupings in global politics as it plays a vital role in shaping and strengthening the global architecture and governance on all major economic issues (McBride, Siripurapu and Berman, 2022) - proves to be incredibly relevant for setting global agendas and building consensus and policies focusing on the aforementioned areas. This was witnessed in the first week of July 2023 at the Research Ministerial Meeting held in Mumbai, India. The theme for the meeting was "Research & Innovation for an Equitable Society" and in line with the same, open dialogue was conducted with the aim of emphasizing the importance of research and innovation for inclusive and sustainable development; gender equality; diversity; empowered citizenship; environmental integrity and protection; peace, prosperity and wellbeing (MoES, 2023). More specifically, the meeting saw nations agreeing on the role that secure scientific collaboration among countries can have in enabling societal, technological, economic and industrial transformations. For India, as the president of G20, this meeting successfully enabled the country to display its leadership, take a stance for the global south and enforce multilateralism in dealing with pressing sustainability issues of today - all of which will increase the country's stature in global politics (Kumar, 2022).

Further elaborating on India taking a stance for the global south, the country plays a vital role in the New World Order as it continuously influences global governance and policies with

the aim of *reducing the gap between developed and developing nations* - supporting the principles of solidarity and collective responsibility. In forums such as the G77 and BRICS, for instance, India has emphasized the need for equitable trade, technology transfer and inclusive growth to enable sustainable development. By championing initiatives such as the BRICS New Development Bank, India demonstrates its commitment to directing financial assistance and resources to developing countries for infrastructure development (NDB, 2023). Moreover, India is also deeply entrenched in the idea of South-South cooperation and has shared developmental experiences as well as providing technical assistance to other developing countries.

5. Conclusion

The New World Order is a concept that has evolved greatly over the years and continues to as a result of changing global challenges, geopolitical dynamics and the pursuit of justice and cooperation on a global scale. Multilateral diplomacy is a primary enabler of the New World Order and greatly influences the management of supranational issues. India being the largest democracy and most populous nation has a great influence on enforcing multilateral diplomacy within international institutions and frameworks - including but not limited to the WTO, G20, G77 and BRICS.

India's increased bilateral engagement with nations around the world as well as their participation in key events over the last few years has allowed them to strengthen their position globally but also further the conversation on the application of multilateral diplomacy to correctively tackle pressing issues including those within the realm of international trade, the fight against climate change, the requirement for security and sustainability in today's world and the need to decrease the gap between developed and developing nations.

As time progresses, it could be expected that the importance of multilateral diplomacy in the context of the New World Order will be increasingly highlighted as a necessary tool for the improvement and progress of the global population.

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