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## Post Corona Virus- Global Change:

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By Kazi Anwarul Masud (former Secretary and ambassador of Bangladesh)

Very people doubt that a global change is in the offing. Debate surrounds about the nature of the change.

Change is nothing new. History of mankind has borne testimony to changes. From ruthless and sometimes benign monarchies, over thrown by guillotines, mass royal murders of the Romanovs, institution of ruthless doctrinaire so-called peoples' revolution which massacred thousands of people through starvation or through negation of right to disagree.

Hubris of the likes of Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany too played a role in the death of one million people in the First World War notwithstanding other factors that also played no minor role. Many historians consider Wilhelm the individual most responsible for the outbreak of war in 1914. While opinions vary, there is a consensus that Wilhelm II's brash leadership and imperialistic and nationalist agenda was a critical factor in the road to war. Wilhelm II's main interest was in expanding the power, prestige and size of the German Empire. This was necessary, he believed, so that the German people could enjoy their "place in the sun".

Historians believe that the burgeoning 'German problem' would have required exceptional wisdom, restraint and tact on all sides and particularly in Berlin, qualities which were spectacularly absent under the erratic personal military monarchy of Wilhelm II. The root cause of the First World War (and by extension of the Second World War too) was thus seen to lie in this fundamental conflict between Germany's elemental drive for supremacy and the determination of Britain along with her continental partners to uphold the existing balance of power in Europe. Kaiser Wilhelm II was arguably the very last person who should have been entrusted with the immense powers of the Hohenzollern military monarchy at such a critical juncture in Germany's and Europe's history.

Perhaps one of the great lessons of history is not to repeat the mistakes of the past. Like Alice in Wonderland we and the surrounding forces are not similar and hence it is no use going back. The other lesson Alice has given us is though it is important that we care about our fellow

human beings, but minding our own business when it comes to following the rules set for our own good and for the community gossip is better good rule to live by.

Without being pessimistic one has to admit that the war being fought to defeat coronavirus epidemic from past experience of Spanish flu, SARS, HIV, plague of the pre-modern era may look Quixotic but to leave the millions to their fate is also not acceptable. Humanity's journey from pre modern to modern to post-modern eras cannot go in vain. The main question we are trying to find the distribution of power in a multi-layered society where the emerging economies or at least the leaders among them would get seats at the high table.

There is a general consensus that post-Second World War state of affairs would not be tenable nor is it tenable now. The very existence of G 7, G 20 and other regional bodies are recognition of the fact that the world is already multi-layered. The question would arise how much the USA is ready to concede ground to the claim of Harvard University's luminary Stephen Walt (The United States Can Still Win the Coronavirus Pandemic-April 3 2020) that the decline of US influence would result in end result in a world "that is less open, less prosperous, and less free" than the world of today. Walt refers to National Security Expert Rachel Klein's March 31 piece where she wrote: global responses to date do not vindicate authoritarianism:

Some democracies have done very well in reacting to the crisis, and some dictatorships have reacted very badly. In other words, regime type doesn't appear to be the critical variable here.

There is another reason why the United States may get out of this in better shape than one might initially think: the dollar. It remains the world's reserve currency and is still considered a relatively safe asset in times of economic uncertainty". Walt argues that the extent of long-term damage to America's global position will depend on two main factors. First, can the United States get the pandemic under control at home, so that it can safely restart its economy and so that other nations will decide that Americans still know how to respond in a crisis? The country will have to do a lot better henceforth than it has done so far, but it certainly isn't impossible. Second, does the United States maintain an "America first" approach to this global problem, or does it begin to exhibit the kind of global leadership that it showed after World War II, the 9/11 attacks, or the financial crisis of 2008.

These are crucial questions to the world that abhors a system that denies Universal Declaration of Human Rights and imprisons human quest for knowledge beyond cosmos and acquisition of technology that will make life easier being conscious of the fact that robots will replace human beings and make a sizeable portion of humanity unemployable. There are always a cost-benefit analysis conducted in corporations and in governments when new products/methods are introduced. Intelligent governments like corporations look at shareholders or stakeholders benefits.

In this case Australia's former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in a lengthy article (The Coming Post-COVID Anarchy-May 6 2020) has weighed with his views on the post-coronavirus global order. Kevin Rudd immersed as he was in his country's politics and in Australia's diplomacy should be taken with due interest by all those who bodes well for this planet. Rudd having been a strong US ally for decades (from the

Second World War and remains a staunch ally in this region). Kevin Rudd opposes the common trend of thinking that Beijing has profited from the pandemic pandemonium.

On the contrary “the outbreak has opened up significant political dissension within the Chinese Communist Party, even prompting thinly veiled criticism of President Xi Jinping’s highly centralized leadership style. This has been reflected in a number of semiofficial commentaries that have mysteriously found their way into the public domain during April. Xi’s draconian lockdown of half the country for months to suppress the virus has been widely hailed, but he has not emerged unscathed. Internal debate rages on the precise number of the dead and the infected, on the risks of second-wave effects as the country slowly reopens, and on the future direction of economic and foreign policy”

The economic damage has been massive. Despite China’s published return-to-work rates, no amount of domestic stimulus in the second half of 2020 will make up for the loss in economic activity in the first and second quarters. Drastic economic retrenchment among China’s principal trading partners will further impede economic recovery plans, given that pre-crisis, the traded sector of the economy represented 38 percent of GDP. Overall, 2020 growth is likely to be around zero—the worst performance since the Cultural Revolution five decades ago.

Kevin Rudd has not been complimentary to the US either. He thinks fragmented establishment will constrain US’s global leadership and more so as the economy will shrink considerably adding to a long list of unemployed Americans lining up for dole. In the ultimate analysis peoples’ distaste to be told what is to be done will win the day for liberal democracy. Hungary and Serbia , AFD in Germany and Marie Le Pen may for a while increase membership but a repeat of 1938 Weimer Republic general elections that catapulted Hitler to power has no parallel to today’s pandemic situation.

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