

## Narrative of Contagions: Dimensions and Perspectives

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### Abstract

The history of human civilisation cannot gainsay the paramount role executed by the microbes in shaping the natural and social ambience. Microbes are ubiquitous, varied, and can exist in any condition. They multiply significantly to affect ecosystem; plants, animals and humans—all harbour microbes—and are affected by microbes in turn. However, all microbes are not congenial for living beings; some of them are pathogens and have caused havoc on human civilisation in different phases of history. The recent onslaught of pathogens in form of contagion Covid-19 and its unmitigable psychic trauma, unfathomable loss of life and economic depression sweeping through the globe is, indeed, an unobliterable memory of our generation. However, this is not the first time that the humanity faced such devastation. Every onslaught of contagion has left humanity terror stricken apart from enabling it to deal with such contagions. This effort of humanity to deal and live with contagions has well been documented in the literary and non-literary endeavours of humankind, and the present article purports to traverse through such endeavours of humanity that strengthens the indomitable spirit of human beings besieged by the pathogens.

**Keywords:** Plague, Divinity, Existentialism, Apocalyptic

### 1.0 Introduction

The history of human civilisation cannot gainsay the paramount role executed by the microbes in shaping the natural and social ambience. Microbes are ubiquitous, varied, and can exist in any condition. They multiply significantly to affect ecosystem; plants, animals and humans—all harbour microbes—and are affected by microbes in turn. However, all microbes are not congenial for living beings; some of them are pathogens and have caused havoc on human civilisation in different phases of history. The recent onslaught of pathogens in form of contagion Covid-19 and its unmitigable psychic trauma, unfathomable loss of life and economic depression sweeping through the globe is, indeed, an unobliterable memory of

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our generation. However, this is not the first time that the humanity has faced such devastation. Every onslaught of contagions has left humanity terror stricken apart from enabling humankind to deal with such contagions. This effort of humanity to deal and co-exist with contagions has well been documented in the literary and non-literary endeavours of humankind, and the present paper purports to traverse through such endeavours of humanity that strengthens the indomitable spirit of human being besieged by the pathogens.

In view of this, the present study is an attempt to discuss the literary representation of and human perspectives to epidemic/pandemic and suggest the apocalyptic role of pathogens primarily based on secondary sources.

### 1.1 Human perspectives

Literature apparently presents narratives of epidemic and in it what shines out is human perspective. We begin with citing Rene Girard (1974) who presents epidemic such as plague in literature in a historical perspective. “The plague (contagion) is found everywhere in literature. It belongs to the epic with Homer, to tragedy with Oedipus Rex, to history with Thucydides, to the philosophical poem with Lucretius. The plague can serve as background to the short stories of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, there are fables about the plague, notably La Fontaine's *Les Animaux malades de la peste* ; there are novels, such as Manzoni's *Promessi Sposi* and Camus' *La Peste* (Girard 1974:833). To Girard, the scope of narratives in literature is very wide. It is not a surprise when Rene Girard remarks, “The theme spans the whole range of literary and even non-literary genres, from pure fantasy to the most positive and scientific accounts. It is older than literature—much older, really, since it is present in myth and ritual in the entire world” (ibid.). The French historian and literary critic, Rene

Girard aptly accentuates the ubiquity of contagion themes in literature irrespective of time and space. However, what makes contagions significant in human history is the perspective of human beings towards it; this perspective can be categorised into divine, existentialist and apocalyptic.

### 1.2 Divine Perspectives

The role of divine providence in human life has been ascertained by almost every scripture irrespective of faith. This providence is the outcome of human life lived as per the doctrines of divinity, and any aberration in this regard invite divine wrath manifested in famine, natural calamities and epidemics. In Ezekiel, the Hebrew Bible written by the prophet of the same name, it is clearly stated that when the God is hurt, he inflicts disaster like plague, famine or/and death by sword (Arthur 1992:193).

However, the earliest literary record of contagions is found in Homer's (1918) *The Iliad*, Sophocles' (1984) *Oedipus the King* and in Thucydides' (1978) *History of the Peloponnesian War*. In Homer's *The Iliad* plague is caused by divine wrath on the unjust deeds of Agamemnon who seizes the daughter of Apollo's priest, Chryses. “It was Apollo, son of Zeus and Leto, who started the feud because he was furious with Agamemnon for not respecting his priest Chryses. So, Apollo inflicted a deadly plague on Agamemnon's army and destroyed his men” (Homer 2003:4).

Taking cognisance of the miserable plight of the Greeks, Achilles holds counsels to find the causes of the wrath of Apollo and a soothsayer from the assembly discloses the truth

after being assured of his safety. The soothsayer makes it clear that the plague is caused by divine intervention and is only resolved after divine retribution. (ibid.:6). The treatment of the epidemic in *The Iliad* reveals that man's deeds lies at the centre of divine providence; unethical deed like that of Agamemnon fetches divine wrath whereas the ethical one of Chryse divine benediction.

Sophocles (496-406 BC) and Thucydides (460-400 BC) are contemporary and share identical opinions about pathogens that struck Athens between 430 – 429 BC. Sophocles' (496 BC) *Oedipus the King* originally written around 429 BC draws much of its thematic content from the plague which remarkably dominates the first half of the play. In the very first scene of the play, Sophocles presents the devastating plague through the dialogue between Oedipus and the Priest:

“Thebes is dying

...

And black Death luxuriates  
in the raw, wailing miseries of Thebes (Sophocles 1984:160).

No doubt, Oedipus has already sent Creon to Delphi to find out the causes of the plague and what Creon discloses to him is highly perplexing and tormenting. Creon's revelation creates a necessity to seek out the means to salvage the city of Athens from the sin of murder of Laius by killing the murderer; and, hence, Oedipus endeavours to find the murderer as the plague is engulfing the entire city and the total extermination is afraid of as the Chorus reveals,

Thebes is dying . . .  
generations strewn on the ground  
unburied, unwept, the dead spreading death. . .  
Thebes, city of death, one long cortege  
and the suffering rises (ibid. 169).

The Chorus mourns over the devastation wrecked by the plague which has broken the Theban from inside. Oedipus is anxiously eager to liberate his people from the lethal pathogens. From his conversation with the Chorus, Oedipus comes to know that only the blind seer Teiresias will help him in finding the murderer,

I still believe . . .  
Lord Tiresias sees with the eyes of Lord Apollo.  
Anyone searching for the truth, my king,  
might learn it from the prophet, clear as day (ibid.174).

On being summoned, Teiresias presents before Oedipus but is reluctant to reveal the identity of the murderer. But on being indignantly insisted he reveals that Oedipus himself is the murderer of Laius who was his biological father, and, hence, he has committed the sin of patricide and incestuous marriage that has accursed Thebes. Thus, like *The Iliad*, *Oedipus the King* also holds the human unethical deeds responsible for epidemics. Patricide and incest have no place in any human society; and the perpetrator must be punished, but in case of Oedipus human deeds seems to be anchored by destiny. The conflict of character and destiny, and human expiation to atone the sin that salvages the city dominates the second half of the play.

Sophocles' account of plague seems to correlate with the historical account of plague by Thucydides (460 BC) in "Pestilence in Athens" a part of his *History of the Peloponnesian War* (Thucydides 1972). According to Thucydides, the plague occurred in the second year of the war, i.e., 430 BC, and since *Oedipus the King* is set around the same period, the plague in the play seems to be authentic. Moreover, the nature of the disease and the suffering of the people narrated in both the books bring their writer closer regarding their opinion of the pathogens.

Sophocles points out that the causative pathogen leads to miscarriages or stillbirths ("and the women die in labor, children stillborn"). (Sophocles 1984:160). The plague's effects are also pointed out by the Chorus: the women cannot scream their pangs to birth . . . children dead in the womb . . . generations strewn on the ground/ unburied, unwept, the dead spreading death" (ibid. 169). On the same vein Thucydides records the death and casualties brought by plague,

"For the disease, first settling in the head, went on to affect every part of the body in turn, and even when people escaped its worst effects, it still left its traces on them by fastening upon the extremities of the body. It affected the genitals, the fingers, and the toes, and many of those who recovered lost the use of these members; some, too, went blind..." (Thucydides 1972: 153).

Thucydides description of plague and his historical proximity to Sophocles authenticates the pathogens frequent onslaught in the ancient time. Since the medical science was not modern and the nature of the pathogens were not known, the Thebans/Athenians had to rely on faith inscribed in the scriptures, and, hence, epidemic was considered divine wrath/curse (as in *The Iliad* and *Oedipus Rex*), and redemption from it lied only in divine perspective.

### 1.3 Existentialist Perspectives<sup>1</sup>

The growth of scientific temperament and rationality after the Renaissance (15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries) (see Hay 2002) brought a new perspective towards life and religion; the discovery of new lands, cultures, faiths, races broadened the scope of human understanding and reasoning. Copernicus' theory of universe (see Dorothy 1917) in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century and Darwin's theory (Darwin 1859) of the origin of species in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century put the divine role in human life into questions as they accentuate the procedural evolution and interconnectedness of the celestial elements and all creatures respectively rather than being created by someone at a time. This nullifies the Biblical concept of creation that finds its culmination in Nietzsche's negation of the existence of God in his "Parable of the Madman": "God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him" (Nietzsche 1882: 182). Nietzsche's proclamation, as it can be argued, brought human at the centre of the universe and the necessity of perceiving all natural and social phenomena in terms of human being; it is the deeds and decisions of human, and not destiny, that shapes his/her life. In a nutshell, it can be said that the existence of human is of paramount importance, and man must endeavour to survive against all odds. This existentialist attitude is well expressed in Camus' *Plague* (2020) when human existence is threatened by the pathogens. At the outset, Camus presents the disbelief and lackadaisical attitude of the people of Oran towards the sudden outbreak of the plague. It is Dr. Rieux who is anxious about the symptom and considers it as reality and is afraid of its uncontrollable spread.

When a microbe," Rieux said, "after a short intermission can quadruple in three days' time the volume of the spleen, can swell the mesenteric ganglia to the size of an orange ... kill off half the town before two months are out (Camus 2020: 24).

But the authority and Dr. Rieux's colleagues are reluctant to accept the severity of the situation and ponder on the idea of 'wait and watch'.

As envisioned by Dr. Rieux, the pathogens spread catastrophically and eventually the government is compelled to hold the city under siege. The first part of the novel suggests that the common human is unable to comprehend the reality beyond their immediate need and circumstances. The contagion is not the part of their daily life and hence an imaginary until it is manifested in terms of death and suffering. Dr. Rieux is not a common man, he is a Shavian superman, and deals with catastrophe with reason and intellect. He does not yield before the plague, rather contrives to subdue it to salvage the humanity.

The second part of *Plague* depicts the impact of quarantine on human emotion and psyche. Suddenly the hectic life comes to a halt; people are separated from their loved and intimate relatives, and are forced to live a life of seclusion longing for their companions. Consequently, they grow irritant and selfish; try to commit suicide and leave the town stealthily. However, the three characters: Dr. Rieux, the Priest and Cottard epitomise three different categories of people during war and epidemic. Dr. Rieux epitomises indomitable warrior, the priest; spiritual guide and Cottard the selfish benefiter. The priest, Paneloux, considering the suffering and declining spirit of the people gives his sermon and considers the epidemic as divine providence,

"If today the plague is in your midst that is because the hour has struck for taking thought. The just man need have no fear, but the evildoer has good cause to tremble. For plague is the flail of God and the world His threshing-floor, and implacably He will thresh out His harvest until the wheat is separated from the chaff. There will be more chaff than wheat, few chosen of the many called" (Camus 2020:46).

The priest here presents the divine perspective on epidemic and considers the unethical deeds of human responsible for the death and suffering brought by the plague. However, in Part IV of the novel, he abandons his accusative attitude and mingles with masses in fight against the pathogens. On witnessing the death of an innocent child, he turns a bit sceptic regarding the role of God in human life, and renders his second sermon, "This had a lesson for us all; we must convince ourselves that there is no island of escape in time of plague. No, there was no middle course. We must accept the dilemma and choose either to hate God or to love God" (ibid. 111). Soon the priest also gets infected and is succumbed to death. No doubt he receives treatment but continues to have faith in God. Dr. Rieux is not sure about the cause of the Priest's death as his symptom is different from that of the pathogens. Here, the novel emphasises the unflinching faith in what one believes to be the truth. The priest has faith in God and he continues to hold the cross till his death.

Cottard is the epitome of all those people who get benefit of others' miseries and helplessness. He manages clandestine exit for the bored and irritant infected people from Oran whereby adding to the spread of the contagion. He exhibits total denial of divine providence and acts pragmatically. He knows how to seize the opportunity to prosper materialistically ignoring its impact on the surrounding. His attitude is absolutely capitalist,

devoid of humanity. In this sense, he is the enemy of humanity, and, hence, is eventually deprived of cognitive ability (sanity) that defines the human being.

Camus amalgamates the ideas from his book *The Myth of Sisyphus* (2013) in *Plague* to focus the common masses' effort to exit the town to get rid of the plague despite being aware of its presence outside. There is no getting out still they try to get out without giving a fight. It is only Dr. Rieux and his group who take the plague face to face. Dr. Rieux embodies Camus' ideas reflected in his *The Rebel* (1982) and appears to be a shield against the onslaught of pathogens. He does not accept the epidemic as divine curse; for him it is an enemy to be defeated in order to survive. The plague here is given an existence (though invisible to many) just like the human being; both are at war for the sake of their survival. When survival is at stake human cannot wait for miracles to happen, he/she must choose to act. Dr. Rieux chooses to combat the plague with total awareness of the possibility of being defeated. In this sense, Camus' approach to the plague is entirely existentialist, though he has given a human touch to it. Dr. Rieux fights for humankind and not an individual human. Like the journalist Raymond Rambert in the novel, he does not try to exit Oran to meet his ailing wife, he is quite nonchalant amid the death and suffering surrounding him as he knows that any kind of emotional deviation will make a dent in his stoicism<sup>2</sup>. He is stoic even when the contagion retreats as he feels that the plague is not over. It is this awareness that makes him alert, and Camus seems to emphasise the necessity of preparedness regarding combating a sudden onslaught like that of a pathogen.

#### 1.4 Apocalyptic Perspective<sup>3</sup>

The term 'apocalyptic' has both sacred and secular connotations; the scriptures, no doubt, accentuate the divine workings behind the end of a vicious age and the beginning of a new virtuous one, the role of the selfish and self-slaughtering nature of humankind cannot be ignored in fetching the end. The pathogens as apocalyptic have well been delineated in Mary Shelley's novel *The Last Man* (2023; first published in 1826) and Jack London's *The Scarlet Plague* (2023, first published in 1912). Interestingly, both the novels deal with the catastrophic attack of pathogens in 21<sup>st</sup> Century. According to Shelley's statement in the introduction of the novel, she found a cache of prophecies in the Sibyl's cave<sup>4</sup> in Naples in 1818. The Cumaean Sibyl painted these cryptic writings in a variety of obscure languages onto leaves, and it was exceedingly challenging to interpret them. However, she and her companions deciphered the writings and presented in the narrative of *The Last Man*: the first-person narrator is the last man of the title who commences the narrative in the year 2073 and culminates in 2100<sup>5</sup>. Apart from the chronology, the novel does not seem to prophesise the world of 21<sup>st</sup> century regarding social structure, transportation and technology. However, the ongoing onslaught of Covid-19 makes one serious about what Shelley has found in the Sibylic writings<sup>6</sup>. After the first wave of the plague, Shelley records, those who survived adopted a selfish, hedonistic approach<sup>7</sup> to life instead of making a unified effort to reconstruct the civilisation. Their occupations were gone but amusements remained as if their merrymaking will be protracted to the grave. But it aggravates the contagious infection that leads to a chain of death. As the town depopulates, people realise the inevitable end of the humanity and turn very bestial shedding all norms of enlightenment; society collapses, and the survivors try to leave their respective town in search of a better and safe place. Leonel Verney, the narrator, departs from London with his gang and travels to Switzerland; but, by the time they get there, everyone has passed away except for Evelyn, Adrian, Lionel, and Clara. Before Evelyn succumbs to typhus, the four have a few comparatively happy seasons in Switzerland, Milan, and Como. When an unexpected storm destroys the boat and drowns

Adrian and Clara, the survivors attempt to sail across the Adriatic Sea from Venice to Greece. At Ravenna, Lionel swims to safety. Lionel travels to Rome via the Apennine Mountains, where he makes the acquaintance of a sheepdog because of fear that he is the only living person on Earth. After a year goes by with no one else entering Rome, Lionel decides to leave with his dog and spend the remainder of his days travelling the desolate regions of Asia and Africa in quest of more survivors (Shelley 2023: 293 - 298).

*The Scarlet Plague* by London begins in 2073<sup>8</sup>, six decades after the devastating Red Death<sup>9</sup> disease has ravaged the planet and caused a significant decrease in population. The human civilisation has regressed to its rudimentary stage, leaving just a small number of individuals alive. James Smith, the narrator, is a survivor from the pre-plague era who journeys throughout San Francisco with his grandsons Edwin, Hoo-Hoo, and Hare-Lip. The grandsons are in their youth and lead a lifestyle reminiscent of ancient hunter-gatherers in a world that has experienced a significant decline in population. Their cognitive and linguistic capacities are severely restricted, in contrast to the youngsters of the pre-pandemic era, and they struggle to comprehend a significant portion of Smith's discourse. Edwin inquires of Smith, known by the nickname "Granser", to narrate the details of the ailment known interchangeably as scarlet plague, scarlet death, or red death. Smith proceeds to chronicle his life's events before to the outbreak of the pandemic, during his tenure as an English professor in the year 2013. Nevertheless, Smith's whole party quickly succumbs to the infection, leaving him as the only survivor. Having endured three years in solitude, accompanied only by a pony and two dogs, he ultimately returns to the San Francisco region in search of fellow survivors, driven by a profound desire for companionship and social interaction. He finally discovers that the few survivors are broken into tribes and have created a new kind of society that exhibits the traits of savage and primitive one. Among all the survivors, Smith only knows about the life before the plague, and often reminisces about the quality of food, social classes, his job, and technology, and feels intense urge to share with his fellow survivors who, pathetically enough, are mentally immature to understand, and, hence, the survivors fail to take benefit of his knowledge thereby resetting the wheel of civilisation.

Both *The Last Man* (op cit.) and *The Scarlet Plague* (op cit.) present the apocalyptic nature of pathogen. Mary Shelley maintains the Romantic legacy of her characters and social pattern and portrays the plague as destroyer only after the vision of a Sibyl. However, Jack London is very prophetic about his portrayal of the pathogen. The year 2013, the plague year in the novel, corresponds to the actual epidemic Ebola<sup>10</sup> besieging the African nations, and the catastrophic effect of Covid-19 during its first and second wave; and its ongoing third wave has threatened the extinction of humanity considering the death tolls. London visualises the life when the uncontrollable pandemic, despite the much advance medical technology, naturally subsides after playing its apocalyptic role followed by the natural calamities to add woe to the agonies of the survivors. As people continue to die so the earth continues to burn. The billowing smoke from the fire engulfs the sky, transforming the midday into a sombre twilight. Occasionally, the feeble sunlight manages to penetrate through the shifting gusts of wind, casting a faint crimson glow. Indeed, it seems to be the final days of the apocalypse. Both the fear of death and the overwhelming sensation of an impending apocalypse grip individuals, as cities are engulfed in flames and people scramble in a state of panic. This overwhelming sense of panic becomes even more alarming and unparalleled following the loss of communication with the rest of the world, an ominous indication of impending doom. In comparison to *The Last Man*, London's *The Scarlet Plague* depicts the brutality of the plague in much dismal and gruesome manner. He writes,

“In London’s novel—as today—scientists were aware of the risk of uncontrolled pandemics. London’s novel foresaw the first and most severe influenza pandemic in history, the Spanish influenza of 1918–1920, ... In the novel, as in reality, human reactions to plague can vary greatly, but still all share a terrible fear, the fear of death—both as the end of one’s life and as the end of civilisation” (Riva et al. 2014:1755).

View of Riva et al. Emphasise that common man’s perspective to the epidemic/pandemic is often apocalyptic as it inherits uncontrollable catastrophic power.

## 1.5 Conclusion

The contagions, be it divine, apocalyptic or existential crisis of humankind, has always been life threatening apart from being a lesson for the entire humanity, and, hence, an apt subject for literary representation. The ancient classical texts like *The Iliad* and *Oedipus Rex* depict epidemic as an act of God and clamour for fostering of ethical and moral deeds as a means of redemption from epidemic. No doubt, ethical and moral deeds are imperative for social solidarity, but it should not be for fear of God or punishment; it must come from within the conscience of humankind and be regulated by its free will. It is the free will of humankind to choose to act that makes his existence more important than any religiously imposed ethics and morality, and Dr. Rieux of Camus’ *Plague* seems to exemplify it. Dr. Rieux and his group render a message much relevant to the contemporary context that it is solidarity that imparts inner strength to bear the onslaught of pathogens. Significantly, epidemic/pandemic teaches humankind to live by breaking all social and class barriers created by the existing social structure (the selfish design of man). During pandemic, there is no rich or poor, white or black, Christians or pagans; there is only man, a natural man faced with the necessity of protecting himself and his race. This is what is done by Dr. Rieux in *Plague* to save humanity ignoring his desire to see his ailing wife. Significantly, he is aware of his limitation and inevitable defeat, yet he gives a fight as he can only choose to fight only.

As Lord Krishna teaches Arjuna in the Bhagvat Gita (ch.2, vers.47) that a man has right over his action, but not over the fruit of the action, he should do his deeds without any concern for outcome, and so Arjuna picks up his weapon to combat the enemy because as a warrior he can only choose to act (fight). Similarly, Dr. Rieux also chooses to fight and not to yield, and so were the many front workers engaged in battling the Covid-19 across the globe. The solidarity shown by Dr. Rieux is a lesson for us to control the pandemic. The global solidarity is the need of the hour which is unfortunately emaciated by the corroding politics and expansionist tendency of some nations<sup>11</sup>. Consequently, the apocalyptic vision of Jack London seems to be the reality of future.

Most importantly, London in his plague narrative expresses anxiety over the necessity of continuing the present civilisational traits to the survivors of post pandemic era. If anything like the vision of London happens in the future, are we prepared to keep the civilisation intact? The survivors in London’s narrative fail, and the only survivor (James Smith) who has the knowledge of the pre-plague civilisation fails to impart it to the other; he even cannot convince his grand-children that what he knows was once a reality. The pre-plague world (before 2013) seems to be myth to them just like many of the events that happened in distant pre-historical past appear to us. And, hence, the process of new civilisation starts. The Covid-19 seems to be the warning bell for the humanity to practise the principle of preparedness, social solidarity, apart from an urgent call to find the means of



preserving and transferring the knowledge system of the contemporary civilisation to the survivors of any future post-apocalyptic era.

## Notes

1. Existentialist perspective refers to the enquiry of exploring and perceiving meaning, purpose and value relating to the issue of human existence, the question of being, around the theme of aesthetic, ethical, religious and spiritual. The perspective gives meaning to life and living purposefully and sincerely (Macquarrie 1972:13-15).
2. Stoicism: the endurance of pain or hardship without the display of feelings and complaint.
3. Apocalyptic perspective is a religious belief that the world will come to an end due to one or other types of global catastrophes, even within one's own lifetime (see Greisiger 2015).
4. The Cave of Sibyl is associated with the Cumaean Sibyl. According to the ancient Roman poet Virgil writing in 19 BC, this was where the legendary Cumaean Sibyl prophetess lived. The cave is believed to have many prophetic inscriptions.
5. The novel *The Last Man*, though written in 1826, is set in future. It is set in the last part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The story begins in the year 2073 and ends in 2100 and deals with a pandemic.
6. Writings by the legendary Cumaean Sibyl prophetess discovered and deciphered by Mary Shelly and her companion which predicted the pandemic mentioned in the novel.
7. Hedonism in simple language refers to the sense of priority given to lifestyle, thought and/or actions by an individual, and at times to egoistic pursuit at the cost of others.
8. Like *The Last Man*, *The Scarlet Plague* is also set in future. Written in 1912, it is set in 2073 and presents a world gripped with an apocalyptic pandemic.
9. A kind of plague.
10. Ebola virus disease (EVD), formerly known as Ebola haemorrhagic fever (EHF), is a severe fever in humans and other primates caused by ebolaviruses. (see Peters and LeDuc. 1999).
11. At present, politically the globe is divided between two powers: NATO and Russia backed by China. Both are at war with money and missile to establish neo-colonialism in world. China's presence in the South Sea and its proxy interference in the internal affairs of economically poor nations of South East Asia including India has created crisis in the region. Moreover, many nations are having military tussle concerning border, and wherever this conflict is about, the presence of America is or Russia is quite palpable. This has destroyed global solidarity.

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