

Reimagining Public Policy In the Context of Emerging Global and Domestic Trends

Mukul Asher

Mukul.asher@gmail.com

Inaugural address for the Conference on ***Public Policy Research, Pedagogy and Practice***, organized by Delhi school of Public Policy and Governance (DSPPG),
and the

Motilal Nehru College, University of Delhi, 15 March, 2023

Introduction

- It is a privilege to deliver the inaugural address for the Conference on Public policy Research, Pedagogy, and practice organized by the Delhi School of Public Policy, and the Motilal Nehru College, University of Delhi.
- In any discipline, particularly in the social sciences and in professional programs, research, pedagogy, and practice needs to be tailored to the emerging context and challenges which the discipline needs to help understand and address.
- The title of my address has the terms “Reimagining Public Policy”. It also stresses “Emerging Global and Domestic Trends”.
- “Reimagining” implies a qualitative change in public policies with scale, and with focus on citizen-centric outcomes. An incremental change would not fit the notion of “reimagining”.
- Can't use 20th century mentality to progress in 21st century. If we don't evolve, we will be left behind. Speed and skill need of the hour: PM Narendra Modi

Introduction

- This Address has many implications and suggestions on how public policy discipline needs to be reimagined to be more relevant in not only producing more employable graduates, with both hard and soft skills, but also raise the quality of public policy dialogue in India.
- This is an appropriate time for reimagining public policy discipline as in presenting the 2023-24 Union Government Budget, the Finance Minister stated that this is the first year of India's Amrit Kaal, the 25 year period ending in 2047, when India will complete 100 years of independence.
- In these 25 years, there are plans to reimagine India and its policy outcomes.
- PM Modi has articulated that the main purpose of '*Amrit Kaal*' is to reduce economic disparities among the citizens of India, emancipate people residing in villages, make India more technically agile, and reduce dependence on the government. "While India has made rapid strides, there should be a 'saturation' of development and 100 per cent accomplishments with every village having roads, every family having a bank account, every eligible person having health insurance, card, and gas connection"

Introduction

livemint.com/politics/policy/centre-embarks-on-vision-2047-plan-in-developed-economy-push-11650564895517.html

Accessed on 22 April 2022

- The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) is working on a blueprint for India@2047, a vision plan to make the country one of the world's top three economies and bring it closer to developed nation status by the 100th year of its independence, two officials aware of the matter said.
- The plan will set specific targets for different economic sectors, the officials said on the condition of anonymity. The vision plan is expected to be finalized by next month, and an official announcement is likely around 15 August, the 75th anniversary of Indian independence.
- A Sectoral Group of Secretaries (SGoS) with top officials from 10 sectors has been directed to finalize and present the plan at the earliest. The PMO and the Cabinet Secretariat are constantly evaluating inputs from the group, the people cited above said.

Introduction

- Such reimagining in the Amrit Kaal Period requires reimagining public policy pedagogy, research, and practice as well.
- That such reimagining is being considered for other disciplines is indicated by the report that the government is seeking to align the way international relations are taught in universities with the changes in the country's foreign policy. To bring about this synergy, EAM Jaishankar will speak to heads of international relations dept of 40 universities.

Select Preliminaries, with Application to Public Policy Discipline

- *PM Modi referring to the use of science in the modern-day said, 'Science is Universal and Technology is Local.'*
- Similarly, principles, techniques, etc used in analysing public policies are universal, but their application must be undertaken in a way that is appropriate for local context. This would involve embedding public policy discipline in India's civilizational context.
- It is this inability, and tendency to regard a framework (designed to aid thinking) as a blueprint (to be followed exactly) that have been major contributors to ineffectiveness of many public policies.
- The above has significant implications for pedagogy, research and practice of public policies.

Select Preliminaries, with Application to Public Policy Discipline

Sridhar Vembu

Sridhar Vembu (born 1968) is an Indian billionaire business magnate and the founder and [CEO](#) of [Zoho Corporation](#). According to *Forbes*, he is the 55th richest person in India with a net worth USD \$3.75 billion, as of 2021

His two observations are worth mentioning here.

1. **scientific method: First the data, then the analysis, third the policy implications, and finally the views**

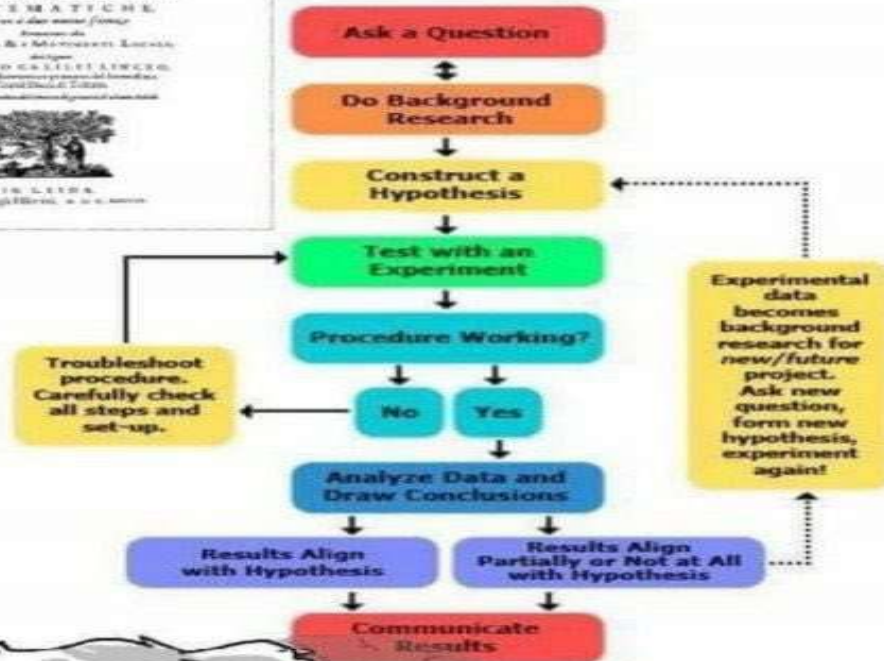
My comments

A public policy education must imbibe the nature of scientific method among all participants, faculty and administrators included. With digital technology, data analysis and basics of AI need to become an integral part of public Policy curriculum; and projects and thesis set as much as possible to demonstrate competence in numerical literacy.

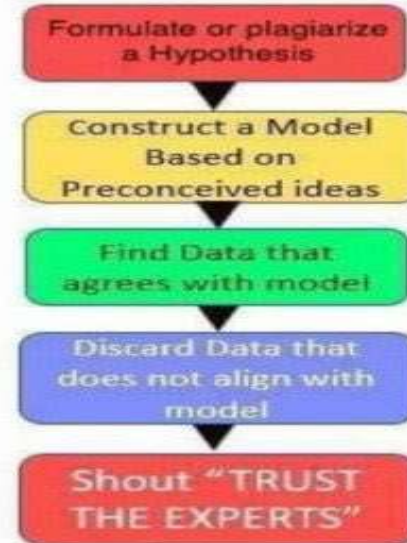
2. **US-trained Indian economists reflect that flawed approach of naively elevating contextual US experience as universal economic law.**

Local-context empirical studies and institutional and market structures relevant for public policy. Projects/thesis could be set to augment this aspect for India. Many government schemes have dashboards, and extensive data to make this possible. Neglected areas such as research on urban and rural bodies could be given special emphasis.

Scientific Method



Science Worshiper's Method



Select Preliminaries, with Application to Public Policy Discipline

Any scheme based on heredity is not only undemocratic but unspiritual' 'while the spirit of India can never die the social institutions which don't embody it must be scrapped' 'caste injures the spirit of humanity and violates human dignity'

President Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan

Importance of selecting those in position of public leadership positions in all areas on merit. Rajeev Mantri has argued that:

“Among the reasons India is on a strong footing today is that the leaders of many key institutions and offices across government and the private sector are self-made individuals. They are rooted, smart, driven leaders who have risen to the top through a competitive process.”

Public Policy Examples of need to change hereditary-like practices: Judicial reform, particularly the collegial system; system of reservations—rethink?, evolving political parties not so extensively based on Parivar -wad.

Significant implications for public policy pedagogy, teaching, and research

Select Preliminaries, with Application to Public Policy Discipline

- “ A democracy can flourish only if rights & duties equally balanced. Rights of citizens are being protected, but duties are yet to be enforced effectively”: Madras HC says while stating that due to imbalance between enforcement of rights and duties, democracy adversely affected
- Public Policy Schools can contribute to greater balance between rights and responsibilities in public policies.

Select Preliminaries, with Application to Public Policy Discipline

Sustainable development requires a sustainable lifestyle.

Dr S. Jaishankar External Affairs Minister, India

This is very relevant for discussion on environment. If a person goes in car to protest at a pro- environment gathering, is that consistent behavior?

John Kerry's private jet emits more carbon in a single flight than your car in your entire lifetime.

Guess what's John Kerry's Twitter handle? It's [@ClimateEnvoy](https://twitter.com/ClimateEnvoy)

In emotive issues like climate change, public policy schools have particular responsibility to uphold good science and scientific method.

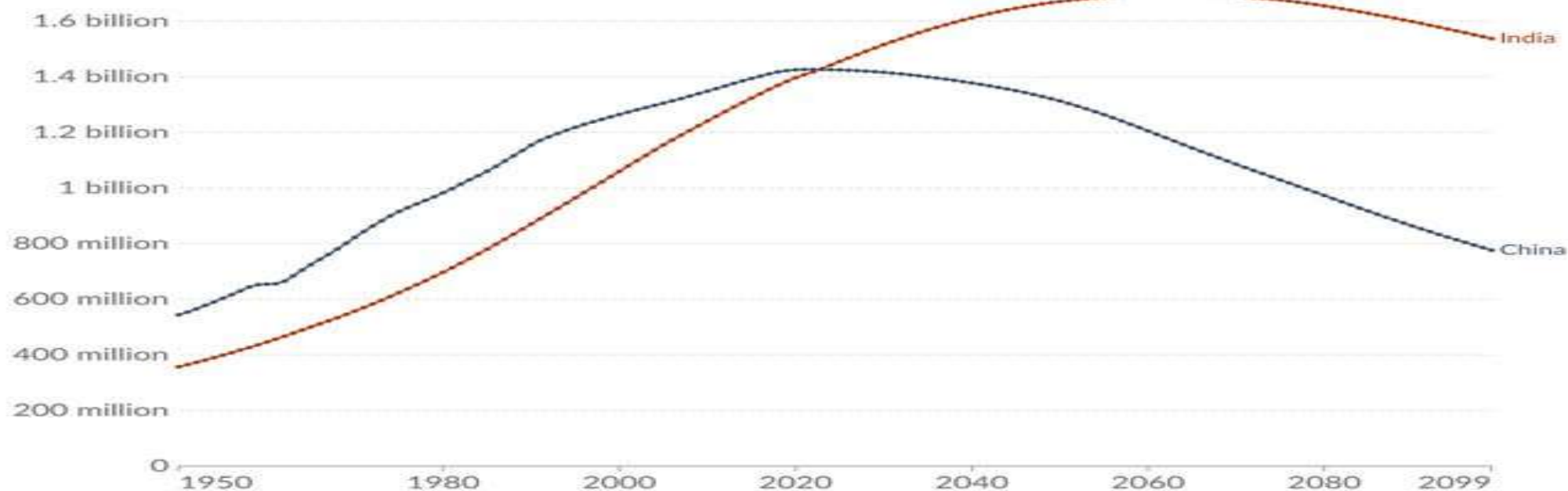
Global and Domestic Developments

Demography will have profound geo-economic and geo-strategic implication.
Figure below is best regarded as one scenario, perhaps an extreme one.

Population, 1950 to 2099

Projections from 2022 onwards are based on the UN's medium-fertility scenario.

Our World
in Data



Source: United Nations World Population Prospects (2022)

CC BY

Global and Domestic Developments

- It has been argued that VUCA world is increasingly being recognized now, even though VUCA world has existed for a long time, but its specifics differ depending on the time period and context.
- Reimagining is needed for public policy pedagogy, research and teaching to manage in a VUCA world.

What is VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity)?

Volatility

Volatility refers to the speed, volume, nature, magnitude of a phenomenon that may or may not be in a pattern form. Volatility increases complexity.

Complexity

Complexity describes the amount of different states a system can get into at a certain point in time. The more states a system can get into, the higher its complexity and the harder it gets to manage it.



Uncertainty

Uncertainty occurs when there are no concrete trends or patterns, which makes it difficult to establish what will happen next and base decision on it.

Ambiguity

Ambiguity describes a situation where multiple interpretations are permitted and equally valid. This makes it hard to decide what to do in order to achieve a desired outcome.



Global and Domestic Developments

Other Global Developments

- **First, globally the term ‘fragmentation’ as opposed to ‘globalization’ is increasing used. The term is a consequence of ‘friend-shoring’, expanding economic and security engagements among countries with similar values. As S. Gurumurthy has observed, safety and confidence in partners is long term cheapness. How can India as a reliable partner take advantage of the fragmentation. Which will be a medium-term process.**
- **Second, there is weaponization of economic, finance, regulatory arrangements, technology capabilities and others. India must develop capabilities to not only protect itself against such weaponization, but develop willingness and capabilities to use the weaponization process where necessary.**
- **Third, global growth and global trade are not only expected to be subdued and more volatile, but also exhibit weaker relationship than in the past. India will need to generate high sustained growth, and increase its share of world trade, world GDP, and global stock market capitalization in this environment, and progress towards gradual convertibility of the Indian Rupee; and its greater use in bilateral trade.**

Global and Domestic Developments

Arvind Virmani has argued that in the 19th century the **commanding heights** of the economy were goods, in the 20th century they were services like finance. In 21st century they will be technology & technology services

India has scope to expand its services trade but a reimagining of services sector will need to undertaken.

It is even feasible for India's service exports to exceed its goods exports in the future.

Global and Domestic Developments

- जैसे-जैसे भारत ग्लोबल स्टेज पर खुद को स्थापित कर रहा है, वैसे-वैसे Misinformation, disinformation, अपप्रचार के माध्यम से लगातार हमले हो रहे हैं।
- खुद पर भरोसा रखते हुए भारत के हितों को हानि पहुंचाने वाली ताकतें चाहे देश में हों या फिर विदेश में, उनकी हर कोशिश को नाकाम करना है: PM
- My comment: Social media risk has become a significant risk for all stakeholders in the public policy process. And merits inclusion in the public policy curriculum.

Global and Domestic Context for Public Policies

Select Domestic Trends for Public Policies

- **First, there is a major shift from entitlement to empowerment. This shift is expected to enhance the importance of merit in all areas of economy and society. This will hopefully lower the weight given to dynastic, and parivar-wadi related factors. This shift is also expected to encourage individual members of household to improve their conditions by their own efforts and entrepreneurship, albeit in an environment where physical, digital, and outcome-oriented governance increasing become more prevalent. The 2023-24 Budget has strengthened this shift.**
- **Second, India's Minister of External Affairs Dr. S. Jaishankar has persuasively argued that Indians must liberate themselves from the colonial mind-sets as this is an essential requirement for India to progress towards becoming a developed nation by 2047. This essential requirement is reflected in the 2023-24 and other policy proposals**

Global and Domestic Developments

- Third, there is a serious argument for using laws (and shaping regulation and standards, both domestically and internationally, to gain national advantage. Europe, UK, USA have been using laws, regulations as a major instrument to advance their interests
- How can India begin to be a player in shaping global regulations and standards?
- Including this aspect requires at least elective courses in Science Technology and Public Policy, Global Economic and Political Dynamics, and Law, Regulation, and Economics. Faculty competent in these areas will need to be consciously developed as a part of reimagining Public policy.

Reimagining Transport

- “The aluminum body of the Vande Bharat Express will be one of its most notable features. This lightweight material provides several benefits over traditional steel body trains,” added Mallya, General Manager of Integral Coach Factory (ICF).
- He also mentioned that aluminum is lighter than steel, which means that the train is more fuel-efficient and produces fewer emissions. This is particularly important in India, where the railways are a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. The use of aluminum in the train’s body will help to reduce its carbon footprint significantly.

Reimagining Transport

- US companies re-examining Chinese supply chains – Head of France's CMA CGM cautions businesses are seeking alternative freight routes as political relations sour.
- India should build ports in Andaman and Nicobar islands so India can become a competitor to Singapore and we should also connect India through our Northeast with South East Asia bypassing Malacca straight.

Reimagining Transport

Noida Airport In Its Entirety With Five Runways, Will Be The Biggest Airport In Asia Having Passenger Capacity Of 225 Million: NIAL Chief

Reimagining Examples from Recent Public policies

India Used Bar Bell theory from the Finance Literature to Manage Covid-19 Pandemic

A good example of understanding the local context and local needs.

Sanjeev Sanyal's lecture at Rishihood university has lot of insights on VUCA world, and hoe India used bar Bell theory from finance to successfully the Covid-19 pandemic.

The link is:

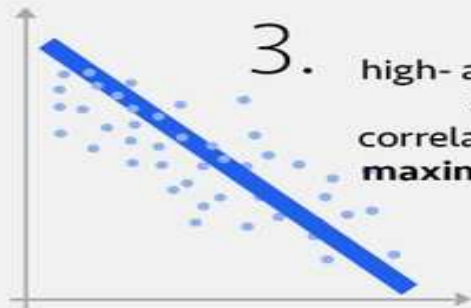
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BkdamNIgtBc>

Planning and Policy Making in a VUCA World

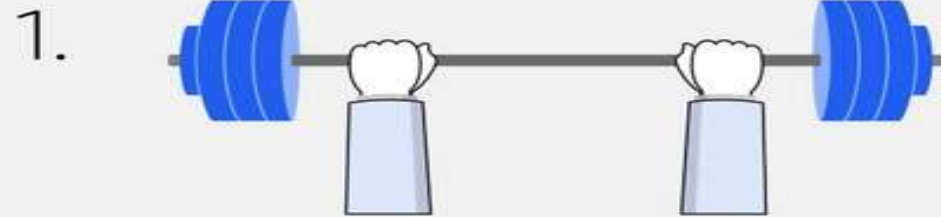
Barbell Strategy

What is the Barbell Strategy?

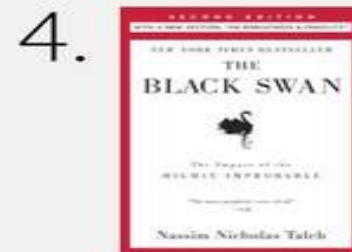
2. Strategists can **adjust the weighing** on both ends based on market conditions



3. Since the earnings of high- and no-risk investments are generally negatively correlated, this strategy could **maximize potential earnings while limiting risk**



The barbell strategy involves **mixing extreme ends of high- and no-risk investments** while skipping everything in the middle



The Black Swan author, Nassim Taleb, says, "If you know that you are vulnerable to prediction errors ... , then your strategy is to be as hyper-conservative and hyper-aggressive as you can be."



Reimagining Labour Laws

- Karnataka's landmark labor reform that enables a flexible work regime to run production with two 12-hour shifts around the clock is set to advance Apple and Foxconn to advance Indian production plans

Dhanyawad

Thank you