

As the potential magnitude of the COVID-19 pandemic became clear in April, there was a lot of immediate speculation about what its impact would be. For countless individuals and families, ordinary life has just been overturned in already unfathomable manners. In any case, in what capacity will the pandemic impact the future conduct of states, governments, and leaders? Will they cooperate all the more intently, or will this further separate them? A significant number of those initial forecasts declared a profoundly changed world order. The premise is correct that there can be no return to the pre-COVID-19 era - for better or worse. [1] On the traditional strategic agenda, pandemics and other health emergencies are generally listed in the same category as climate change and wildfires—that is, they pose security threats rather than change strategic orders, but the latest developments prove otherwise. [2]

Following World War 2, the United States was the main proponent of the liberal world and turned into an uncontested power with the Cold War's end. China, with its amazing trajectory of financial development and huge increments in military spending, has been on the lurk for quite a long time. Beijing initially concentrated on domestic unity and the security of the Chinese Communist Party but rose to challenge the world order after 2008 when the monetary crisis seemed to flag a decline of American supremacy. COVID-19 is indeed the crisis of the century (and the century is only a fifth of its way through), it is bound to leave generational memories in its wake. The last major global upheaval, World War 2, upended the mighty British Empire and cemented America's status as a global superpower. [3] The economic aspect is evident in the prompt aid packages that many national governments have handed out to their corporations and share markets. The US, for instance, provided a buffer of \$1.5 trillion to its corporations and Wall Street days before it declared a national emergency and grudgingly made \$50 billion available for health. [4]

This pandemic acts as a disclosure of the attributes of our new world. Two of these attributes stick out: the shortcoming of worldwide administration- in the key area of healthcare; secondly a change in the focal point of influence towards China and Asia by large. [5] In World War 2, the United States entered the European theatre through Italy. Today, history repeats itself; China and Russia have taken actions to strengthen their influence in Europe through Italy. As Europe's disconnection from the United States will accelerate in the upcoming years, relations between the EU members with Beijing and Moscow will deepen, this pandemic may quicken it further. [6] For US-partnered democratic systems which function with an open administration and free speech, this is a stressing development. [7]



Bolsonaro's Graffiti in São Paulo, Brazil

The pattern towards, dictatorial tendencies is clear in nations, with the ascent of conservative populist governments in Europe and developments in Turkey, Brazil, and India, encapsulated by Russia and China. Some are currently following China's lead in endeavouring to weaponize the pandemic for political gains.[8] For example, Vladimir Putin's ongoing plot to inconclusively extend his reign in Russia (even though the pandemic has since delayed voting that could have permitted him to remain in power until 2036). [9] Another was by Viktor Orbán, Hungary's chief, declaring a state of emergency "that recommends five-year jail sentences for those blocking the state's emergency response or dispersing false news." Governments like Egypt have followed China's model in ousting foreign media, limiting journalism and suppressing open debates. This outbreak will be used by nationalist and rightist parties in most countries to close the borders and to police their minorities.[10]

Take, for instance, US President Donald Trump's ban on flights from the European Union because he claimed that European nations have not done enough to stop the "foreign virus." But, there are more coronavirus cases in the United Kingdom which has left the European Union, than in many European nations. The status of the United States as a world power in recent decades has been constructed on power and riches, as well as the authenticity that

streams from the United States' local administration, the arrangement of worldwide open trade with the capacity and ability to assemble and facilitate a global solution to emergencies. The COVID 19 pandemic is challenging every aspect of the components of U.S. authority. Up until this point, Washington is floundering under pressure, while Beijing is moving rapidly and proficiently to exploit the opening made by U.S. botches, filling the vacuum to situate itself as the worldwide pioneer in pandemic reaction. It is attempting to flex its framework for efficiency, by giving material help to different nations, and even coordinate with different governments. [\[11\]](#)

Global interdependence and the importance of collective, multilateral approaches

The US, EU, and NATO have weakened during the pandemic, and have split further and further apart from each other in the process. The failure to solve the rapidly spreading epidemic in Italy, Spain, and France, as well as the collapsing British healthcare system following British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's proposed "herd immunity" model, has left Europeans fearful and distrustful of their governments and the EU [\[12\]](#). Italy's former Prime Minister and current main opposition leader Matteo Salvini responded saying: "I hate and am disgusted by the EU. It is a den of snakes and jackals rather than a union. We will beat the virus first, and then we will go back and reconsider the EU. If necessary, we will leave without gratitude." [\[13\]](#) The crisis has led to the US further turning inwards. The way the EU travel ban was announced without taking European leaders into confidence left a bad taste in an already fraught alliance. Instead of leading a global initiative to find the cure, Trump talked up taking over a promising German company (CureVac) so that the US could be the first to inoculate its population. [\[14\]](#) America tightened sanctions on Iran, at a time when prior sanctions were biting hard amid the massive outbreak in that country. The extraordinarily-harsh measure of America cutting its aid to Afghanistan over the peace-talk impasse also hasn't gone unnoticed, again at a time when the critically aid-dependent Kabul needs more resources to combat the crisis. [\[15\]](#)

Contrast this with China's government and its billionaires who are sending aid to countries around the world, sharing early experience and helping meet global medical demand by putting factories back on work. The assistance seems directed especially towards the European Union, partly because it is the pandemic epicenter. [\[16\]](#) It is also because the absence of American leadership will be felt the most in Europe. Also, WHO is not assuming the focal job it ought to do in the COVID-19 emergency. It was alerted past the point of no return by China, impairing other states' capacity to respond. WHO operations give the feeling that it is reiterating a "Chinese line" on the battle against the pandemic. China, coincidentally, is receiving the rewards of the active role it has placed in the UN framework

lately[17].



A man fixes the chinese flag in front of boxes with Protective suits and masks in Vienna, Austria, Friday, March 20, 2020/ Image: AP Photo/Ronald Zak

China's Mask Diplomacy

The speed with which China has controlled the virus and jumpstarted its economy has left other countries in awe of how the Chinese governance model works. Meanwhile, America, towards which the democratic world is looking for guidance, is fumbling royally in its approach to contain the crisis. [18] While China is now assisting other countries, the US federal government has been unable to meet the demands of its hard-hit states like New York and California. If this crisis has exposed the dysfunction and divisiveness in American democracy like never before, then it's a propaganda win for the Chinese governance model that quickly got a grip. China's private and public segments are filling in holes in hardware

where different states are coming up short, although the spread of the virus, the materials may rapidly outpace China's stockpile. [19]

China is battling a publicity war, Beijing's war point is basic: move away from all fault for the episode from China, the messed up beginning reaction, and its initial spread into the more parts of the world. In question is China's worldwide credibility, just as the possibility of a principal change away from China for manufacturing and assembling. Likewise in danger is the heritage of General Secretary Xi Jinping, who has staked his authenticity on his technocratic fitness. Beijing is now capitalizing on its ability to contain the fire it allowed to spread in the first place. Its propaganda apparatus is in overdrive, touting China's success. [20] Beijing offers aid and advice, and contrasts its efforts with the West's fumbling responses, in the hope that its culpability is overlooked. While some Chinese officials claim that the virus may have had foreign origins, many across the world are firmly convinced otherwise. [21] China badly needs reputation management, but that calls for substantial wherewithal. Experts are unanimous on the point that China's reputation has taken a bad dent. Despite the experience with the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2002, the Chinese government took considerable time to inform its people of the emergence of COVID-19.



People wearing masks attend a vigil for Chinese doctor Li Wenliang on Feb. 7. | Kin Cheung/AP Photo

Further, the failure to inform the global community promptly is being seen as the absence of collaborative intent on the part of China even on issues when there is no clash with its 'core' national interest. In the first two months of the virus outbreak, China suppressed information and punished truth-saying doctors.^[22] Rather than acting with speed and straightforwardness, the Chinese government looked to preserve its legitimacy and reputation. It pressed down on informants like the late Dr. Li Wenliang and suppressed social media to forestall both data about the pandemic and analysis of the governmental policies. China will be forced to bear criticism from governments that have made a less than impressive display themselves. ^[23] In light of China's initial mismanagement, democratic governments around the globe, presently are being compelled to take phenomenal activities that to some degree reflect Beijing's dictatorial inclinations, in this way changing the world more in China's liking. In the post-corona virus era, it will be a much different China. There will be higher demands for transparency and wariness about certain forms of dependence on China, going well beyond medical supplies. Western economies will erect new

sanitary/phytosanitary and technical barriers to trade. It is only a matter of time before various rating agencies, as well as other international organizations, will come up with a 'health vulnerability index' that will seek to influence investment decisions. [24]

Opportunity for the other Asian power: India

Numerous foreign organizations as of now have been reevaluating their plan in China, because of uncontrolled IP theft and rising manufacturing costs; presently, they may genuinely question working altogether in China. Not only is the health of its employees at risk, but they no longer can be assured that China will be a stable supplier. The interruption brought about by the virus could clear route for increasingly foreign interests in developing economies like India, Bangladesh, and Vietnam as the world hopes to diminish reliance on China, the biggest assembling center on the planet. [25] In this context, India is very well positioned to help build a more dynamic and sustainable world. Based on the Global Competitiveness Index, India is the most competitive country in South Asia. India has a competitive advantage in the services including the Information Technology Services, Pharmaceuticals, Biotechnology, and Medical tourism sectors. Right now, it is particularly ripe for market reforms given solid platform created by Make in India and Invest India initiatives of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. However, India needs to have more market-friendly land and labor laws with adequate safeguards to protect individual freedoms. [26]

Its administration services are understaffed at the upper levels relative to its population leading to excessive stress, possible reductions in the speed of bureaucratic service and concentration of power. The emergence of a single-window clearance system is a great positive which needs to be rapidly expanded in both scope and scale [27]. To attain investors' confidence, Parliament should consider laws that would help prevent decisions like retrospective taxation on Vodafone. However, this may not happen automatically but would require proper planning. The present crisis has shown up certain vulnerabilities of India's manufacturing, India depends upon China for 60 percent of its bulk drug requirements. This calls for duty-free imports of manufacturing equipment as well as for raw materials that are not available in India, such as special alloys and steel. [28] A new start could be given with financial incentives as well as lower cost finance to set them up and make them viable, and State governments could provide incentives as well. A well thought out intervention could convert current challenges into a great opportunity for India. [29]



Image: Business Standards

Conclusion

COVID-19's monetary effect could fuel existing budgetary imbalances, an unforeseen and unexpected emergency like COVID-19 could spill these into a monetary crisis. As of now, we are seeing the Insurance agencies frantically selling down to raise money, fortifying the fact that the business sector is weakening. [30] COVID-19 pandemic is most likely to revive the Hobbesian view of human nature and shape international relations. Close to 200 countries are fighting a war against the Corona virus, and by and large, they all are going solo. No one is talking of collective security, humanitarian intervention, foreign assistance and disaster management. [31] President Donald Trump offered a billion US dollar to a German Company to develop an anti-Corona virus vaccine. The deal was it would be only for the United States. The same company had already been given incentives by the German Government to develop a vaccine only for Germany. [32]

Democracies are often perceived to be underperforming because of their virtues such as the

free flow of information and rigorous questioning of the government. Further, many democracies were hesitant to deploy tools such as geographical lockdowns and travel suspensions, as they may infringe on the rights of the people. [33] Democracies are always slow to react, and the US under President Donald Trump much slower than usual. For different reasons, Mr. Trump, like the CCP, initially downplayed the gravity of the situation. Chinese authorities discovered the new virus back in December and did nothing to caution their residents or force measures to control it from spreading; Beijing is guilty of the spread of the pathogen around China and the world.

Wuhan, the starting point of corona virus sits at an important junction in BRI, China's most ambitious project to date under which billions of dollars will be invested in infrastructure development to ease down trade and logistics between China and Europe, as China seeks to revive its much-celebrated Silk Route. Wuhan's position as a strategic transport hub has backfired and worked as a negative factor. [COVID-19 has severely damaged the economy of China](#), and it will take time to restore China's economy to the level of the pre-COVID era so that it can fund and complete the BRI projects.[34]

To conclude, the dreaded US-China Cold War will be the main hallmark of the post-COVID international order. The trans-Atlantic ties will be disrupted further, and the trust level will severely deteriorate, even as the United States and the EU are fighting their own battles against the novel Corona pandemic now. China is offering assistance to Europe, and the US is getting sucked into its war against COVID-19 at home. While China is trying to cement its bond with BRI partner countries by offering them medical assistance, its impact is going to be marginal in furthering China's goal to carve out a Sino-centric international order.

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